A Holistic Ethical System of Architecture in the Time of Globalization: Between Dubai and the Medina of Tunis

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This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of The University of Western Australia (UWA)

School of Design + School of Humanities

Architecture and Philosophy

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Thesis Declaration

I, Majdi Faleh, certify that:

This thesis, presented in 2018, has been substantially accomplished during enrolment in the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Architecture and Humanities at the University of Western Australia and has been undertaken through the School of Design and the School of Humanities.

This thesis does not contain material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution.

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the design challenges and opportunities as well as ethical problems that architecture and the built environment are facing in the Islamic world. Forces of globalization have changed contemporary cities of the Islamic World, and architecture has come to be less informed by the roots of Islamic architecture. The globalization of architecture will be examined as a vehicle of progress and diversity. Conversely, the urban and architectural character in the Islamic world has become predominantly ‘Westernized.’ A new culture of consumerism has been associated with glamorous and largely imported postmodern building aesthetics promising progress and sustainability.

This research argues that architects and researchers in the twenty-first century can reinvest Islamic architecture with values of traditional Islam; its ethical values, and its aesthetics in the context of globalization and the loss of Islamic architectural identity. It also envisions and articulates an intermediary role that Islamic architecture and the civilization surrounding it can play to negotiate different sources of contemporary identities and to resolve the tensions that exist between the local and the global as well as the traditional and the modern sources of value in the built environment.

This study analyzes the architectural and urban tales of two cities: Dubai and Tunis, where the cities' urban forms and architecture are examined in light of Islamic identity. The study will be cross-disciplinary as it will engage scholarship and stakeholders from the fields of architecture, planning, philosophy, and religious studies. It asks architecture scholars and practitioners to reflect on a contemporary Islamic architecture with respect to Islamic identity and Islamic values and ethics. The overall study does not aim to provide technical solutions, but it grows out of the need to rethink the notion of identity and to raise an architectural concern among architects and thinkers in the Muslim world, and particularly in Tunisia.

Keywords: Islamic architecture, globalization, ethics, aesthetics, identity, Dubai, Tunis.
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Finally, my deepest gratitude goes to The University of Western Australia as an institution, for giving me this opportunity to pursue my doctorate. This research was supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarship.
Dedication

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

I dedicate this thesis to:

Those who continuously supported me during this challenging experience, and to those who strive to revive Islamic Architecture around the world through design and research.

To my family who supported me during this challenging experience.

To my colleagues at the Postgraduate Office, UWA School of Design, and to my friends who showed me some support during this journey.
Authorship Declaration: Sole Author Publications

This thesis contains the following sole-authored work that has been published and/or prepared for publication.


Location in the thesis: Chapter 3

Please note that some of the content of the conference paper was altered and updated in this thesis.


Location in the thesis: Chapter 5

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Location in the thesis: Chapter 6

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List of Abbreviations

AKAA The Aga Khan Award for Architecture
AKDN The Aga Khan Development Network
AKPIA The Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture
ASM Association de Sauvegarde de la Médina (de Tunis)
ENAU Ecole Nationale d'Architecture et d'Urbanisme (Tunis)
MIT Massachusetts Institute of Technology
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
Transliteration System\textsuperscript{1} for Arabic

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\textsuperscript{1} ISO 233-2 is the adopted system. It is the 1993 revised Arabic transliteration system. Although it is not used by Arab governments and U.S. governmental entities; this system is very valuable because it adheres to correct phonetics. It also does a stellar job in terms of distinguishing the sound of one character from another ( \( zh \) and \( ḩ \) as well as \( ž \) and \( ẓ \) [Lawson 2010, 170]). Some adjustments were made to \( ẓ \) as seen below.

\textsuperscript{2} The Z sound for this letter of the Arabic Alphabet is not correct. Thus, it will be replaced with a 'Dh.'
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1. Introduction

1.1 Preface

I consider myself to be a global citizen. Although I am a Muslim, Arab, and Amazigh citizen of Tunisia, I have lived in five different continents for the past ten years. My interest in my Muslim heritage grew when I moved to the United States in 2009\(^1\) to pursue my masters as a Fulbright scholar. During that time, I was very passionate about Islamic geometry, and I designed and created wooden panels using laser technology. Towards the end of my studies, the ‘Arab Spring’ started in my country, Tunisia, on January 14\(^{th}\), 2011. People from all walks of life demanded social, economic and political reforms. The dictator, Ben Ali, who had ruled Tunisia with an ‘iron fist’ since 1987, fled the country and a new democratic era started reshaping the history of Tunisia.

Being a Tunisian architect, I started reflecting on the future of architecture in my country as well as the future of the Islamic heritage sites, such as the Medina of Tunis. At that point, I started to think about notions of globalization, identity, heritage, ethics, and reform in the context of architecture. Since qualifying as an architect, I have had, a deep interest in studying how traditional architecture is mutating and how it transformed due to geopolitical and cultural influences. In some cities of the Arab world, such as Dubai or Doha, a jungle of concrete has dominated the environment. A ghetto of reinforced concrete and steel has created an irrelevant architectural vocabulary, which made the overall architectural context unshaped yet interesting to study. This phenomenon is an architectural laboratory of the twenty-first century that comes with its challenges.

In the year 2007-2008, I wrote my bachelor thesis with a focus on architecture, cultural spaces, and consumerism in Tunisia. In 2011, my master’s thesis focused on architecture and social justice in the African-

\(^{1}\) In this thesis, I will only use the American spelling (US English) given my familiarity with this system of writing. Any direct quotes will remain unchanged if they are using British or Australian English.
American context of Detroit, Michigan. Thus, my interest in consumerism, architectural production, and social justice grew further beyond the borders of those countries. In 2013, my first peer-reviewed paper was published by Istanbul Technical University, Journal of the Faculty of Architecture. This paper is entitled “Urban Metamorphosis and Islamic Architecture in the Time of Globalization: Utopian Realities and Challenges”. My bachelor’s thesis, my master’s thesis, and my first publication were the driving forces that motivated me to apply for a Ph.D. degree to explore my topic of interest, Islamic architecture, and heritage in the twenty-first century.

My professional experience as a junior architect at HKS Architects in the US also inspired this interdisciplinary research. The international firm worked on several projects in the Middle East and around the world. At the Detroit office, I worked on the King Fahad Medical City (KFMC) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. This particular project inspired more profound reflections about how globalization is influencing architecture and what Islamic architectural identity is about. KFMC was designed as a landmark gateway that draws inspiration from cultural and regional influences. Particular attention has been given to the façade which attempted to emulate local influences through complex geometric patterns evoking images of water, sand, and palm leaves. My role as a junior architect and my discussions with senior American architects prompted more reflections about architectural production in the Middle East. The focus of architects on patterns and evocative images also inspired me to reflect more on the meaning of architecture in the Islamic world. Being part of an international firm working remotely on a project in the Middle East also motivated me to learn about the diversity of cultural and design approaches.
1.2 Where the Story Begins

Cultural revolution is not here yet. There is some freedom, for instance, and I am talking specifically about Tunisia; however other countries are still struggling with political and military issues. They have not yet reached certain stability to tackle other aspects of life. We, for instance, we need to start our cultural revolution by bringing up a significant debate and reflection on these aspects. That includes the issue of architecture, the issue of culture, and the issue of heritage, and all the issues that are of great interest to us. That means there is freedom to diagnose problems. Diagnosis always took place in Tunisia, but they were not published freely. Today we can say all, but political parties did not adequately approach these aspects. That is to be done, I believe! (Mouhli 2014).

Mouhli, Zoubeir. 2014. (Director, ASM Association de Sauvegarde de la Medina de Tunis), in discussion with the author. December 31.

The importance of the proposed research is most apparent while brutal social and political upheavals are impacting on the Islamic world. The media all too often show the latter, narrowly, as “monolithic and unchanging” (Said 1997, 100), reflecting terrorism and fundamentalism. The reality on the ground is more complex. People are calling for social and economic opportunities, political freedom, and cultural changes across the Arab world. Intellectuals like Zoubeir Mouhli (2014) are starting to reconsider how the architecture of a particular character prevailing or believed once to have prevailed in the region of the Arabian Peninsula, North Africa, and Persia may have contributed to a long-lasting Islamic civilization and cultural identity. They are seeking to draw on and possibly reinvigorate this identity as a source of answers to challenges today. In other words, this research is an attempt to highlight architectural aspirations and conflicts – grand dreams and bold designs – across the

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2 In this thesis, I will use the term ‘Islamic’ and ‘Muslim’ interchangeably as they have been used in the literature and the news. Even the term Arabo-musulman [Arab and Islamic] has been used quite extensively in the literature and especially in French literature and books. The studied cities (i.e. Dubai and Tunis) are crossroads of Islamic and pre-Islamic civilizations. Thus, the concept ‘Muslim’ or ‘Islamic’ city itself is vague given the diverse urban fabric of such cities [Islamic, Colonial, Ottoman, Arab, etc].


Islamic world, while looking at how global and regional architectural trends have reshaped this area.

Cities like Dubai have entirely transformed the meaning of a twenty-first-century city of the Islamic world. The 'prestige' of Dubai, one of the fastest growing places on earth in terms of urban developments and construction (Elsheshtawy 2004d, 179), is achieved through its branding as a 'world-class city'. However, in recent years it has acquired a mixed reputation, known not only for its seemingly never-ending construction and extravagant consumerist excess, but also for the degraded living conditions of its construction workers, maids, cleaners, and others of the working class (Ali 2010, 33). The internationally glitzy surface of Dubai is very pleasing to many Westerners owing to its familiar Western character and international flavor. The import of Western architectural models has been the trend in Dubai during recent decades, and it has primarily transformed this city into a phenomenon that researchers should study.

1.3 Problem Statement

The changing character of Islamic architectural identity in the twenty-first century calls for evaluation. This evaluation can be done through a reflection on the apparent disparities between a rich and forgotten architectural ethics and aesthetics, on the one hand, and an ill-defined or largely non-descript corporate built environment that has appeared in recent decades in cities like Dubai and Tunis, on the other. Therefore, architects and researchers focused on Islamic architecture face various obstacles when they attempt to mediate between modern and traditional sources of value in the built environment. Given the dynamic nature of the field of architecture and humanities, this framework should be positioned as one important way of seeing the problem – not the only way.

Throughout Islam’s eight hundred years of power, Islamic architecture spread through means of successive empires. It also spread under various political and cultural regimes, from Southern Spain to Southeast Asia, establishing a diverse architectural heritage noticeable through opulent interiors, which are hidden behind minimalist exteriors. This architectural
heritage can be seen in buildings and settlements such as the Alhambra (built 889 A.D.)\(^5\), the Medina of Fes (founded 789-808 A.D.), and the Medina of Tunis (founded 698 A.D.) to name a few. The concept of ‘hidden architecture’ is the genuine expression of Islamic architecture, reflecting an “architecture that truly exists, not when seen as monument or symbol visible to all and from all sides, but only when penetrated and experienced from within” (Grube 1978, 13). However, in the current age and time, some traces of Islamic architecture exist differently.

The rejection of traditional models in architecture might be related to a premature fascination with copying Western models, excessive consumerism, an invading market culture insensitive to the deep heritage, and overall tensions between global and local cultures. Nevertheless, given their large-scale, corporate architecture and technologies can offer a new trend for contemporary Islamic architecture to flourish through technology and the scientific progress that comes with it. In an ongoing dialogue between architecture and forces of globalization, new building technologies have transformed architecture through the addition of glossy facades and changing city skylines, into dispersed construction sites of office towers housing multinational corporations, world trade centers, and five-star hotels (Eldemery 2009, 345, Öncü and Weyland 1997, 1-2).

The superlative becomes egocentric and central, and from a hidden architecture, there is a move towards an extravagant and an overly revealing architecture. At the same time, the Muslim world has been conserving its heritage and its architectural past. Pakistani-born British architect Sabiha Foster states that architecture fitting within a Western context might not necessarily fit in an Islamic context unless being aware of regional identities:

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\(^5\) Most, if not all, dates used in this thesis will follow the Gregorian calendar (Miladi in Arabic) to avoid the confusion of readers who are not familiar with the lunar calendar (or Hijri). The Islamic calendar is a lunar calendar and it consists of twelve months and 354 days. The first year of this calendar started in the year 622 when Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emigrated from Mecca (also spelled Mekkah) to Madinah. Emigration was called Hijra.
The main reason for the so-called Islamic resistance to all things modern lies not in a rejection of modernity or modernization, but in an awareness of what is happening to the West where local, cultural and regional identities are being erased by an all-pervading market culture (Foster 2004, 7).

By what terms and value framework can the contemporary architectural models be ‘wrong’ for the times? Does this phenomenon result merely from copying Western models and embracing a dismissive or nihilistic attitude towards existing heritage - or, do other factors come into play?

1.4 Aims and Objectives

This research aims to reveal some of the tensions produced by the significant architectural and cultural shifts in the Muslim world. These shifts can be seen in modern architecture and city planning in Dubai and T unis, and they have happened during a period of political upheaval (Arab Spring) as well as in a context where the so-called “clash of civilizations” is questioned. This philosophical exploration of architectural discourses seeks to establish the basis for a more productive dialogue between the Islamic city, as a product of complex historical and cultural forces, and current globalizing trends by looking at its ethical values and aesthetics.

1.5 Research Questions

In light of the previous discussion, this research focuses on the following primary questions:

(1) In the context of ‘Islamic civilization’ as the means and measure of a set of unique social formations and their values, how did Islamic ethics and aesthetics produce an art and architecture mediating between the civilizations that generated or received these values?

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Under the framework of globalization, is there a loss of ‘Islamic identity’ in Dubai’s architectural developments and the Medina of Tunis? What are the effects and challenges imposed by globalization on Islamic cities and architecture, as well as on their identities?

How can Islamic ethics and aesthetics be reinvested in this era to generate an architecture that reconciles the past with the present and mediates between current civilizations?

1.6 Originality

The originality of this work comes partially from 'the tale of two cities': Dubai and Tunis under similar influences of globalization, but with different adaptations to it. Revisiting key writers from various eras and bringing them together in a novel take on identity and architecture is another original analytical process. This research will raise crucial questions about the future of Islamic architecture while revisiting heritage in general, in the midst of an unstable geopolitical scene and rising Islamophobia across multiple countries. Some short interviews were a means of teasing out key questions and issues of concern after discussions with scholars, architects, and academics from Malaysia, Spain, Morocco, and Tunisia. However, one should emphasize that these interviews were not analyzed or included because they are not the core of this research but rather a way of finding out the major concerns in the architecture of the Islamic world.

I have also conducted extensive research of recent books and journals calling on my knowledge of the history of these sites and my fluency in English, Arabic, and French to access and compare different sources from different theoretical contexts. The original Arabic treatises, of Ibn al Rami and Ibn al-Imam, were not discussed sufficiently (as primary sources) in the Arab world and the Western world. Recent articles from magazines (Middle East Online, Islamic City, Medinanet) and peer-reviewed journals (Muqarnas) will also enhance the contemporary relevance of the project.
1.7 Key Concepts

1.7.1. Introduction

This thesis investigates what is conceptualized as ‘Islamic’ architecture at present, and how this relates to centuries of orientalism, colonialism, globalization and other external forces. This issue is of research interest now given the heated political debates about the concept of the ‘Islamic’ in the media and in academia. Additionally, there is a lack of critical engagement about how Islamic architecture mediates these different external forces, and here I attempt to present an original research on the issue. Then, this research will examine this through comparing two case studies of Dubai and Tunis that represent current trends and different experiences of ‘Islamic’ architecture. Thus, per the title of this research, this thesis follows an interdisciplinary approach that engages a holistic ethical system, or an all-inclusive method examining and contrasting ethical principles from the past and the present to determine intermediary architectural solutions for the present time.

This thesis argues that Islamic architecture can play an intermediary role to negotiate different sources of contemporary identities and values in the built environment, including the local and the global, and the traditional and the modern. To understand this dual architectural negotiation, it is essential to examine the discourse on Islamic architecture between the nineteenth and the twenty-first century, a period during which the Islamic world experienced colonialization and later internationalization.

First and foremost, I propose throughout this thesis that architectural decisions are ethical decisions, and ethical problems are internal to the practice of architecture, as philosopher Maurice Lagueux (2004) emphasizes in his essay “Ethics Versus Aesthetics in Architecture”. Lagueux (2004, 119) focuses on how a majority of ethical debates raised by architecture are related to problems linked to the practice of the field and the success of their work. The problem being part of the solution is an approach that I will adopt throughout this thesis. In my writing and analysis in this thesis, I explore this argument by more or less addressing ‘the
problem’ before reaching the solution. In this research, I uncover the contentions behind the discourses of defining Islamic architecture and the reductive formal and aesthetic analysis of scholars such as Ernst Grube⁷ and George Marçais⁸. Their attempts at defining a uniquely ‘Islamic’ architecture, though a source of valuable insight for art historians, disregarded essential aspects of context and external influences such as Orientalism and colonialization, thereby limiting the relevance of the architecture for the contemporary age. As a response to this narrow view, I suggest that the negotiation of different sources of identities (Islamic and Western) should start by exploring the field of values within which Islamic architecture emerged and was appraised.

A particularly useful starting point is the polemical and untenable writing on the so-called ‘clash of civilizations’ dominated by authors such as Samuel Huntington (1993). Lagueux’s analysis of ethical problems suggests an alternative, less reductive view of cultures than to Huntington’s, offering an opportunity to examine how Islamic architecture has borrowed from non-Islamic and pre-Islamic sources, exemplified by the case of the Tanzimat Period (1839-1876) of the Ottoman Empire.

Further to this, I analyze how different facets of globalization, including the economic and the cultural, have influenced architectural production in the Islamic world through the analysis of the tales of two cities, Dubai and Tunis. This analysis brings about a new reflection on the ethics and aesthetics of building contemporary Dubai from the scale of the city to the scale of the building. This analysis aims to contrast Dubai with Tunis. It also shows that architectural decisions are ethical decisions. Reviving traditional architectural patterns in these two cities shall start by addressing the roots of excess (scale of buildings) and the dominance of Western architectural patterns.

⁷ Grube, Ernst J. 1978. “What is Islamic Architecture?” In Architecture of the Islamic World: its History and Social Meaning, edited by George Michell, 4-10. London, UK: Thames and Hudson. Grube defined Islamic architecture based on its spatial features such as the ‘hidden.’

⁸ Marçais, Georges. 1946. L’art de l’Islam. Paris: Larousse. In 200 pages and 64 slides, the author attempted to cover 13 centuries of an art that is ‘singular’. He then defined Islamic art and architecture by visual means.
Recognizing the limited architectural scholarship that has addressed the problem of Islamic architectural negotiation, I argue that the paradigm of negotiation offers opportunities to examine the ethics and aesthetics of architectural production carefully. This analysis is supported by an overarching framework including privacy, urban transition, complex geometry, and light. This framework aims to look at the social, cultural, and spiritual values of Islamic architecture by using contemporary examples highlighting the qualities of these case studies.

1.7.2. Defining the Different Discourses of Islamic Architecture

Before explaining how Islamic architecture can be the mediator between the different sources of identities, this research firstly needs to introduce the debates about Islamic architecture in the twenty-first century. This analysis relies on past and present accounts of contemporary scholars and academics, beyond the nineteenth-century European orientalist approach. The Orientalist approach sees Islam, the Islamic world, and its architecture as the ‘other’\(^9\). In his influential book Orientalism, Said (1979, 1) explains that “the Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences”. This conception of the Orient, as explained by Said, particularly offers a basic distinction between the ‘East’ and the ‘West’ (Said 1979, 257) a view that a large number of writers accepted (Said 1979, 2). The conception of Orientalism, Said argues, is not a simple political subject nor is it a reflection of Western attempts to control the ‘Oriental’ world (Said 1979, 12). However, Orientalism reflects a “distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philosophical texts” (Said 1979, 12). In other words, the complexity of Middle Eastern cultures and geographies was reduced to mere ‘interests’ of control and manipulation of a different world.

\(^9\) Orientalism is not the main focus of this research; however, it is fundamental to mention Said’s views on the subject. In his famous book Orientalism, Said shows how a boundary was drawn between the East and the West, amplifying the idea of inferiority of one over the other as well as the dominance of European imperialism. More details can be found in a recent edition Said, Edward W. 2014. Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient. New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group
Said (1979, 280) recognizes that both Muslims and Islam are represented as a rigid entity, where he critiques Gibb’s argument\(^\text{10}\) that Islam reflects life, religion, its people, unity, intelligibility, and values. In *Orientalism*, Said further argues that such a way of standardizing Islam tends to be metaphysical and abstract. In a sarcastic way and using McDonald’s as an example, Said (1979, 280) highlights that Gibb’s approach is uncertain as it does not specify which period of Islam he is referring to. In addition to Gibb’s book, Said (1979, 302) criticizes the two-volume *Cambridge History of Islam\(^\text{11}\) where he explains that its editors uncritically accept ideas “and no effort was put forth to make even the idea of Islam seem interesting”.

Said’s views are essential to discuss in this thesis even if they do not relate directly to architecture. Nevertheless, one should highlight the fault lines of Said’s work, which can be partially noted in Varisco’s very recent publication *Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid*. Varisco (2017, 142) questions the ‘Orient’ that Said is referring to and warns the reader that ‘Oriental’ voices and critique from Arab intellectuals are ignored in Said’s book. Apparently, Said’s argument is oversimplified as it “excludes a potential dialogue between the Orient and the Occident but also prevents any critical dialogue among the Europeans that could lead to different and disparate views on the Orient which could contradict the hegemonic project of the West” (Çırakman 2002, 13).

Said’s Orientalism and his work on European Imperialism is valuable to suggest new ways of reconstructing Islamic architecture and Islamic identity. The dominance of Western architectural models or Western hegemony, purposefully or not purposefully, can still be seen. However, to dwell continuously about the West and the rest does not necessarily offer

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\(^{11}\) This is a two-volume book edited by Peter Holt, Bernard Lewis, and Ann K.S. Lambton. This book, which describes the history of Islam, is primarily dedicated to students, intellectuals, and orientalists. Based on several reviews, this book tends to be unexciting as it lacks analysis. Some of the reviews include Robert L. Tignor. 1972. “Reviewed Work: The Cambridge History of Islam.” The American Historical Review 77 (1):116-117.
opportunities to discuss how the Islamic world shaped Europe and how the Islamic world was shaped by Europe, in particular in architecture.

The study of Islamic architecture was known as a post-enlightenment European project, conducted by architectural historians, such as Edward Freeman (1823-92), Sir Banister Fletcher (1866-1953), and James Fergusson (1808-86). These scholars described this kind of architecture as Saracenic, Mohammedan, Moorish, and Oriental before ‘Islamic’ became a conventional label for this kind of architecture around the late nineteenth century. The fact that Islamic architecture was not homogeneously defined opens up for more hybrid discourses where symbols, forms, and concepts can be adaptive to meet the goals of modern architecture.

In a very recent edition of his book *Empire Building: Orientalism and Victorian Architecture*, Crinson (2013, 70) confirms that architectural historians such as “Fergusson, Freeman and Ruskin all wrote about Islamic architecture from a distance”. In fact, he explains, Ruskin has never been or seen what Crinson calls an ‘Islamic building’. He also emphasizes that knowledge about Islamic culture was considered a low matter in the nineteenth century and as a consequence “Islamic architecture by nineteenth-century scholars had little preceding it but the laconic images and reports of travellers mostly interested in other matters”. (Crinson 2013,15). Regardless of Crinson’s strange way of using the term ‘Islamic buildings’, I should reiterate that the matter in hand presents different angles of inquiry in the current century. One needs to consider external factors affecting the progress of Islamic architecture in the twenty-first century.

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12 Further readings about the survey done by renowned architectural historians can be found at Fletcher, Banister. 1896. “Sir F. Banister Fletcher.” *Kt.: A History of Architecture*. Also, more recent writings about the comparative method for the student, craftsman, and amateur, can be found at Baydar, Gülsüm. 1998. “Toward Postcolonial Openings: Rereading Sir Banister Fletcher’s History of Architecture.” *Assemblage* 35: 7-17. Further to this, Fergusson, James. 1862. *A History of Architecture in all Countries: from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*. By James Fergusson, Vol. 3. J. Murray, Freeman, Edward Augustus, 1849. *A History of Architecture*. J. Masters. While one agrees that such orientalist surveys are valuable to document the Islamic world and its architecture, one should emphasize that they tend to be reductive in nature as they do not deeply investigate the manuscripts and books detailing the concepts behind planning and building the different architectural styles across the wide geographic areas.
In the context of a proposed mediation between traditional Islamic architecture and global architecture, internationalism, post-colonialism, imperialism, and globalization are buzzwords that are present and frequently included in the central debates on architecture and identity. Architecture is one of the most remarkable forms of Islamic art and science, as it can be studied and revived given a range of material artifacts, including human settlements, mosques, houses, bazaars, streets, doors, door knobs, and intricate patterns of ornament. However, research shows that modern architecture and colonialism have continuously affected Islamic architecture. In his attempt to define Islamic architecture and its challenges in the past centuries, Nasser Rabbat writes:

Two generations ago, scholars viewed Islamic architecture as purely a tradition that had ceased to be creative with the onset of colonialism and its two concomitant phenomena, westernization, and modernization, in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Somehow a degree of incongruity was accepted between Islamic architecture and modernism so that when modern architecture (and by this I mean the architecture of both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) arrived it immediately eclipsed Islamic architecture and took its place (Rabbat 2012, 3).

Different forms of globalization have limited the expansion of Islamic architecture, and that includes westernization, modernization, and colonialism. Islamic architecture, as Rabbat explains, was obscured by the modern architecture of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Thus, “the architecture built under colonialism and after independence was not considered ‘Islamic’; it was seen as either modern or culturally hybrid” (Rabbat 2012, 3). Such a view expands the issue that is being discussed in this thesis. The same phenomenon continues to be observed in the twenty-first century where Dubai’s architecture is presented as the model of success for other cities across the Islamic world. A glimpse of Dubai in Khartoum and Nouakchott, as Choplin and Franck (2010, 14) note, can be seen in these African cities and appear to offer the only path towards modernization.

The architecture built in the Islamic world after the eighteenth century is predominantly colonial or western, where decision-makers left almost no
room for a contemporary or nearly contemporary Islamic architecture. The degree of incongruity, mentioned by Rabbat, continues to be critical. In a non-essentialist context, one should state that Islamic architecture offers a wealth of material to researchers interested in the contemporary Muslim world. It covers a vast territory that needs more approaches to investigate the cultures, societies, and politics of Islam. Islam and its architecture did not grow independently from other faiths, as shown in a recent interview I conducted with art historian Amir H. Zekrgoo. He states:

So, when it comes to the issue of art and architecture, a little study of history shows that Islamic art, architecture, and civilization grew on the soil of other arts and civilizations. The influence of Byzantine from one side, and Sasanian Persian from the other; it is like you are living in a neighborhood, you are having a nice piece of land, and you want to build a house, but you do not have an idea how to make it. Well, you look, and you have two very nice buildings next to you one on the left one on the right. You can get ideas from them. At a first stage, you simply imitate, but when it goes on then, it goes beyond imitation. You internalize those concepts and gradually reject certain things that do not fit within your worldview and embrace those that you could fit in it. Then, you develop it in a manner that it will eventually become yours although originally it was an imported idea (Zekrgoo 2015).


The process of imitation and borrowing as suggested by Zekrgoo (2015) is useful as it shows how concepts and worldviews are internalized by architects. It reflects an organic and dynamic design process contradicting essential approaches. Islam evolved over 1400 years, even though it persists to be a social and cultural structure organizing the lives of its adherents around the world. The Islamic designation, as explained, coexisted with other cultural contexts and was universally aware of them, thus refuting the views that Islamic architecture is the only and an essential component of Islam.

In their writings, architectural historians Gülru Necipoğlu, Zeynep Çelik, Sibel Bozdoğan, and Janet Abu Lughod reject this essentialist perception
of Islamic architecture and planning. These scholars identified an inclination of the nineteenth century Western scholars towards a unifying essence of Islamic art, Islamic architecture, and the ‘Islamic city’. Yet, an interesting view emerges from “Entangled Discourses: Scrutinizing Orientalist and Nationalist Legacies in the Architectural Historiography of the Lands of Rum” by Bozdoğan and Necipoğlu (2007, 1) who explain that both Western and local writers (from the Islamic world) created this ‘universal’ image of the so-called Islamic heritage. This view contributes to the argument of this thesis where the issues facing architectural mediation in the current century need to be examined both locally and globally.

Architecture, whether Islamic or not, cannot be disconnected from its context, as it constitutes part of a global cultural network. One should refer to the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha, by I.M.Pei (opened 2008) as a contemporary expression of an Islamic architecture inspired by the spirit of the forms and evolving geometry that conciliates past and present, without falling into an orientalist approach of the ‘other’. Essentializing and transcendent alizing Islamic architecture as the only part of Islam is instead a limiting approach that restrains how its architecture can be contextualized.

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Islamic architecture is not an exclusive entity that appeared suddenly disconnected from previous architectural styles. Buildings representing Islamic architecture, as Bianca (2000, 67) points out, are “cross-breeding between local vernacular traditions and the products of a more refined court civilization which absorbed, assimilated and propagated inherited building models, often of Roman, Byzantine or Sasanian origin”. Hillenbrand (1999, 25) also shows the cross-breeding between Umayyad monuments such as the Dome of the Rock and the Great Mosque of Damascus, and Byzantine techniques of building and decoration. Islamic architecture inherited different cultural features from Byzantine architecture. Byzantine sixth century experiments with domes, for example, were carried on by Muslim architects and the use of the dome as an honorific element over the miḥrāb came from its use in Roman palaces (Irwin 1997, 22). One can question the epistemology of Islamic architecture as it represents a vast field of inquiry covering vast geographical territories and fields of history while looking critically at its different facets.

Oleg Grabar (Ettinghausen, Grabar, and Jenkins 2001, 23) looked at architecture in the developmental period of Islam, with its unique blend of Byzantine and Sasanian components. Grabar (2001, 23) explained that the Muslim World did not acquire depleted conventions, but somewhat unique ones, in which new understandings and new tests existed together with old ways and old styles. This idea is supported by Necipoğlu (1993, 169) in her
essay on the discourse of early modern Islamic architecture. Grabar’s views and Necipoğlu’s ideas resonate with the idea that Islamic architecture bridging the past and the present can emulate other architectural styles while being conscious of what to emulate. Islamic architecture, beautiful and appealing, should not be limited to the aesthetic qualities that are easy to remember and to replicate.

In fact, the aesthetic appeal created by glitzy images of the Orient has restrained the definition of Islamic architecture. The fascination with Islamic architecture is a prevalent attitude that lacks a clear understanding of the beliefs and lifestyle of the occupants of its buildings. The glitzy images of the Orient can even be seen in animated television series, such as Aladdin, reflecting a romantic image and disregarding the depth of this architecture (Figure 1-2). The same images continue to be seen today in the news, media, and shows around the world. Islamic architecture is described as an architecture that concentrates on its interiors (Grube 1978, 10), a definition that focuses mainly on its aesthetic qualities. Understanding the dynamics of Islamic architecture starts with considering it as a ‘cultural’ element that is unique thanks to its values, meanings, and

occupants. Islamic architecture is an expression of a specific but evolving culture that defined different creative approaches by a culturally and socially diverse group of people.

Pirani (2002, 31) notes that Islamic architecture should be understood in the spirit of Islam, a view that partially supports the argument of this thesis. The teachings of Islam guide Muslims in their daily life, and understanding this architecture is linked to accurately interpreting its subjective principles. Pirani also explains that Islam is a dynamic faith applicable to any society or period, and Islamic architecture becomes “the name of a constantly evolving search for design in the spirit of Islam for the betterment of all humanity” (Pirani 2002, 31). This view translates its central meaning by concentrating on the importance of the historical, religious, cultural, and social contexts to find meaning in history and to be able to enhance the quality of the contemporary built environment.

Figure 1-3: Faleh, Majdi. 2014. Islamic Architecture from Around the World
The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, the Mosque of the Umayyad in Damascus, Uqba Mosque of the Aghlabids in Tunisia, and the Great
Mosque of the Caliphate of Cordoba in Spain – are masterpieces and landmarks reflecting the splendor of early Islamic art and architecture (Stierlin 2009, 7). While Islam, being a new and modern faith, was spreading through Arabia, Persia, and Africa, its architecture was also evolving in places where other faiths existed. Understanding the connection with the non-Islamic helps to investigate the different ways of rethinking Islamic architecture.

The spirit of a new religion, transmitted through a divine revelation to an illiterate but chosen man named Muhammad (PBUH), emerged in the middle of the desert of the Arabian Peninsula. With the rise of the new religion of Islam under its green banner, a changing world was emerging, and a need for structures to accommodate this new world order arose (Stierlin 2009, 7). Structures were needed to reflect a new political, religious, and social order from that time onwards. The first structure in Islam was Prophet Muhammad’s mosque (Figure 1-4), which was created adjacent to his house in Medina as a place of gathering for worshippers.

The original mosque built by Prophet Muhammad and his companions was a minimalist and unique structure (Stierlin 2009, 7). It was an open space, covered with palm fronds, and a raised platform for reading the Qur’an. A minimal and straightforward structure was the start of a continuity of a course of civilizations and progressing architectural forms. From that point on, religious and secular institutions started to evolve based on standard morphological practices that unite some building types on one side and include a variety of typologies on the other side. Historically and geographically, the appearance of how an ‘Islamic building’ could be was an enigma, and the definition of a ‘typical’ form could not necessarily find

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14 The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem (completed 691 A.D.), the Mosque of the Umayyad in Damascus (completed 715 A.D.), Uqba Mosque of the Aghlabids in Kairouan (founded 670 A.D.), Tunisia, and the Great Mosque of the Caliphate of Cordoba (started 784 A.D.), Spain.

15 PBUH: Peace Be Upon Him will be used throughout the whole thesis when referring to the Prophets in Islam. The Arabic variant is ṣallā Allāhu ʿalayhi wa- ḥalī ṣallam meaning blessing of Allah be upon him and his family and peace.
any new grounds to breed its obsession with the form and subjugation to a narrow vision.


Some contemporary representations of Islamic architecture focused on its formal and spatial properties. German Historian of Islamic architecture Ernst Grube addresses this question in his article “What is Islamic Architecture?” in the book Architecture of the Islamic World. Grube (1978) defines Islamic architecture based on its architectural characteristics and spatial qualities, which are shaping its morphological and typological aspects such as the courtyard, narrow entrances, and narrow streets. As Rabbat (2012, 3) mentions, Grube’s definition of Islamic architecture entitles a set of architectural and spatial features, such as introspection, which are integral parts of the cultural phenomena of Islam (Grube 1978, 3). Grube questioned whether one should understand Islamic architecture as a ‘special’ architecture, and he also examined the meaning of ‘a different architecture’. For Grube, the definition of Islamic architecture reflects its interior qualities, as most spaces in Islamic architecture, are hidden behind a constructive veil, where the exterior does not necessarily reveal the whole story of the buildings, its origins, roots, and social purpose. Form and function are other aspects of the concept that was referred to as ‘hidden architecture’ by Grube. He mentions that “Islamic architecture
is known for hiding its principal features behind unrevealing exteriors; it is an architecture that does not change its forms easily, if at all, according to functional demands, but rather tends to adapt functions to preconceived forms” (Grube 1978, 12-13). For instance, the decoration of facades in a traditional Islamic house is more focused on the interior rather than the exterior of the building. Around the courtyard, Islamic architecture establishes a private environment that protects the inhabitants from the extreme summer heat, and from the views of outsiders, thus establishing a unique environment and reflecting sociocultural ethics of this society. Domes also tend to sink in the maze of cupolas in the case of the medinas. Here, social and cultural identities are at the heart of architecture. Does this notion apply to all ages and times?

Spatial relationships between mosques, palaces, suqs, and other traditional buildings have continuously changed, and given this change, one should question this notion of hidden architecture. In the ninth century, as Bloom (1993, 138) notes, “just as palaces became hidden behind blank walls, mosques began to acquire architectural features that made their presence known from a distance”. In “In the Image of the Cosmos: Order and Symbolism in Traditional Islamic Architecture”, Akkach (1995, 6) contests the notion of ‘hidden architecture’ discussed by Grube. In his writing, Akkach (1995, 6) stresses that “the emphasis on the interior and the absence of form-function relationship undermine contemporary approaches which attempt to explain Islamic architecture with reference to the modern architectural theories of functionalism and formalism”. Grube’s observations are limited because he explains Islamic architecture in terms of modern architecture and the notion of ‘form follows function’ (Akkach 1995, 8).

George Michell (1978) also explains Islamic architecture from a more holistic angle. Michell (1978, 7) shows that it transcends its morphological symbols (the spectacle of domes, minarets, perfumed palaces, and turquoise tiles), to celebrate the apogee of a once lived rich culture that unified countries as far as Spain, Indonesia, Central Asia, and sub-Saharan
Africa. Grube (1978, 10-14) also shares Michell’s holistic approach and explains that the variety and uniqueness of buildings in Islamic architecture is a reflection of religious beliefs, social and economic order, political agendas, and a genuinely enrooted tradition of aesthetics. Most interestingly are Rashid and Bartsch (2014, 129) philosophical views on the concept of “invariables (thawābit) and the variables (mutahawilat)”, which define the morphology of Islamic architecture. What changes in the morphology of Islamic architecture are the ways its philosophy and values are materialized by people to meet their situations (Rashid and Bartsch 2014, 129). Islamic buildings, geographically and historically different, continue to be a testimony of a cultural world that defined a vital era of Islamic history. As significant as they can be, Grube and Michell’s observations are based on preconceived modern preoccupations with form and overgeneralizing attitudes about society and culture, ignoring the philosophy and values of such architecture. Islamic architecture should be carefully explained in light of changing Islamic law, society, and local cultures, which informed Islamic architecture differently under different geographies.

An attempt to define Islamic architecture through its morphological shared properties only (such as courtyards or Saḥns, wind towers, narrow streets, minimal facades) might be challenging, even if it might partially benefit the mediation of local and global sources of architectural identity. Such a definition might lack rigor, and it might not allow researchers to scrutinize the logic behind the existence of such architecture. Such an approach might be too ‘orientalist’. Different changing dimensions including the political, social, and spiritual should be taken into consideration to expand the scope of its definition, as Rashid and Bartsch (2014) did, and to explain how it fell under a political and excessively consumerist and passive system that did not allow or encourage its evolution.
Politically, the seventies was an era of the rise and decline of several Islamic and Arab political movements\(^{16}\) that demanded change, rethinking identity, and notions of nationalism. The 1979 Iranian Revolution (Figure 1-5) was sparking and came as a new era to limit moral failure, to stand up against Western interference, and build a supposedly rational model for an Islamic nation (Rabbat 2012, 9). Rabbat (2012, 9) further explains this idea while describing the correlation between this specific political context and its architecture:

Despite their relentless and violent attacks on what they saw as the depravity of all Western cultural imports, these political movements showed surprisingly little interest in the conceptual contours of architecture, including the religious architecture being built in the name of Islamic architecture. Only a few ‘Islamicist’ historians of Islamic architecture can be identified.

\(^{16}\) This includes Pan-Arabism which is closely related to Arab nationalism. This movement was popular from the 1950s to 1960s. The same historical period also witnessed Nasserism (by reference to Jamal Abdel Nasser), which was one of the most important pan-Arabist movements until the 1970s. The same period of time marks almost a decade of independence of some North African nations from France, including Tunisia (1956), Algeria (1962), and Morocco (1956).
Here one can question the meaning of the ‘Islamic’ and whether or not architectural discourses should be part of the frenzied system of political movements. Through the observation of current politics of the Middle East between 2011 and 2017, the major political debate continues to be preoccupied with building political agendas while architectural debates are being ignored or marginalized. Architecture comes as a series of objects that garnish the ‘achievements’ of politicians within the debates of long-lasting political systems.

In the Arabian Peninsula, the discovery of oil in the 1970s was another major event that shifted the socioeconomic situation in that part of the Islamic world, specifically Gulf countries. Foreign planners were invited to transform Saudi Arabian cities from small desert enclaves into modern cities, and a dramatic change happened in Dubai in the 1990s. Bahrain had a similar story, where foreign architects were supported over local ones to convert the small city-state into a modern city and banking center (Khan 2008, 1050). Doha, on the other hand, has grown exponentially both horizontally and vertically, expanding laisser-faire mechanisms and developments, as well as gated and branded ‘open’ spaces for commercial purposes (Salama and Wiedmann 2016, 84). Salama and Wiedmann (2016, 84) also point out that “Doha’s architecture has developed from a functional modernity with contemporary monuments representative of the state such as palaces and roundabout sculptures, to a more pluralistic and postmodern design representing spaces for leisure and consumption as well as global ambitions”. Describing Qatar, in her research called “Dressing up Downtowns”, Nagy (2000, 125-126) reflects on the new tendency of creating Doha’s image and ‘dressing up’ buildings with traditional Islamic patterns, where architects incorporate a pastiche of elements deemed to be ‘traditional’, Arabic, or Islamic. The same patterns can be used as diagrams for plans or splashed on surfaces as ornaments creating new ornately and eclectically decorated mosques, and replacing traditional bazaars with malls. Both aesthetic and ethical qualities of contemporary Islamic cities are at stake here, calling for an investigation of the realm of Islamic architecture at the institutional level.
During the 1970s, *The World of Islam Festival* was an important event that led to questioning the concepts of identity and architecture in the context of Muslim communities. This event included congresses, exhibitions, and symposia. Several initiatives were led by the Aga Khan including the Aga Khan Award for Architecture (AKAA\(^\text{17}\)) and the Islamic architecture programs (including doctoral and postdoctoral programs) at Harvard and MIT (AKPIA\(^\text{18}\)). From an official point of view, a recognized educational charity called the World of Islam Festival Trust was formed in October 1973 (Bulletin Festival 1974, 33). Furthermore, as Blair and Bloom (2003, 157) note, this period was marked by a strong European interest in Islamic art, and the zenith of this interest came in the Festival of Islam, which took place in London in 1976. This global event gathered objects from twenty-four countries in the Middle East, Europe and North America, and it attracted both publishers and the media. It included exhibitions in museums and galleries, international congress by experts, lectures by leading Muslim scholars, and film series (Bulletin Festival 1974, 33). Grabar (2006, 48) considered the festival as an interesting and recent event reflecting complex ideas that “may or may not end up by affecting a whole field but which certainly reflect concerns, feelings, prejudices, questions, answers and attitudes of a very special moment in time”. Such an event was criticized by Grabar as being in part a failure because objects of Islamic art were organized based on aesthetic and visual judgment (calligraphy, vegetal ornament, geometry) leading to an idiosyncratic presentation.

From an institutional point of view, the Aga Khan Foundation, as well as the Arab World Institute, explain that their MIT program (AKPIA) aims to concentrate its teaching and research activities. In fact, it principally aims to:

\(^{17}\) “The Aga Khan Award for Architecture is given every three years to projects that set new standards of excellence in architecture, planning practices, historic preservation and landscape architecture. Through its efforts, the Award seeks to identify and encourage building concepts that successfully address the needs and aspirations of societies across the world, in which Muslims have a significant presence” (AKDN 2018).

\(^{18}\) Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture (AKPIA) was established in 1979 to enhance the understanding of Islamic architecture. It is financially supported by the Aga Khan, and it focuses on Islamic architecture, art, urbanism, landscape design, and conservation (AKPIA ND).
Enhance the understanding of Islamic architecture and urbanism in light of critical, theoretical and developmental issues, and to support research at the forefront of the field in areas of history, theory and criticism of architecture and urbanism. It also aims to explore approaches to architecture that respond critically and thoughtfully to contemporary conditions, aspirations, and beliefs in the Islamic world, and provide an extensive base of information about architecture in the Islamic world and to share it with scholars, teachers, and practitioners from everywhere.

In her paper “The Aga Khan Award for Architecture: a Philosophy of Reconciliation”, Sibel Bozdogan (1992) explains that AKAA focused on promoting Islamic architecture as syncretic and expansive during the past thirty years. Their strategy covered a vast terrain of urban and landscape design, environmental and socioeconomic sensitive projects as well as conservation and rehabilitation; AKAA also demarcates ‘Islamic‘ architecture and society along with a philosophy of reconciliation with identity. The founders of the AKAA also engaged scholars, philosophers and practitioners to tackle the issue of architectural negotiation, and more debates evolved since the 1970s. The concept of ‘rupture‘ discussed by Algerian thinker Mohamed Arkoun (1986, 20) examines how “architecture and the urban fabric in the last twenty years cannot be evaluated outside the conflicting visions and the divergent interests of the new social classes in Muslim societies”. Arkoun (1986, 21) also discussed the dominance of Western architectural models, calling it a “historical rupture”, which reflects a discontinuous built environment. The latter is defined as: “rich modern villas, modern hotels, banks, and airports [which] co-exist with poor public housing, ancient deteriorated medinas, spreading haphazard housing, slums”. To solve this rupture, the AKAA has been established to solve the problem of cities in the Muslim world and to connect the present, past, and future through architecture and urbanism. This phenomenon constitutes a political and cultural revolution aiming to build a new civilization (Arkoun 1986, 21).

Through works of Oleg Grabar, AKPIA strongly pushed forward the idea that Islamic architecture works in correlation with its cultural, social, and ideological contexts (Rabbat 2012, 11). These context-related factors
reflect the idea of civilization. So how did Islamic civilization negotiate with other civilizations to build its architecture?

1.7.3. The Negotiation Between Islamic Civilization and Other Civilizations Through Architecture

This research attempts in the following section to demonstrate how Islam spread out over time and across continents, and how it historically negotiated different sources of architectural identities as a result of this journey. With the rise of Islam and its expansion from the Arabian Peninsula to Persia and North Africa and finally Spain, different empires and dynasties evolved starting from 622 until probably the late nineteenth century with the Ottomans (Figure 1-6). Western and Eastern architectural traditions, or Byzantine and Sasanian, were the basis that helped Islamic architecture to develop (Clévenot 2000, 15). The development of such architecture also continued after the fall of Islamic civilization in Spain. Christian Elite conquerors, for instance, borrowed the highly developed Islamic art after the Reconquista (1492) and abstract decorative art stayed in the hands of Morisco Craftsmen and Muslims (Hess 2010, 199). This view, mostly absent from the literature, suggests that architectural borrowing is a dynamic process that can even influence the conquerors, thus supporting the thesis in hand that Islamic architecture can be a mediator by adopting or
transferring architectural techniques and details during different historical periods.

During the Umayyad Dynasty (661-750), architecture was inspired by local traditional techniques of building, which were mostly Byzantine but also those of late Near Eastern Antiquity and Sasanian Persia (Clévenot 2000, 13). For the future of the Islamic world as well as for its architectural ‘newly’ defined heritage, this step was paramount (Stierlin 2009, 28). At that time, the choice of Damascus, in the Far East, implied the adaptation to Graeco-Roman traditions, especially in architecture. Arabs did not have the needed architectural traditions. Therefore the Caliph appointed Byzantine architects, master builders, sculptors, and mosaicists to build an Islamic architectural heritage rivaling Christian creations (Stierlin 2009, 28). The establishment of masterpieces such as the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem is a witness of the birth of Islamic architecture from the fusion with other architectural styles. The Dome of the Rock is a unique and “the first Muslim monument of structural, decorative and volumetric maturity. It derives its perfection from the skills of generations of builders in the Near East” (Warren 1978, 235-236). This domed octagon, with a double ambulatory around the rock, is similar to Roman mausolea and Christian martyria; the Byzantine medium of wall mosaics was also used inside and outside the building on a larger scale compared to Byzantine churches (Hillenbrand 1999, 25).

Islamic architecture, during the Umayyad time, did not only emulate other architectural forms but instead, it created a fusion with other architectural forms. Ernst Grube, the German historian of Islamic art, notes that the Dome of the Rock is a unique building, where the formal architectural language comes from the language of the vanquished or Byzantines, meaning pre-Muslim traditions (Grube 1978, 12). Unlike the Great Mosque of Damascus, the Dome of the Rock does not follow the tradition and explicitly follows non-Islamic models. The mosque seems to derive from the model of the Prophet’s mosque in Medina. Its open courtyard filling the rectangular space reflects the standard components of a typical Christian basilica. The
façade also reflects a variation of Syrian churches, and its quartered marble formed dados following the Byzantine fashion (Hillenbrand 1999, 28). In his description of the Dome of the Rock, Grube (1978, 11) also explains that the Dome of the Rock is not truly Islamic, referring to the other influences it has. He writes:

The Dome of the Rock is not a truly ‘Islamic’ building at all, in spite of the fact that it was built by Muslims (or at least at Muslim command) and served a function intimately connected with Islam’s subjugation of its enemies: it is, in fact, a monument to the victory. Yet the formal architectural language of this monument is that of the vanquished, not that of the victors. What makes an Islamic building is not its form but its intention, expressed, furthermore, not in an artistic language of its own, but by secondary, non-architectural means: Arabic-inscriptions.

Figure 1-7: Public Domain. N.D. Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem, Palestine. Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/

However, Necipoğlu (1993, 169) notes that “the Dome of the Rock and other Umayyad imperial projects not only challenged the modest architecture of the early caliphs stationed in Medina but at the same time invited a contest with the Byzantine architectural heritage of Syria, the center of Umayyad power”. Necipoğlu (1993, 169) further identifies this dynamic and competitive approach of building Islamic architecture, particularly among the Ummayad and the early Abbasids, who competed with past architecture to establish their own “imperial architectural image”. Smaller states “sought to legitimize their dynastic claims by making allusions to the prestigious monuments of these two early caliphates” (Necipoğlu 1993, 169). Moreover, while studies of Islamic civilization sought to identify the continuity and competitiveness of previous civilizations, rare are the studies that challenged the “imperial projects” and monuments
built under those empires. Necipoğlu highlights Islamic architecture as a dynamic process where:

Its parameters were continually redefined according to the shifting power centers and emergent identities of successive dynasties who formulated distinctive architectural idioms accompanied by recognizable decorative modes. Novel architectural syntheses that both remained rooted in a shared Islamic past and self-consciously departed from it created a perpetual tension between tradition and innovation, often articulated through pointed references to the past that endowed monuments with an intertextual dimension (1993, 169).

Unlike the Umayyads whose architecture was influenced by the Byzantines, the Abbasid caliphs sought to borrow architectural and planning lessons from the Sasanian kings. Baghdad became the capital of the Caliphate in 762 under Al-Mansur (754-755). Thus the Abbasids exercised their powers to the full during five centuries (Stierlin 2009, 107). The circular plan of Baghdad was near the ancient Sasanian capital Ctesiphon, and “in following cosmological considerations that dated back to the Assyrians, they [astrologers and geomancers] drew a circular plan whose origins lay in the cities of Nineveh, Hatra, Haran, and Firuzabad” (Stierlin 2009, 108). Mesopotamia became the center of the Islamic world, and the grandeur of the Abbasid’s dynasty was evident through their power and architectural borrowing.

One should note the work of the British-born Lebanese historian Albert Hourani, who offered a critical understanding of civilizations in the Arab and Muslim world based on his account of intellectual history. Hourani (2002, 189) notes that the final disintegration of the Abbasid caliphate led to the growth of an Arab Islamic culture; most importantly, as he explains, “poets and men of religious and secular learning had met together in Baghdad, and different cultural traditions had mingled with each other to produce something new”. Even in the time of political division between the caliphates, energy and talent helped to increase the number of courts and capital cities, which focused on artistic and intellectual production (Hourani 2002, 189). Thus, mediation between the Abbasids and others was a dynamic process that enhanced the built environment.
In architecture, the minaret called Malwiya, Islamic Ziggurat or 'snail-shell,' was connected to the Great Mosque of Samarra via a bridge. The mosque was completed in 851 AD by caliph Al-Mutawakkil (847-861). Unfortunately, fighters blew off its top in an attack in 2005 (Aljazeera 2005), reflecting an era where US invasion of Iraq did nothing but destroy its architectural heritage. Its spiral form derives from the Babylonian Ziggurats, who also copied this construction technique thousands of years earlier (Stierlin 2009, 120). This round step tower “evoked the image of the Tower of Babel and Babylonian ziggurats, with their access on inclined planes. This resemblance illustrates the continuity of solutions which the use of brick as a building material dictated in Mesopotamia” (Stierlin 2009, 124). In his book, Islam, Stierlin (2009, 107) explains that handicrafts such as fabrics were made using high standards and borrowed Sasanian and Byzantine motifs. It is important to note that the spread and evolution of these once thriving empires did not happen discontinuously from previous non-Islamic empires and enhanced cross-fertilizations of architecture and the arts.

In Persia, under the Safavid empire, another type of architecture evolved as part of the Islamic heritage. In his paper entitled “Was Safavid Iran an Empire?” Matthee (2010) explains how the architecture transitioned from a military to an urbanized one marking the beginning of the Safavid dynasty. The royal palace, mosques, and other buildings of Isfahan, once the capital, are an illustration of cultural refinement as a new value that negotiates the historical and the contemporary. The same author
thoroughly explains the idea of a new city and a new architecture as follows:

The architecture of Isfahan as designed by Shah Abbas reflects this transition of the Safavids from a wild warrior band to a sedentary, urban-based administrative enterprise. It is civic rather than martial; it lacks in permanent triumphal arches celebrating victory in war; it finds expression in buildings that are slender, pious, and decorative rather than bellicose and forbidding. The columns of the Ali Qapu palace are open and inviting, neither projecting the raw power of the fortresses of Agra and Delhi, nor the secluded inwardness of the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul (Matthee 2010, 261).

Islamic architecture continued to evolve into the present by borrowing from the past eras during the emergence and evolution of the faith. Many architectural elements reflect the dynamics of Islamic architecture as builders borrowed them from Sasanian, Roman, and Byzantine architecture. British Historian and specialist of Islamic art, Robert Irwin uses the dome as an example to illustrate this cross-cultural borrowing:

The deployment of the dome as an honorific marker over the area in front of a Mihrab, or over a mausoleum, may have derived from the similar use of the dome as an honorific marker in later Roman palaces. The desert palaces of the early Islamic Umayyad dynasty in seventh- and eighth-century Syria can easily be confused with Roman villas (and nineteenth-century scholars and archaeologists did indeed so confuse them). Islamic architects of the Turkish Ottoman dynasty were using features from Byzantine church architecture as late as the sixteenth century (Irwin 1997, 24).

The lessons that Islamic architecture borrowed from previous pre-Islamic architecture contribute to its richness and to more inclusiveness. The formal expression of Islamic architecture revives features from previous typologies that allow developing a more critical perspective on how far the fusion of architecture can historically negotiate different architectural values. One can say that Islamic architecture can neither be considered static nor can it be developed while disconnected from preceding civilizations.

In studying Islamic architecture, one should also consider different features that change considerably with the context. Architecture is an object of aesthetics that defines a specific culture, while also being manifest by many objets d’art (Taylor and Levine 2011, 79). The previous statement suggests that the reason for defining the Islamic in Safavid buildings is much
related to a sedentary culture, and that is mainly why its built environment is open, decorative, and concise. Given these facts, one can describe Islamic architecture as a phenomenon that has its sources and influences in history and politics while promoting diversity. Yet, Islamic architecture and architecture in general face external influences of globalization in the twenty-first century. Globalization too has influenced architectural mediation, an aspect that is interesting to discuss in this literature review.

1.7.4. Globalization of Architectural Identity in the Twenty-first Century

Globalization is a catchphrase that dominates the political and economic scene across the world and a topic that has generated considerable scholarship in recent years. Therefore, it has been considered as an inevitable development of the modern age and likewise, a significant topic of research here. This imposed phenomenon is changing cities and local architecture in places in different parts of the world, evacuating the local and replacing it with partially exogenous and corporate buildings, borrowed from a foreign context. The continuous economic control of the world and globalization have made major cities key controllers in the world (Sassen 1999, 324). In the context of the Islamic world, while this should not be seen as a definite response to how globalization operates, it is necessary to draw the link between the effects of globalization and the evolution of Islamic identity. Citizens are in need of environments that reflect their identities and history, thus cultivating a more meaningful engagement with global and local sources of identities.

The concept of globalization has been described in Globalization in Question (Hirst, Thompson, and Bromley 2009, 2) as contributing to an era of universal processes and to the dissolution of cultures, economies, and geographies. The world’s political economy has consequently acquired new dynamics that impose seemingly uncontrollable economies to meet new international standards, a process mainly noticeable, in cities like Dubai or Tunis. Dubai, one of the most active construction sites in the world, thus has an overwhelming number of projects that are in the final stages of building, with a growing demand compared to supply. Dubai is also known
for its market boom along with excessive speculation for those looking at trading their mortgages (Davidson 2008, 128). Such a city is known for its continuous construction and investments following international neoliberal economic models.

Realistically, Dubai is a property-market city that is pushing its urban and architectural boundaries to accommodate a more substantial number of investors, and to promote itself to Westerners as a global haven of investment, development, and tourism in the Middle East. This ‘branded’ and ‘superlative’ city (Kanna 2013, Kanna 2011, Krane 2009, Davidson 2008) is rendering its image based on market globalizers, thus overshadowing the deep context and history of its Islamic architecture. In architecture and planning, globalization tends to reflect the loss of place, identity, and character (Eldemery 2009, 346). Purportedly, cities around the world are becoming shapeless and meaningless entities, haunted, more or less, by the same indistinct character. This ‘universalization’ of urban and architectural character poses a more pressing problem in third world countries because it is seen to reinforce the philosophical instance of Western cultural hegemony (Elsheshtawy 2004d, 6).

In a more significant part of the Islamic world, buildings and cities have become ‘bar-coded’ entities that can be easily replaced and placed anywhere on the planet. As highlighted by anthropology professor Ahmed Kanna in The Superlative City (Kanna 2013, 128-129), Dubai is a hypermodern city of giant malls and resorts; it exemplifies the complex phenomenon of ‘Wannabe cities’ where the pursuit of ‘progress’ triumphs over its eulogized and largely forgotten history. Wannabe cities are the new trend of the twenty-first century, where the ‘cool’, ‘universal’, and supposedly ‘sustainable’ is dominating the architectural realm. “Wannabe cities are [also] cities of spectacle, cities of intense urban redevelopment, and cities of a powerful growth rhetoric” (Short 1999, 45). With reference to Kanna’s argument, one can suggest that architectural hegemony and Wannabe cities in the less developed parts of the world, including the
Islamic world, have been overlooked in the literature of Alsheshtawy and Kanna.

Cities of spectacle are a result of global attitudes and internal decisions that call for a more philosophical take on what architecture should be, ideally, and how in cities like Dubai, systemization and ignoring history, or - taking ‘too much’ history superficially on board might lead to false promises. However, it is important to note that in a non-existent and relevant context, alternative forms of globalization exist. The focus here will go beyond the debate of acceptance and denial of the concept to question globalization as a revalidation of a hybrid Islamic identity that mingles past and present while evolving to selectively appropriate heritage and contemporary standards.

A second term ‘identity’ is central to this research. In the postmodern age of globalization, it is unrealistic to discuss one single or unchanging form of identity that is unified and coherent. Cultural theorist Stuart Hall defines this essentialist conception of a secure identity as a fantasy (Hall et al. 1996, 598). The multiplicity of identities created a “moveable feast” formed and transformed continuously and related to the ways we are represented in the surrounding cultural systems (Hall et al. 1996, 598). This view shows an interesting angle to consider in this thesis as Islamic architecture, for instance, can potentially be formed and transformed to assume different identities, which are negotiating different sources of value in the built environment. The post-modern conception of a unified and coherent Islamic architectural identity remains problematic as it is being pulled in different directions sometimes leading to Western dominance and in other cases to Islamic dominance or no identity at all. Living experiences have become rapid, and change has become discontinuous in space and time.

The correlation of globalization and identity in Islamic societies is not widely discussed in the architectural literature, but its impact on weak post-colonial societies, in the Islamic world, has to be highlighted as it reduced opportunities for creative expression and affected the expansion of cultural identities. Questions about what is Islamic are not valued as much
as what is unquestionably accepted as Western in Islamic societies. Islamic identity has been restricted to a religious concept or to a series of beautiful geometric patterns rather than a holistic ethical system, a notion that this thesis tries to argue against to determine how architectural decisions can be ethical decisions transcending the aesthetic realm.

Identity is present when it encompasses an entire range of features including architectural, social, environmental, and aesthetic symbols as a reminder of the past and a new departure of an enrooted and a sustainable future. This approach allows citizens to identify themselves with a well-defined architectural context. The old and the new can intermingle, supporting philosopher Gilles Deleuze’s and psychoanalyst Felix Guattari’s theories, which see identity or ‘being’ not as a fixed state but always in the process of changing (Deleuze and Guattari 2014, 25-30). The being and identity of contemporary Islamic architecture need to go through a process of change and adaptation to meet the world’s dynamism while conserving its architectural authenticity and generating a new human experience.

In the case of the Medina of Tunis, or the Arab-Islamic city, it is interesting to look at the structure of the Bazaars or covered Sqs that accompany the visitor through these winding and well-planned streets, creating an intriguing atmosphere intercepted by the penetration of light through light wells. The scale of the human being is entirely addressed, thus making the spatial experience pedestrian-friendly and welcoming. The streets of the Medina, which are covered with vaults, are a dynamic social entity contained within the fortifications of a historical city, and dynamic with a bustling and diverse market (Binous and Jabeur 2002). As Binous and Driss note:

A network of souks emerged around the great Mosque. The shops huddled together along vaulted streets that were closed with doors. Trades causing a nuisance because of their noise or smell were excluded from the noble area and relegated to areas close to city gates...Shops for everyday needs were situated on the fringe of residential quarters (Binous and Jabeur 2002, 21).
Planning is healthy and considerate of its context. Tunis of today, global and pretending to be progressive, is unfortunately not considerate enough of its pedestrians and its rich Islamic aesthetics. Contemporary Tunisian architecture is a pastiche of so-called ‘contemporary’ buildings. Binous and Driss do not further expand this area in their writings on houses of the Medina as they mainly focused on the historical realities of the heritage site. This thesis will take Binous’ descriptive approach as an opportunity to learn from traditional architecture to build a local contemporary architecture by addressing the problems that this architecture faces from its definition to its global context, and later to cover the ethics and aesthetics of producing Islamic architecture.

Local contemporary architecture in cities like Tunis or Dubai does not assimilate globalization into their traditional cultural heritage. The simplistic idea of using Islamic patterns on facades of skyscrapers and corporate buildings is not there yet, and only some experiments by architect Jean Nouvel, for instance, the iconic Doha Tower (Burj Doha, completed in 2012), have been done so far. However, I believe that the result combines a strange building form with a simplified play of patterns. Islamic patterns are elements that reflect the wealthy past of Islamic civilization. Nonetheless, they constitute only one element among many that define Islamic architecture. The Doha News team reported that Chicago-based Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat selected Burj Doha (Figure 1-9) as the best tall building in the Middle East and North Africa in 2012. The reason behind this selection is “because it combined ‘ancient Islamic patterns’ with modernity” (Doha News Team 2012). This conception of the negotiation between modern and traditional sources of architectural identities remains limited by the formal, the beautiful, and the romanticized Orient that Said referred to.
The complex evolution of intricate patterns, intricately interwoven, in Islamic geometry, for instance, is an expression of unity, multiplicity, universality, and a reflection about harmony (Sutton 2007, 1). The enigmatic aspect of Islamic architecture can grow in different directions disregarding the form of the original scheme, going hand in hand with non-directional plans, and a tendency to create a space with no focus, clearly readable, and spiritually present (Grube 1978, 12-14). The infinity of patterns connects with the idea of the universality of the creation and the infinity of this world. The question is now about transcending the descriptive literature and the Orientalist attitude of venerating Islamic architecture, to establish a more critical stance regarding its presence in the current age and time.

1.8 Methodology

1.8.1. Case Studies

The research will primarily focus on analyzing case study cities of Dubai and Tunis, given their historical importance and strategic locations in the Islamic
world. These particular cities, located in the developing world and known for their Islamic architectural heritage, have undergone different series of urban developments in past decades. The Medina of Tunis is mostly historical, whereas Dubai is mainly modern.

Dubai will be mainly analyzed in terms of its urban scale to understand how it developed quickly through trade in the early part of the twentieth century (Ali 2010, 15). Dubai will allow the study of globalization and urban scale in the contemporary Muslim world. This case study aims to show how the ethics of architectural mediation can be obstructed by excessive globalization and a lack of understanding of urban and architectural utopian projects.

The Medina of Tunis (Arab-Islamic city), a crossroad between the East and the West, will be analyzed as a dynamic and unique human settlement at the crossroads between globalization and a contemporary hybrid Islamic identity. The analysis of the Medina of Tunis examines globalization at different historical stages (colonization, independence, and twenty-first century) and analyzes its impact on architecture (from the scale of the house to the ornament). This case study shows different ethical stances where internal and external factors hinder the evolution of this historic settlement.

The research will analyze urban morphologies of the past, buildings, architectonic elements, and geometric patterns, to determine which elements have the potential of ensuring the mediation between local and global sources of architectural identity. The analytical comparison also aims to deliver a thoughtful reflection on whether these global cities of the past have created a standard or hybrid Islamic architectural identity.

The ultimate goal of the comparative and analytical case studies is to suggest a guideline that proposes a different kind of understanding of globalization and identity, a model for urban and architectural practice based on architectural ethics and aesthetics of the place, and further conclusions on spiritual springs deriving from Islamic architecture.
1.8.2. Methods of Analysis

As the topic covers different areas of Islamic architecture, as well as different perspectives on how this architecture can negotiate global and traditional sources of ethical and aesthetic values, triangulation would allow the researcher to use more than one approach to investigate the subject of Islamic architecture and globalization. The research reviews and extrapolates common questions and issues concerning the state of Islamic architecture from several sources and stakeholders.

The sources include academic literature from recent publications on Dubai and Tunis, as well as historical manuscripts describing the ethics and aesthetics of the Medina of Tunis. The logic of the analysis starts with defining the ethical dilemmas of architecture and Islamic architecture and then suggests solution and reflection based on historical manuscripts of fourteenth-century scholar Ibn al-Rami. Gradually, one moves from the general ethical issues to more particular ones related to Islamic architecture. This research also includes recent newspaper articles and online magazines (including Tunisian) discussing the dynamics of Islamic architecture. The research concludes by arguing that continued reflection on a contemporary identity of Islamic architecture would expand the horizons of research in this specific area.

This study will mostly adopt a theoretical approach, calling on my previous knowledge of architectural criticism and on studies related to Critical Regionalism (i.e. Frampton), to analyze how the concept of Islamic architecture exists in the twenty-first century under the framework of ethics and aesthetics. A comparative study of globalization past and present includes a parallel critique of people’s and architectural discourses, aiming to define a philosophical view on identity shifts within the built environment, the human spiritual experience, and core aesthetic and ethical values of Islamic architecture. The analytical method of this thesis includes the following points:

1) The Literature survey establishing key terms and issues relative to different sources and critical constituencies (stakeholders).
2) The Historiographical study establishing the cultural and other factors bearing on the understanding of ‘What is Islamic Architecture?’.

3) The philosophical analysis focused on values and ethical dilemmas bearing on the aesthetics of Islamic architecture with a particular focus on Dubai and Tunis, and their position in the literature and historiography.

1.8.3. Data Collection

The analysis of the architecture of case studies will rely on an observational approach and site visits, surveys, and, to a lesser extent, interviews. This research will rely on data collected through (1) analysis and reports from UNESCO, (2) peer-reviewed papers published in scientific journals, and (3) recent articles from newspapers and magazines. (4) A particular focus will be on ideas of leading experts and scholars on globalization, ethics, and aesthetics in the Islamic world through talks with academics and scholars. Interviews conducted by the author were intended to establish a number of issues and questions and then, for background and added interest, to provide a series of provocative reflections or ‘opening gambits’ at the start of key chapters. These interviews will be published separately as a series of book chapters or journal articles.

A comparative study was established between Dubai and Tunis, by analyzing plans, maps, global mainstream news, and photos, to analyze the urban growth of cities seen across the Islamic world and to understand how Islamic architecture can play a role to negotiate past and present identities. Some of the conclusions are suggestions for future reflections, which can be theoretical or design-based. During the research period, the researcher also conducted a symposium at the School of Architecture (ENAU) in Tunis. He also presented his work in Tunisian radios in English, Arabic, French, and Spanish.

1.9 Thesis Structure

To support the argument of this research, the thesis begins with a discussion of the dynamics of Islamic architecture, its apogee, and its definition in the contemporary age (twenty and twenty-first century). It then attempts to
discuss the challenges faced by Islamic architecture and identity in the context of globalization past and present. Later, it suggests that ethics and aesthetics can be mediums to ensure the negotiation between global and traditional identities in Islamic architecture. Some of these chapters are a result of peer-reviewed journal papers and conference papers, which were written and successfully published during the doctorate. In 2016, four of these publications also received The University of Western Australia Publication Grant. The other chapters will be developed and published as a series of journal papers later on with different publishers and academics.

The first part of this thesis defines the general context and consists of three chapters. The context concerns the broader issues of the definition of Islamic architecture, explained previously, the influence of civilization on Islam and its architecture, and the clash of globalization and Islamic architecture in the twenty-first century. This introductory part sets the argument of the thesis and defines the political, philosophical, and economic context of the entire thesis.

Chapter 1 represents the introduction of the thesis and provides the reader with the historical context of negotiation between Islamic architecture and pre-Islamic architectural styles (Roman, Byzantine, Sasanian). The first part of this chapter includes some case studies to highlight how this negotiation happened historically. The chosen examples are the Dome of the Rock (Jerusalem), the Umayyad Mosque (Damascus), and the Great Mosque of Samarra (Samarra, Iraq). The negotiation happens between pre-Islamic identity, evidenced in historical monuments, and Islamic identity with its common architectural features (layout, plan, facades, details).

Based on a study of the literature, the second part of this chapter attempts to explain how this negotiation faces political, economic, and cultural obstacles given the complexity of the evolution of Islamic architecture. These obstacles impact the definition of the concept in the twenty-first century. Later, it concerns the broader process of globalization, and its geopolitical context, explaining how it influences the negotiation between
Islamic architecture and other sources of contemporary identities, by hindering its evolution or by promoting it.

Chapter 2 represents the context of conflict and the heated debates about the clash of civilizations in the current century, which is a burden for architectural negotiation.

This chapter begins by setting the context of conflicts of civilizations in the current century to reveal some of the reasons behind the disruption of architectural negotiation with reference to writers such as Huntington. Following this, the destruction of the site of Palmyra is described, leading to explaining the ideological and political tensions hindering architectural negotiation in the Islamic world. The analysis of Islamic civilization is then explored by looking at key writers on the topic of civilization such as Elias, Toynbee, and Arberry, whose views on Western civilization, encounters between civilizations, and Islamic civilization, would reinforce the argument. The next part of this chapter questions the future of Islamic civilization and discusses its priorities by looking at its founding principles and how they can be used to ensure the negotiation. At the last stage, this chapter introduces the thesis argument by suggesting that the positive negotiation between Islamic and European civilizations can be seen historically through architectural projects of the Ottoman’s Tanzimat period.

Chapter 3 examines the forms of globalization and how the economic priorities dominating architecture (profit, real-estate interests, architectural image) in the world and the Islamic world are dominant and hinder the negotiation between local and global sources of architectural identity. This chapter later opens up the discussion of ethics and aesthetics dilemmas to explore the matter ‘in-depth’.

This chapter begins by discussing the different forms of globalization in the twenty-first century, while attempting to define its positive aspects and how they empower architectural negotiation. Later, the negative manifestations of globalization are explained to highlight more obstacles.
facing architectural negotiation in the global world. The latter sections reinforce the problem of architectural negotiation and help to uncover the challenges facing Islamic architecture due to globalization. Later, this chapter introduces the ethical dilemmas of Islamic architecture in the current century. This part consists of two primary cases studies from the Islamic world, namely Dubai and the Medina of Tunis. Ethical dilemmas are discussed in relation to how the phenomenon of globalization has transformed both the perception and the physicality of urban spaces in these two cities. This analysis informs the reader about the challenges facing Islamic architecture and halting the negotiation between local and global sources of value in the built environment.

The first case study, Dubai, examines the influence of globalization on the architecture and planning of the city. The first part introduces the modern history of Dubai, and then it looks at the architectural and planning trends that are the result of globalization. In relation to the argument, this chapter defines the phenomenon of ‘Dubaization’ that led to the dominance of global architectural patterns over local.

The second case study examines the effects of globalization on the Medina of Tunis, during the French colonization (1882-1956), after independence, and in the past two decades. This part provides a historical and a political context for the ambiguous perception and struggles that the Medina of Tunis faced due to colonials, elites and citizens, and later tourism. This part also questions whether the architecture of the Medina was halted due to different forms of globalization.

The second part of this thesis supports the argument by suggesting new ways of understanding ethics and aesthetics of Islamic architecture, in general, and in the Medina of Tunis, in particular. Ethics and aesthetics are the mediators that will initiate the negotiation between the traditional values of Islamic architecture and global sources of value in the built environment. This chapter is the backbone of this thesis and it is placed at the end as it comes after defining the context of the clash and exchange
in Islamic civilization and its architecture. This part consists of three chapters.

**Chapter 4** begins by examining the debate about ethics in architecture, both in the west and in the Islamic world. The nature of ethical issues are defined through the writings of contemporary writers such as Lagueux, Collier, and Harries. Comparing and contrasting these writers gives the reader a deeper understanding of how architectural decisions can be ethical decisions, defined by economic means or phenomenological mediums. This chapter then discusses aesthetics by examining how the culture of the image has influenced the production of architecture in the twenty-first century. It also introduces few examples or cases of buildings from the Medina of Tunis, discussed briefly, where the reader observes the ambiguities in the interpretation of Islamic architectural patterns on modern facades and the extent to which the image matters as a priority for architects and leaders.

**Chapter 5** examines in detail the manifestation of ethics and aesthetics in the Medina of Tunis. To ensure a fair negotiation between different sources of value in the built environment, Islamic architecture should understand the roots and applications of its principles to avoid any ambiguity. The analysis of these principles and values will be done hierarchically from the scale of the Medina (planning and architecture). Following the arguments in this chapter, it is demonstrated that Islamic architecture of the Medina of Tunis emphasizes a possible negotiation and not a clash between global and local sources of architectural and planning identities. When analyzing the rich manuscripts of Maliki Fiqh, this thesis will attempt to focus on the different case studies that reflect how ethics were implemented. This research will not delve into discussions on Hanafi, Shafi‘i, Hanbali, Ja‘fari, Zaydi, and Isma‘ili as it may be taking us too far afield from the principal point of this thesis, namely the context of the Medina of Tunis and the jurisprudence applicable to the context.

The theoretical discussions about the Islamic principles of planning and design are grounded in concrete planning case studies based on the
writings and experience of fourteenth-century scholar Ibn al-rami. Then, more specifically, this thesis draws some connections between these historical case studies and contemporary applications of planning strategies to show their validity in the current age and time. This analysis establishes the context for examining the concept of privacy from an Islamic perspective and its implication on the planning and architecture of the Medina of Tunis. The following section examines in detail how planning principles such as the transition from public to private realm have an impact on privacy, and how that can restructure modern architectural spaces in the Islamic world.

Chapter 6 investigates light from a spiritual perspective, based on the Qur’an, to conclude how timeless this element can be for the negotiation of different sources of value in contemporary Islamic architecture. Geometry is the last element of this study, where the research evaluates the application of traditional Islamic geometry on several modern buildings inside and outside the Medina of Tunis. This investigation evaluates how successful Islamic architecture can be in negotiating traditional and modern aesthetics through geometry. As such, the traditional house of Dar Lasrem remains a showcase for understanding aesthetic sources given the attention to detail but also thanks to the symbolism and spiritual dimensions of its aesthetics.

The third part of this thesis consists of chapter 7, which is the conclusion. This last part emphasizes the necessity of this theoretical and philosophical analysis and suggests new guidelines to promote the perception of Islamic architecture in the twenty-first century. It also reflects on the findings of the previous chapters to, firstly, reinforce that the discourses of civilization and globalization had major effects on Islamic architecture and, then suggests that the understanding of ethical and aesthetic dilemmas can be the key to enhancing the production of Islamic architecture in the twenty-first century.
Initially, this artwork aimed to express the tensions between civilizations and the conflicts in the Middle East. By graphically applying a layer of Islamic geometry, or more precisely Persianate tiles, the artwork becomes an expression of both the tension and exchange between modernist abstract approaches and traditional patterns.
2. Contemporary Perceptions Around Civilization and the ‘Clash’ as a Hindrance to Architectural Mediation

Today we talk about civilizations of the past. Civilization has lost its limits in the contemporary age because there is an apparent connection with all other parts of the world, by reference to globalization. We all tend to be equal nowadays, and the particular identity is being lost. There was an Islamic civilization between the 8th and 15th century in Al-Andalus, that is being lost officially but extra-officially preserved under the Moriscos. All this heritage of civilization was transferred through history and influenced the culture and the architecture. For instance, the Mudejar is a national symbol. (Castro 2014)

Roldán Castro, Fatima. 2014. (Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies, The University of Seville, Spain), in discussion with the author. December 1.

2.1 Introduction

This thesis envisions and articulates an intermediary role that Islamic architecture and the civilization surrounding it can play to negotiate different sources of contemporary identities. It argues that Islamic architecture can negotiate between the local and the global, as well as the traditional and the modern sources of value in the built environment. The thesis does this by questioning the reach and limits of Islamic vernacular architecture in the twenty-first century, in particular in Dubai and Tunis. This dissertation begins by analyzing different parameters that commonly define Islamic civilization according to scholarship that charts its development and proposes its dynamism. The analysis of the process of civilization will be used to suggest a desirable process of cultural negotiation and mediation between Islamic civilization in general, and the contemporary context where its architecture continues to evolve.

Recent economic and political clashes widely present in the past few decades and more importantly since the ‘Arab Spring’ movement erupted in 2011 need to be put into the context of the founding principles of Islamic civilization. The movement started in the Arab world, precisely in Tunisia, and later it influenced the people and the youth of other neighboring nations. In the contemporary context of conflicts and wars, the world geopolitical and cultural order has been shifting since the 1990s Iraq war
and the subsequent Iraq war (2003). Other brutal events include the Afghan invasion by American troops (2001-2014), and especially, recently, the destructive Syrian civil war (2011) along with the sudden appearance of terror groups such as ISIS (2014). Many have started to question the value of traditional Islamic cultures, customs, and mutual understanding between societies. Researchers have also questioned how the political dominance of superpowers continuously dictates the world order and the way politics, economies, and societies should operate. Critics of Orientalism such as Edward Said have questioned the hegemony of one [Western] civilization over the others. In today’s heated debates about civilizations, the clash of the West versus Islam is at the heart of significant political and cultural discussions in the media, where the focus is on Western and Islamic civilizations in the twenty-first century. Concerns over the sudden destruction of heritage sites such as Palmyra in Syria or the Buddhas of Bamiyan in Afghanistan by the Taliban suggests that protected heritage sites and architectural wonders are facing higher risks in the current age and time. These risks also hinder architectural mediation.

Figure 2-1: Faleh, Majdi. 2011. Photo Taken by the Author During a Demonstration in Tunis Downtown, Tunisia

This chapter aims to shed light on how civilization has been defined, on its priorities, and on its values in the Islamic world. This research also attempts to show how Western and Islamic civilizations were constructed and more explicitly how civilization in the Islamic world was depicted, defined, and produced during its apogee. According to Saliba (1994), Islamic civilization flourished from the eighth century to the thirteenth century. Thus science, economy, and culture were progressive during that period. Architecture in
the Islamic context, which is a reflection of Islamic culture, is a relevant case study as it reveals how this civilization demarcated its ethical and aesthetic criteria while attempting to mitigate between past and present in different eras.

In this chapter, the discussion firstly examines the polemic of the so-called ‘clash of civilizations’ in view of the destruction of heritage that has occurred recently in the Middle East. In the first place, the research introduces the city of Palmyra to question whether the idea and values of civilization have continuing relevance in the contemporary world vis-à-vis the brutal attacks on architecture and the political agendas that polarize our thinking today. This chapter questions how the perception of tension between civilizations hinders the mediation between Islamic and Western values.

Then, the several definitions of Western and Islamic civilizations determine what civilization is. It is necessary to identify instances where several understandings of civilization overlap and share common terms. These understandings of the concept allow for an understanding of how Islamic architecture is metamorphosing. In a way, the different dimensions of civilization are to be analyzed to establish a process of cultural mediation between Islamic traditional and vernacular principles of architecture, on the one hand, and contemporary principles of design, on the other.

At a later stage, this chapter examines a case study that supports previous theories and findings of civilizational exchanges in Islamic architecture. The Tanzimat period of the Ottoman Empire (1839 - 1876) is an example of how an architectural dialogue between Islamic and Western empires was established in early modern history. Lastly, this chapter reflects on the future of Islamic civilization in the midst of a clash of civilizations, during the past few decades.

In summary, Islamic architecture as discussed in the introduction has had an intermediary role, possibly negotiating between different sources of modern and traditional identities. This chapter intends to reveal the areas
where civilizational encounters have previously occurred and can occur to inform architecture in the Islamic context. It supports the argument that Islamic architectural traditions can be reinterpreted by revisiting its roots using the models and historical case studies discussed in the introduction.

2.2 Civilization and Conflict: Exchange, Power, and Disruption in Negotiating between Civilizations in the Twenty-first Century

For a period just prior to and following the start of the twenty-first century, discussion of the necessity for and values attending a ‘civilized’ state of affairs was influenced by polemics suggesting a major clash of civilizations was occurring. As prospects for resistance to hegemonic (frequently understood as ‘American’) values and intercultural dialogue are threatened by such a clash, it seems relevant to begin the chapter with the analysis of political scientist Samuel P. Huntington. His article about civilization and power conflicts, “The Clash of Civilizations”, attracted extensive attention but also controversies after it was first published in 1993. In reality, there is an urgency in the twenty-first century to study civilization in the Islamic context in the midst of a climate of conflicts, heritage destruction, and political tension in the Middle East. The central question calls for understanding Huntington’s static and somehow divisive views on civilization, in contrast to other scholars who consider civilization as a dynamic entity, possibly serving a mediating role between the past and the present.

Huntington (1993) argues that the primary sources of conflict in the post-Cold War (1993, 46) will be people’s culture and their religions (1993, 29). He also emphasizes that wars in the future will happen between cultures, where Islamic fundamentalism will be the main threat to the world (1993, 31-32). Huntington hypothesizes that the fundamental source of tension is related to culture leading to conflict between nations and clashes.

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between different groups. Huntington (1993, 22) also explains his thesis in light of the views of contemporary intellectuals, where they discuss the end of history, conflicts, and the fall of nation-states. However, he also suggests that contemporary intellectuals are incorrect because they do not see the principal source(s) of conflict in the future as occurring in the realm of culture – and that, presumably, is what defines the clash of civilizations. He writes:

It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future (Huntington 1993, 22).

In the past few decades, heated debates about both Western and Islamic identities have arisen and consequently exaggerated the notion of ‘otherness’ in the context of both civilizations and cultures. The reception and context for Huntington’s ideas, particularly after 9/11 and, the rising of tensions between the West and the Islamic world, calls for the discussion of the polemics and challenges of civilization to eventually propose a way to reconstruct some of its values, concepts, ideas, and visions – especially now. Palestinian literary theoretician Edward Said explains the paradigm as follows:

The basic paradigm of West versus the rest (the cold war opposition reformulated) remained untouched, and this is what has persisted, often insidiously and implicitly, in discussion since the terrible events of September 11. The carefully planned and horrendous, pathologically motivated suicide attack and mass slaughter by a small group of deranged militants has been turned into proof of Huntington’s thesis (Said 2001).

Edward Said (2001) explains that Huntington recklessly attempts to show civilization as a sealed-off component. Huntington, in Said’s view, is trying his best to show “the ludicrously compressed and constricted warfare of the clash of civilization” (Said 2001, para.4). Huntington is also ignoring the visible history of “exchange, cross-fertilization and sharing” (Said 2001,
para.4) that went beyond conflict, religious wars, and disruption (Said 2001).

Huntington’s analysis tends to be misleading and policy-focused rather than promoting cultural mediation. In fact, Huntington (1993) refers to the concept of policy-making six times in his article, where he mentions a ruthless policy towards Buddhist people, Turkic-Muslim minorities, policy issues, neutral policy, Eurasian policy, and Western policy. In one of these instances, he claims that differences related to policy issues are shaped by differences in culture and religion (Huntington 1993, 29). Edward Said strongly disagrees with Huntington’s vision of the clash of civilizations; and he explains that “the personification of enormous entities called ‘the West’ and ‘Islam’ is recklessly affirmed, as if hugely complicated matters like identity and culture existed in a cartoon-like world” (Said 2001).

Huntington is described by Edward Said as a polemicist as he writes from the standpoint of a crisis manager rather than a reconciler; he tends to focus on describing civilizations as clashing and separate rather than embracing collaboration and exchange. The latter two characteristics present a possible definition of civilization that Said promotes while Huntington overshadows in his writing. To support his argument, Said explains that Huntington’s argument lacks a deep insight into what constitutes a civilization and is more focused on conflicts, rage, and tension, rather than sharing and cross-fertilization. He, Said (2001), then states that:

In fact, Huntington is an ideologist, someone who wants to make ‘civilizations’ and ‘identities’ into what they are not: shut-down, sealed-off entities that have been purged of the myriad currents and counter currents that animate human history, and that over centuries have made it possible for that history not only to contain wars of religion and imperial conquest but also to be one of exchange, cross-fertilization and sharing.

So what is the basis of Huntington’s thesis about the clash of civilizations, in general, and the civilization of Islam in the twenty-first century, in particular, and how does his polemic make cross-cultural dialogue and
mediation difficult, if not impossible? Before discussing the ‘clash,’ it would be necessary to explain how Huntington pictured civilization. He says:

A civilization is the broadest cultural entity. Villages, regions, ethnic groups, nationalities, religious groups, all have distinct cultures at different levels of cultural heterogeneity. The culture of a village in southern Italy may be different from that of a village in northern Italy, but both will share in a common Italian culture that distinguishes them from German villages. European communities, in turn, will share cultural features that distinguish them from Arab or Chinese communities. Arabs, Chinese and Westerners, however, are not part of any broader cultural entity. They constitute civilizations. A civilization is thus the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species. It is defined both by common objective elements, such as language, history, religion, customs, institutions, and by the subjective self-identification of people...Civilizations are the biggest “we” within which we feel culturally at home as distinguished from all the other “thems” (Huntington 1997, 43).

Huntington’s descriptive analysis of the concept seems to be very general, mostly applicable and also very descriptive with a distinction between the ‘we’ and the ‘them’. Interestingly, in his essay published in 1993, he only described civilization as a “cultural entity” (Huntington 1993, 23). It took Huntington almost four years to ‘realize’ that civilization is the broadest entity representing cultures. Indeed, it is compelling to investigate the instances where Huntington used civilization to highlight confrontation and conflict in the Islamic context.

Civilization, at first, is broadly described as an entity that transcends the cultural boundaries, even if it is an expression of the material cultures. It remains a concept that unifies groups of people and distinguishes them from other groups based on cultural and religious factors. It is evident that the progression of civilizations even transcends that of empires as it is an enduring and all-encompassing spirit or ideology. These factors; religion, culture, and history, are the driving forces that grow and connect different civilizations and enhance the relationship between the local and the global, an aspect that Huntington ignores in his analysis. That is how he analyzed and explained the context of civilization. In discussing the differences between civilizations, Huntington adds:
Civilizations are differentiated from each other by history, language, culture, tradition and, most important, religion. The people of different civilizations have different views on the relations between God and man, the individual and the group, the citizen and the state, parents and children, husband and wife, as well as differing views of the relative importance of rights and responsibilities, liberty and authority, equality and hierarchy. These differences are the product of centuries. They will not soon disappear. They are far more fundamental than differences among political ideologies and political regimes. Differences do not necessarily mean conflict, and conflict does not necessarily mean violence. Over the centuries, however, differences among civilizations have generated the most prolonged and the most violent conflicts (Huntington 1993, 25).

Civilization in this instance, as defined by Huntington, covers vast research fields ranging from history, religion to ethics and behavior. Huntington’s analysis focuses on the differences among the groups he mentions within a given civilization: the God and the man, the individual and the group, the citizen and the government, and the hierarchy within family members. Based on the quote, these differences are a result of centuries, and throughout times they will lead to brutal conflicts. Huntington connects the image of brutality and fundamentalism with that of differences among civilizations, and he even claims that cultural differences will be the source of conflict and divisions between humans (Huntington 1993, 22). The author of “The Clash of Civilizations” explains that the last phase of the evolution of conflicts in the modern world will be the clash of civilizations, primarily between princes, ideologies, and nation states within Western civilization (Huntington 1993, 22-23). Huntington’s limited, archaic, and politicized perception of cultural interbreeding shows civilizations and cultures as potential sources of conflict. Instead of considering diversity an advantage, Huntington mostly sees it as a risk factor.

Henningsen (2014) also stresses that Huntington’s writing reflects and emphasizes the image of the conflict between several civilizations. In fact, Henningsen described Huntington’s perception of civilizations as focused on “active combatants for regional and/or global hegemony” (Henningsen 2014, 148). In light of Henningsen’s critique, one should state that civilization here is driven by significant differences including beliefs, behaviors, and practices while including different circles and social hierarchies. In my view, differences might influence the understanding of
‘civilizations’ in the contemporary age, especially if they are put forth as a source of conflict. The very politically charged argument Huntington relied on is based on failing rhetoric, which does not aim to establish a civilization at the heart of cultural interchange. His attitude is very similar to some political leaders who seem to seek support by focusing on differences and spreading fear of the ‘other’ in their political debates. One such example is the current US president, Donald Trump, manipulating and using the blind way of conservative and patriotic supporters. The cliché slogan “Make America Great Again”\(^2\) seems generic and a way to conceptualize a contemporary civilization based on power, hegemony, and rejection of others, emphasizing Huntington’s theories of conflicts in the Western world.

Huntington’s generalized definition of civilization also stresses several outcomes such as language, logic, and difference, while emphasizing that differences, as in customs, behavior, and relationships, are most likely to lead to conflict and tension at an ultimate stage. The reason being is that these differences were constructed throughout centuries while generating some of the constant and most violent conflicts (Huntington 1993, 25).

‘Borrowing’ is an excellent example of how civilizations interact positively, and a way to contradict Huntington’s logic. As demonstrated in the introduction, Muslim and Christian empires borrowed from each other despite the ‘politically’ oriented conflicts. These empires reached a more constructive way of building knowledge and created a basis for their architectural heritage to grow aware of the surrounding context. Huntington does not deny such borrowing per se since he explains that “civilization identity will be increasingly important in the future, and the world will be shaped in large measure by the interactions among seven or eight major civilizations” (Huntington 1993, 25). Even though he claims that this will be an important dynamic, he disagrees it is a necessary or positive

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one. As a result, he underlines that the cultural fault lines between civilizations will be the most important causes of future conflict (Huntington 1993, 25). The cultural fault lines that Huntington mentioned between Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and possibly African civilizations would lead to much more than conflict.

In fact, one can observe numerous examples in the field of architecture and design, where architects have integrated Islamic and Western design principles to generate a dynamic and diverse architecture. One such example is the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul (completed 537 A.D.), a building that is a testimony of both Byzantine Christian and Islamic civilizations. It was first a church, a mosque; then it became a museum. As an urban example, the old city of Jerusalem remains a testimony of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim civilizations. The Dome of the Rock, Al Aqsa Mosque, the Western Wall, the Armenian Quarter, and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, are all examples of the mediation between civilizations. Additionally, the expansion of Islam in the cities of Andalusia created a hybrid architecture. In Seville, the Giralda minaret of the city’s cathedral (completed 1198 A.D.) remains a testament to how cultural ‘fault lines’ were positively essential to connect, transfer, and adapt heritage sites. Following the Mudejar style, the tower was formally a minaret. Nowadays, it represents a hybrid architecture of Moorish and Medieval Gothic architectural styles, reflecting the period during which the Moors enriched the culture and civilization of Andalusia.

Henningsen (2014) continuously criticizes Huntington’s vision of civilization by way of explaining that the author of “The Clash of Civilizations” is focused on the loss of power and the clashes of civilizations, specifically from a Western perspective, while tending to be banal, simplified and arbitrary (Henningsen 2014). Henningsen also describes Huntington’s approach as simplistic. He writes: “A few illustrations suffice to prove the point that his positivistic knowledge interests would today be easily satisfied by a Wikipedia search on the Web” (Henningsen 2014, 150). The relations
between the different powers are strictly influencing Huntington’s view on civilization, and his description lacks some depth.

Huntington’s affirmative and assertive statements tend to both marginalize and politicize the depth of the concept of civilization. Huntington constantly emphasizes how cultural fault lines would lead to future conflicts. For him, civilization is a tool of dominance rather than a process of mutual understanding. Henningsen considers that Huntington’s description of the ‘West and the Rest’ is rather extreme and naive as it singles out other civilizations. He also disagrees with Huntington’s thesis that power relations reflect a hegemonic attitude rather than an opportunity for exchange and positive intracultural mediation. Henningsen writes:

When reading Huntington, it becomes clear that civilization is for him an appendix to power, and that does not only apply to the clash between the West (read: the US) and China. When he dedicates an entire chapter of his book to ‘The West and the Rest: Inter-civilizational Issues,’ he does not focus on contacts between or comparisons of civilizations, he deals strictly with power relations (Henningsen 2014, 151).

Henningsen’s position further illustrates that singling out specific groups and emphasizing power relations leads to an approach that is too simplistic. Henningsen explains that from a primary and general statement, Huntington shows his attention and devotion to power relations and the supremacist concerns of nations in the contemporary age rather than on contacts and elaborate exchange. Exchange still exists in the current century, but power differences are deeply entrenched in building new power forms, namely globalization while compromising traditional cultures. Henningsen further explains his position by comparing several contemporary views of civilization and power in the twentieth century. His point is that there are contrasting and confusing views about the complexity of civilization and power. He writes:
In their monumental works, Toynbee and Voegelin had come to the conclusion that the history of civilizations had come to an end: Toynbee in the 12 volumes of his *A Study of History* (1934–1963) and Voegelin in the five volumes of his *Order and History* (1956–1987). But unlike Francis Fukuyama’s speculation in 1989 about the liberal contours of the ending, Toynbee’s and Voegelin’s terminal visions are of a much earlier date and devoid of any privileged positioning of the West and its American superpower in the world beyond civilizations. For both of them, the violence of the wars and revolutions of the twentieth century certainly shaped their perspective; but in a way, they anticipated the void of meaning that has accompanied the march of globalization on the ruins of traditional civilizations. The responses of the two scholars to this death syndrome were dramatically different, though free of any nostalgic longing for a return to lost pasts. Both scholars, I think, would have charged Huntington with attempting to fill empty civilizational shells with doctrinal narratives of meaning that are disconnected from the experiential reality of the living (Henningsen 2014, 148).

In other words, Henningsen is saying that Toynbee and Voegelin believe that globalization has marched on traditional civilizations, in a modern era where the discussion is about the death syndrome of civilizations. Unlike Fukuyama’s liberal vision of civilization, Toynbee and Voegelin see the end of civilization due to the dominance of conflicts and later globalization. Both scholars, Henningsen explains, would have claimed that Huntington’s views are disconnected from reality. In architecture, for instance, the void of meaning can be seen through taller, more significant, and more massive buildings whether it is in Shanghai, Dubai, or Casablanca. In China, for instance, the frenzy of construction and the creation of a ‘new’ and strong economic and political civilization drive developers and governments to build more developments and residential towers, even if they remain unused. Imitations of European architecture or American architecture can be seen all over China. One can even see a copy of the Austrian UNESCO town of Hallstatt in Guangdong province (SpiegelOnline 2011). Chinese developers are trying to fill empty civilizational shells by imitating European history to build a strong political and economic presence in the world. ‘Copycat Towns’ become the norm.

Most importantly, here, this research focuses on supporting Henningsen’s perspective while highlighting the fact that Huntington’s views on civilization are fueled by political interests and distorted ideologies of many
twenty-first century politicians. These views tend to seal civilizations and to create a bold vision of what they are not. These views also tend to be dominant in the current geopolitical climate. They potentially lead to a total loss and deviation from contacts and exchanges between civilizations to confrontation and tension caused by political benefits and capital interest.

To my understanding, the discussion on civilizations and world tensions of the twenty-first century should not be limited to the relationships of power, as it is today. In a disparity between reality, articles and media outlets, the reality of a once thriving civilization is compromised. Henningsen (2014) described the political tensions as ideological factors leading to an unbalanced shift of past civilizations towards current globalization trends. The political landscape following 9/11 has been continuously exploited by political analysts like Huntington and the like to emphasize tension and separation of current civilizational trends. Such a view compromises and reduces the opportunities for cultural and architectural mediation.

In the midst of political tensions, traditional Islamic architectural patterns are not a priority or a concern in primary political debates in the Middle East. Limiting the civilizing process leads to disruption between traditional and modern identities. Architecture cannot find enough stable grounds to evolve naturally, and the rising tensions deviate the discussion on traditional architecture. Several examples can be seen in Palmyra, Bamiyan, and other heritage sites destroyed by terrorist groups due to rising tensions between global politics and local fundamentalist groups. As shown in the previous sections, understanding the plurality of civilizations is crucial in the modern world as it permits the negotiation between different cultures. The intrinsic value of different civilizations, including the Islamic and the Western, combined with their traditions, have the potential to pave the way for architectural mediation and mutual understanding.
2.3 Architecture between Civilization and Barbarism: Hindering Mediation

The tension between different civilizations is rising in the contemporary age of conflicts, under the dominance of a capitalistic and a politicized global sphere. The cultural ‘fault lines’ separating civilizations, as mentioned by Huntington (1993), may confirm his theory of clashes and future conflicts between Islam and the West. However, one should not succumb to such a politicized approach that tends to detract from the subject of cultural and architectural mediation. One should instead understand the origins of the cultural mediation of past sites, which currently struggle for survival in the midst of rising tensions between terrorist groups and international politics. The destruction of the historical city of Palmyra in 2015 by ISIS is a reflection of barbarism and increased tension where architectural heritage is sacrificed.

In Palmyra, the un-Islamic fundamentalist group Daesh killed archeologist Khaled al-As’ad. Al As’ad had devoted his life to Palmyra and was a scholar of the Roman-era tombs and the Temple of Bel. ISIS accused Khaled of being “apostate” and “director of idolatry” because he attended “infidel” conferences, as reported by Tharoor and Maruf (2016). Khaled was later hung and killed by the terrorist group while he was reading the Qur’an loudly. His daughter Zenobia (2016), named after the Palmyrene queen, describes the atrocities and destruction under Daesh:

The day Daesh came to Palmyra feels like a blur, a dream, or nightmare. I remember being at home and I saw my neighbours and people, just running, the streets were in chaos. And they said, ‘Daesh are coming to Palmyra they’re barely a few miles away.'
In a very recent analysis of Paul Veyne’s book *Palmyra: an Irreplaceable Treasure* (2017), Josephine Quinn (2018, 28) describes his work as “an angry eulogy dedicated to Khaled al-As’ad”. She also explains that the book is a “colourful and very readable account of a city that thrived in the middle ground between political empires and cultural worlds, refocused on its recent destruction and on a single question: why” (Quinn 2018, 28). Quinn (2018) clarifies, in reference to Veyne’s book, how ISIS managed to use architecture and heritage to gain momentum among its followers while distorting the image of mediation between civilizations. ISIS advertised for its ideological message and released images of the destruction of the Temple of Bel in its online magazine Dabiq, while using the argument that such temples promote širk or idolatry (Quinn 2018, 28). In Issue 11 of Dabiq Magazine, ISIS uses a combination of high-quality and well-designed graphics and well-formatted text written in perfect English. ISIS also shows the image of the destruction of Palmyra, the Temple of BaalShamin, and the Temple of Bel. As seen in the images below (Figure 2-3), ISIS also uses the word širk or idolatry to describe these temples highlighting their rather narrow vision of heritage and architecture and compromising the dialogue between civilizations.
As Chitwood (2015) claims in his article “The Streak of Doubt that Underlies ISIS’ Destructive Acts of Religious Fervor”, ISIS ideologies reflect their conception of a return to the roots of Islam. Admittedly, a true Muslim, unlike ISIS fanatics, would not agree with such thinking that comes from the distorted and verbose rhetoric of the current century. The destruction of icons is merely an expression of the ignorance of the power of mediation between cultures, Islamic or others. These barbaric acts also reflect their ignorance about how Islamic architecture borrowed from non-Islamic sources such as the Roman and the Hellenistic. Palmyra is one such example that reflects the fluidity and borrowing between civilizations and their architecture.

Quinn refers to Veyne’s point that ISIS destroyed Palmyra and its temples because Western people adored such historical monuments, while fundamentalists, “want to show that Muslims have a culture that is different from ours, a culture that is unique to them” (Quinn 2018, 28). The choice of Veyne’s claim, I would say, reflects a careless attitude reminding us of
Huntington’s cultural fault lines. Quinn (2018) also contests this claim in her review of Veyne’s book stating that even Khaled al-As’ad, the archeologist killed by ISIS, also respected and sufficiently protected the site. The sacrifices of al-As’ad and his colleagues are not a distinctively Western value, as Quinn (2018, 28) notes, but rather a universal value of promoting heritage and protecting the urban fabric of historical cities.

Civilization is devalued when a city, such as Palmyra, does not represent “a model of multiculturalism but a symbol of resistance to Western imperialism, and its destruction sent a message that was less about the West than about the regime in Damascus” (Quinn 2018, 28). The legacy of civilization or more precisely of a city like Palmyra is politicized, and its symbols are used on bank notes by the corrupt Syrian regime (Figure 2-4) as a symbol of Arab nationalism and defiance against the West. Mustafa Tlass, who was the Syrian defense minister from 1972 to 2004, wrote Zenobia’s story (Quinn 2018, 28). Without delving into endless details about the matter, one could claim that when architecture and civilization become objects of politics and propaganda, their value is then reduced to mere political interests. Despite all politicized matters, Palmyra had a different story of multiculturalism and architectural mediation to tell, and one should focus on this story to defy the regime’s propaganda and its politicized approaches.

Palmyra was a great city, a mysterious place, and the place where the powerful Queen Zenobia once ruled and founded her empire in the 3rd century A.D. The same queen also built an empire extending from modern-day Turkey to Egypt. In an excerpt from the (UNESCO) World Heritage website, the value of architectural mediation of the site of Palmyra is described as follows:

An oasis in the Syrian desert, north-east of Damascus, Palmyra contains the monumental ruins of a great city that was one of the most important cultural centres of the ancient world. From the 1st to the 2nd century, the art and architecture of Palmyra, standing at the crossroads of several civilizations, married Graeco-Roman techniques with local traditions and Persian influences. (n.d.)

The same temple of Baal, which was destroyed by ISIS or ISIL, shows that the architecture of Palmyra was a meeting point of Ancient near Eastern and Greco Roman or Western Ancient Architecture (Gates 2011, 401). Palmyra's architecture is Greco-Roman, but its Semitic people modified it with their Gods and traditions (Gates 2011, 401). In fact, the temple became a Byzantine Church with the spread of Christianity in the region and later with the spread of Islam; it became a mosque (Tharoor and Maruf 2016). Somehow it had a similar fate to that of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. Palmyra was a strategic site for several Muslim dynasties where the Abbasids, the Umayyads, the Mamluks, and the Ottomans built souks, and they made the place as a crossroad for traders. The UNESCO world heritage website describes Palmyra’s architecture as grandiose and diverse, with its architectonic details reflecting Greco-roman, indigenous, and Persian influences. UNESCO states that:

It grew steadily in importance as a city on the trade route linking Persia, India and China with the Roman Empire, marking the crossroads of several civilisations in the ancient world. A grand, colonnaded street of 1100 metres' length forms the monumental axis of the city, which together with secondary colonnaded cross streets links the major public monuments including the Temple of Ba'al, Diocletian's Camp, the Agora, Theatre, other temples and urban quarters. Architectural ornament including unique examples of funerary sculpture unites the forms of Greco-roman art with indigenous elements and Persian influences in a strongly original style. Outside the city's walls are remains of a Roman aqueduct and immense necropolises.
Palmyra is an example of tolerance where different civilizations continuously borrowed architectural ornaments and methods of construction from each other. At the same time, the city preserved the place where Palmyra’s civilization withstood both time and the geopolitical struggles of different eras. The destruction of part of the temple by a terrorist organization Daesh (ISIS) embodies the pure idea of hatred, ignorance, and attempts to disturb the mediation between past and present sources of identities. This destruction, as Veyne (2017, 1) explains, has “obliterated an entire fragment of our culture” and the history and memory of Muslim people.

Palmyra is a hybrid historical center. Funerary sculptures, public monuments, and temples are a testimony of its hybrid identity. Sculptures of noble women, designed for their funerary stelae, include flowering sleeves from Belgium, a headpiece from Slovenia, a Turban in Tyrol, and a fur whose brims formed two horns in Hungary (Veyne 2017, 59). These architectonic details reflect the fluidity of borrowing between Eastern and Western material cultures. They consequently present further evidence of how Palmyra’s architectonic details managed to mediate between the East and the West.

Palmyra selected particular features from other civilizations that were relevant to its local context and culture. Vast numbers of influences make up the vibrant identity of this city, and they comprise the field of culture, architecture, and politics. These influences include ancient Mesopotamian cultures, ancient Aramean Syrian, Phoenician, Persian, Arabian, as well as Greek culture and the Roman political system (Veyne 2017, 61). One needs to observe the map of the empire of Palmyra, as Veyne (2017, 61) notes, to understand the patchwork of cultures that made this place a “patchwork city” and gave it “the record for the number of rich cultures that could be found in one place”. As diverse as it can be, a civilization, as in the case of Palmyra, can carefully incorporate a mix of material features (architectural details) as well as customs. Palmyra’s citizens, for
instance, borrowed certain greek traditions “while ignoring others, of which it perhaps had indigenous equivalents” (Veyne 2017, 63).

In a BBC Radio 4 interview conducted by Kanishk Tharoor and Maryam Maruf on March 1st, 2016, art historian Nasser Rabbat describes how he experienced the city when he was growing up. He discussed its hybrid identity. The cultures that existed in Syria were, “Arab in origin but then classical in influence and in temperament and in inclination” (Rabbat 2016). He compared Palmyra with Petra in Jordan showing their similarities. Both, he claims, show how cultures connect creatively. To describe the temple of Bal, Rabbat (2016) also uses a frieze showing a funeral procession as an example of the mediation between cultures. He says:

There are three women carved in a very abstract way, as if they are clad in togas but they are wrapped from the head all the way to the bottom. They’re dressed like a classical woman, but these are Arab desert-based women, and their heads are covered.

The image of these women, as described by Rabbat (2016), is an illustration of how the art of sculptures and architecture managed to mediate images from other civilizations (Togas for Romans) and actual representations of local cultures (Arab desert women). The result of the shared material culture between civilizations shows how far these entities can intermingle. To understand these shared entities between civilizations, one should understand the foundations or ‘analysis’ of these civilizations.

2.4 The Analysis of Islamic Civilization

Before venturing into explaining the origins and foundations of Islamic civilization, it is imperative to highlight the reasons behind this approach. Several ways of defining Islamic civilization can help to identify the internal dynamics of these groups, where borrowing and mediation were the historical pillars of building civilizations. As part of this research, it is crucial to look at how Islamic civilization was depicted by Western scholars in the twenty-first century to be able to understand how to enhance cultural mediation. These concepts are useful to understand how architectural mediation can take place, and what priorities civilizations have in place.
In the next sections, this research investigates how contemporary scholars have shaped civilization. The goal here is to construct an overall understanding of how context, geopolitical, ethical, architectural, and urban, creates a particular view of civilization. Then, it would be more relevant to construct an understanding of civilization, in the Islamic context. In essence, dealing with the several theories behind the concept requires using the word interchangeably possibly helping to negotiate different sources of identity.

2.4.1. Elias on Civilization and Behaviorism

First and foremost, it is crucial to understand civilization from a Western point of view given the influence of this culture on the modern world. Secondly, by understanding the concept from a Western and later an Islamic perspective, one might determine the opportunities for cultural borrowing and interactivity between ‘East’ and ‘West’. It would be fruitful to evaluate the mediating role that civilization plays in an intercultural milieu: the Western and the Islamic. Sociologist Norbert Elias’s book The Civilizing Process (1939) portrays civilization as a dynamic process, a concept that is potentially useful for this research as it is concerned with processes and sites of intercultural mediation.

Elias’s (1978) argues that the West defines civilization as a wide variety of material artifacts and practices. These include technological advances, manners and behavior, scientific knowledge, religious ideas and customs, type of dwellings, relationships, judicial punishment, and even food preparation. He even states that “there is almost nothing which cannot be done in a civilized or uncivilized way; hence, it always seems somewhat

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3 The original book was written in German and published in two volumes under the title Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation, translated as About the Process of Civilization. This is one of Elias’ most influential works in sociology, and it did not become popular until 1969 because of World War II. After his death in 1990, his influence started to increase. Elias describes the Civilizing Process as a long-term approach that can be hindered at any time. Many writers explained the importance of Elias’ thesis including Pratt, John. 2016. “Norbert Elias, the Civilizing Process, and Punishment.” Oxford Handbooks Online. Also, see Górnicka, Barbara, Katie Liston, and Stephen Mennell. 2015. “Twenty-five years on: Norbert Elias’s intellectual legacy 1990–2015.” Human Figurations 4: (3). One can also read Linklater, Andrew. 2004. “Norbert Elias, the ‘Civilizing Process’ and the Sociology of International Relations.” International Politics 41(1): 3-35. In his writing, Linklater explains how Elias’ theory can be expanded and used to discuss international relations, since Elias was slow to recognize that aspect. The Nobert Elias Foundation website also offers more insights into the author’s achievements.
difficult to summarize in a few words everything that can be described as civilization" (Elias 1978, 3).

Civilization encompasses different forms and characteristics of human actions. According to Elias (1978, 4), civilization indicates a global process, a structure, and a strategy that characterizes peoples’ footprints and the legacy of their actions and works throughout history. It organizes the lives of human beings while occupying different environments.

Elias defines the concept narrowly as a reflection of the “self-consciousness of the West” reflecting the idea of superiority constructed by Western society, where it is believed that its contemporary construct is more progressive than what Elias calls “earlier societies or ‘more primitive’ contemporary ones” (Elias 1978, 4). In other words, Western society has sought to define its progress through its material achievements including technical progress, civilized behavior, and scientific knowledge. Goudsblom (1994, 1) explains that Elias’s theories of the civilizing process were viewed as Europe centered, teleological, misrepresented of Europe’s progress, incompatible with contemporary trends, and disproving the idea of continuous civilization. This incompatibility requires more investigation into how Elias constructed the concept and whether it offers real opportunities for cultural mediation.

In a different usage, the German civilization or ‘Zivilization,’ as Elias calls it, refers to a useful but somehow materialistic concept that is external and useful. In a way, it is an object of a lower rank referring to behavior or the “value which a person has by virtue of his mere existence” (Elias 1978, 4). Elias (1978, 4) explains that Kultur, or the closest equivalent to what civilization is in the German context, describes civilization as a theory. The relationship between ‘culture’ and ‘civilization’ makes ‘culture’ the most complicated concept in English (Williams 1983, 89).

In a critical study exploring the connection between culture and power, Schoenmakers (2012) supports Elias’ theories and clarifies the vast and complicated terrain of culture and civilization. Schoenmakers (2012, 10)
and Kuper (2009, 30) both agree that civilization, based on French customs, is a patchwork of political, religious, economic, social, and moral aspects. Unlike Kultur, civilization for Germans transcends space and time. This theory outlined by Elias (1978) encompasses intellectual, artistic, and religious facts, which are at the heart of this holistic concept; distinguishing between immaterial aspects, on the one hand, and economic, political, and social ones on the other.

Elias also explains in a different instance that Kultur is a concept, which reveals the self-consciousness of a nation questioning its identity and placing it within a political and spiritual context (Elias 1978, 4). As close as they might seem, Kultur and Civilization have some differences. Kultur refers to human products which are like “flowers of the field,” including works of art, books, religious and philosophical systems; whereas civilization is a process or at least the result of a process that is dynamic and “moving forward” (Elias 1978, 5).

Nuances exist within these two concepts. Showing, explaining, and detailing the nuances helps to define an appropriate perspective, which is, as suggested in this thesis, about mediating different cultures; it also allows for an investigation of civilizations, identities, and national boundaries. Overall, Elias sees civilization as a concept that:

Plays down the national differences between people; it emphasizes what is common to all human beings or—in the view of its bearers—should be. It expresses the self-assurance of people whose national boundaries and national identity have for centuries been so fully established that they have ceased to be the subject of any particular discussion, people which have long expanded outside their borders and colonized beyond them (Elias 1978, 5).

These intricately established national identities are a reminder of how Elias (1978) attempted in his work to understand how Europeans saw themselves as ‘civilized’ compared to others who were less civilized or even ‘barbaric.’ This egocentric view of European civilization does not even attempt to show contacts between the European civilization and other more ‘oriental’ ones. The focus of The Civilizing Process was to understand the process of becoming ‘civilized’ and maybe indirectly celebrating it, as it reflects the
consciousness and superiority of the West. Linklater and Mennell (2010, 385) criticized Elias’ approach since “the analysis did not condone these self-images; the point was not to share in European self-congratulation, but to understand the processes that led to the sense of cultural superiority”.

Linklater and Mennell (2010, 409) add that “one might also quarrel with the details of Elias’s account of the most recent phase of the civilizing process in which the norms of the colonial powers and the norms of the colonized peoples were coming closer together”. Many examples from the Islamic world illustrate how the norms of the colonials and the colonized come together through architecture. Arabisance in North Africa is a form of hybridization between the colonial and the colonized. French architectural historian Francois Béguin (1983) explains Arabisance as the adaptation of vernacular architecture (Arabic and Islamic) to French colonial architecture. Interestingly, Arabisance began with the first phase of heritage destruction by the French in Algeria (Béguin 1983, 11-13) including the destruction of the Medina of Algiers and Constantine. In their attempt to deface the Medina of Constantine, the French colonizers built a European city and disfigured the urban fabric of the Arab-Islamic city of Constantine. Consequently, one can even assert that this attempt by France to “replicate its image overseas in the existing buildings” (Silva 2016, 84) is a notorious show of power and the superiority of a Western (here French) civilization over the Arab-Islamic indigenous civilization. French settlers implemented their Grandes Percées known as the Haussmannian Boulevards (Silva 2016, 85) in the Medina of Constantine in an attempt to strengthen their presence and their colonial power through architectural and urban interventions.

This first aggressive phase of urban changes done by the French in Algeria reminds us of the European view of civilization, explained by Elias (1978, 4), or the French civilité that sees the ‘other’ as less progressive and more primitive. The second phase of this urban and military dominance, as outlined by Béguin (1983, 14-16), was a phase of cultural mediation between French civilization and the Arab-Islamic one, where the
protector’s policies preserved Arabic (and Islamic) architecture. This mediating approach began in 1865 when Napoleon III stopped the destruction of the Medina in Algiers (Morton 1998, 366), seventy-four years before Elias writes his manifesto.

Another example of the mediation or the ‘coming together’ of the colonizer and the colonized is Moorish Revival architecture where European architects adopted oriental, Arabic, and Islamic features into their buildings. This exotic style has become a universal architectural expression of mediation between cultures and civilizations, which has continued into the current century. One such example is the Spanish Synagogue of Prague built in 1868, again seventy-one years before Elias wrote his book in 1939. The façade of the synagogue, known as Španělská Synagoga, shows a mixture of Moorish style architecture noticeable in the arches on its façade (Figure 2-5), which are similar to the horseshoe arches of the Great Mosque of Cordoba. The red and yellow colors of the façade remind the visitor of the colors of the Mezquita of Cordoba. The fascinating interiors of the building are decorated with bright Arabesque patterns, in particular, the dome (Figure 2-6), which reflects the Islamic and Arabic influence. This Neo-Moorish architecture is an example of how mediation happens between civilizations through architecture to transcend religious differences – in this case, Judaism and Islam.

Figure 2-5: Faleh, Majdi. 2016. The Spanish Synagogue of Prague, Czech Republic

Figure 2-6: Faleh, Majdi. 2016. Interior Dome of Spanish Synagogue Above the Main Hall, Prague, Czech Republic
There are numerous examples of this architectural mediation including the State/Forum Theater (built 1929) in Melbourne, Australia; the Civic Theater (built 1929) in Auckland, New Zealand, and the Central Synagogue (built 1872) in Manhattan, USA.

The importance of the civilizing process through architecture is evident in many locations around the world. The same civilization that can lead to order and peace in societies, as Linklater and Mennell (2010, 409) note, can also lead to conflicts. The issue that Linklater and Mennell (2010, 409-410) grapple with is how far the civilizing process “can find common ground in a global civilizing process”. For a fair mediation between civilizations, this common ground should not compromise the values of one over the other, or hegemonize one group based on a Western-centered approach.

Elias (1978) explains that the crystallization of the civilizing processes happened within the context of history, where aspects of civilization become fashionable and a result of collective needs. History changes and as a result people’s behaviors and their constructed civilization also change. Gradually, the civilizing process begins to lose its properties, or it starts to change its form, manifestation, and meanings. The shared societal values change throughout time, while the civilizing process affects the values and attitudes of the society. One might want to understand how civilization is generated and then transmitted throughout generations to understand how the encounters between civilizations happen. Elias (1978) explains that:

The social process of their (civilization and Kultur) genesis may be long forgotten. One generation hands them on to another without being aware of the process as a whole, and the concepts live as long as this crystallization of past experiences and situations retains an existential value, a function in the actual being of society (Elias 1978, 7).

Architecture is an integral component of the civilizational process. If the genesis of both civilization and culture is interrupted then architecture may encounter similar interruptions and substantiations in material artifacts. This interruption leads to an incomplete architecture unable to mediate and
crystallize different concepts, situations, and experiences. Buildings and facades can be mirrors of civilizations. In the global age, consumerism and excess shape modern societies, shopping malls, gated communities, suburban nations, and car-based cities. Gulf cities, including Dubai, are clear examples of how city planners and policymakers design, by the machine and for the car. Architects and decision-makers are more focused on pace, power, and change.

The Muslim civilization in al-Andalus (711 – 1492) pushed the boundaries of science, knowledge, and innovation in architecture and planning. The palace and fortress of Alhambra (Al-Hamrā initially built in 889 A.D.) and the gardens of Generalife (Jannat al-‘Arīf) built in the fourteenth century borrowed lessons from previous dynasties and continue to inspire architects today. Oleg Grabar, in his analysis of the Alhambra, shows that the Umayyad palaces of the East copied the Roman tradition of fortifications (Grabar 1978, 107). Nasrid Andalusian Islamic architecture is a testament to the integrated Moorish culture of Spain. It is also a testimony of how the city or citadel is designed by and for its people, filtering and adopting different aspects of both Islamic and European cultures.

The dilemma of these civilizations in a contemporary context is explained in an interview I conducted with professor Carlos Jerez Mir on December 3rd, 2014, where he describes the modern movement as fanatic and negative since it did not value cultural heritage. A place like Andalusia, he notes, is at a crossroads of civilizations including Romans, Phoenicians, Arabs, Christians, and one should use this diversity today without losing the identity. By reference to Dubai and modern cities, he claims that the “craziness of architecture” and “the big scale, which is not a human scale, is being imported and results in a feeling of fear, intimidation, and megalomania. Big, money can be used the wrong way where big buildings are conceived creating a disproportionate effect” (Mir 2014).

Overall, and to avoid imbalance, a definition of civilization should reflect social and cultural perspectives. In fact, civilization encompasses the recognition of people’s traditions, behaviors, and progress. The encounters
between civilizations might be the solution or the critical point in positioning other anthropological and social worlds using Elias' theories, while at the same time being aware of understanding the priorities and characteristics of Western and Islamic civilizations.

2.4.2. Toynbee’s Civilization on Trial – On “The Encounters of Civilizations, Islam and the West”

The encounter between Islam and the West tends to be a hegemonic relation whereby Western sources of value have dominated the world in the twentieth and twenty-first century. British historian and philosopher Arnold J. Toynbee (1889 - 1975) writes about this topic in the context of World War II. During this period, powerful nations such as the USA, European countries, and Japan, continuously attempted to impose their Western values and dominance throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and other parts of the world. Toynbee (1948, 187) explains Westernization takes place and,

Thus the contemporary encounter between Islam and the West is not only more active and intimate than any phase of their contact in the past; it is also distinctive in being an incident in an attempt by Western man to ‘Westernize’ the world—an enterprise which will possibly rank as the most momentous, and almost certainly as the most interesting, feature in the history even of a generation that has lived through two world wars.

Throughout history, Islam and the Western world have had many encounters, and the first one happened when the Western world was in its infancy and when Islam was the particular religion of Arab tribes in their heroic age (Toynbee 1948, 184). Between the two terms, ‘Islam’ and the ‘West’, there is a particular difference of definition where one is a religion, and the other is a region or an adjective describing Western societies. Bernard Lewis describes a similar correlation between both concepts in his book Islam and the West, where he identifies a narrower and an asymmetric relationship between the notions of “Europe” and “Islam” (Lewis 1994, 3). This asymmetry comes from the fact that Europe is a modern cultural and political unit, while Islam is, for Muslims, an entire way of life (Lewis 1994, 3-4).
This element of religion in Islam reflects the construct of Islamic civilization and its priorities. Islam is a system in place that illustrates the awareness of Muslims about the importance of maintaining their civilization on earth. As explained by Lewis (1994, 4-5), Islam evolved under prophet Muhammad’s spiritual mission, it became victorious and was carried on by the Caliphs after his death. Representing a whole civilization that “grew up under the aegis of religion”, as Lewis (1994, 4) notes, Islam has been the opposite of both Christendom and Christianity. Despite the differences existing between these counterparts, a religion and a place, opportunities for mediation existed. In many ways, as explained previously in the introduction, medieval Islam and Christendom demonstrated such encounters in architecture and planning.

While investigating civilization in the Islamic context, Toynbee recognized architecture and the influence of Islamic architecture in Christian empires, particularly in the conquered territories of Sicily and Andalusia (Toynbee 1948, 185). In the Sicilian city of Palermo, for example, the Islamic influence was dominant, and numerous architectural techniques from Byzantine and Arab heritage were combined. Some of these examples include the Castle of Siza (opened 1175), the Cathedral of Monreale (built 1174), the Church of San Cataldo (built 1154), the Church of San Giovanni Degli Eremiti (built 1132), and the Castle of Maredolce (built 1071). All these examples and many others are a reflection of the architectural mediation between Arabs and Normans in medieval Italy, which can also be seen in the town of Mazara Del Vallo south of Palermo.

Alexander Metcalfe (2009) examines the long and short-term impact of Islamic culture on Sicily in his book The Muslims of Medieval Italy. Indeed, he refers to Sicily as a place of the frontier zone and holy wars based on Al-Muqaddasi’s account, using the particular structures of Ribâṭs as an example (2009, 61). Frontier zones or probably fault lines between civilizations as Huntington (1993, 22) named them, do not only refer to tension and resistance but also to exchange. In fact, Metcalfe(2009, 61) explains that “this fortification system was transferred to Sicily where Ribâṭs
were said by Ibn Hawqal to be a notable feature of coastal military architecture. [...] They are also likely to have served as focal points of frontier communication and exchange”. Opportunities for exchange and borrowing can also exist within the virtual fault lines or the physical frontier zones of different civilizations.

During another period under the Umayyads, Toynbee (1948) enlightens the reader about the influence of Islamic civilization on Christendom in Sicily and Andalusia, where mediating between both civilizations and their architecture is a sign of progress. He writes:

Economically and culturally, conquered Islam took her savage conquerors captive and introduced the arts of civilization into the rustic life of Latin Christendom. In certain fields of activity, such as architecture, this Islamic influence pervaded the entire Western world in its so-called ‘medieval’ age; and in the two permanently conquered territories of Sicily and Andalusia the Islamic influence upon the local Western ‘successor-states’ of the Arab empire was naturally still more wide and deep (Toynbee 1948,185).

Throughout history, the encounters between civilizations generated different impacts, both militarily and culturally (and possibly others). In many instances, political and military dominance tends to happen before cultural influence. Thus two components can be described as essential factors of civilizations in a physical space. The interaction between Latin Christendom and Muslim Spain had had a significant influence on architecture. For instance, the architecture of the Mezquita of Cordoba is a testament to this exchange. The double arched arcades of the mosque are said to derive from Roman architecture and more specifically from Roman Aqueducts. The borrowing and adaptation of architectonic elements have been a pattern both ways. The horseshoe arcades of the same mosque can also be seen, as explained previously, in Neo-Moorish synagogues and civic buildings across Europe, USA, Australia, and New Zealand. Architectural mediation between Islam and the West also needs to be understood in light of the fundamental aspects of Islamic civilization that Arberry discussed.
2.4.3. A.J Arberry’s Aspects of Islamic Civilization: Wisdom, Mysticism, and Revolt

British Orientalist A.J. Arberry (1905 - 1969) translated some of the most critical passages of Islamic literature in his book Aspects of Islamic Civilization, to investigate the aspects of progress in Islamic civilization. He looked at the rich and diverse literature of Islam to understand how that civilization once functioned. One can study Arberry’s analysis of Islamic civilization to determine its relevance for the future of architectural mediation. In other words, this research attempts to understand Islamic civilization in the midst of a contemporary battle of politics and ideologies, characterizing relations between the West and Islam – as well as the aspiration to overcome these antagonisms. Arberry also explains that “all take pride in a common inheritance, all aspire to recapture the stories of a civilization which in its Golden age dominated the world” (Arberry 1964, 9).

The Golden age of Islam, from the eighth century to the thirteenth century, was known as an era of advancements in the sciences, literature, design, architecture, and religion. Arberry (1964) highlights the fact that Islamic civilization inspired other civilizations due to the diversity of its landscapes and the richness of its heritage. Arberry’s understanding of the pillars of Islamic civilization can later be useful for explaining the mediation between different sources of value (global and local) in the built environment.

Geographical location does not define Islam. Islam is a way of life and a system of belief, conduct, and worship that structured and united different societies from East to West. Arberry (1964, 9) introduces these Muslim nations as an influential group, as a confident group of nations, newly liberated from colonialism, and geographically extending from Morocco in the West to Indonesia in the East, from Turkey in the North to Sudan in the South. Both religion and customs are the main factors in the vitality of these nations, who have shared many traditions and ways of life, despite their local yet significant differences (Arberry 1964, 9). Therefore, any mediation
between the sources of value of Islamic traditions and other global sources of identities (including Western) should appreciate Islam’s traditions.

Arberry (1964) explains that the cradle of Islamic civilization rose with the rise of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula in the sixth century while some other civilizations were collapsing. In fact, “by the eve of the rise of Islam, Rome had collapsed into anarchy; Byzantium, the fortress of Eastern Christianity, was locked in a bitter and protracted war, ultimately fatal to both parties, with Sasanian Iran, the homeland of Zoroastrianism” (Arberry 1964, 10). The revelation, Umma or nation, language, religious impulses, the Qur'an, philosophy, and science as well as the Empire, were unifying factors, which will be discussed in future chapters. These uniting factors continue to connect people from around the globe both spiritually and materially. The birth of Islamic civilization started with the Prophet Muhammad, who wrought a revolution that presents God or Allah as the only God of the heavens and the earth (Gibb 2013, 187).

This religion evolved in the desert where Prophet Muhammad went for meditation. His first revelation took place when he was approximately forty in the month of Ramadan, while he was in the cave of Ĥira (Ġār Ĥirā'). The revelation continued, and monotheism for Muslims became the practice and submission to the one God, Allah, from which the word Islam derives. The most challenging part of this monotheistic revelation was about reconstructing the religious life and thought of the people (Gibb 2013, 188). Architecture came at a later stage. Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula had had strong ties with each other even after the death of the prophet of Islam in 632 AD. They were united together in what is known as an Umma or a theocratic community; non-Arabs of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Persia, Central Asia also joined these diverse groups in a more organized fashion (Arberry 1964, 11).

Islam, a theology and a way of life was spreading rapidly under different Islamic civilizations including the Abbasids, Ummayyads, and Ottomans. For instance, the call for prayer “from the Atlantic coasts to the borders of China, in the tongue of Mecca [Arabic], rang out from minarets
summoning the faithful to prostrate themselves to the lord of the worlds” (Arberry 1964, 12). The call for prayer has been a unifying factor in Islamic civilization.

Islam helped to create a robust spiritual unity or culture that resulted in the establishment of its material structure, reflected through thriving empires and civilizations. The religious impulse expressed through the Qur’an was vital and enduring for these nations. It created, along with the Holy Scripture, a sense of belonging and a structured life that enhanced to the creation of a united spiritual and material culture. Spiritual experiences, being part of a metaphysical world, can also support the foundations of material culture, namely architecture. Arberry explains that the empire of Islam continued thriving with trade and wealth leading to the construction of lavish mansions and palaces in Baghdad, Bokhara, Samarkand, Aleppo, Jerusalem, Tunis, Fez, and many other cities (Arberry 1964, 16), where architecture thrived.

At the outset, one should ask how spirituality in architectural spaces can establish a spiritual connection with people, space, and the overall environment. Spirituality, a backbone in Islamic civilization, is what Sardar (1987) previously referred to as mysticism, which is the opposite of materialism in which the focus is on the immediate gain. The courtyard, for instance, one of the oldest forms of domestic development and the physical and spiritual center of the house (Lad 2010, 3), is designed to reflect a secure connection between the worldly life and the universe. Whether it is in the New Delhi mosque or the Madrasa Qarawiyyin in Fes, the courtyard reflects the same spiritual dimension while reflecting local variations (Nasr 1987a, 3).

Based on the previous descriptions, one could say that the lavishly adorned and prosperous architecture and cities of Islamic civilization have partially or entirely disappeared. However, the philosophy and religious foundations that made Islam prosperous through its civilization still exist, and they are still carried out by different generations across time and space. The spiritual philosophy of Islam continues to be actively present in
the Muslim world, despite colonization and dictatorships. The foundation of Islamic civilization has followed a spiritual path whereby unity of belief and the trials of civilization were its dynamic parameters.

Islam has defined its civilization and its founding principles based on spiritual thinking. Beyond the physicality of the expansion, the spiritual dimension of the empire has been a steady foundation of its civilization. However, beyond the richness of the several dimensions that characterize civilizations and the civilization of Islam, one should understand the ramifications of a once prosperous Islamic civilization in the contemporary age.

2.5 The Future of Muslim Civilization in the Contemporary Age: its Origins, Foundations Principles, and its Cultural Mediation Factors

Before establishing a mediation between Islam and other sources of identities, including Western identity, one needs to analyze the parameters that commonly define Islamic civilization, based on the existing literature that charts the possible development of this once dynamic and thriving future civilization of Islam. Sardar (1987) questions the path towards the reconstruction and the understanding of Islamic civilization. He considers the idea of a revival of heritage which relies on past and present sources of value, that he calls ‘energies.’ He then states that:

The need for a new departure becomes painfully pressing when, indeed, a civilization has to be reconstructed and it becomes absolutely necessary that those who are to take part in discussion and planning should have a clear idea of what they want…Shall not we, then, who look forward to a revival of Islam as a dynamic, thriving operational civilization try to articulate our energies to the end we seek to accomplish? The future of Muslim civilization is extensively dependent on its past and present (Sardar 1987, 7).

Sardar is trying to respond to a set of issues, or possibly a crisis that culture has faced in the modern age. One needs to understand Islam’s position in this discussion to plan its civilization and its architecture. Sardar (1987, 7) explains that Islam is at the center of Muslim civilization and refers to it as an act of submission to God, a way of life, a middle way - a primordial one that applies to the existence of humans. Islam, he explains, is a blend of
the rational, the material, and the spiritual aspects of the human journey. Muslim civilization was based on the revelations (al-Waḥy in Arabic) of Allah to Muhammad.

This same book, the Qur’an, came to provide the theoretical framework for Islamic civilization. The framework included aspects such as behavior, spirituality, morals, education, aesthetics and the physical dimensions of human personality on a personal and a collective level. Collectively, these revelations direct the social, economic, political and behavioral attitudes of Muslims (Sardar 1987). The spiritual laws that were revealed in the Qur’an aimed to establish operational rules for a whole society. These rules were not only for Muslims but dictated a balance between the moral and spiritual dimensions of humanity. Humans are at the heart of Islamic civilization since all events and changes happen around him or based on his actions or influences. The human being in Islam lives at the intersection of material and spiritual realities, where he is on the quest of spirituality. He uses balance and moderation in the material aspects of life; such a moderation results in order, refinement, proportion, and beauty (Sardar 1987).

Islam presents civilization as a synthesis of three principles, namely materialism, rationalism, and mysticism. Islam’s quest is to balance between these three principles. Materialism is a social order that focuses on the immediate rather than the ultimate gain. Islam “enjoins Muslims to be self-supporting, to seek material benefits, and not to be a liability on someone else, or on the state” (Sardar 1987, 23). Therefore, it is necessary to understand the sources of value of Muslim civilization from different perspectives, and in terms of these components to be able to understand how Islamic principles can grow cultural and architectural mediation in the contemporary era. Rationalism, the second principle of this civilization, is related to reason and logic. Sardar defines it as follows:
An outlook that accepts nothing except that which fits the scale of reason and human intellect. As a term, rationality denotes thought and action which are in accord with the rules of logic and empirical knowledge. As a world-view, rationalism demands that an actor’s objectives, available means and limitation of his actions must be precisely specified...If civilizations and systems of thought claiming to be rational and scientific are scrutinized, their basic material character comes to the fore (Sardar 1987, 19).

Mysticism is a concept that comes to complete yet to define a higher spiritual dimension compared to materialism and rationalism. Materialism and rationalism represent a limited illustration of what civilization ought to be in the Islamic context. Sardar explains Mysticism as follows:

Mysticism is an antithesis of materialism and rationalism. In contrast to materialism and rationalism, which deny higher forms for knowledge, mysticism seeks the annihilation of matter and mortification of the body...It generates a willful apathy towards the body and its needs. As such, mysticism is just as one-dimensional as materialism and rationalism (Sardar 1987, 20).

A synthesis of these three elements helps to explain the roots of Islamic civilization. The dynamic configuration of these three principles aims to enhance the spiritual system of Muslims, their inner self, and their material system, or the environment surrounding them. After looking at the main principles and foundations of Islamic civilization and Islam, one might reflect on the connections that this civilization established with preceding civilizations. Sardar explains the dynamics that Islamic civilization went through:

A civilization must, of necessity, pass through various phases of change and a process of assimilation and diversification. Its strength and weakness will be judged by its ability or inability to adjust to a changing environment, yet preserve its original identity and parameters. In its early phases, Islamic civilization came into contact with Greek, Roman, Persian, Indian, and Chinese civilizations. At each contact Islamic civilization was able to filter the concepts and values of these civilizations, accepting and assimilating that which agreed with its fundamental characteristics and principles and rejecting that which was contradictory to its values and norms. It was able to derive benefits from these contacts and prosper (Sardar 1987, 35).

In the twentieth century, Sardar (1987) mentions that Islamic civilization could not necessarily cope with the contemporary world due to the lack of understanding of Islam by Muslims. Muslim societies somehow failed to
adjust their system of thinking to the global world. Thus adopting different sources of value is needed while fully understanding the Islamic sources.

The development of early Islamic civilizations is based on knowledge as well as on Islam’s capacity to empower others. It seems clear, by relating back to the main argument, that a civilization cannot settle unless it establishes its roots based on its material and spiritual values. Architecture in the Islamic world today is disrupted, and it highlights a capitalistic way of building and producing with little understanding or attention to the local heritage, climate, and values. In Dubai and postmodern Tunis, for instance, the architectural industry reflects a pastiche of images based on international models without necessarily exploring a rich Islamic heritage. This research intends to foster an understanding of the Islamic concepts but also an understanding of how one can come to embrace ‘Islamic civilization’ dynamically, in a way that embraces the necessity of change while retaining its heritage.

2.6 Civilization in the Context of Islam, Asabiyya, and Ibn Khaldūn’s Theories

In the Islamic context, civilization is a concept rich with mysticism and spirituality. The relevance of Muslim scholars’ writings contributes to a negotiation between civilizations through an understanding of the principles of Islamic civilization. This concept is particularly important in the wake of rising tensions between Islam and the West, noticeable in Huntington’s ‘polemic’ essay “The Clash of Civilizations”. Muslim scholars, such as Ibn Khaldūn (1332 – 1406), the forerunner of modern history, social sciences, and economics, remain ignored by the majority of people in the Western World. Only a small number of people interested in specific Middle Eastern journals will know the relevance of the understanding of civilizations from an Islamic perspective (Ahmed 2002, 24). When I discuss Ibn Khaldūn’s work in Western Academic circles, a good number of people ignore his identity and often the discussion shifts back to ‘Western’ philosophers who gained more popularity, including Foucault, Voltaire, or Marx. The one-sided perspective stimulates little interaction between Islam
and Western civilizations. Such unbalanced mediation between sources of identity will lead to a hegemonic attitude where Western sources dominate the discourse, or where some Muslims isolate themselves and choose not to learn from Western sources. Professor Ahmed Akbar also shares a similar experience. He writes:

When I talk of Ibn Khaldun people usually ask: Who is he? Another “terrorist”? Any links to Usama bin Ladin? Or is he an oil shaykh or an Arab minister? Even the scholars who have heard of Ibn Khaldun may well ask: How is Ibn Khaldun, the Arab in question, relevant to our problems in the 21st century (Ahmed 2002, 24).

Ibn Khaldūn’s theories are vital for this research as he, unlike modern Western sociologists, “still writes as a believer” (Ahmed 2002, 25). One is not negating secular Western beliefs but instead calling for a deeper understanding of Islamic spiritual beliefs to show their importance in the process of architectural mediation. Ibn Khaldūn considers religion as a potent element that unifies different groups of people. This idea is particularly important in the current climate of clash and ignorance.

“But the idea of a dialogue of civilizations” as Ahmed (2002, 24) notes, “is central to Muslim perception of self”. Even in the Qur’an, particularly in Chapter (30) sūrat l-rūm (The Romans), Allah emphasizes the importance of a dialogue between people to embrace different civilizations. In his translation, Arberry (1996) writes “And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and earth and the variety of your tongues and hues. Surely in that are signs for all living beings”. The dialogue among civilizations⁴ is also an idea promoted in the current century as the way forward towards organizing society.

⁴ In the year 2000, and as part of the United Nations Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations, Secretary-General Kofi Annan emphasized that diversity needs to be used as an asset and not as a threat. During the same round table discussion, former president of Iran Mohammed Khatami used the concept of ‘cultural homelessness’ to show the danger of obstructing the dialogue among thinkers, scholars and artists from diverse cultures and civilizations. In 1999, during a lecture entitled “The Dialogue of Civilizations and the Need for a World Ethic”, Kofi Annan called for a dialogue among cultures and civilizations instead of a clash between these groups. He recognized Huntington’s point about the Clash but he also questioned its relevance and accuracy. Further to these views, one can also read the works of philosopher Köchler, Hans. 2009. Al Muslimun wal Gharb: Min Assira ila al Hiwar (The Muslims and the West: From Confrontation to Dialogue). Casablanca, Morocco: TOP Edition.
In the masterpiece of philosopher Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*\(^5\), the author discusses the concept of ‘asabiyya or social organization, which is fundamental to humans. If social organization is disrupted then the presence of humans would be deficient (Khaldūn 1967, 46). Social organization is also at the heart of civilization since it reflects the desire of God “to settle the world with human beings and to leave them as His representatives on earth” (Khaldūn 1967, 46). This idea, primarily promoted in the Qur’an, binds people from different classes and groups together and helps societies to transmit their values to the next generations (Ahmed 2002, 30). One might find Ahmed’s interpretation of Ibn Khaldūn statement too idealistic; however, in the context of dialogue and mediation, preserving core societal values is essential for the existence of Islamic architecture. For instance, a survey of the medinas of the Maghreb (Fes, Tunis, and others) shows the intrinsic value of privacy through the hierarchy of public and private spaces, an aspect that will be explained later.

Ibn Khaldūn’s fourteenth-century theories on the birth of civilization reveal a pragmatic vision of the evolution of the world, of civilizations, of dynasties, and later of cities and the human (Insan). The process of building a civilization is then described through the social organization established by humankind for subsistence:

Their social organization and co-operation for the needs of life and civilization, such as food, shelter, and warmth, do not take them beyond the bare subsistence level, because of their inability (to provide) for anything beyond those (things)...Then, they co-operate for things beyond the (bare) necessities. They use more food and clothes, and take pride in them. They build large houses, and lay out towns and cities for protection. This is followed by an increase in comfort and ease, which leads to formation of the most developed luxury customs. They take the greatest pride in the preparation of food and a fine cuisine, in the use of varied splendid clothes of silk and brocade and other (fine materials), in the construction of ever-higher buildings and towers, in elaborate furnishings for the buildings, and the most intensive cultivation of crafts in actuality. They build castles and mansions, provide them with running water, build their towers higher and higher, and compete in furnishing them (most elaborately) (Khaldūn 1967, 91).

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Humans gradually erect buildings and their dimensions are gradually changing as people’s skills and competencies, but also creativity, evolve altogether. The philosophical conception of civilization, based on Ibn Khaldūn’s theories, means a transformed and progressive human society where the level of cultivation and analysis evolves, and where the scale of conceptualization also evolves from objects to customs and later to the elaboration of built environments and cities. One should note that his methodological approach, as Ahmed (2002, 26) points out, examines Greek philosophy and a cross-cultural comparison of Arab, Berber, Turk and Mongol groups without isolating himself as a scholar in an ivory tower. This view is particularly important in the current dialogue of civilizations as it forms a bridge between civilizations.

Civilization, as described by Ibn Khaldūn, is composed of methods of making a living, power, leadership, and religion. The latter factors support the strength of the social organization and the structure of a civilization (Abu-Hantash 1989). According to Abu Hantash (1989, 18), the methods of making a living (al-Ma’ash) are the methods people use to earn a living thus influencing the character of civilization. Civilization can be developed in a materialistic manner when it is an individualistic experience, or collaboratively and cooperatively enhancing exchange. Collaboration leads to a constructive mediation between different civilizations. Abu Hantash (1989, 21) also explains that Ibn Khaldūn considers severe conditions as a driving force for people to develop collaboration and cooperation. The character of Islamic civilization, I argue, is determined by a variety of factors ranging from the social, economic, political, ethical, and spiritual.

Civilization encompasses the organization of life, work, societies, knowledge, industries, power, leisure, and comfort. This perspective is compelling as it draws links between civilization and stability, making them two interrelated entities, and this is indeed, another way of looking at the realms of civilization and its dynamic factors. By having a full grasp of its factors, one is more able to define its limits and its potential role in
negotiating between past and present sources of identities. Stability is in fact needed, both materially and spiritually, to carry on a material and a mystical experiment (Sardar 1987). Civilization, as an expression of urbanity and progress, prospers in stable and favorable conditions both in time, through history, and in space through architecture. Architectural prosperity is evident in other places across the Islamic world including the Ottoman Empire.

2.7 The Negotiation of Civilizations: Ottomanization in Question

Architecture and cities of the Ottoman Empire reflected a cross-cultural adaptation of styles and patterns during an era of reorganization. Adaptation or cross-cultural reform did not necessarily mean copying but rather an interpretation. This era of Tanzimat\(^6\) helped to develop the empire and led progress towards modernity. Both eighteenth and nineteenth century were periods of rethinking architecture in the Ottoman Empire. Through their trips across Europe, the Sultans of the empire developed a desire to adopt specific architectural forms and trends and to apply them to their architecture. Professor of Ottoman Cultural history Ahmet Ersoy refers to the early Tanzimat architecture (the 1840s and 1850s) as a period of adaptation of European architectural forms. This adaptation valorizes local design frameworks, and it comes from the Ottoman Baroque experiments of the eighteenth century (Ersoy 2017, 200).

The reorganization of certain institutions had already started in the Ottoman Empire before the Tanzimat with the reforms of Sultan Selim III (r. 1789-1807), followed by those of Sultan Mahmut II (r. 1808-1839), Sultan Abdülmecid (r. 1839-1861), Sultan Abdüllaziz (r. 1861-1876) and Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876-1908). Stylistic changes in architecture had already started at the beginning of the eighteenth century during the period of Sultan Ahmet III, mainly in floral decorative forms and the integration of isolated Western architectonic elements, later leading to an Ottoman

\(^6\) Tanzimat is a word in Ottoman Turkish (similar to Arabic Tandhimat) which means reorganization. Historically, it was a period of reorganization of the Ottoman Empire that lasted from 1839 to 1876; it included a series of reforms to strengthen the empire and to follow the European model. Such an approach suggested that the empire is part of Europe.
Baroque style (Yenisehirlioğlu 1983). At the time of the Tanzimat period, between 1839 and 1876, civilization meant organization. To describe the emergence of this period, Ahmet Ersoy, states that:

One must admit that after the invasion of Asia Minor and the Bosphorus, the vanquishers and the vanquished, without taking account of the difference in race, collaborated on the production of works of art. Arabs, Persians, Greeks, and a whole population divided by religious beliefs and different aptitudes intermingled with the conquerors. Art being independent of the state of civilization, all these diverse groups, which coalesced at the time of the foundation of the Ottoman Empire, had inherited the most various knowledge from their ancestors. A distinct method [of building] emerged from the fusion of all these elements and with the contribution of each of these arts (Ersoy 2007, 131).

Islamic civilization is widely spread out, and it is also diverse both in space and in time; therefore, it would be relevant to focus on a specific period where cultural and architectural borrowing happened between the West (Europe) and the Islamic world (Ottomans in this case). This section investigates the concept of continuity and diversity of architectural production in the Ottoman Islamic context, where Arab, Saracenic, and European Influences played significant roles in shaping monuments and buildings of the empire in its earlier medieval stages until later on in the nineteenth century. Scholarly research has demonstrated that the publication of Usul-i Mi’ari-i Osmani, Usul or translated as Fundamentals of Ottoman Architecture in 1873, is the period during which Ottoman architecture and its patrimony were theorized. The theorization emerged during the period of Tanzimat and modernization reforms. Ottoman architecture was described based on modern principles and promoted as “a rational, an open-ended, and a universally applicable system of building that was subject to change and innovation” (Ersoy 2007, 117).

The intention here is to examine how Western and Islamic civilization established an ‘architectural’ dialogue in the past global age to understand how mediation occurred between different sources of value in the built environment. While the Christian Byzantine Empire was collapsing, the power of a new empire was transcending and rising. The Ottoman Empire was settling into one of the strongest and widespread empires in
Islamic history as it covered lands from Asia to North Africa and Europe. Between the thirteenth century and the early twentieth century, the Ottomans ruled the Islamic world and Istanbul was the capital of their empire. Its territory spanned over three continents and became a very influential and inclusive empire.

The Ottoman political system included the diverse communities that lived under its banner and adopted diversity as a pillar of its progress. In fact, the territory of the empire included diverse populations, races, religions, cultures, and traditions (Lybyer 1913, 5-9). “The Ottoman Empire was not only vast, but it also contained a mosaic of religious, ethnic, and linguistic communities, including Greeks, Serbs, Bosnians, Hungarians, Albanians, Bulgarians, Romanians, Arabs, Turks, Armenians, Kurds, and Jews” (Kia 2017, xvii). Therefore, it is essential to highlight the role of diversity in building the empire and the flow of knowledge and exchange that existed within it. Diversity has, indeed, played a significant role in building a vibrant character of the Ottoman Empire. People from different communities had the challenge to build a robust social construct that establishes the character of this civilization.

During the time of the Ottoman Empire, Ottoman architecture was the highest level of achievement. Early Ottoman architecture heavily relied on builders from other backgrounds, both cultural and geographic, and it continued to build precisely on the legacy of Islamic architecture. Early Ottoman artistic and architectural milieu thrived as it was naturally inclusive and polymorphous, particularly the “influx of ideas and people engendered by the post-Chingisid and Timurid disarrays contributed to the formation of a syncretic artistic milieu on which Ottoman art and architecture thrived” (Ersoy 2007, 129).

Throughout its history, the Ottomans built an architecture based on architectural precedents that existed across Anatolia, where Seljuk architecture, Byzantine architecture, and Persian architecture flourished. Grube (1978, 14) explains that Seljuk minarets, for instance, were thick and constructed out of bricks, but buildings were out of stones following the
local Anatolian style. The interpretation of Iranian motifs and the use of limestone instead of plaster were essential changes. Materials from demolished Byzantine buildings were used. Centralized mosques were erected, rejecting the ancient principles of the pillared hall and the lateral naves. Domes were designed to rival those of the Byzantine church of Hagia Sofia, especially after the Ottomans conquered Constantinople in 1453. Tiles, as well, come from a Seljuk tradition, and the Ottomans carried it through with more varied colors and larger designs of Iznik tiles, which are the typical Ottoman tiles of the sixteenth century (Grube 1978, 14).

There is something incredibly appealing to researchers in studying this phenomenon of expansion, learning, and adaptation. According to Ersoy (2007), the Ottomans also attempted to bridge the gap between the civilizations that existed in their empire. The Ottomans learned from several civilizations to empower their civilization and architecture. This architecture is noticeable in Istanbul and particularly in buildings such as the Dolmabahce Palace, built between 1843 and 1856. This building was the chief administrative center of the Ottomans (1856-1922). This palace was built on the European coast of the Bosporus using diverse elements from the Baroque, Rococo, and neoclassical styles blended with traditional Ottoman (Islamic) architecture. Even during the modern history of the empire, the syncretic nature of inclusivism continued to thrive to support the earlier periods of borrowing and interpretation in the field of architecture and the arts, and thus:

For the Ottomans of the nineteenth century who looked back at the founding years of their dynasty, a reappraisal of the highly syncretic nature of early Ottoman culture promised to be a pertinent ideological instrument for providing historical legitimacy to the modern ideal of cultural and political inclusivism instilled by the Tanzimat. A new layer of meaning was added to the reading of early Ottoman history by the proponents of late Ottoman reform, propelled by their quest for inventing a suitable dynastic/national past (Ersoy 2007, 129).
The Ottoman Empire carried on the legacy of cultural adaptation from past and neighboring cultures. The integration of Western architectonic elements is only one of the many forms of adaptation that openly supports the argument that civilization was built based on dialogue and mediation. Plurality is a fundamental principle that was carried out throughout the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans introduced new types of buildings after the nineteenth century. Thus Tanzimat led to the reformation of the empire. The goal of these reforms was to modernize the empire and to reinstate social cohesion between people. During that era:

New governmental, educational, commercial and military buildings were introduced in cities, having an effect on the physical expression of their urban textures, both in the capital and the provinces. New city centers and neighborhoods were formed. Domestic architecture and its interior decoration changed according to new styles. The new type of citizen formed by the modernist approach of the period and supported by the regulations of the Tanzimat also needed new social spaces to circulate and to socialize (Tekeli 1980, 36).
Throughout the history of the Ottoman Empire, stylistic and aesthetic developments have seen substantial influences from previous or neighboring civilizations thus setting the scene for the “Ottomanization” of architecture. The intention here is not about focusing on a specific building or a specific historical period but rather to explain how architectural adaptation happened in the Empire and how architecture was perceived as a connector reaching a mature level in both classical and modern periods.

Thus, even though the achievements of Sinan are recognized as constituting the culmination of the mature Ottoman aesthetic, the interpretive lens provided by the Usul seems more sharply focused on the dynastic monuments of the fifteenth century... At odds with the evolutionary scheme of stylistic development proposed in the text, the decorative wonders of the early fifteenth century were privileged (most perceptibly in the plates) over the sixteenth-century paragons of classical perfection and austerity. This ambivalence regarding the period of paradigmatic status in Ottoman architecture was to remain embedded in the writing of art history throughout the late Ottoman period, only to be resolved by modernist republican readings, in which the classical age emerged unsurpassed as the emphasis on decoration was definitively suppressed in favor of tectonics and structure (Ersoy 2007, 130).

As a conclusion, this survey does not aim to evaluate the architecture of the Ottomans but rather to demonstrate how adaptation occurred. During the Tanzimat period, the Ottomans enriched the plurality and versatility of architectural production.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how the context of the current century of ‘Clash of Civilization’ (Huntington) and ‘Architectural Barbarism’ (ISIS) has had multiple adverse effects on architectural mediation in the Islamic World. The political and ideological obstacles accentuate the gap between Islam and the West, leaving little room for understanding Islamic architecture and its civilization.

Civilization, in this context, can be defined through architecture, a physical or material manifestation, and history, a spiritual or mental manifestation of it. Architecture is again the spatial reflection of civilization, whereas
history is the temporal reflection of this complex and metaphysical reality. Despite the different approaches and influences of defining civilization, the different scholars (Toynbee, Elias, Arberry, Sardar, and Ibn Khaldūn) seem to agree that it is a historically complex unit that underpins cultural and spiritual values. This understanding ensures a more balanced approach to architectural mediation.

Each civilization is different, and each one has its system of manifestation in space and time. Islam views the world as a global entity that transcends geopolitical borders to recognize overarching and rich cultural synthesis. In this suspicious and polemic context we live in, it would be fruitful to analyze how globalization has replaced civilization and what impacts it made on architecture and planning in the Islamic world.

Chapter 3 will turn to explore the effects of globalization on architectural spaces and cities in two different parts of the Islamic World: Dubai and Tunis. This analysis aims to discuss how economic globalization, a market-based approach, has hindered architectural mediation between local and global sources of identities, and a passive ‘urge’ to follow the trend of copying to create international cities.
Faleh, Majdi. 2015. Dressing up Dubai. Graphic Illustration. 10 x 30cm.

In this graphic artwork, the application of Islamic geometry on the postmodern facades of the Emirates Twin Towers of Dubai’s financial center, challenges the duality between traditional and modern architecture. Islamic geometry becomes a pastiche to dress up downtowns and to create an attractive image for marketing the product, which is architecture.
3. The Ethical Dilemmas of Globalization in the Architecture of Dubai and Tunis

In a personal interview with professor Larbi Bouayad, he bemoaned the strange and ‘awkward’ character of contemporary Islamic architecture. He also noted the influence of Dubai’s global market on its architecture. Additionally, he used the attribute ‘decadent’ to describe architecture in the Muslim world nowadays. He stated:

Which Islamic architecture are you referring to? It is an Islamic touch on a foreign architecture. Let’s talk about Dubai, where many buildings are empty. There is no life in there. It is driven by a market, money, and oil; oil will be exhausted, so they are looking for other ways to diversify their economy. Whether they are right or wrong, it is a problem of the market. We cannot have an architecture that is independent of the context, meaning that we cannot change a context with architecture, but we change architecture within a changing context. The context in Dubai is that of the globalizing market which will result in the architecture that is “ordered” by the society. Society is Muslim but not Islamic, which is a word that I never use. Today, we have a Muslim architecture that is decadent, and even in Morocco, it is decadent at the Muslim level. Regardless of starchitects and their influence, this architecture remains Muslim, and Muslims deserve it. Your theme can be fascinating if you can define the real identity of Muslim architecture that follows these principles, and all humans can benefit from it, and not only Muslims (Bouayad 2015).

Bouayad, Larbi. 2015. (Professor, Rabat University), in discussion with the author. January 18.

3.1 Introduction

The chapter at hand provides an account of how globalization has affected architectural spaces in Dubai and the Medina of Tunis. This analysis discusses the challenges of Islamic architecture in the realm of globalization and some of its ‘ills’ in a changing world, as Bouayad notes

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7 Dubai’s population clock online tool is an extremely accurate and periodic way of monitoring the dynamic mobility of its residents, as it is updated monthly. As of 9/7/2018, the population of Dubai is 3,085,322, and 71% are expatriates (Dubai Statistics Center 2018). 76% of the UAE’s people are Muslims and 84% are Sunni (CIA 2018b).

8 The introduction of Tunis would benefit from further and recent demographic data. The Tunisian Regional Data Center has only updated statistics from 2015 (world bank) with a population of 11,000,000 to 11,110,000, and with a 0.51% international migrant stock (a person living in a country other than that in which he or she was born) (Statistiques Tunisie 2014). As of 2014, the population of the city of Tunis is 1,056,247 (Statistiques Tunisie 2014), and its Medina had 26,703 people in 2004 and later its population dropped to 21,400 in 2014 (City Population 2017). 99.1% of Tunisians are Muslims (official Sunni) (CIA 2018a) but no exact data is found in relation to Tunis.
in the above interview. In relation to the argument of the thesis, this chapter first offers an understanding of the dominant forms of globalization. Then, it discusses how globalization can hegemonize local sources of architectural identities, in particular in the Islamic world. This chapter also emphasizes that Islamic architecture should move beyond the narrative of loss by understanding the ‘real’ identity of what Bouayad calls Muslim architecture.

Ultimately, this chapter is pivotal as it highlights the problem of architectural mediation and helps to describe how globalization challenges Islamic architecture in the current age and time. The second part of this chapter will discuss two different case studies, namely Dubai and the Medina of Tunis, which exemplify the challenges of globalization discussed in the first part of the chapter. The discussion will examine how globalization has transformed architecture in Dubai, thanks to a thriving oil-based economy in Gulf countries since the 1960s. In relation to the effects of globalization on architecture, the second case study will discuss the challenges faced by the Medina of Tunis since colonization, to explain how globalization has affected traditional cities and hindered architectural mediation. The challenges posed by globalization has set the scene for new strategies, or design recommendations, based on previous architectural experimentations of architects such as architect Hassan Fathy, Egypt’s architect of the poor, and many others. The final two chapters of this thesis will explore contemporary architectural projects exemplifying such design recommendations.

As Islamic architecture and its civilization are contentious concepts, globalization is also one of the most fiercely contested issues in contemporary discussions and academic discourses. In regards to its definition, broad usages of globalization can be distinguished through overlapping, though different concepts including internationalization, liberalization, universalization, Westernization, and deterritorialization. Globalization, I suggest, has acted as a contemporary version of civilization.
that responds to current economic trends and an international system and order.

3.2 The Dominant Forces of Globalization in the Twenty-first Century

In the current century, globalization has become a buzzword used by politicians, researchers, and journalists. Local or national cultures, economies, and politics have become part of one global system, mostly driven by rapid developments of the world economy. In their latest edition of the book *Globalization in Question*, the authors describe the nature of globalization as:

> A fashionable concept in the social sciences, a core dictum in the prescriptions of management Gurus, and a catchphrase for journalists and politicians of every stripe. It is widely asserted that we live in an era in which the greater part of social life is determined by global processes, in which national cultures, national economies, national borders, and national territories are dissolving. Central to this perception is the notion of a rapid and recent process of economic globalization (Hirst, Thompson, and Bromley 2009, 2).

The authors’ thesis is that world market forces have led to an uncontrollable global economy. Globalization is a complex concept that derives from the interaction between different fields of inquiry, particularly economics and social sciences. It is an economic, social, political and geographical phenomenon. Nowadays, global processes are the driving forces towards connectivity and change across societies. The world has become a ‘global village’ that has replaced traditional settlements. These processes of global connectivity and interactivity influence cultures and economies as they eventually increase the interaction between nations, governments, and people. Hirst, Thompson, and Bromley (2009, 2) explain that this phenomenon is driven by a global economy that is impacting and weakening local economic processes. The authors also note that uncontrollable market forces start to emerge leading to new dynamics; nation-states start to lose their power and the global market is then in control of most territories. Transnational corporations (or TNCs), as Hirst, Thompson, and Bromley (2009, 2) note, are the leading organizations of this new dynamic. These companies situated in strategic locations “owe
allegiance to no nation-state and locate wherever on the globe market advantage dictates” (Hirst, Thompson, and Bromley 2009, 2).

Corporate transnational powers operate today in all spheres including the cultural, political, and the economic. Sklair explains that:

In architecture these are the people who own and/or control the major architectural, architecture-engineering and architecture-developer-real estate firms. They are of two, minimally overlapping, types: first, the biggest of these firms, and second, the most celebrated and famous architectural firms. The magazine World Architecture has published annual lists of the top corporations in the industry by fee income and numbers of fee-earning architects employed. In 2004 the biggest firms earned around $200-300 million in fee income and employed around 1000 or fewer architects so, in comparison with the major global corporations they are quite small (Sklair 2006, 24-25).

The dynamics of the market once called the art of architectural creativity, has acquired a new connotation, whereby capital, fame, and names decide for the fate of architectural production in the cities of today. The culture-ideology9 of architectural production reflects the level that buildings, spaces, and architects reached. These actors of the architectural output became fruits or products of the whole system. Economic forces are the core drivers of contemporary globalization, where the latter dictates a new world order impacting cultural and political spheres. The geopolitical scene dominated by the US and the West is at the heart of significant decisions. These decisions have been changing the geopolitics of the world system in the current century, as seen in wars in the Middle East and the paramount access to oil in the same region. Hirst, Thompson, and Bromley (2009, 6) discuss the hegemony of the US as a

9 Culture is another thriving component of this global age. Cultural globalization is incredibly necessary as it has impacts on the cultures of the world through “technology, information, symbols, images, values, and beliefs that can be transmitted across the globe nearly instantaneously. Thanks to satellite communications, computers, and the internet, information possesses a global reach” (Ervin and Smith 2008, 35). In today’s world, cultures come into contact and are thriving thanks to technological tools that support the spread of these cultures. Cultural hybridization is a phenomenon that results from this interaction, whereby cultures change and spread across borders. However, cultural hegemony might be a downside of these cultures coming into contact, where one dominates the other, as the case in colonialism, leading to either fusion or total dominance in specific case scenarios. Modernist consumerist attitudes, leading to better lifestyles, might also lead to a degradation of these lifestyles as hybridization shifts its meanings and becomes known as cultural hegemony.
reflection of globalization, which is relevant to the debate on civilization in the previous chapter.

The authors (2009, 6) state that: “there may be clashes in the international arena, but for us, there are not clashes between such large aggregations as civilizations or fundamentalisms.” Huntington’s ‘clash of civilizations’ is referred to here, along with the USA as a protector of Western civilization and a hegemonic entity, and extreme neoliberalism as a form of fundamentalism (Hirst, Thompson, and Bromley 2009, 6). Neoliberalism promotes open markets and free trade allowing for more investments. Nevertheless, Neoliberal policies can largely influence several sectors including architecture and planning. My only critique of this book, notwithstanding some improvements being made compared to the previous edition of 1996, is that the authors do not engage at all with relevant literature on urban and architectural dilemmas under the influence of globalization.

Despite its adverse effects, globalization, as regarded by neoliberals, can improve economic gain and benefits. They advocate that profit is necessary for societies to thrive, and that globalization is “the ideal economic expression of human freedom and ingenuity” (Ervin and Smith 2008, 30). The authors explain that globalization improves people’s quality and standard of living. By analyzing the views of neoliberals, one should admit that globalization’s economic mechanisms are necessary to push the boundaries of architectural production and planning, such as in the case of Dubai. Despite its shortcomings, globalization is useful as it addresses the economic concerns and ambitions and the market changing needs. Unequal benefits of capitalism, or economic globalization, is necessary as it balances societies, and eventually these problems “work themselves out, leading to a new era of increased wealth and prosperity for all” (Ervin and Smith 2008, 31). Economic incentives are needed for societies to prosper socially, economically, politically, but most importantly culturally.
While Neoliberals provide a perfectionist and utopian vision of globalization, Institutionalists, however, regard globalization as positive but not without criticism. They consider that markets are not able to reach better conditions and efficient public regulation is needed to ensure that globalization also provides stability and benefits (Ervin and Smith 2008, 31). Institutionalists agree that ties among countries can increase interdependency (Keohane and Nye Jr 2000, 106). It is clear that globalization, in the context of organized mechanisms and regulations, would provide governments, states and people with more tools to solve global challenges. Keohane and Nye Jr (2000, 105-106) also refer to globalization as the shrinkage of distances, citing the example of Islam’s rapid spread from Arabia to Indonesia.

In the same manner as civilization, globalization has influenced economic and political networks. The emergence of the concept of globalization took place in the 1960s, and it reflected more interconnectedness in networks and global policy-making (Sparke 2013, 5) with continuous trade liberalization and market competition. In the 1970s and 1980s, there was a crucial shift towards a global economy, where “goods and services are produced and marketed by an oligopolistic web of global corporate networks” (Knox and Taylor 1995, 3). Globalization is increasingly more influential, where ideas of unprecedented, unstoppable, and leveling global change merge. It has become a concept that powerfully shapes political debates and global policymaking (Sparke 2013). Globalization attempts to define the rule of law around the world and tends to be positioned as an overarching framework for politics.

Furthermore, people around the world are virtually linked, without being physically or materially connected. Sparke also defines globalization as a term reflecting the increasing global interconnections (Sparke 2013, 3). This buzzword opens up for a more reflective dialogue on how individuals from different backgrounds are living the human experience in a market culture, and how, as a consequence, they shape their urban environment. A more comprehensive description of the concept defines it as an “unstoppable
juggernaut that necessitates neoliberalism” (Sparke 2013, 27). People’s lives and human experiences, including building their cities, are in a continuous race against the global standards set by corporate-style environments, which can be seen across the globe from Dubai to Jakarta.

Sparke’s book *Introducing Globalization: Ties, Tensions, and Uneven Integration* tends to be more comprehensive than *Globalization in Question*. The latter mostly focuses on economic and political aspects while ignoring the urban and architectural consequences of globalization. In his review of Sparke’s book, Herod (2016, 146-147) explains that the author explored the intersections of globalization and a variety of fields; providing a comprehensive overview and an interesting discussion of space, territoriality, geopolitics, and geo-economics. Upon surveying the book, one also notices that Dubai, a central case study in this thesis, is mentioned several times to show how capitalistic needs shifted the scale of the city into a gigantic global scale (Sparke 2013).

The global is also uncontrollable, and regulations cannot form an obstacle to face its transcending powers. Dominant economic and cultural centers grow with the growth of world economies, where a structured center and a set of exploitative connections develop a network of global cities that later become the new center of control in an international system (Knox and Taylor 1995, 28, Sassen 2002, 146, 2005, 28). My contention is that globalization, being a complex phenomenon, can be a synonym for both integration and dependency on international economy and politics. This phenomenon is an economically-driven trend, and it has multiple effects on how policy makers, decision makers, architects, and planners shape buildings and urban spaces.
3.3 The Challenges of Architecture under the Effects of Globalization

The phenomenon of globalization has affected not only economies around the world but also cities and their urban environments. Over the past few decades, the Islamic world, notably Gulf Countries, have witnessed growing oil-based economies and a sharp metamorphosis of their built environments. The effects of globalization on the scale and image of Gulf cities is described as such: Breath-taking structures, high-rise buildings, and shimmering skyscrapers resemble an artificial pearl created in the middle of a wide gulf and a desert, where nature is forgotten and trapped inside the urban jungle. Large bay windows, great views on the Arab Gulf, and a large-scale transparency are repetitively monotonous aspects of the whole urban scene. In those areas, people are living in a “fly-by” world, defined as a world of brands and capitalism (Faleh 2013, 131).

In the current century, advanced technologies have shaped modern cities rendering their urban cores and buildings more or less the same across cities like Dubai, Doha, and Abu Dhabi. Standard methods of construction, materials, and global and imported styles have limited some of the traditional features of Gulf cities as there is an urge to build global cities meeting the image of the twenty-first century. There are still few attempts among architects and planners to explore new ways of bridging world cities and regional cities in an era of unprecedented changes and waves of technological progress since the 1980s (Lo and Yeung 1998, 1). Technological progress has challenged architects who have to mediate past and present sources of identity. Architects and planners have to adopt new technologies by acting both locally and globally to produce a dominant form of modern development that responds to a world ‘jammed’ with brands and images. Dubai, for instance, is a city of ‘cranes’ (Figure 3-1). Developments are continuously taking place to build higher and bigger, and to produce a spectacular and global architecture. Developing countries are associating economic prosperity with success and thus constructing ‘contemporary’ buildings’ in order to show their modernity, leadership, and innovation.
Increasingly, the architecture of the postmodern city, including Dubai, is a reflection of economic progress. For those working in the field of architecture and real estate development, the city has provided both a resource and a subject for their explorations wherein the city becomes a series of iconic buildings and remarkable developments. As Gospodini (2004, 234) writes, “Throughout the history of urban forms, design innovations in urban space—whether new architectural forms or urban design schemes—appear as an outcome of the economic growth of cities and/or countries”. The architecture of the postmodern city, including Middle Eastern cities (Dubai, Doha, Abu Dhabi), tends to be market-oriented and, as a result, it has increased the development of iconic buildings as well as the number of internationally renowned architects in these countries.

Some of the notable firms or architects who have been working in the Middle East include Zaha Hadid Architects, SOM, HOK, I.M. Pei, KEO
International consultants, Atkins, HKS Architects, Perkins+Will, Wood Bagot, Killa Design, Tabanlioğlu Architects, Samaya Dabbagh, and many others competing to design iconic and innovative buildings. It is by no means clear, however, that a simple turn to some of these firms’ websites or projects in the Middle East, would show that the term ‘icon’ is frequently recurring. Titles include “Daniel Hajjar discusses how sustainability, community and iconic architecture shapes design in the Middle East” (HOK Architects 2017). Other titles include “Qatar Tradition and Culture Inspires Design for World-Class Learning Campus” (Woods Bagot 2018), and “…some insights on innovative sustainability within one of the world’s most iconic cities, Dubai” (KEO International Consultants). Some of these architectural projects eventually attempt to mediate global and traditional sources of identities, or what HOK Architect Daniel Hajjar once termed “creating places”. Therefore, increasing engagement with matters related to architectural mediation has also shaped the work of these starchitects. Hajjar explains:

We have drawn on many influences from the region to create a more ‘classic’ and timeless architecture for generations [sic] to come. It is not about being different for difference’s sake; it is about creating places, buildings and interiors for generations to come. This is what we admire from other global cities, so why would it not apply here? (Hajjar 2017)

However, beyond this attitude of creating icons and ‘respecting’ local traditions, there is a cynical movement of turning architecture into a product of mass media. According to architectural historian and cultural theorist Charles Jencks (2006, 8), large corporations and the global society are forcing architecture to be mediated by mass media (TV, magazines, and international weeklies), by relying on starchitects or what he called the “iconic architect”. Such a shameless approach, as he notes, keeps the media interested. Mediation here seems to transcend sources of identities as it focuses on fame and attention through mass media. This approach, undoubtedly conventional in the field of architecture, is more concerned with the necessity to advertise the commercial product or architecture, and the grand iconic structures of this age and time.
Additionally, Jencks (2006, 3) argues that iconic buildings have replaced monuments in an era of late-capitalism, where architects and their buildings, or what he termed “commercial products”, are competing to get more attention. “The rise of modernization and the constant upheavals of the marketplace” as Jencks (2006, 3-4) points out, led politicians and mayors around the world to ask for and support this new genre of iconic buildings. Jencks also termed this phenomenon “the wow factor in new building” or the “Bilbao Effect” (Jencks 2006, 8). Global society and its large corporations transformed the built environment, in turn leading architecture to be controlled by market forces rather than by different sources of traditional and modern identity. On the surface, mediation seems to be happening, but in reality, a robust economic desire has eroded the boundaries of architectural mediation.

Hall and Barrett (2012, 205) explained that the ‘Bilbao Effect’ has been viewed as successful in making an image within a city and attracting more tourists (Plaza and Haarich 2015, 1460) to this new global and cultural center. However, as is often claimed by contemporary researchers, the “Bilbao effect,” does not benefit the built environment but the real estate industry, profit-making, and marketing (Plaza and Haarich 2015, 1459-60, Plaza, Tironi, and Haarich 2009, 1713). The involvement of “starchitects” in the urban planning and city marketing is crucial marking a new era and enhancing economic upturn (Plaza and Haarich 2015, 1460). In the age of capitalist globalization, architects tend to be preoccupied with the financial market and with generating ‘attractive’ icons. In my formulation, these icons maximize the centrality of the architectural image. Almost any building can be interpreted as an icon but not any building can promote an in-depth reflection of both traditional and modern sources of value in

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10 Since the 1980s, Charles Jencks has written extensively about the realities of postmodernism and how architecture and urban design has dominated the scene leading to a market-oriented built environment. His theories of postmodernism also became famous in the same period, and since then he has been highly critical of both postmodernism and iconic architecture. With respect to these topics, one can read Jencks, Charles. 1980. Late-modern architecture: and other essays. No. 72.038. 6. Rizzoli; More Recent publications about the topic include Jencks, Charles. 2005. The Iconic Building: The Power of Enigma. London: Frances Lincoln. Jencks, Charles. 2002. The New Paradigm in Architecture: the Language of Post-Modernism. New Haven: Yale University Press. This latter book surveys Jacob’s and Venturi’s approaches and considered the new architectural paradigm that changed in the past forty years.
the built environment. ‘Guggenheiming’, a term that I suggest in this discourse, is a form of architectural hegemony that promotes copying and standardization rather than a dialogue of architecture and its context. To understand this standardization, one should observe the striking similarities that exist between Bilbao’s Guggenheim Museum, the Guggenheim Museum in Los Angeles, and the Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum in Minneapolis.

![Image of Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao](image)

Figure 3-2: Faleh, Majdi. 2009. Iconic Architecture of the Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain

The ‘faith’ of the new free-market system has increasingly shaped architecture and the built environment, even in places like the Muslim world where religion has a strong presence. Something has gone fundamentally wrong with the way iconic architecture is produced and with the values surrounding it. It might be argued that new introductions of standardized architecture can contribute to the built environment but because of the lost sense of place, I would maintain that iconic buildings and standardization have been flawed and superficial. Efforts to re-engage with the place, through the built environment, have been flawed as superficial or pastiche. Similar buildings with similar facades, materials, and forms, do little to support the heritage of the region. These iconic
'products' are true technical innovations, but they fail to maintain a strong connection with the local belief system and values, as Jencks explains:

The iconic buildings that have arisen recently in Asia, Africa and the Muslim world often underscore these general points. They appear to have little faith in the iconography and symbolism they sport. Like slogans they hang around, with embarrassment, in the air. In this sense, failed iconic architecture is a very good symbol of failed belief, which is why some people hate the genre. Icons without a supporting iconography are like spots on the skin that signify measles, an unintended betrayal of meaning, a symptom waiting for the doctor’s analysis, often a denial of the very meaning they hope to assert (Jencks 2006, 8).

Today, consumption has turned out to be a fundamental form of daily life. First and foremost, the progress of modern societies has created an environment fully embedded with objects, signs, and interactions relying on market exchanges. The rise of mass consumption society reflects a world with excessive economic processes and services. Even retailers and those who control media promote their businesses through signature architects and iconic buildings (Sklair 2005, 496), and many examples can be seen in Dubai and Doha. Iconic buildings, which have little connection to the site, aim to attract investment for an ‘elsewhere’ context that is not automatically local (Sklair and Gherardi 2012, 64). Since the beginning of the previous century, economic ties and exchanges, notably in architecture and design, redefined how buildings, spaces, and architects interact with the context. A consumption society is a new form of civilization born in the twentieth century, where an economy based approach defines the boundaries of the overall society. Consumption and consumerism become the dominant patterns and shapes the everyday life of humans, their cultures, and their urban spaces.

3.4 Beyond the Narrative of Architectural Loss in the Islamic World: Hybridization as a Form of Architectural Mediation

The emblematic narrative of architectural globalization is dominant with a narrative of loss. Globalization has diminished the quality of architectural production and led to a phenomenon of copying and the loss of architectural identity. This narrative tends to be dominant in the Islamic world, whereby the orientalist reading of the Muslim/Arab mind, exposed
by Edward Said (Said 1979), explains that Islamic civilization reached its apogee in the twelfth century (Elsheshtawy 2004a, 3). This narrative started in the 1970s and was influenced by postmodernism and critical regionalism (Frampton 1983b, a) which focused on reviving the historical dimension of the built environment and ignored modernizing discourses (Elsheshtawy 2013c, 478). Despite holding some truth, such a narrative is counterproductive as it lacks an in-depth analysis of what globalization can do to architecture and cities in the contemporary age.

With the rise of global cities, the forces of architectural globalization can seek either to promulgate indigenous identities or to overshadow them completely (Lewis 2002) depending on architects' and policymakers’ decisions. Different perceptions of what constitutes modern and traditional architecture can even be seen in the famous ‘architectural’ cartoons of professor and architect Roger K.Lewis (Figure 3-3). His comic illustration reflects people’s different perceptions and views of what architecture should be. This cartoon is useful in illustrating the idea that people expect Islamic architecture to look a certain way. Islamic Architecture is seen more as an objet d'art rather than an actual representation of complex layers of history, economy, culture, and society. This research is seeking a more nuanced view of interpretations of Islamic architecture. It seeks to revisit Islam’s architectural riches and tradition while recognizing the roots of the hegemony of globalization.
‘Architectural globalization’ is trapped between two opposing movements, one for globalization and the other one for maintaining tradition, identity, and culture. The movement against globalization seeks to establish traditional links with the past through traditional architecture, repetition of motifs, shapes, and forms that existed for an extended period without modernization. This movement is a supporter of historical connectivity in architecture and the conservation of an existing identity (Lewis 2002). Those for ‘architectural globalization’ endorse the use of new technologies and materials to develop state-of-the-art architectural structures that meet different functional needs. For this movement, it is vital to highlight systemization, flexibility, and interchangeability (Lewis 2002) as fundamental processes of building and shaping the built environment. Reviving Islamic architecture in the twenty-first century continues to be a subject of interest among contemporary scholars from the Islamic World (Omer 2011a, Mahgoub 2008, Asfour 2007, Eldemery 2010). Other scholars from the same region continue to contest this contemporary architectural
approach that legitimizes tradition as the sole solution for architectural mediation (Ghandour 1998). It seeks a balanced approach to globalization and traditional architecture.

The first form of ‘traditional’ movement among those who are against ‘architectural globalization’ aims to “safeguard and promulgate established indigenous architectural traditions, forms, decorative motifs, and technologies. It advocates historical continuity, cultural diversity, and preservation of geographic identity, all symbolized by a particular architectural vocabulary” (Lewis 2002). These tendencies are similar to the orientalist reading of the Islamic city, whereby the Islamic is wholly divorced from the modern context, in which different architectural movements evolved and new architectural experiments took place. Some architects or writers blame modernization, Western culture, and globalization (Mahgoub 2008, Eldemery 2009). Some writers even create links between the loss of traditional values and fundamentalism, in the same way as Huntington, who coined the term, “the Clash of Civilizations” (1993). Because of the speed of modernization in some countries, there has been a profound struggle between imported ideas and traditional values, which even contributed to fundamentalist movements (Saqqaf 1987, 6).

The Arab and Islamic city, as Elsheshtawy (2004a, 3, 2013c, 478) emphasizes, has been evaluated in relation to heritage and tradition with an emphasis on the ‘Islamic’ perspective. Elsheshtawy explains that the works of Al-Hathloul (1981) and Hakim (1986) “could be considered representative in this regard, by attempting to establish a legal framework through which the Moslem city emerged and developed” (Elsheshtawy 2004a, 3). He suggests moving beyond heritage and tradition (Elsheshtawy 2004a, 2013c), but at the same time, he overshadows Hakim’s research on the Mediterranean Urban and Building Codes (Hakim 2008). Hakim explored how Islamic law influenced architecture not only in the Islamic world but also on the Southern shores of Europe (Italy, Greece). Being too polemical about a traditional and an Islamic framework, as Elsheshtawy argues (2004a), is in itself reductive of its religious values. This attitude
reflects the secular attitude of modernity while asking why would someone want the modernity that “cut across all boundaries” including religion (Harvey 1989, 10-11).

In the Maghreb (Northern Africa), an eclectic architectural movement, known as Arabisance (Kenzari 2006) bridged the gap between traditional and modern architecture. This architectural style of modern Islamic architecture adopted traditional Islamic architectural vocabulary and colonial heritage in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco at the turn of the twentieth century. Arabisance was politically charged (Kenzari 2006, 80), especially in Tunisia, as it attempted to establish an alliance with the French colonialists. A marriage of formal Islamic architectural elements was established with formal colonial forms of buildings. After the Second World War, architects opted for spatial compositions and more rational and functional architectural elements resulting from careful analysis and in-depth study of local architecture.

The second movement of architectural globalization promotes the use of modern technologies, and it focuses on standardization. Lewis describes it as such:

> Invention and dissemination of new forms using new technologies and materials in response to changing functional needs and sensibilities. It places a premium on systematization, flexibility, and interchangeability. As commerce, transportation, communication, and information become globalized, it argues for internationalized, innovative architecture transcending local conventions and constraints (Lewis 2002).

In architectural history, the international style\(^\text{11}\) follows these similar principles of systematization and standardization, mass production, economies of scale, functional logic, and aesthetic composition that lacks ornament and style (Lewis 2002). This architectural movement seems to promote architectural globalization that is mainly in favor of a global culture of production (Elsheshtawy 2013b, Kanna 2013, Kanna 2011, Mitchell 2013, Davidson 2008). Standardization can be beneficial at times.

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\(^{11}\) The international style in architecture appeared between the 1920s and the 1930s and it was a dominant architectural style until the 1970s.
In Tunisia, architects Jason Kiriacopoulos and Bernard Zehrfuss designed standardized plans of schools, markets, and dispensaries in the 1940s. One such example is the Minima House that allowed for circulation between the rooms without accessing the courtyard (Kenzari 2006, 83). “It was a matter of adapting these projects to the Tunisian way of life and tradition, and of responding realistically to the economy and productive limitations of this period”, as Kenzari (2006, 83) notes.

A global culture of commerce and design have driven the architectural production into a systemized entity, where buildings are standardized, and architects are creating attractive icons available to all and everyone. Architectural styles can be imported, exported, transferred, and adapted in any given geographical context on this planet. The rise of this internationalism gave way to a different architecture of the contemporary age that is neither international nor traditional but somewhat experimental. So how about Dubai’s laboratory of ‘extreme’ architectural experiments?

3.5 Dubai’s Architectural Globalization as a Phenomenon of the 21st Century

3.5.1. The Birth of a Fairy-tale in the Industrial Age

In the sixth and seventh centuries, Dubai’s population was nomadic because of the tropical desert climate in the area. During the rule of the Umayyad Caliphate in the seventh century, Islam expanded to this land. From the seventeenth century, the creek or Khor of Dubai supported the city to become one of the most thriving ports in the Gulf region, despite its harsh climatic conditions (Ramos and Rowe 2013, 20). This strategic piece of land was a global hub for boats traveling through the Indian Ocean for trade. In 1833, as a response to tribal fights in the region, eight hundred members of the Abu Al Fasala tribe left Abu Dhabi and settled in an area between Sharjah and Abu Dhabi (Ramos and Rowe 2013, 21), known today as Dubai. Along the creek, the pearl and fishing industry evolved gradually, and Dubai became a strategic center in the Gulf area. On the history of the development in Dubai, Davidson explains the context of its recent evolution as follows:
In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the tiny settlement of Dubai metamorphosed from little more than a fishing and pearl diving base into a fully-fledged Sheikhdom with political stability, an established ruling dynasty, and a key role to play in a strategically significant region (Davidson 2008, 9).

Strategically, Dubai was an important port and a hub due to its stable history and steady economy. Dubai relied continuously on fishing and sailing. In 1929, the global depression impacted the city’s economy, and in the 1930s it was able to leverage its geographic importance by selling oil exploration concessions and developing infrastructure (Ramos and Rowe 2013, 23). Later in the 1950s, as Ramos and Rowe (2013) show, oil exploration attracted different investors, and this helped to generate a better economy.

Davidson (2008) explains that by the 1980s, the production of oil increased significantly following the discovery of different onshore fields including Hatta. In 1991, the city was able to use the cheap energy and to produce heavy industries. In the twenty-first century, the metamorphosis of Dubai transformed the city’s urban pattern reflecting a mosaic of power and fame. Nowadays, Dubai has become a real hub for travelers, business investors, and workers.

Emirates Airlines website describes Dubai as the fascinating city that achieved several architectural dreams to encourage visitors and investors. It is a national pride and it is also:

...one of only a few locations worldwide where iconic architecture is not only encouraged, but actively pursued. As long as it is eye-catching, it seems that anything goes, from the sublime to the outrageous, and sometimes a combination of the two. What is interesting is Dubai’s extraordinarily short building cycle. At less than 50 years old, Dubai is remaking its own image faster than any other city in the world. Nearly a quarter of all the world’s construction cranes are hard at work here, leaving the beholder with plenty of iconic architecture for sightseeing (Emirates 2017).

Dubai’s icons are the culmination of a historic celebration of its recent economic and architectural achievements. Iconic architectural production is essential to understand its symbolism and its development around the world following a Western European and American model. With
new materials and advanced techniques helping to build faster and cheaper, iconic architecture fascinated people and architects since the industrial revolution.

3.5.2. Iconic Architecture and Capitalism

In the context of the Islamic world, Dubai seems to be a successful architectural experiment of the modern age. In less than fifty years, Dubai has transformed its nomadic culture of cattle herders into a highly capitalist culture. The city has become a hub for entertainment, research, universities, architectural creativity, and comprehensive planning projects. Dubai is indeed the new Las Vegas of the Middle East. On the topic of iconic architecture, iconicity is defined as follows:

Analytically, iconicity in architecture may be seen not simply as a judgment of excellence or uniqueness but, like celebrity in popular culture, as a resource in struggles for meaning and, by implication for power. Under conditions of capitalist globalization, iconicity is a key component of what I have termed the culture-ideology of consumerism, the underlying value system of capitalist globalization (Sklair 2006, 36).

Transnational trends transcend national boundaries to redefine borders, economies, societies, and architecture. The architectural icon becomes a symbol of power and a celebration of transnational powers. Architecture is then a translation of a new age of capitalistic architectural supremacies within place and space. Icons move as ideas move across borders, and generate new cultural values that are temporary, symbolic, but much more likely to highlight abstract and static images. However, to which extent does an icon influence architectural production, and how is contemporary architecture being more iconic than ever?

One of the most significant architectural achievements in Dubai is Burj Khalifa which is the tallest building in the world. In its official website, it is promoted as a world-class destination and a unique masterpiece of the city of Dubai. The UAE based real estate agency, Emaar, compares the building to internationally known skyscrapers (Figure 3-4) to show how exceptional it is. “Not only is Burj Khalifa the world’s tallest building, it has also broken two other impressive records: tallest structure, previously held
by the KVLY-TV mast in Blanchard, North Dakota, and tallest free-standing structure, previously held by Toronto’s CN Tower” (Emaar 2016).

Figure 3-4: Faleh, Majdi. 2014. Burj Khalifa and Surroundings in Dubai, UAE

Entertainment, spectacle, and consumption are central themes that justify the presence of this building and others while promoting its importance in the modern age. El Sheshtawy (2013b) describes the discourse of modernity that influenced architectural production in Dubai, and sets up some of the contradictions of Dubai’s global ‘brand’. He writes:

The discourse of modernity plays a prominent role in justifying the construction of such a gigantic building. By deciding to place this tower in Dubai, the city proclaims itself to be truly modern, irrespective of the fact that the building is designed by an American firm, constructed by a Korean construction company, with construction work carried out by Asian laborers, and with most of the apartments and hotels purchased by an expatriate clientele. Despite these global orientations, the developers felt the need to contextualize the project and give it an “Arabian” touch, whether through some imaginary conceptual direction or the creation of pseudo-Arabian districts within the overall development. Finally, this takes place within a discursive rather than an actual space (Elsheshtawy 2013b, 111-112).
The development company, EMAAR (2014), describes the project as the “vertical city that defines the can-do spirit of Dubai”. It also describes it as “a global icon that pushes the frontiers in design, architecture, and construction”. The building has a mixture of international features that make it unique. Verticality emphasizes the presence of the skyscraper in this ‘orchestra.’ The image of an icon is borrowed from a different context and applied to fit the context of Burj Khalifa and the culture of constructing and promoting buildings at Emaar. The developers mostly relied on words to convince the public about the Islamic influence of their building, which is in reality absent. The discourse of modernity and globalization is present here, and it calls for an evaluation of the mediating role of architecture in Islamic and Arab societies because this kind of mediation is trapped between the ‘too traditional’ and the overly modern. Words and images define architectural icons. Architecture cannot establish itself independently unless described alongside fame, aesthetic components, and symbols.

The architecture of the fastest growing cities on earth, including Dubai, has been borrowing architectural icons from other cultures and applying them to fit the context of new global cities. The symbol loses its special meaning, and fame becomes a central pattern to justify its presence in a global society. Al Kazim art deco Twin Towers, completed in 2008 in Dubai, are reminiscent of the Chrysler Building in New York City. By observing its architecture, the building form is a borrowed icon from the Big Apple that found its place in the heart of the desert. Another example is SOM designed Cayan Tower described by Fedele (2013) as “The unveiling of the world’s tallest twisted tower in Dubai highlights the growing trend toward twisted forms in skyscraper architecture. The latest milestone in twisted architectural marvel comes through the inauguration of Cayan Tower in Dubai”. This building’s structure reminds us of the Turning Torso Tower designed by starchitect Santiago Calatrava in the city of Malmo in Sweden in 2005. These buildings are examples, among many others, of how architectural icons can be ‘borrowed and transported’.
Besides iconic architecture, the new culture of ‘cut and paste’ was described by architect Khalid Asfour (1998) as a problem and as a cultural crisis phenomenon, where images are moved from one culture to another without a sufficient understanding of what they meant. Commenting on the shift that Egypt experienced during the nineteenth century, Khaled Asfour claims that:

For the first time in the Arab world, a process of ‘cutting and pasting’ was introduced as a cultural mechanism. The process involves cutting ideas from its [Sic] original cultural field, the European, and pasting them with their logic in the new field, the Arabian. In the process, there is the assumption that the new field has similar cultural predicaments and would yield similar results upon transfer of ideas (Asfour 1998, 53).

This new and foreign culture of passive borrowing is extant in Arab and Islamic cities, where European or American standards tend to be the
pattern to follow creating a series of architectural icons in the urban space. This process might also mean success and progress of architectural ingenuity, for policymakers and architects who hopelessly try to respond to foreign influences. This process creates absurd designs 'cut' from different contexts. The process of cutting and pasting involves imaging and not much thinking. This process includes image selecting, image cloning, and image recycling.

This case of ‘recycling images’ can be observed in Ibn Battuta Mall in Dubai (Figure 3-6). This building is designed to mimic all architectural styles based on the travels of Ibn Battuta. Even “some souqs in Dubai do not use wind catchers (barjeels in Arabic) for natural ventilation and are air-conditioned. With exposed structural elements, these souqs serve as replicas for cultural consumption and aesthetics rather than functional reasons” (Arefi 2015, 242). Perhaps the designers of these malls should have studied relevant engineering research on the function of windcatchers in courtyards. “Generally, wind-catchers are attached to the ceiling to get the free atmospheric air and divert into the indoor” (Benkari, Fazil, and Husain 2017, 396).

The ‘recycling’ of images is not an efficient process to achieve architectural mediation, as it tends to be dominated either by traditional (or regional) patterns or by modern ones. In contrast to ‘passive’ copying, Rifat Chadirji’s12 architecture has shown a comprehensive understanding of traditional architecture (including Arab and Islamic) as well as modern architecture. Chadirji (1986, 49) emphasized in his work that imitation cannot be compatible with the fundamental thrust of the mechanical-aesthetic mode. In 1986, he received the Chairman’s Award for marrying modernity and tradition (Bartsch 2005, 119). In the Tobacco Monopoly Headquarters (1966), Chadirji reconciled between vertical and cylindrical forms of the façade and ‘abstract’ forms of Mashrabiyyas made of brick.

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12 Rifat Chadirji (1926) is an Iraqi architect, author, and activist. He devoted his life to the development of an architecture that brings Iraqi traditions and modern technology together. In 1986, Chadirji was awarded the Aga Khan Award for Architecture for his work reconciling Islamic architecture and contemporary architectural features.
or concrete (Figure 3-7). In his architecture, Chadirji relies on ‘image abstraction’; it is a mixture of cannons of Cubism and De Stijl as well as traditional elements, or what Asfour (1998, 54) termed Regional Modernism. Chadirji’s synthesis of international concepts and traditional abstract forms did not copy or imitate. His architecture “excluded simplistic imitations of traditional features and primitive technologies” (El-Shorbagy 2010, 20).
A form of Neo-modernism has dominated the Arab world after the neoclassicism architectural era. This same trend applies to the Islamic world, as both contexts overlap historically and architecturally. Architect and researcher Khaled Asfour explains that “the Arab world was submerged in Modernism or rather a crude image of Modernism” (Asfour 1998, 53). A Jigsaw puzzle of architectural mixtures has become a pattern in many parts of the Arab and Islamic world, including Dubai, where cities are racing to reach a ‘global’ image in the shortest time possible. The hegemonic pattern of images “becomes an intrinsic value of the form that does not change with time or place” (Asfour 1998, 53) and this attitude still shapes architecture and cities of the Islamic world today.

Acculturation of traditional Islamic and Modern Western cultures resulted in noticeable changes at the social, cultural, and personal levels. The focus has become centered around lines and forms that imitate a borrowed yet strange image. This form-based approach resulted in a mechanical distribution of structures and a simplistic vision of the arrangement of
spaces; later the hegemony of the image has become a conventional pattern to follow (Asfour 1998, 53).

Asfour (1998) explains that superpowers of the nineteenth century led other nations to accept a natural transfer process, whereby architectural production was reduced to a simple ‘copying’ and a ‘pastiche of borrowing’ mixed with great excitement. The metamorphosis of architecture is taking place thus leaving a restricted space to tradition. Confusion becomes the pattern, and Arab and Muslim nations disregard their traditional heritage.

3.5.4. A City of the Superlative, a City of Spectacles, and a City of Appearances

The literature on Dubai contains mixed views on the excess of capitalism and the consumerism of the architectural image. Andraos and Wood (2013, 44) explain that the city grows faster than the billboards advertising it, with excessive fantasies and a high number of the world’s cranes. Both authors explain that Dubai is a reflection of “our celebrity-obsessed culture that has seemingly extended stardom to cities: every move is scrutinized, recorded, dissected, and replayed, rendering Dubai a site of both fantasies and anxieties” (Andraos and Wood 2013, 36). It is, indeed, a city that captures people through its image. Kanna (2013) explains that the city relied on its photogenic image to become a haven for entrepreneurial developments. This wannabe city is “an avant-garde experiment in globalization” (Kanna 2013, 6). Dubai is a “glitzy experiment without limits” (Kanna 2013, 7).

As Sheikh Muhammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum once claimed, Dubai’s overwhelming experience is a translation of this ‘wannabe’ character attempting to change the future to avoid being captive of the past. In their website, EMAAR also claims that the Burj Khalifa is “a place where old meets the new”. Andraos and Wood (2013, 43) consider such confusion between the old and the new endemic. This phenomenon is a reflection of a resonance style of the twenty-first century, which
samples elements and motifs from sources as disparate as old Hollywood movies and archeological findings and combines them with flights of architectural fancy on the part of corporate designers whose sole task is to channel a vernacular that has never existed. The result is something reminiscent of the past that resonates with a public (Andraos and Wood 2013, 43-44).

Dubai is created to deliver a branded architectural experience through images and fictive scenes rather than urban and social realities. In my view, Dubai presents an assemblage and collage of various planning and architectural patterns that have also changed the urban setting in other cities around the world. The ‘cut and paste' culture has been influencing both architecture and planning in emerging ‘modern' cities of the Middle East. Dubai’s built environment can be described using the following attributes; the tallest, largest, widest, biggest, and the coolest buildings. Architecture reflects an image, a brand, an icon, and a marketable product.

Marxist theorist Guy Debord (1994, 29) talks about modern societies with dominant modes of consumption in his book The Society of the Spectacle. He explains that:

The spectacle corresponds to the historical moment at which the commodity completes its colonization of social life. It is not just that the relationship to commodities is now plain to see — commodities are now all that there is to see; the world we see is the world of the commodity...With the advent of the so-called second industrial revolution, alienated consumption is added to alienate production as an inescapable duty of the masses.

Debord suggests that modern societies embraced a passive trend, where citizens are following the tendencies of commodities without necessarily being critical to their changing environment. In Dubai, the spectacle is highly dominant through buildings, streets, superficial islands, and malls. All these urban elements come together to strengthen the idea of commodity and to provide the consumer with the best experience. Buildings, parks, highways, roads, and even billboards are all actors of this planned orchestral experience. Whether the orchestra is harmonious or not, that is another issue to tackle. Elsheshtawy (2008b, 166) considers that Debord’s focus transcends mass media to cover the built environment. As claimed
by Debord (1994, 42-43), "...the spectacular logic of the automobile argues for a perfect traffic flow entailing the destruction of the old city centers, whereas the spectacle of the city itself calls for these same ancient sections to be turned into museums". The city, as in the case of Dubai, is trapped between its obsessive desires to celebrate the spectacle on one side, and its obligations to protect its heritage on the other. Elsheshtawy (2008b, 166) explains that the many buildings in Dubai create its character, focusing on superlatives (the tallest, the biggest) without taking into consideration the local context. The phenomenon of superlatives is a result of "a fragmented, splintered urban fabric. Its widely discussed megaprojects seem to exist in a parallel universe within an endless desert-scape" (Elsheshtawy 2008b, 166).

As the city is focused on commodity and production, it becomes the end product. The city also becomes self-centered, where the vast highways, theme parks, themed buildings, and tall towers, are essential products of the urban commodity and planning of the city. This planning experience results in by-products or secondary products, as well, where cities’ developments are developed, fragmented, and then replicated in other parts of the city. As image matters, it is at the center of designing the megastructures in cities such as Dubai.

3.5.5. Planning Processes in Dubai: Prototyping, Amplification, Replication, and unsustainable territories

Dubai’s diverse economy helped the city to grow faster over the period of fifty years (Ramos and Rowe 2013, 18). As previously mentioned, the city used to be a peaceful harbor for trade and commerce. However, with the discovery of oil in the 1970s, the peak took place abruptly, and the city expanded. Davidson explains the historical journey of Dubai by saying that:

In the nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries the tiny settlement of Dubai metamorphosed from little more than a fishing and pearl diving base into a fully-fledged sheikhdom with political stability, an established ruling dynasty, and a key role to play in a strategically significant region (Davidson 2008, 9).
The urban development of Dubai did not necessarily follow any specific pattern, nor did it build a logic based on a historical pattern that grew around the creek of Dubai. Architecture professors Ramos and Rowe (2013) highlight how replication informed Dubai’s planning by stating that:

Far from conforming to an overall master plan, each specific swath of development has its own internal logic and environmental character, the sum of which appear as a yet-to-be-completed mosaic. Consciously or not, over the past twenty years or more, once a successful form for a particular type of development arose, it became a prototype for subsequent developments of a similar kind. Often, during the process of replication, aspects of the prototype were also amplified, usually to meet higher demands (Ramos and Rowe 2013, 18-19).

Amplification, replication, and prototyping are the processes that informed Dubai’s planning pattern. Ramos and Rowe (2013, 29) describe Port Rashid as an image of the massive Jebel Ali port; the Dubai World Trade Center reflects Burj Dubai, the Dubai International Airport mirrors the image of the newly built Al Maktoum airport, and Palm Jumeirah is a reflection of the World Island. Each development is a copy of a smaller development, which gets processed, replicated, scaled up, amplified, inserted, and then advertised. Elements to replicate can be chosen incorrectly as in the case of the Islands (Ramos and Rowe 2013, 32). Such planning strategy focuses on copying similar developments elsewhere in Dubai with little connection between their urban fabric.

The process continues to cover other areas including its shopping centers. “These developments are characteristic for their scale and an exaggerated and heightened use of themes. The meaning behind this becomes clearer when we examine the marketing campaigns that are involved in some of these projects” (Elsheshtawy 2008b, 169). Indeed, the ‘copy and paste’ process described by Khaled Asfour (1998) does not only apply to architecture but also to the planning of different swaths of the city.

The development regime of Dubai reflects a frenzy to build and expand while disregarding the existing ‘old’ rules of planning. Andraos and Wood (2013, 37) reflect on how Dubai rejected the “burdensome old rules of master planning, zoning, and the building of infrastructure” leading to the construction of more iconic buildings. Iconic buildings and developments include Emirates Twin Towers (Figure 3-10), as well as specialized cities including Media City, Internet City, and Medical City. The Reliance on what Andraos and Wood call “peak urbanism”, or a city with intense physical nodes with no connected urban fabric, created zones of intense activity vertically and horizontally. These zones of intense activities come in the form of themed development, private and with clear borders. Small villas, dirt roads, and commercial activities are trapped in the middle of mega developments (Andraos and Wood 2013, 37).

One should compare this type of urbanism with the objectives of Dubai’s 2020 Master Plan. The latter is inspired by the vision of Sheikh Muhammad, the ruler of Dubai, and focuses on creating a global hub and a gateway to the world. In fact, “the plan covers the Dubai Emirates territories including offshore area within the 12 nautical miles, existing urban area, land committed for mega real estate projects, and desert and rural territory excluding Hatta area” (Municipality 2018). The intensity of ‘peak urbanism’ seems to continue in the next two years and Dubai’s excessive planning seems to focus on prototyping generic and mega suburban and globally-oriented developments.
Despite the risks of prototyping and replication on the urban scale of Dubai, these processes can enhance the flexibility and speed of the urban production in the city. Dubai can be an urban laboratory for architectural production, and such prototypes can offer an opportunity for testing leading to more knowledge and a straightforward application. A tall tower like Burj Khalifa can also lead to “sufficient amplitude for considerable exploration of more detailed matters of shape and appearance” (Ramos and Rowe 2013, 31). One can suggest that such advantages of a somewhat confusing process can be beneficial for architectural mediation if architects and planning departments apply them carefully and consider local codes that respect the environment.

The planning of large parts of contemporary Dubai principally relied on copying, replicating, scaling up, amplifying, and then inserting the developments within the city and at different locations. Copying is not necessarily a matter of choice or forgetfulness, but architects and policymakers need to approach it from a historical, social, and cultural perspective. Dubai, a millennium city of high-rises, rapidly developed its superstructures, as many other cities in the world did. On Dubai, Architect Douglas Kelbaugh (2012, 84) writes:

Dubai, a modernist city of superhighways, superblocks and super high-rises, rapidly developed a disconnected pattern of homogenous enclaves that has served to limit physical accessibility, especially on public transit and foot, as well as to undermine the inherent vibrancy and sustainability of the compact, complex, connected, and complete urbanism of gridded Manhattan.

The ‘Manhattan of the desert’ is described as the disconnected, the undefined, and the unsustainable. The story of Dubai is similar to that of Los Angeles in 1877. LA was a small pueblo or village, with a limited population that started growing at the turn of the twentieth century giving birth to little population pockets. Shanghai too used to be a small fishing village, and it grew suddenly to become a hub for skyscrapers and investors. Similarly, within sixty years, Dubai has changed entirely from a tiny fishing village into an urban metropolis that is growing in different directions claiming both the land and the sea.
Credit and capital played essential roles in its expansion and growth. Dubai relied on oil to finance its projects, but it also tried to diversify its economy, while its budget is reaching a deficit of US $681 million in 2017, the first since the financial crisis of 2009 (Arab News 2016). The city also borrowed massive foreign capital to urbanize and to develop large-scale projects (Elsheshtawy 2010a, 30, Bloch 2010, 945, Botz-Bornstein 2012, 4). When Dubai’s financial crisis happened in 2008, many of its large construction projects were delayed or canceled, some of them mentioned before as being replicated and scaled up, and as a result, the whole of Dubai was affected, but most particularly its proposed expansion to the south towards the Abu Dhabi border, as large-scale extensions to Jebel Ali port, some work on the new Al-Maktoum International Airport and an associated ‘aviation community’, Dubai World Central, and the huge residential and mixed-use communities Dubai Waterfront and Arabian Ranches were all put on hold, as were innumerable smaller developments all over the rest of the city (Bloch 2010, 947-948).

Despite Dubai’s vulnerability to economic pressure, governments and real estate agencies continue to work together to expand the ‘development’ of the city (Worley 2016, Gulf News 2017). The city has become a series of buildings that are built on different lots with little if any connection. One of the planning issues that remains in a city like Dubai is its non-mixed use developments. A traveler or an architect can also notice two trends of urban growth. Residential homes and neighborhoods are continuously growing horizontally on one side, and skyscrapers and high-rises are growing vertically along Sheikh Zayed road that leads to Sharjah and Abu Dhabi. One is trying to dominate the other, as an image of peak urbanism, and interstitial space is lost in between.

Furthermore, architectural expression and dialogue are subdued. Kelbaugh (2012, 86) explains that these buildings do not necessarily take into account the different levels of contexts including the ground context, thus not enhancing the quality of the urban space. The author compares the buildings along Sheikh Zayed Road to perfume bottles (Figure 3-11) competing for attention, disregarding the cultural and geographical context, making the urban space alienating and scaleless (Kelbaugh 2012,
As explained before, the development of urban lots in Dubai is not focused on mixed-use developments, but rather on developing different densities, uses, and building forms here and there.

It is as if one is building and storing buildings till other buildings join them to fill the gap between them. In her book The Death and Life of Great American Cities, Jane Jacobs discusses the idea of walkability, mixed-use, as well as the idea of short blocks. She writes: “...frequent streets and short blocks are valuable because of the fabric of intricate cross-use that they permit among the users of a city neighborhood” (Jacobs 1961, 186). The city’s blocks are long causing more traffic congestion and less walkable spaces. A short urban block offers more opportunities for ease of access, less car-oriented environments, and more opportunities for solar and wind exchange. Dubai’s history starts in Deira (Figure 3-12), a neighborhood at the heart of the city, where narrow streets and alleys remind the traveler the old history of Islamic cities. Deira is the place where businesses meet social life and shops meet traditional housing and mosques. Mixed-use is at the heart of this diverse traditional settlement. Such ideas, if implemented in Dubai, can balance the mediation between traditional architecture and modern urban planning.
3.5.6. A New Global City on the Shores of the Arabian Gulf?

Dubai is a series of iconic small ‘cities,’ and a kaleidoscope of cities within a city (Elsheshtawy 2004c). Dubai has a concentration of new developments such as Burj Khalifa, Burj Al Arab, The Palm, Jumeirah, the World, Media city, Medical city, and all the malls that make it a city of spectacles. The city is a different version of a Disney Land or an exclusive reproduction of a Lego village. The urban components of Dubai are claiming new territories under the name of hybridity. The city combines a pastiche of images to claim its hybridity and global presence. Dubai’s ambitious projects are changing its built environment. The city is described through its ambitions and projects, which despite being formally hybrid, highlight the downside of globalization (Elsheshtawy 2004b, 191).

The concept of ‘Dubaization’\(^{13}\) is driven by the development of large real-estate projects, which are driven by the culture of the image. In a world dominated by intensive acculturation between images and symbols, the image becomes the goal and the symbol of a superlative city. Images are copied horizontally as plans and swaths, and vertically as buildings and facades. Buildings and small ‘city-pockets’ or villages are exclusively unique and exorbitantly intriguing. The dimension of these entities or buildings exceeds the human dimension, and it excludes certain social groups who do not have full access to such facilities. The superlative becomes the norm. Consequently, the city is substantially claiming new

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\(^{13}\) Yasser Elsheshtawy introduced the term “Dubaization” in 2004 to show the influence of Dubai on the urban discourse. Synonyms include Gulfication (by reference to Gulf countries) and spectacular urbanism.
territories. Gated neighborhoods, as in American suburban nations, are reproduced in Dubai but at a larger scale. Hotels are also gated neighborhoods, and Malls are gated commercial neighborhoods cut off whether by choice or by obligation. Their size, as in the case of Dubai mall, cuts the building from its environment. Artificial islands are also cut off from the mainland, and they are claiming new territories in the sea such as the case of World Islands or Palm Islands. In this context of globalization and wannabe cities, it would be relevant to compare and contrast Dubai with other gradually formed settlements such as the Medina of Tunis.

3.6 Globalization Challenges of the Medina of Tunis: Colonization, Independence, and Tourism

3.6.1. A Chaotic Enclave During Colonization

The Medina\textsuperscript{14} of Tunis has seen many challenges similar to Dubai. It was established in the seventh century around the year 698 and evolved gradually to cover different areas of the city to acquire a more complex urban fabric throughout its history. The Medina is a well-established example of Islamic Architecture as it has survived into the twenty-first century while exemplifying architectural mediation between its past eras. The Medina of Tunis was one of the wealthiest Medinas during the Hafsid dynasty (twelfth to sixteenth century) (UNESCO). It is also an enclave that “is not only rich in a great variety of religious monuments but also the site of the most interesting domestic architecture in North Africa” (Micaud 1978, 431). It would be beneficial to analyze how the Medina\textsuperscript{15} has negotiated between local and global sources of value under the effect of historical, political, and cultural dynamics. In particular, this section will focus on the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Micaud (1978, 431) supports the idea of the uniqueness of the medinas while describing the medinas of the Islamic world as a “discrete part of the urban fabric which, while adapting somewhat to a larger milieu, still stands

\textsuperscript{14} The Medina with a capital M will be used to refer to the Medina of Tunis. Medina or medinas will refer to other North African Arab-Islamic cities.
apart as a striking testament to a peculiarly local way of life”. In the medinas, a historical core reflects the image of a shared heritage, which transcends the historical object and its material substance that stood there for centuries. This heritage is more about learning from the dynamic process that shaped the settlement socially and culturally than about imitating stones, mortar, and geometry.

Historically, Islam did not prescribe specific architectural design guidelines, but it has established a system of values and behaviors that generated site-specific and culturally-appropriate models for shaping space. In other words, this religion provided a “matrix of behavioral archetypes which, by necessity, generated correlated physical patterns” (Bianca 2000, 24). The medina’s value owes to the specificity of its religious and cultural values within its site and the architectural and planning response delivered by its architects. Micaud (1978, 431) emphasizes the importance of revisiting the properties of ancient cities and using them in our modern cities. He also adds that too many architects today focus on the formal and material aspects of architecture rather than “the abstract ordering principles” of ancient cities. Alexander (1965, 58) in Micaud (1978, 431) points out this dilemma by stating that it is essential to understand the deep meanings of the medinas. He writes:

Architects or city planners fail to inject new life in the city because they limit themselves to an imitation of the material substance of old cities; they fail completely to penetrate the secrets of the intimate nature of old cities.

During the colonial period (1882-1956), the Medina of Tunis was the settlement and the commercial hub for Muslims and non-Muslims in the area. Unfortunately, this place had a negative image due to diseases and political instability, which, I suggest, are a result of globalization or colonialism. Several liberation movements led by intellectuals and youth against the French colonizers took place inside the Medina of Tunis. This enclave also accommodated several ethnicities since the 1930s; that included Europeans, Jews, new rural migrants, and the Tunisois or the natives of Tunis (Micaud 1978, 434). Given its strategic location and its
importance, the French colonials settled nearby and started building their European orthogonal city on the edges of the Medina. This political and urban dominance by the French created tensions with this Medina as Tunisians resisted. It was also home to the Liberal Neo Destour Party\textsuperscript{16} (Micaud 1978, 435) and different youth resistance movements against the Colonials.

This image of the Medina as a symbol of resistance and change is still present in the collective memory of architecture and citizens. In fact, these political uprisings were an opportunity for its empowerment. The Medina continued to be a source of friction which led the French to build their city next to it. They co-opted the old Turkish Kasbah around the Medina as their administrative center and replaced the ramparts with circular boulevards to access the Kasbah ministries (Micaud 1978, 435). Micaud (1978, 435-436) explains that the latter decision was one of the fatal mistakes made by the French because the Medina could not expand anymore. These events led to the first phase of marginalization and tension between these ‘dual’ cities namely the Islamic and the European. The mediation between their urban fabric was interrupted due to political circumstances and a desire to hegemonize the area.

Later, Tunisian nationalism established by the first president Habib Bourguiba resisted colonial powers. It also created an identity that reintegrated Tunisia neither in the Orient nor the Occident, but rather a shared reformist current that Bourguiba aimed for to help Tunisia find its place in the modern world (Poncet 1974, 249). After Tunisia gained its independence in 1956, defining its identity became critical. The Tunisois began to move towards the European suburbs (Carthage, La Marsa). The Medina’s destruction seemed imminent. On December 17, 1960, Bourguiba organized an international competition to solve the problem with, fifty-four

\textsuperscript{16}In 1962, Clement Henry Moore wrote about the part that was established by president Habib Bourguiba. Moore describes the political party as the only mass party in the Arab world. It was started in 1934 to oppose French domination that appealed to the masses and the educated Tunisian elite. Noteworthy study by Moore, Clement Henry. 1962. “The Neo-Destour Party of Tunisia: A Structure for Democracy?” World Politics 14 [3]: 461-82. doi:10.2307/2009363.
projects being submitted to a jury that included the famous Tunisian architect Olivier-Clement Cacoub (Meddeb 2012, 172).

From building a structure over the Medina (Figure 3-13) to building one underneath it, the different design proposals seemed unethical as they would undoubtedly lead to the destruction of the Medina. The colloquium organized in 1961 “has been remembered as an international competition for the opening of the medina to traffic” (Micaud 1978, 436). These rather destructive ideas do not aim to revisit the architecture of this Medina, a socio-cultural representation of Muslim society, and does not mediate between the traditional and the modern sources of value in the built environment. Such destructive and marginalizing approaches reflect another form of the ‘narratives of loss’ that were previously described in the case of Dubai. In a postcolonial context, the proposal was an earlier instance of the challenges of modernization. Such attending practices as master design competitions could have come with their often destructive aspects.

Figure 3-13: Faleh, Majdi. 2017. 3D Illustration of the International Ideas of Rethinking the Medina of Tunis, Tunisia

Their poor proposals demonstrate the risk that the profession has been facing in Tunisia. The lack of architectural ethics could lead to an urban
and architectural catastrophe, thus planners and architects should understand the social and cultural impacts of their solutions. Political decisions also inform the architectural practice as they emanate from the government and its public institutions.

### 3.6.2. A Challenging Urban Entity During and After the 1956 Independence

The establishment of ASM (Association of Safeguarding the Medina) in 1967 was a political decision that shaped the ethics of architectural production within the boundaries of the Medina. Indeed, the Municipality of Tunis and the governor-mayor of the city, Habib B.Ammar, conducted this sharp political decision (Micaud 1978, 437). The association expanded and established an Atelier de l’Urbanisme (AU) to develop another plan for the city and seek international financial funds. These brave political decisions (Bejaoui 2013, 114) stem out of a post-independence era that seeks to establish new dynamics to revive the value of the Medina. This same decision seems to come from a local will rather than an international effort. Ethically speaking, the establishment of this group of planners and architects is a reflection of the gained interest of the Medina and the value judgment of the local professionals and citizens. These political decisions might also be accompanied with strong economic incentives that would or would not enhance the architectural ethics of this place.

The post-independence period, and specifically from 1961 to 1969, has known an accelerated pace of economic progress (Micaud 1978, 437). The progress happened under president Bourguiba and Minister of Planning Ahmed Ben Saleh. The political strategy in place encouraged mass tourism, even though the situation of the Medina was still marginalized. Micaud (1978) explains that several reasons were mentioned to explain this malaise, including colonialism, the flight of the bourgeois to the suburbs, and most importantly the high density and occupation of
houses (Oukalas\textsuperscript{17}) by migrants (the process of Oukalisation\textsuperscript{18}). Degradation and misuse were the main reasons for this ethical dilemma, as the Medina continued to face historical and socioeconomic challenges disrupting the architectural quality of its spaces.

The period from 1985 to 2000 was the longest in the history of modern challenges inside the Medina. PTC, known as the Project Tunis-Carthage, was the incentive of this period since UNESCO channeled it through the Ministry of Planning (Micaud 1978, 439). ASM and PTC worked together on this project. However, there was little focus on the Medina per se and more emphasis on the Carthage part of the project.

The PTC technicians contributed to, if they did not cause, a general romantic misapprehension of the medina” and “on the level of general urban planning, the goal was to make up a Carthage-medina package for ‘cultural tourism’ that would contribute to the economic development of Tunis by making it a first-class tourist attraction (Micaud 1978, 441).

Planners marginalized the economic, political, and social realities of Tunis in the post-independence period, and the ethical importance of reviving the Medina was replaced by global priorities to imitate an occidental approach and to turn the Medina into a museum for tourists. Another risk factor of ‘globalization’ has been obstructing its ordinary course of evolution. But now, how about the influence of mass tourism, which is a form of architectural globalization? Has it represented a threat raised by architects and planners?

\textsuperscript{17} Traditional rooming houses occupied mostly by people coming from rural areas. This phenomenon continues until today and especially after the Arab Spring and it negatively affected housing of the Medina.

\textsuperscript{18} A term I suggest based on Micaud’s oukalise (French). Here this term aims to describe the process of squatting and randomly occupying houses in the Medina. More can be found at Bejaoui, Faika. 2013. “Le Paysage Urbain Historique de Tunis: Outil d’Analyse du Processus De Patrimonialisation.” Tangible Risks, Intangible Opportunities: Long-Term Risk Preparedness and Responses for Threats to Cultural Heritage, San Jose, Costa Rica. This phenomenon called “Oukalisation” has affected not only the traditional houses but all kinds of buildings intended or not for habitation: palaces, mansions, medersas, religious buildings ... In each room lived a family, while the building did not subject to prior, any development preparing it for his new role: toilets, Water points and kitchens are common to all tenants (Bejaoui 2013, 119).
3.6.3. A Threat to Tourism?

Tourism and mass tourism are aspects of the global village people live in the current century. One such example is the previous case study of Dubai, which is a contemporary tourist site and an attractive destination for people from all over the world. The city-state has become an important destination on the global tourism map (Sharpley 2008, 14), where “advertising narratives combine images of ultra-modernity with allusions to history, stressing the friendliness of locals and the Arab tradition of hospitality” (Henderson 2014, 109). In contrast, historical sites such as the Medina of Tunis need to carefully negotiate these changing roles of cities in the Islamic world as serious challenges. Globalization has generated multiple aspects (socioeconomic and political), which have a direct influence on the architecture of vernacular settlements. For instance, researchers have observed the Medina of Marrakesh and the Medina of Damascus (Escher 2001, 36), and noticed that they have been directly exposed to the effects of globalization. In connection with political and economic globalization, the Moroccan state promoted foreign investments and the influx of tourists (Escher, Petermann, and Clos 2001, 26). Foreign buyers and international restaurants made it easily into these two enclaves. This urban and global phenomenon goes along the lines of this research; they describe Die Dynamische Erneuerung or the dynamic renewal of the Medina:

Many Arab old towns are no longer abandoned to decay slowly but are now gripped by dynamic renewal. That is especially true for towns and cities in Morocco and Syria. In the old town of Marrakesh, for instance, residential buildings are being bought primarily by Europeans and renovated and frequently used as guesthouses (Escher, Petermann, and Clos 2001, 25); cited in Escher and Schepers (2008, 130).

This global influence illustrates the vulnerability of the medinas. Such influences might change the character of buildings, customs, as well as functions. The Medina of Tunis did not surrender to global forces and strived to protect its original character while facing other dynamics. Its identity was at risk, but the local interest to protect it reduced these risks. To ensure its protection, the Medina should be viewed as a symbol of national
identity and not an accessory of the European town as was viewed by colonials. The Medina became a symbol of resistance against the Colonials (Abdelkafi 1989, 251) confirming its identity in the midst of global influences (colonialism, and tourism). The Medina of Tunis went through different phases in the modern time, from colonialism to global challenges of the twenty-first century. The dynamics of the Medina of Tunis were purely local appealing to local populations as well as to visitors. This process of glocalization (versus globalization) balanced the character of the Medina and protected it from being altered by colonialism or modernity.

3.7 Conclusion

The first part of this chapter explained the repercussions of globalization on architectural mediation. It emphasized that colonialism, economic globalization, and tourism challenged the Medina. The second part of this chapter discussed two different case studies, namely Dubai and the Medina of Tunis. It firstly demonstrated how the culture of the image and financial interests transformed architecture in Dubai and hegemonized its character transforming it into a tourist attraction and economic hub. Then unlike Dubai, it highlighted the symbolic significance of the Medina and how it mediated global and local sources of value by choosing not to become a decayed enclave, an overly modern settlement, or a museum for foreign investors.

Given its challenges, this research strives to explain the norms structuring architectural mediation. After looking at the challenges faced by Dubai and Tunis, it is relevant to evaluate these case studies, especially Dubai, based on different debates on ethics and aesthetics in architecture. Chapter 4 will turn to explain these debates in Islamic architecture in Dubai and Tunis. This discussion will clarify how the revitalization and protection of the medinas can be enabled.
Faleh, Majdi. 2017. Architectural Dilemmas. Graphic Illustration, 10 x 20cm.

This graphic illustration is the result of superposing two layers: an image of the Ezzitouna mosque of Tunis and another image of the society of consumption and its endless obsession with objects. This work raises the question of the struggle of traditional architecture in the Islamic world as well as the question of ethics and aesthetics.
4. The Debate about Ethics and Aesthetics in the Context of Islamic Architecture

4.1 Introduction: on the Debate about Ethical Issues in Architecture in the West and the Islamic World

This chapter aims to identify the ethical and aesthetical debates of architecture in the Islamic World to determine the gaps in values and understanding and the lessons that can be learned from architectural ethics. However, The field of the ethics of the built environment or the ethics of building, as philosopher and ethicist Warwick Fox (2012, 3) emphasizes, is neither clear nor explicitly devoted to the subject; and contributions have not been numerous from a philosophical or a design perspective. Thus this research should envision to expand the debate on ethics in the specific context of the study, namely the Islamic world. Architectural ethics can potentially ensure a fair negotiation between different sources of architectural identities in the twenty-first century, without falling into a battle of styles or a dominance of one style over the other. As Lagueux suggests, the principal problems facing architects are at the same time ethical problems (Lagueux 2004, 122). Each design decision made and each solution proposed by architects is also a value judgment because architecture "produces an obligatory framework for social life, which it directly influences" (Lagueux 2004, 122). Architecture has a significant influence on people and society, and more precisely on their feelings, behaviors, and values. Lagueux (2004, 122) also claims that unlike other arts, ethical problems are internal to architecture because the solution to these problems is a fundamental part of the practice of architecture.

In Lagueux’s words “architecture continuously raises ethical problems, which, however, are nothing more than normal problems that architects must solve in practicing their art. It is for this reason that these ethical problems can be called internal to the discipline” (Lagueux 2004, 109). Collier (2006) confirms that architectural decisions are ‘internal’ to the practice and explains that the solution to these problems is the way forward towards making ‘good’ architecture. She adds the following:
These are clearly ethical decisions, but they are also professional ‘best-practice’ decisions taken so as to achieve the optimum outcomes for the project in hand. In this sense, the ethical problems associated with architecture are ‘internal’ to the practice of architecture, and their solution is part and parcel of doing ‘good’ architecture (308).

Collier believes that architectural decisions have a continuous impact on the lives of people affected by architecture. Ethical decisions taken by architects are an essential part of the field of architecture.

Consequently, given the main case study of this thesis and chapter that follows, one can assert that the Medina of Tunis, an exemplary case study, in its current state is a reflection of the architectural and planning decisions shaping this old settlement and the values manifest therein throughout its history. In contrast, one example of the ethical problems facing architects, in this case, follows the influence of capital flows brought about by oil production on the architecture and planning of Dubai. As a consequence, the use of an excessive capital flow has resulted in an imported architecture that is not representative of traditional Islamic architectural values of Arabia and does not reflect the culture of Dubai’s local population. Mitchell (2013) explains how Dubai’s architecture has gained an iconic status to serve tourists and investors, where a culture of the ‘image’ has played a major role in doing so. The architectural design of that region has become driven by capitalistic interest thus setting an iconic status for architecture and creating a gap between modern and traditional architecture. He states that:

As real-estate speculation fuels the construction industry, buildings must compete for iconic status to attract the attention of tourists and investors, which in some cases are one and the same. Photorealistic images, sometimes generated without an actual site and selected or on the basis of nothing more than a vague idea, indicate lush gardens, ample parking, and a few nondescript neighboring structures to ensure incredible views and privacy. However, the realities that must be confronted in the design and construction process make it difficult to deliver on the promises inherent in sales brochures and billboards (150).
In Medieval times and during the Renaissance, designing beautiful buildings was the best way for architects of those eras to satisfy ethical values given the central role aesthetics played in design decision-making. Obtaining ‘beauty’ in a building form was akin to establishing it as ‘good’ and ‘just.’ While it is conceivable, both architects and theorists have nearly always attempted to satisfy the ethical values and aesthetical standards of their given communities, only in the nineteenth century do relations between ethics and aesthetics become a central matter of debate in architecture. Lagueux (2004) explains the debate and the times, in terms of scholarly research regarding architectural ethics:

Not only were ethics and aesthetics two well-developed branches of thought that were often characterized by their mutual opposition, but a consequence of aesthetically oriented scholarly research was the specification of various styles among which architects were almost obliged to choose (124).

In Great Britain and possibly further afield in the West, the debate took shape for much of the nineteenth century with the so-called ‘battle’ of architectural styles, between supporters of the Gothic style, on the one hand, and the Classical, on the other. A.W.N Pugin and Decimus Burton were among a number of scholars supporting one or the other choice. Some scholars, most notably Pugin, considered the Gothic Style as “more

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1 See Pugin, Augustus Welby Northmore. 1836. Contrasts: or, A parallel between the noble edifices of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and similar buildings of the present day, Shewing the present decay of taste. Accompanied by appropriate text. [Place of publication not identified]: [publisher not identified]. Another interesting work to mention is by Crossley, Paul. 1988. "Medieval Architecture and Meaning: The Limits of Iconography." The Burlington Magazine. 130 (1019): 116-121. In this paper, the author referred to Gothic and Medieval architectures and explained the changing meaning of certain architectural types.


A pioneering study to discuss in the context of this thesis is Smith, Christine. 1992. Architecture in the culture of early humanism: ethics, aesthetics, and eloquence, 1400-1470. New York, N.Y: Oxford University Press. Smith explains how architectural imagery became a core vehicle for the expression of Renaissance humanists’ ethical, political, and civic concerns. She also discusses Alberti’s use of imagery to reflect spiritual tranquility as well as the influence of Byzantine architecture on Quattrocento humanists’ attitudes to architecture. That includes the work of Byzantine scholar Manuel Chrysoloras and precisely his comparison of new and old Rome.

inclined to promote moral sentiments compatible with Christian ideals than the classical style" (Lagueux 2004, 124). Pugin (1898, 1) wrote in his book Contrasts that “on comparing the Architectural Works of the present century with those of the Middle Ages, the wonderful superiority of the latter must strike every attentive observer”. Believing that religious customs have a profound influence on the formation of different styles of architecture, he cited the temples of so-called ‘Pagan nations’ to highlight the interpretive value of grand historical monuments. In doing so he idealized ecclesiastical buildings of the Middle Ages, comparing those examples from Pagan antiquity including the Egyptian pyramid and obelisk, these being building forms which he considered “emblems of the philosophy and mythology of that nation” (Pugin 1898, 2). By contrast, Pugin praised Christian architecture. He concluded that “from Christianity, has arisen an architecture so glorious, so sublime, so perfect, that all the productions of ancient paganism sink, when compared before it, to a level with the false and corrupt systems from which they originated” (Pugin 1898, 2). As complex as they might seem, the historical debates over architectural styles have had different priorities in the nineteenth and the twenty-first centuries. These differences will be explored in the next section.

In the twenty-first century, the debate over ethics and aesthetics has taken on a different character, albeit one still about values. This debate has become directed to assume an instrumental value of economic realities, environmental issues, and community identity in which the fundamental necessity or ‘hegemony’ of one particular architectural style over another (such as the Gothic over the Classical, in Pugin’s day) is not the main issue. Instead, in the new millennium architects find themselves challenged by prevailing tensions between reinvigorating local architectural traditions, on the one hand, and embracing the global forces of capitalism which seem to demand a narrow range of modern architectural styles and development models, on the other. Indeed, the condition of rapid change due to global restructuring, capital flow, corporatization, and new technology (Eldemery 2009, 343-345) has transformed architecture and design decision-making in cities such as Dubai, Doha, and Tunis, rendering the revival of traditional building forms there little more than pastiche.
In the context of Islamic Architecture and the Islamic World, one should note that the fundamental changes in architectural production have accelerated since the discovery of oil in Dubai in the early 1960s (Davidson 2008, 100) and the subsequent boom in the region’s oil economies. As explained in chapters four and five, global and globalizing trends have come to dominate architectural developments in Dubai and Tunis. Thus, in 2017, these cities aspire to become millennial cities. Their architecture is moving away from local Islamic architectural traditions to fully benefit from the flow of capital and embrace the high-rise towers and enormous building blocks commonly designed in the Western World.

An interview I conducted on December 31st, 2014 confirms this trend. Architect and director of ASM (Association of the Preservation of the Medina of Tunis), Zoubeir Mouhli, elaborated the idea of a tension existing between local Islamic architecture and global trends that establish the field for decision-making in architecture and urban planning:

> What is happening to us with Petroleum that appeared mostly in regions which did not have developed urban traditions unlike other parts of the world? Their richness came suddenly, and they did not appreciate their heritage the right way. At the start, they denigrated their heritage, so they looked at borrowing urban models not even from Europe but from the United States. They tried to make a huge leap forward in history without being culturally prepared. Therefore, they thought about erasing the historical to replace it with skyscraper cities, cities where everyone is trying to build higher, a defiance between Emirs (princes) to build the highest and the most modern buildings (Mouhli 2014).

Finding solutions for these tensions involves an understanding of global and local dynamics shaping architectural production. In the case of Dubai, for instance, one is faced with ever larger buildings and significant real estate developments or what some architects and planners refer to as the ‘superblock.’ Colquhoun (1983, 83) wrote that superblocks come from “the enormous reserves of capital that exist in the modern economy which enable either private or public agencies, or a combination of both, to gain control over and make a profit from, ever larger areas of urban land.” Other challenging trends include sprawling developments and the dominance of an architecture of the ‘superlative’ (Kanna 2013) in which the image or symbolism of buildings appear to be everything, even the key
value. Consequently, the contemporary architecture of Dubai has a Westernized character (Kanna 2011, Kanna 2013) that does not necessarily accord with Islamic values limiting excess and conspicuous displays of wealth and power. In this context, unlike the contemporary architecture of Dubai, Islamic architecture serves the desirable goals of Islam as well as individual Muslims (Omer 2013, 33). According to Omer (2013), the embrace of Islamic architecture is a means that rely on Islamic values, and particularly a pure intention, and not an end. He also describes the process of building in Islam as follows:

A process that starts from making an intention, continues with the planning, designing and building stages and ends with achieving the net results and how people make use of and benefit from them. Islamic architecture is a fine blend of all these stages which are interlaced with the thread of the same Islamic worldview and Islamic value system (Omer 2013, 37).

Thus, in the current century, globalized architecture raises particular ethical challenges to local identities and a way of life grounded in Islamic traditions, culture, and the art of building.

Turning to Islamic precedents for understanding the connection between ethics and aesthetics in architecture, Averroes or Ibn Rushd (1126-1198) was a Muslim scholar and polymath. He was born into a family of Malikite Lawyers, which exposed him to matters of Islamic ethics or, more precisely, Malikite Fiqh or Jurisprudence. Averroes’ investigations were concerned to elaborate a theory of value establishing what we commonly call “good” and “evil” (Hourani 1962, 15), and his influence on planning and design principles suggests the importance of paying close attention to the ethical and aesthetic dimensions of these. The question of philosophical ethics discussed by Ibn Rushd focused on values attending human life, acts, and character. Based on an Aristotelian analysis, he defines “happiness” as a synonym of “good” (Hourani 1962, 29). Happiness is not only related to worldly matters such as the planning and architectural details of residences in the Medina of Tunis. Moreover, it also transcends the material world to address the divine, which is a priority that dutiful Muslims strive to understand during their lifetime. The same divinity has had a significant influence on the ethics and aesthetics of Islamic architecture. So, the
question arises as to whether the spiritual basis of Islamic Architecture and
the effect of Islamic Jurisprudence on architectural codes is missing in the
production of architecture in the twenty-first-century Islamic world? And if
so, why?

Islamic Jurisprudence mainly influenced architectural and planning codes
in the medinas of the Maghrib in particular. Omer (2013) explains the
importance of the spiritual character of Islamic architecture:

It is because of this conspicuous spiritual character of Islamic
architecture, coupled with both its educational and societal roles,
that the scholars of Islam never shied away from keenly addressing
a number of issues pertaining to various dimensions of residential,
mosque and communal architecture within the scope of Islamic
jurisprudence (fiqh islam) (37-38).

The theory of value or the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’ elaborated by Ibn Rushd
were also articulated through the ethical and the aesthetical dimensions
of Islamic architecture. The point here is that whether using jurisprudence
or other principles, architects are required to build their structures morally.
Architects should strive to promote local values such as building with the
right intention an architecture that would represent the community’s
culture and customs and to a larger extent their values. Architecture can
also be transcendental as it balances the spiritual and the mundane, a
point that will be further explored in the next section when questioning the
views on architecture and meaning of Karsten Harries. Ibn Rushd
“expounds briefly the classical theory of jurisprudence, making clear its
basic principle that all judgments of what is lawful have to be derived,
directly or ultimately, from the texts of the Qur’an and traditions” (Hourani
1962, 33). Ethical judgments based on his view are central to the study of
Jurisprudence (Fiqh in Arabic). Fiqh comes from a balance between moral,
spiritual, and physical aspects of life.

One should also recognize that the study of the influence of Islamic
Jurisprudence on the architecture of the medinas can be a valuable tool
to revive vernacular principles in Islamic architecture, as this thesis
proposes. The influence of Islamic Jurisprudence can occur not only in
terms of influencing the visual or aesthetic aspects of new buildings, but
also when it comes to establishing the principles (laws) informing such an architecture both socially and culturally. Having understood some aspects of the ethical debate in the Western and Islamic world, one needs to understand the real issues surrounding ethics in architecture in the Islamic context to further elaborate the principles of jurisprudence in the architecture of the medina. Examples of these matters include the dominance of so-called modern architectural styles and their uniformity across countries such as Dubai and Tunis, while Islamic architecture degenerates. According to Galdieri (2002, 114), Jerrybuildings have suffocated the historic centers and have hidden their artistic treasures. He also explains, in the context of Islamic architecture, that “to construct functionally modern buildings does not mean necessarily copying from models that are alien to one’s culture: only those elements deemed useful or necessary to one’s own way of life should be borrowed from the west” (Galdieri 2002, 116).

This negotiation, as previously identified in this thesis, between the local and the global sources of value in the built environment, in particular, the medina, has the potential to teach architects lessons that can be used to ensure the balance between global and local architectural identities. These lessons can also shed light on the broader field of architecture and ethics while serving as sources of value redefining architecture, its functions, and its buildings and planning principles in the twenty-first century. Ethics gives architecture an opportunity to promote social and human values, and aesthetics give it the aesthetic appreciation that humans naturally aim to reach. Firmitas, Utilitas, and Venustas defined as structural integrity, utility, and beauty, are examples of the main components of architectural values identified by Vitruvius based on the Vitruvian Triad or his Virtues of Architecture (Pollio 2009, 17). Such architectural values continue to influence architecture today, so one

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would question if any such values can be applied to Islamic architecture. For these values to stand out, one needs to investigate the ethical issues within the architectural practice in the twenty-first century.

The following section of the chapter will turn to discuss the nature of ethical decisions in the context of architecture in general and that of the Islamic world in particular. Later, it will debate the significance of aesthetical judgment in the context of architectural ethics, and at the last stage, this research will investigate ethics and aesthetics with a focus on the Medina of Tunis. It is, indeed, necessary to examine the challenges faced by architecture in the Islamic World and to evaluate the ethics of decision making in this process.

4.2 The Nature of Ethical Issues in Architecture: Lagueux, Collier, and Harries

As a global field that now transcends national borders, architecture in the first decades of the twenty-first century continuously faces ethical issues. Architecture is commonly seen as an expression of social, cultural, and political realities, but it also has economic and corporate aspects, which strongly influence the growth and fabric of the built environment. Developments in architecture reflect the economic growth of a given country as in the case of Dubai, given the exponential expansion of oil production there in the 1960s (Davidson 2008, 100). To describe how Dubai is becoming a global brand, Ali (2010, 32-33) highlights how “the post-2001 oil boom had allowed Dubai to become even more extravagantly rich, to grow at a mind-boggling pace, and, importantly, to make itself internationally known”. Specific developments worthy of attention that speak to the building outcomes of expansion include the Burj Khalifa. It is currently the tallest skyscraper in the world, and it was designed by American firm SOM and completed in 2010 (SOM). The Dubai Mall is also the largest mall in the world that was developed by Emaar Properties and opened in 2008 (Emaar). Additional projects also include the Palm Jumeirah, an artificial archipelago that was designed by HHCP, completed in 2014 and described as “the first man-made earth form identified by the human eye from outer space. Intended as a solution to create tourism
components for the rapidly growing Dubai market” (HHCP 2015). These developments are large in scale and continue to exemplify an architecture of ‘the image’ as well as an architecture of ‘the superlative’, while some of these mega projects are posing significant threats to local and traditional environments and continuously challenge architects and scholars.

Architects deal with clients and capital, but discussions of human welfare and local heritage are also important. These discussions are sometimes downplayed or disregarded. Ethics involves theories of morality as well as cultural and social values. In architecture, in engineering, in law as well as in medicine, ethics would naturally play a crucial role, which can be witnessed through the professional codes of ethics organizing the mentioned professions. However, in practice, these same codes rarely address the nature of architectural developments, their scale, and their impact on local architectural traditions. Even if they exist, these architectural codes are rarely applied to ensure a negotiation between local and global, traditional and modern sources of value in the built environment. Ethics, whether conceived as a distinct discipline, (as in the field of philosophical ethics), or as an ingredient in a range of disciplines, constitutes the backbone of considerable decisions that add value to the fields above. In the twenty-first century, the application of these codes is weak, because as Collier says:

Global corporations face ethical challenges posed by cultural, social and political differences. Professional codes of conduct are continually rewritten to incorporate recommendations on currently sensitive issues. Progress in scientific achievements brings with it unanticipated ethical dilemmas posed by the application of new knowledge. The moral responsibilities of business, of professionals and of scientific researchers are fully recognised and forcefully articulated by society, but expressions of concern frequently elicit no more than a minimal compliance that puts profit, power and knowledge before concerns for human welfare (Collier 2006, 307).

This section turns to explore the nature of architectural ethics and the views of two theorists, Jane Collier and Karsten Harries who, in addition to Maurice Lagueux, also address the topic of ethics in architecture. Collier investigates ethics in the practice of architecture and Harries explores architectural ethics from an abstract perspective, so both scholars are
showing the importance of the topic to enhance the field of architecture. Moreover, Lagueux emphasizes how architectural decisions are ethical decisions since they have an impact on the lives of their users. Collier, who addresses ethics in the professional practice of architecture, also supports Lagueux’s views that architectural decisions are ethical decisions. Unlike Lagueux and Collier, however, Harries addresses architectural ethics from a phenomenological perspective. Understanding the significance of these three different points of view would help architects to select the best narrative, which allows for an ethical negotiation between the various sources of architectural identity.

Lagueux (2004, 117) explains that one might think that architectural ethics are not well-developed because architecture is an art rather than a science, thus, as claimed by art advocates, it is committed to aesthetical rather than ethical values. However, he further explains that “architecture is very different from other arts since its function is to create places and contexts in which social life goes on” (117). In the context of this research, one can assert that architecture can play a mediating role given its emphasis on ethics, as well as its transcendental aspect that goes beyond the simple aesthetic representation of objects. Arguably, I would also say that architecture, being intrinsic to Lagueux’s ‘social life’ (Lagueux 2004, 117), impacts on people’s behaviors and their well-being, as well as supporting a range of functional, economic, and political norms.

“Therefore, it is reasonable to think that architecture can induce in people various feelings that make them more or less pessimistic, oppressed, depressed, revolted, and aggressive, or rather optimistic, liberated, communicative, peaceful, and possibly egalitarian” (Lagueux 2004, 122). By overlooking one or many of these roles and influences (i.e., behavior, well-being, norms), architecture becomes a marketing tool or is reduced to an ‘image’, which merely displays power, beauty, and capital growth, rather than serving as a critical field for ethical reflection.

The architecture of the ‘image’ that focuses on enhancing financial and commercial profits overshadows architecture’s capacity to negotiate between local and global sources of value while impacting negatively on
people’s local architectural traditions. Architects and decision-makers have a great responsibility in ensuring a positive impact on people’s lives as well as on their behaviors. Lagueux (2004, 117) also explains this idea and states that “architect’s works have such an impact on the way people behave that the development of a new field devoted to the analysis of problems associated with this impact does not appear implausible.” For instance, the development of Dubai, in general, and Dubai’s JLT Towers (2006), or the Dubai Marina Development (2003) along Sheikh Zayed Road, in particular, stems from the political desire of the emirate’s ruler. Sheikh Rashid dreamed of building a modern and a millennial city, thus creating an ‘image’ that would attract massive financial profits and deliver a business-oriented strategy to the city. In his book, City of Gold, Journalist Jim Krane describes how Sheikh Rashid “embarked on a remarkable string of gambles. Dubai’s desert was an empty palette. He was going to start painting” (Krane 2009, 75). Krane (2009) describes how in the 1960s “Sheikh Rashid knew Dubai’s prosperity meant keeping ahead of Abu Dhabi...Dubai jumped at every opportunity concerning industries and economic sector” (75-76). In 1967, he built the largest port in the history of the city and named it Port Rashid, and soon after that in the 1970s, “foreigners poured in: businessmen, laborers, investors, and fast-buck chasers” (Krane 2009, 76).

Sheikh Mohammed has also subsequently “gone to great lengths over the past two decades to transform Dubai from a trading port into a global city. He wanted Dubai not simply to be wealthy, but to be internationally famous” (Ali 2010, 190). Dubai also created a superficial culture and became a “culturally plastic place” as Ali (2010, 34) describes it. It is a consumers’ paradise with a mix of iconic buildings serving a specific clientele. Attracting Westerners and their capital meant producing an architecture like theirs. Architectural progress in Dubai has thus meant

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5 Further details about the development of Dubai and its iconic projects can be found in chapter four. Also, see Kanna, Ahmed. 2013. The Superlative City: Dubai and the Urban Condition in the Early Twenty-first Century. Cambridge, Mass: Aga Khan Program at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design.

Also, noteworthy studies about Dubai’s contemporary developments can be found at Ramos, Stephen and, G. Rowe, Peter. 2013. “Planning, prototyping, and replication in Dubai.” In The superlative city: Dubai and the urban condition in the early twenty-first century, edited by Ahmed Kanna, 18-33. Cambridge, Mass: The Aga Khan Program at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design.
following Western architectural trends. Ali (2010, 33) explains how Dubai’s construction projects were positioned to attract Western expatriates and wealthier ones in particular, and how tourism was aimed at Westerners who spend money. Dubai continued its rise to build an international image, an image of fame, where its “myopic emphasis on economic development has been at the expenses of the cultural realm, specifically of art and education” (Ali 2010, 33).

In the twenty-first century, a growing pattern whereby developers and their corporate or government backers seek to reproduce international images of modern cities has weakened the possibilities for building context-related architecture. This pattern also disregards the traditions of local populations. This same idea of easy and fast ‘iconic’ projects was elaborated by Ali (2010) as he states that:

> Still, any idea can be brought to fruition with less difficulty than in most places as the bulk of the ‘iconic’ projects are run by Dubai government-owned Nakheel and Emaar, a publicly traded company but largely backed by the government...there are no public hearings or ‘not in my backyard’ movements to hinder progress (38).

In other words, architecture becomes a government-owned business where the glitzy international image using internationally known symbols (large bay windows, cladding, steel structures) or modern aesthetics is the way forward. Here both ethics and aesthetics are questioned, thus calling for a more in-depth investigation of the two concepts. This point also raises the questions of the ethics in the practice of architecture, the relationship between ethics and aesthetics, and the importance of context in architecture. These same questions were raised by Collier (2006) in her research entitled "The Art of Moral Imagination: Ethics in the Practice of Architecture".

Regarding the ethics of architecture, Collier (2006, 307) shows that architecture is more of an art than a science, as discussed by Lagueux in his debate. She also adds that “as such its values are aesthetic” (2006, 307).

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6 One Should note that the term Western can be problematic because it is broad. In this research, ‘Western’ refers to an international trend of architecture with high-rise buildings, large freeways, glass facades, and a car-based city. Dubai or Doha are amongst the examples of ‘Westernized’ cities in the past few decades.
One might think that Collier supports a narrow aesthetic interpretation of the meaning of building form, thereby playing into the hands of the developers of JLT Towers and Dubai Marina ensuring the fame of their buildings. However, one should note how Collier emphasizes that architecture "is very different from the other arts, because since its function is to create appropriate places and contexts of social life its purpose is by definition ethical" (2006, 307). Her statement comes directly from Lagueux’s explanation of the matters where he writes that “architecture is very different from other arts since its function is to create places and contexts in which social life goes on” (Lagueux 2004, 117). Even if architectural values are aesthetic in a way, its social side remains a central aspect of this debate. Lagueux (2004, 118) also agrees with her since he highlights the vital responsibility of architects and how their buildings influence the lives of their occupants. Each architectural decision influences people’s lives. Each transformation in the built environment influences people’s identity.

Collier’s position in regards to the duality of ethics and aesthetics covers a broad spectrum since she addresses the practice, the context, and the notion of moral imagination in architecture. Moral imagination, as Collier (2006, 315) explains, is about using skills related to artistic perception or reflection to provide a value judgment. She, like Lagueux, also writes that “aesthetics is internal to the practice of architecture, as is ethics, but aesthetic qualities are modulated and evaluated in the light of relevant ethical criteria” (2006, 309). Collier (2006, 309) supports a broad vision of ethics of the built form where she explains the negative influence of ethically flawed works on their aesthetic merit. 

Ad aesthetic qualities of filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl’s film the Triumph of the Will, which she cites, might be corrupted because of its corrupted political vision. It is an artful work of propaganda showing the Nazi party under Hitler. She also refers to the example of Gaudi’s Sagrada Familia, where she questions the extent to which we take into account the monument’s ethical quality and not only its artistic merit and aesthetic qualities. Focusing on the aesthetic nature of architecture has been a tendency among architects and decision makers of the twenty-first century. Based on Collier’s views, ethics
have significant influences in determining the aesthetic quality of an architectural project, and this is an aspect one observes in the case of Dubai’s massive developments. Despite being a unique engineering and design project with its large bay windows, Burj Khalifa remains a controversial project, in my view, as it does not offer a specific contextual response to the climate and the history of the region. However beautiful and shimmering the building is, this skyscraper is principally a reflection of the economic goals of the city and the frenzy to build its name and brand.

Architecture is not merely an aesthetic delight that thrives through a marketable image. Again, with the example of Dubai’s JLT Towers and Dubai Marina, focusing on a political and economic agenda undermines the social concept of traditional and local community life in the Emirates from the equation. Restraining these local and traditional aspects limits the mediation between different sources of architectural identities, thus allowing global patterns of capitalism to inform architectural decisions. Innovation is neither about breaking with local traditions nor about copying the rich past, but rather about using Western architectural language as a tool of communication and not as a model to follow. Innovation in the Islamic context, as explained by Galdieri (2002):

Calls for great talent and a profound knowledge of the history and techniques of other architectonic cultures. Moreover, it requires dedication to the authentic faith and traditions of the Islamic way of life and thus of its specific temporal and regional features. It cannot be an architecture which breaks with its past but a natural and rational evolution of forms and functions in which Western architectural language can be seen as a possible tool of communication and not as a purely aesthetic, or worse ideological, model. From the orthodox point of view, the sumptuousness of the great mosques of the past can and must be considered as a limit to the moral and social legitimacy and justifiable solely as a sign of power (114-115).

Thus, architectural decisions are crucial to avoid the purely aesthetic Western model or the purely historical Islamic model. On the influence of architectural decisions, Lagueux (2004) confirms that “since they affect ways of life and corresponding values, determining which decision is appropriate in all such cases is an ethical problem” (119). Choosing the right architecture for the right context can be one of these ‘optimum
outcomes.' It suggests a specific sort of ethical responsibility for architects. Therefore, the overwhelming dominance of financial interests or the preference for glamorous architectural images does not allow for a middle ground between local and global and traditional and modern sources of architectural identities.

Further to this view on the ethical issues of architecture in the twenty-first century dominated by the ‘image’, one should point out how architectural decisions made by architects impact on the lives of its dwellers and their values, an idea that is shared by Collier. Architecture continuously points out issues which are regular to the discipline and thus confirming the internal character of these ethical problems. Beyond basic requirements such as providing for the health, safety, and welfare, architects are also required to establish the integrity of the built environment, both ethically and aesthetically. Each decision comes from the field itself unlike in medicine or biology, as explained previously, where ethical problems are external to the discipline. For example, a scientist’s expertise would not be affected if he were not able to solve ethical problems in his field. The integrity of the field stems from the solutions provided to its principal issues. For instance, one could relate to the notion of the built environment in the main cities such as Dubai or Tunis and question their integrity and how they serve their citizens and engage them practically. Developments such as Dubai Marina indeed provide citizens and visitors with decent spaces to walk around, consume, and meet people. However, one remains uncertain as to whether its architects and developers defined a narrative that connects people with their context past and present.

This notion of internality that was explained earlier in this chapter has also been supported by Collier (2006, 309) who explains that architecture being a ‘practice’ can perform as a social practice, a virtue-based practice, and a learning-based practice. The profession of architecture is a social practice in a sense that its “systems and structures are thus nothing other than patterns of enacted conduct within a context of procedural and moral rules, of material resources and sources of authority” (Collier 2006, 309). It is a virtue-based practice since its activities “strive to fulfil their
purpose of excellent design and its appropriate realisation in buildings that serve needs of human living" (Collier 2006, 309). Lastly, it is a learning-based practice where “narratives that work have to be coherent and capable of being seamlessly reinterpreted in the light of the present. In architecture the modernist narrative was coherent; it provided good reasons for considering ‘traditional building’ as aesthetically worthless” (Collier 2006, 311). Architecture as a practice tries to examine different facets of potential issues and possible narratives where architecture continuously seeks to define the ‘good’. However, why is it that architects are necessarily the first ones questioned when it comes to ethics involved in creating their spaces and cities? Does it have to do with the function of architecture?

Moving on from Lagueux’s and Collier’s views of architectural ethics and their internal character, it is worth investigating whether and how Harries’s universal theories of dwelling align with the thesis in hand. Harries explores the ethical function of architecture in his article Space, Place, and Ethos (1984). He supports Martin Heidegger’s notion that the idea and meaning of ‘dwelling’ transcend the basic function of shelter, a prospect that is relevant to this research. According to Seamon (1993, 3) “Harries suggests that the thinking of German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1890-1976), especially his notion of dwelling (Heidegger, 1971), provides one conceptual means for considering building as it might sustain and mirror the worlds of particular persons, groups, and environments”.

Harries elevates the question of architectural ethics to a highly abstract level with a view to speculate on ‘being’ rather than cultural or social factors bearing on the built environment per se. He thus identifies the key issues faced by architecture as primarily philosophical and existential. Such a universal and existential approach to architectural ethics is insightful but unlikely to help us understand how Islamic architecture can innovate using global patterns of urbanization and building development in the modern era. In the context of this research, a key question is how the brand of phenomenology demonstrated by Harries’ interpretation of dwelling
(following Heidegger) can provide one kind of ethical order to the architecture of the twenty-first century.

Harries explains that architecture is tasked with interpreting the world to provide the individual with a place within the community and nature. He cites Heidegger’s example of the Black Forest farmhouse which provides both shelter and meaningful dwelling determining the human being’s ‘ethos’ or a dwelling place (Harries 1997, 152). Harries begins to explain the idea by stating that “time and space must be revealed in such a way that human beings are given their dwelling place, their ethos” (Harries 1993, 51). He adds that “as Heidegger describes the farmhouse, it not only offers shelter, but it provides for dwelling by articulating man’s ethos, his place in an ongoing order that includes God, the community, and nature” (Harries 1984, 160). He further states that Heidegger’s “description of a Black Forest farmhouse may be read as his attempt to give content to the ideal house that haunts our dreams of genuine dwelling” (Harries 1993, 51). This house is built for successive generations and places the individual in a “communally shared time, in history” (Harries 1997, 264). Harries thus recognizes the importance of understanding human beings' temporal existence, and how life is lived and experienced to keep their sense of belonging to the community.

In Heidegger’s farmhouse, there is a sense that he is thinking about space and time. The two-hundred-year-old building establishes a material and philosophical connection between heaven and earth, and the divine and the mortal so that “here the self-sufficiency of the power to let earth and heaven, divinities and mortals enter in simple oneness into things, ordered the house” (Heidegger 1971, 160). Heidegger adds that “the nature of building is letting dwell...in this way, it designed for the different generations under one roof the character of their journey through time. The craft, which, itself sprung from dwelling, still uses its tools and frames as

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[7] Ethos is a Greek word usually used to describe “character”. It can be related to a character of a culture or the beliefs and traditions of a given group. Further details about Harries’ ethos can be seen in Harries, Karsten. 1997. The Ethical Function of Architecture. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. In the context of Harries’ theories, he explains the notion of ethos as architecture’s priority. In the Ethical Function of Architecture (1997), he explains that a person’s ethos is his character, and a community’s ethos refers to the spirit of its activities. For him, ‘Ethos’ refers to the way human beings exist in the world, which means their way of dwelling. Architecture would have an ethical function, for him, by articulating a common ethos.
things, built the farmhouse” (Heidegger 1971, 160). One would believe that the nature of Heidegger’s universalizing theories on dwelling can apply to architectural identity as a means to give credit to the past of architectural heritage and to maintain the roots of past and present architectures as well as traditional and modern architectural production. However, it is crucial that universalizing theories of dwelling would most likely lead to romanticizing the past and ignoring present realities and the context of the current century.

Architectural ethics is at the center of this negotiation. As timeless as Harries and Heidegger describe it, this way of thinking might be partially relevant to Islamic architecture as it allows for the continuation and importance of tradition in the contemporary era for Muslims and Islam in the twenty-first century. Harries’ interest in the function of architecture seems to focus on the divine, where:

> The ethical function is first of all a public function. Sacred and public architecture provides a community with a center or centers. Individuals gain their sense of place by relating their dwelling to those centers... Think of a medieval town, dominated by its church, by the horizontal of an enormous sheltering roof and the vertical of a tower that the traditional consecration ceremony allows us to link with the ladder of Jacob’s dream, a ladder that connects heaven and earth (Harries 1993, 57).

While promising a philosophical and holistic perspective on architecture and values, this theory remains both limited and limiting when applied to this thesis and the architecture of Dubai, given the realities that surround its formation. The perspective fails to grasp fully, the social, political, and economic realities impacting on architecture, building development and planning in the current era. Jurisprudence and Islamic law also contribute to a perspective on architecture and ethics as I have explained previously, but Harries’ abstract approach tends to limit this and additional possibilities. Harries’ approach tends to be universal and holistic, connecting with the divine expression of architecture, which he explored in his writing. The divine expression of architecture is an important aspect that should be studied in the context of Islamic architecture. This idea will be investigated in the next chapter.
To expand on Harries’ thesis about dwelling, one should pay closer attention to why he defined it as a central problem of the field. According to Harries “architecture is needed to recall the human being to the whole self: to the animal and to the ratio, to nature and spirit” (Harries 1997, 362). However, based on Kierkegaard’s analysis the self or the ‘I’ is becoming “unclaimed and indifferent to the world” (Harries 1997, 361); and consequently, the death of art, architecture, and humanity’s future are at stake. To the contrary, Harries suggests that the act of dwelling is the central problem in architecture. He explains that problems of building are problems of dwelling and calls for identifying philosophical dimensions of human beings that should be recognized. He writes:

Problems of building are inevitability also problems of dwelling. Such problems cannot be solved by abstract theorizing. What such theorizing at most can hope to do is call attention to questionable assumptions, to different possibilities—perhaps recall us to dimensions of our being that we ourselves must recognize to matter if a philosopher’s words are to matter (Harries 1997, 362).

Moreover, Harries calls for an architecture that responds to the incompleteness of people and the need for a community, thus allowing for a universal dimension and a precarious interpretation of ethos and the place of individuals (Harries 1997, 363). Here, one needs to state that the discussion of Harries, influenced by a Heideggerian approach promotes a phenomenological variant of philosophical thinking, which is abstracted from the contingencies of the contemporary situation. There is no need to embrace this kind of thinking theory as a more constructive approach can be used to elaborate on which sources to use within Islamic architecture. The approach can happen through a thorough investigation of the social, economic, and cultural realities of architecture in the twenty-first century as well as the applicability of some of its founding principles, namely jurisprudence or Fiqh, which survived throughout centuries. One needs to understand how the Medina of Tunis, for example, reflects a specific socio-cultural reality and how jurisprudence informed its planning codes.

As regards the past as a source of traditions and values, and in an earlier article entitled “Thoughts on a Non-Arbitrary Architecture”, Harries (1993) distinguishes between the nineteenth-century eclecticism that contributed
to the aforementioned ‘battle of the styles’ and the Modern Movement, clearly valuing the former. He notes that:

The nineteenth century took seriously the historical paradigms it had adopted, just as those who insisted on the neo-gothic architecture of so many American college campuses still took its medieval precursors seriously, not only or even primarily as artistic models, but because they wanted to preserve at least a trace of ethos that produced the original. Today such reverence for the past seems a bit naïve. Not that we side with the harsh criticism directed against nineteenth-century eclecticism by the Modern Movement; we lack the conviction such fervor requires (Harries 1993, 42).

In other words, the reverence of the past, as described by Harries, is not taken seriously by post-modern architects thus offering more dilemmas to architecture. In comparing the nineteenth-century trend and the postmodern trend, he points out that ethos is the key to preserve and reproduce the original of artistic models. He also admits that “Postmodernist eclecticism takes itself less seriously than did its nineteenth-century predecessors. It is freer, more playful, less intimidated by the past. However, by the same token, it is also less convinced by its borrowing and less able to convince” (Harries 1993, 42). Harries’ approach calls for an investigation of more scholarly views on the subject to determine its relevance in the context of architectural borrowing.

According to Seamon (1993, 3), Harries’ take on postmodernist approaches to design sees the movement as creative and free but also eclectic and without conviction. In a way, the postmodern approach does not respond to the needs and the concerns of people. Seamon (1993) explains how creative freedom has provided little guidance on how lessons and building forms from the past reinvigorated architecture. Therefore, “the modern Western world is fortunate in that people are no longer constrained geographically or historically and can borrow freely from buildings and design styles of any time or place” (Seamon 1993, 3).

Arbitrariness and tension can be synonyms in this context. Harries’ critique of postmodern architecture and precisely its eclecticism aligns with this thesis in hand. As explained previously, architectural borrowing in the case of Dubai has created a patchwork of postmodern architecture that can apply to any contemporary geographical and historical context. Its
architecture is partially postmodern as it pushes for more freedom beyond traditional architecture, with design styles that can apply freely anywhere and at any time. That is the so-called arbitrariness. It can thrive in Tunis or Dubai in this age and time, by being superficial. Harries adopts this view and claims that postmodern architecture and its aesthetics are superficial (Leach 2005, 136). Whether they are working for European or American firms, architects throughout the Middle East are free to design buildings which borrow architectural elements from a range of architectural styles and traditions, regardless of their appropriateness for the locale such as the case of Dubai Mall, Dubai Marina, Palm Islands (Figure 4-1), or Burj Khalifa. These are all architectural ‘products’ imported and imposed on the site to reflect economic prosperity and an era of free trade and freedom. Even architecture adopted the free trade agreement and changed its skin beyond the ethics of borrowing.

Figure 4-1: Heilner, Alexander. 2008. The Center Core of the Palm Jumeirah, Dubai, UAE. Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org

Even though Harries critique of postmodern eclecticism in architecture is relevant in the context of this thesis, his notion of ethics remains limiting as it overlooks several aspects. Harries’s approach to the overshadowing of
the social, political, and economic spheres remains poetic as it renders us numb to the reality of the field (Leach 2005, 136). Leach (2005, 136) also explains that in his critique of architectural ethics, Harries does not engage in the social sphere, the political sphere, and economic sphere.

The social sphere in the Medina of Tunis, as an example, has also informed its architecture through strict socio-cultural codes that informed the planning of its architecture and protected the privacy of its inhabitants. Overshadowing such an aspect does not offer an ethical vision of its Islamic architecture. Concerning politics, Harries does not address the political sphere and sanctions a politics of the status quo (Leach 2005, 136). In the context of Dubai, for instance, I would claim that the political arena was influential as the Sheikh had most powers over its architecture and his dream and vision show how an imposed political view has influenced architecture. Economically, Harries does not engage with the economic status and the affordability as “not everyone can afford to live in seductive American farmsteads” (Leach 2005, 136). This view would be interesting to explore in the context of vernacular architecture, precisely the Medina of Tunis, to investigate how its architecture responded to the economic needs and the variety of activities inside its walls.

Harries’ phenomenological approach does not seem to have strong grounds in the context of borrowing and negotiation of different architectural styles, or what he refers to as eclecticism. Harries’ critique of aesthetics and the obsession with technology in postmodern architecture is, however, a valid point that should be discussed at length to determine what challenges Islamic architecture is facing in the twenty-first century.

4.3 The Debate about the Culture of the Image and an Aesthetic Judgement of Architecture

Considerations of aesthetic judgment can help to mediate between different sources of architectural identity, namely the local and the global sources of value in the built environment—a principal concern of this thesis. To examine further this negotiation between different kinds of architecture, diminishing what appears to be society’s promotion of a ‘culture of the
image’ would allow for a fairer negotiation and would help to unpack the sources of Islamic architectural identity. To do so, one needs to reflect on traditional aesthetics of Islamic architecture (i.e., complex geometry, floral patterns) to determine their symbolic value in the realm of Islamic architecture, an aspect that will be explained at great length in the final chapter of this thesis. In the context of the Medina of Tunis, in particular, one should investigate the symbolic aspects of architectural aesthetics in the context of internationalization and standardization of architecture. In the twenty-first century, images, icons, and symbols have dominated the world of architecture reflecting iconographic preferences that appear, largely without differentiation and much scrutiny or meaning across the region from Tunis to Dubai. This section will discuss the issues of aesthetic judgment in architecture, particularly in Dubai and Tunis.

As explained in the previous section, Harries’ phenomenological approach disregards social, political, and economic realities. Nonetheless, these mostly philosophical and abstract concerns serve to highlight certain truths. Harries emphasizes that the current obsession with advanced building technology and ornamentation has led to a playboy-architecture, which became a new fashion. This type of architecture keeps “jumping from one sensation to another and quickly bored with everything” (Giedion 1967, xxxii). Harries explains that the “romantic orgy” of playboy-architecture that Giedion deplored continues to exist as it has not faded (Harries 1997, 6). Harries also states that by walking through one of our cities or looking at architecture journals, one can notice that architecture has not found its way (Harries 1997, 6). In fact, Harries explains that “ducks” and “decorated sheds” approaches, codified by Venturi in 1972, should be thought in opposition. In this age and time (twenty-first century), architecture has been struggling and confused. It is overwhelmed by icons and symbols that have been constructing its identity.

“Ducks are symbols become buildings, constructed symbols, as opposed to functional sheds to which decorative symbols have already been applied” (Harries 1997, 73). In Learning from Las Vegas (1972), Robert Venturi and his collaborators describe “Ducks” as symbols, and this
concept derives from the image of the Long Island’s Big Duck building, a famous roadside American stand or symbol. Venturi describes a “duck” as a building-symbol that represents what it sells or the function it has through its shape and construction. No sign is needed as the building shape reflects the activity that is inside. A “decorated shed” is a building whose purpose is identifiable through its signage displaying messages, images, letters, and patterns. Thus it functions as a billboard (Venturi, Brown, and Izenour 1972). The decorated shed is “the essential form of an Architecture as Communication, where meaning rather than expression is the quality sought, and where the aesthetic dimension derives from ornamental surface rather than from sculptural articulation” (Venturi and Brown 2004, 35).

In both instances, one should reiterate Harries’ view that the duck type should not be reduced to such peripheral buildings, as pyramids and churches can also be considered as ducks. In a way, what matters are not a building’ aesthetics but the symbol it holds for a given culture, place, and time. In the twenty-first century, in the midst of a culture of technological development and consumption, architects need to be wary of how their buildings express themselves as symbols or how their aesthetics convey the message they are aiming to convey. The reality is that a frenzy of imagery and a culture of capitalism has also dominated the aesthetics of architecture, thus distancing architects from the sociocultural realities of their work. Both these morphologies, “Ducks” and “Decorated Sheds” are typical in modern cities, and they would only constitute a threat if they start to dominate the urban space, like in the case of suburban neighborhoods in the US. Despite their economic benefit, they are starting to twist architectural identity in places like Dubai where cookie-cutter buildings and developments are dominant.

Capitalism excessively promotes the aestheticization of architecture and the placelessness of the field of architectural design or the kinds of buildings that result from aestheticization. Such aspects of postmodern architecture in the global world hinder the development of vernacular and Islamic architecture. The identity crisis that follows is similar to what
Jameson has called placelessness, a tendency of late capitalism. He also explains that “still, the urgency of the subject demands that we make at least some effort to think the cultural evolution of late capitalism dialectically, as catastrophe and progress altogether” (Jameson 1991, 86). In Dubai, Tunis, or other modern cities, capitalism has a long and distinguished presence through engaging a broad range of factors such as speculation, a culture of images, and an excessive push towards turning architecture into a marketable product or an object of the market. It is a product of an advertisement that purely serves the economy of construction, while overwhelming contemporary architecture with the excessive use of technology.

Dubai, for example, continues to push its architecture to imitate the architecture of modern cities such as New York. It continuously attempts to be the New York of the Middle East through massive highways, superficial islands, shimmering skyscrapers, and large glass facades. In fact, “one of the most visible manifestations of the massive and colossal productive forces created by capitalism, the skyscraper...and this perpetual reinvention applied just as much to its cultural signification as it did to its material form” (Deamer 2013, 30). Whether it is through skyscrapers or other structures, Dubai, since the discovery of oil in the 1960s in the UAE, is trying to market itself and to create an architecture that reminds both visitors and investors that they are in a modern city like New York or Singapore. Dubai, like New York, can be described as the land of expatriates and extreme capitalism. It is a paradise of capitalism, where Dubai is “the most American place in the Arab world, a haven of fast food and Disney, with buzz-cut American sailors thronging the malls” (Krane 2009, 143). Another aspect of the negative impact of capitalism on urbanization and architecture is described by David Harvey, where he refers to it as a global phenomenon that one can observe continuously in the Middle East and Dubai. He writes:
Astonishing, spectacular and in some respects absurd urbanisation projects have emerged in the Middle East in places like Dubai and Abu Dhabi as a way of mopping up the capital surpluses arising from oil wealth in the most conspicuous ways possible (like an indoor ski slope in a hot desert environment). Many of these booms, including those in the Gulf States, are now, however, in deep trouble. Dubai World, the government-backed development corporation which has borrowed vast amounts of surplus capital from British and other European Banks to build so spectacularly, suddenly declared it could not meet its obligations in late 2009, sending all manner of tremors through global markets (Harvey 2010, 174).

Capitalism, a reality of this century, seems too preoccupied with its financial hardships and challenges, and thus it would not allow such a vernacular architecture to play a substantial role in negotiating different sources of contemporary identities, namely the local and the global, and the modern and the traditional ones. Islamic architecture suffered a similar fate, surrendering to the aesthetics of capitalism as a reflection of how progress is meant to appear nowadays. Traditional aesthetics of Islamic design are either forgotten or used as a pastiche on large corporate headquarters’ facades in Dubai, Doha, or Tunis. According to Galdieri (2002, 113), oil revenues supported such an architectural fervor in the Middle East. He also explains that the majority of architects working in that part of the world were designing a ‘confused’ architecture rendering it into a pastiche of elements:

Unfortunately not all the expectations were fulfilled: apart from a few isolated examples of truly modern projects that nevertheless respected the spirit of Islam, the majority of architects, divided equally into “local” and “foreign”, designed (and unfortunately also built) works that appeared from the outside to be close to the International Style, but were almost always masked, in a purely cosmetic operation, by all the paraphernalia of grilles, eight-pointed stars, domes, arches, fountains, and stalactites thought to provide local color (113).

The aesthetics of capitalism is a term I would use to refer to the aesthetics of buildings in the twenty-first century with large bay windows, glass facades, large-scale signage along highways, billboards, and strange shapes of buildings. Such an architecture is based on scale and the use of

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8 Capitalism’s history is diverse and it is discussed in several debates. This economic phenomenon started in Europe in the 1500 hundreds and then it started spreading to different parts of the world. Further readings about the history of capitalism can be found in Beaud, Michel. 2004. The History of Capitalism, 1500-2000. Aakar Books. In his book, Beaud provides an analysis of the evolution of capitalism as well as its history over five centuries, while showing how it grew with the conquest of the Americas.
icons, where some buildings in Muslim countries attempt to remind the visitor of their Islamic character though cosmeticizing its facades with stars, domes, arches, and other elements. These buildings are made superficially attractive. Even Yasser Elshehstawy (2010), among many other writers who wrote about urban and architectural dilemmas in the Middle East, continuously emphasized these aspects, in describing Dubai’s architectural trends through a Deutsche Bank advertisement in a local newspaper. He writes:

A recent Deutsche Bank advertisement in a local newspaper showed the symbols of various Middle Eastern Cities and countries as a way to establish its transnational credentials. Egypt’s Sphinx, Jordan’s Petra and Lebanon’s Baalbek represented the ‘old’ or traditional Middle East. Appropriately, all its symbols are historic. But when it came to the ‘new Middle East’, the choice of imagery changed. Cities and countries were represented by modern buildings- the Faisaliah Tower in Riyadh and Kuwait’s Water Towers. The focus of the advertisement, however, was Bahrain’s Financial Harbour and Dubai’s Emirates Towers. A clear distinction was drawn between the past and the future and it was quite clear where a transnational financial institution sees the future. Aside from the political and financial implications of this, it is telling that architecture is used to communicate these meanings. And not just any architecture-it has to be spectacular, unique-in short iconic (Elsheshtawy 2010b, 133).

Buildings become a trademark of the economy thus intimidating the development of traditional aesthetics while celebrating the spectacle of capitalism. The choice of imagery has changed in the Middle East and moved from the historical symbols that illustrate centers of influence and traditional settlements to focus on bringing an architectural ‘product’ that can be advertised as an icon of transnational economic power. Somewhere along the lines “the Arab/Middle Eastern city is thus caught between a variety of worlds, ideologies, and struggles. At its very essence it is a struggle for modernity and trying to ascertain one’s place in the twenty-first century” (Elsheshtawy 2008a, 4).

Architecture has become more aestheticized, as Leach explained in his book The Anaesthetics of Architecture. According to Leach (1999), the focus on images has negative impacts on architecture as it has been mostly aestheticized rendering it numb to social issues. Leach (1999, 11) explains that there is a growing tendency for architects to privilege the
concept of the architectural image thus distancing themselves from the concerns of their users and buildings. This trend also pushes architects to create a highly aestheticized architecture rendering architecture to a ‘beautiful’ product celebrating economic progress. He also states that the ‘intoxicating’ world of images has become aestheticized and possibly ‘anesthetized’:

Architecture is potentially compromised within this aestheticized realm. Architects, it would seem, are particularly susceptible to an aesthetic that fetishizes the ephemeral image, the surface membrane. The world becomes aestheticized and anaesthetized. In the intoxicating world of the image, the aesthetics of architecture threatens to become the anaesthetics of architecture (45).

To examine the effects of the ‘intoxicating world of the image,’ I will turn to explain how the saturation of architecture with images threatens to anesthetize the field while creating a condition of artifice and imagery supporting Leach’s idea of us being numbed by them. Then, I will reflect on the culture of spectacle that is dominating the world in the twenty-first century to demonstrate how it has ‘fetishized’ architecture. Later, I will reflect on how globalization and its economic component, capitalism, are driving vernacular architectures, such as Islamic architecture, to a pastiche-like trend. At a later stage, one will propose a solution to this complex phenomenon by looking at critical regionalism as well as the fundamental sources of aesthetics in Islamic architecture.

It is necessary, in order to explain the phenomenon of the ‘image,’ to describe the facts surrounding the saturation of architecture with images in the current century, and analyze how the aesthetics of the global age have come to prevail over local communities and their architectural traditions. Prioritizing images over social and cultural realities has shifted the focus of architecture in the twenty-first century. The saturation of the image and its fetishizing effect are interconnected phenomena reflecting the idea of the building as an ornament. Architects are highly concerned about the image of their project, their renderings, their facades, the modern look of the exteriors, and other related aspects. The contemporary culture is “heavily aestheticized”, and the society is “awash with images” (Leach 1999, 55). Leach also describes the postmodern man’s obsession
with images an idea that French sociologist Guy Debord discussed in the 1960s, and called Societe Du Spectacle. In this society of spectacles, the real world becomes simple images, and the simple images become real beings and the motivation of hypnotic behaviors. He also likened spectacle to a bad dream of a modern society that only expresses its desire to sleep (Debord 1971, 18-22). In more recent times, This phenomenon was also described as “saturation, intoxication, and complacency” (Leach 1999, 55). Architecture in the twenty-first century is increasingly aestheticized, and it continues to reflect this saturation. The medium of the image is continuously dominating architecture as the field is entirely fascinated by this trend of images (Leach 1999, 9). Conventionally, the world of architects is a world of images, where “convention dictates that architects should see the world in terms of visual representation-plans, sections, elevations, perspectives, and so on” (Leach 1999, 10). The professional culture of architecture has distanced itself from the space of lived experiences and architects’ work has been reduced to a process of architectural representation.

The field of architecture consists of sole representations and images of space, lots, and renderings. One should observe, for instance, the many advertisements promoting the new mega-projects in Dubai. Whether it is Burj Khalifa, Dubai Marina, or the Palm Island, the aestheticization of the field has become a standard pattern. Whether they are based in the UK or the USA, architecture firms designing projects in the Middle East have been increasingly competing to create the best architectural image through design. Architectural images remain a top priority. As seen on both advertisements (Figure 4-2) one notices that the image of progress in Dubai and the success of its national carrier Emirates is advertised through the image of its glamorous architecture, in particular, the tallest tower in the world Burj Khalifa. Dubai “re-imagines the world” as the home of tomorrow and the hub for people from all over the world. Through these well-rendered images, the city is presented as the future through its most iconic tower as well as the smaller developments surrounding it. The image of Burj Khalifa is the “address” (Figure 4-3). This iconic building comes with its glass
and tall façade to define a new type of modern aesthetics that would become a reference of what architecture is about in this part of the world.

Figure 4-2: BBDO. 2012. Dubai Re-imagines the World. Ads of the World. https://www.adsoftheworld.com/media/print/emirates_burj

There is indeed no harm in doing so except when it becomes the main priority of architects in this era. According to Leach (1999, 10), there is an increasing gap between the techniques and practices of architecture firms and the world of lived experiences. He also points out how architectural culture is trapped within the whole logic of ‘aestheticization’. He writes:

The very fetishizing of the image in architectural culture decontextualizes that image and traps the discourse of architecture within the whole logic of aestheticization, wherein everything is divested of much of its original meaning. Architectural culture, therefore, encounters the same depoliticizing urge that affects all discourses which work within the medium of the aesthetic (Leach 1999, 10).

In *Learning from Las Vegas*, Venturi referred to modern architecture as ordinary and ugly, where he and his collaborators explained how modern architecture became silly and informed by many formal languages. Through the design of so-called ducks, architects applied less if any ornaments thus the building itself became an ornament. Venturi, Brown, and Izenour (1972) explained their perspective of decorated sheds in the twentieth century as follows:

This content did not flow inevitably from the solving of functional problems [as it should be according to Lagueux] but arose from Modern architects’ unexplicated iconographic preferences and was manifest through a language—several languages—of form, and that formal languages and associational systems are inevitable and good, becoming tyrannies only when we are unconscious of them (162).

Comparing the modern approach of the ‘duck’ to that of the Medina of Tunis, in particular, and Islamic architecture, in general, one is compelled to state that the aesthetic and ornamental approach is less obvious. The ornament is hidden from the public gaze inside the medina’s richly ornamented interiors. The outside only shows a simple, white façade (Figure 4-4), with few openings towards the main streets; while the courtyards are richly decorated.
The exterior façades of houses, mosques, and madrasas, are minimal as they do not show any exceptional decoration except for the doors. Ernst J. Grube explains that hidden architecture is the actual form of Islamic architecture (Grube 1978, 12). In the Medina itself, a mosque, its minaret, and several other monumental structures might be partially or totally hidden by adjacent buildings. This urban character is due to the dense urban fabric, obscuring the aesthetics of architecture from sight (Figure 4-5).

This vision of hidden aesthetics is different from Venturi’s take on modern architecture, where he described buildings as being icons and ornaments themselves. This twentieth-century trend continues to prevail in the twenty-first century. As seen in (Figure 4-5), one should mention the contrast between the ornamentation of modern buildings in Las Vegas, where the building becomes an ornament and acts as a ‘commercial monument’,
compared to that of vernacular Islamic architecture. In the latter one, the ornament is a constitutive part but does not make the building a monument. In the case of Ezzitouna Mosque, for instance, the building is a monument given its historical, educational, and religious functions, but not an ornament per se.

To summarize the previous ideas, one should say that the dominance of postmodern aesthetics over traditional and local Islamic aesthetics is a reflection of how capitalism is threatening the authenticity of local architectures. The frenzy of capitalism highlights how the production of goods is intensifying in a world intoxicated with images. Architecture has become one of these modern goods adding more economic value to the society of the spectacle. Architecture is part of this ‘economic celebration’ of the modern age. The culture of spectacle is driving architecture to perform in a standard way. Whether it is in Dubai or the US, architecture is expected to embrace international aesthetics to reflect an image of fame, progress, and presence in the global scene. In a more recent book related called *Understanding Islamic Architecture* (2002), Galdieri (2002, 111) calls it a general crisis in architecture, where imagination is lacking, a desire for standardization is growing, globalization of popular taste is taking place, along with an excessive dependence on technology. A strange relationship with the local environment is increasing, and architects are abandoning local materials and resources. He also explains the causes of the crisis including the impulse to turn architecture into a spectacle of “bolder and taller” constructions driven by more technology but “increasingly hostile to the people who are supposed to use them”. He writes:

> For example, the impulse to turn every new building into an “event” and thus to engage increasingly in architecture as spectacle, an architecture intended not to perform its function and serve the city and its inhabitants, but to be written up in architectural journals or to be a symbol of power (Galdieri 2002, 111).

The concept of spectacle refers to a mode of reproduction of society based on the reproduction of goods, ever more numerous and ever more similar in their variety. Debord’s (1971) *La Société du spectacle* is essentially a radical criticism of the commodity and its dominance over life, which is
found in the alienation of the consumer society. The spectacle is also created in architecture being one of these ‘unconsumed goods’ and the frenzy to produce beautiful icons has become a major by-product in the spectacle of architectures of the twenty-first century. Examples, where these occur, are skyscrapers or malls, which are ordinary icons in the big ‘concrete jungle’. Urban streetscapes are dominated by ‘superblocks’ (Colquhoun 1983). An entire building becomes an ornament that attempts to market itself through its image. Competition over images has been taking place in the world of architecture nowadays, thus informing the way aesthetics function.


In the context of placelessness and capitalism, critical regionalism has the potential to sustain an architecture that focuses on balancing modern traditions and local ones. Since it emerged in the 1980s, the term first used by architectural theorists Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, “has emerged as one of the alternatives to a clearly aging modernism and to postmodernism’s younger but prematurely ailing sibling, deconstruction” (Tzonis and Lefaivre 1990, 484). British architect and critic Kenneth Frampton also used critical regionalism and called for a revival of old civilizations while relying on modern architecture (Frampton 1983b). Critical regionalism is an approach by which architecture counters “the ubiquitous placelessness of our modern environment” and it is also an opportunity, as Frampton emphasizes, for “an architecture of resistance” (Frampton 1983b, 24-25).

Frampton explained that architecture needs to ensure an arriere-garde⁹ position removing itself from “the optimization of advanced technology and the ever-present tendency to regress into nostalgic historicism or the glibly decorative” (Frampton 1983b, 20). Frampton, who relied on

⁹ In his Book chapter “Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance” (1983, 20), Frampton defines arriere-garde as a position that can sustain architecture. Arriere-garde is a position “which distances itself equally from the Enlightenment myth of progress and from a reactionary, unrealistic impulse to return to the architectonic forms of the preindustrial past.”
Heidegger’s critical vantage point on universal placelessness\textsuperscript{10}, recognized that a critical arriere-garde could use discrete universal techniques while implementing an identity-giving culture. He also notes that critical regionalism relies on “a high level of critical self-consciousness” and its main strategy is about “mediating the impact of universal civilization with elements derived indirectly from the peculiarities of a particular place” (Frampton 1983b, 21). Mediating the impact of universal civilization (globalization) with the peculiarities of a particular location (Medina of Tunis) is aligned with the objectives of the thesis at hand. Architects cannot revive a whole medina, for instance, through the use of advanced technology only. They would not be able to revive it through the architectural eulogy of orientalists and recycling its ornaments in a pastiche-like form. Following such avoided approach would lead to the placelessness of architecture. So, to what extent can critical regionalism act to mediate between different sources of architectural identity?

Through his critical regionalism, Frampton calls for an architecture that promotes resistance and an “identity-giving culture” and at the same time follows universal techniques discreetly (Frampton 1983b, 20). Indeed, architects need to be critical of what architectural elements they choose to use and why they are doing so while understanding the symbolism behind these architectonic elements. Moreover, architecture should not be overwhelmed by modern technologies and construction methods but should rather choose adaptive solutions to specific cultural contexts. One should also state that relying purely on history as the way forward to discover the ‘origins’ of Islamic architecture would lead to an attitude centered around history. In his essay “Modernity and Tradition: Problem or Potential”, Suha Ozkan (2002, 87) discusses regionalism in the Islamic world, and he explains how modernism became a strong pattern and an ethical foundation that is hard to contest. Some of the interesting architectural approaches he refers to are what he calls “derivative regionalism” or

vernacularism\textsuperscript{11}. Hassan Fathy is one of the pioneers who challenged modernism and “wholeheartedly believed that materials to build with were available on any site; he thought that it was the responsibility of the architects to figure out how to use and develop appropriate technology to transform local materials into buildings” (Ozkan 2002, 87). The problem of Islamic architecture is not its traditional elements or the modern technology but rather how twenty-first-century architects either rely too much on history or too much on modern technologies.

As seen in Figure 4-6, the use of Islamic geometry on an office building in Tunis seems marginal. The buildings' incoherent architecture attempts to negotiate large bay windows and Islamic geometry oddly. This fusion shows how ornament is added ineffectively to the exterior and does not necessarily increase the value of this architecture. Rather it tries to embellish the building. The ornament simply becomes an aesthetic commodity that is not well integrated and researched.

\textbf{Figure 4-6:} Faleh, Majdi. 2010. The Use of Islamic Geometry on an Office Building in Tunis, Tunisia

Such an approach is limiting in a philosophical sense as it places architecture within a rigid context, which proposes something akin to the ‘genetic’ essence of Islamic architecture while excluding some of its ethical values and building codes that address cultural identity and human

\textsuperscript{11} In the architecture of Hassan Fathy (1900-1989), the use of adobe as an appropriate technology in projects such as Al-Gourna Village is one aspect of reviving Vernacular architecture. Vernacularism is about the use of the vernacular. Other aspects of the use of the vernacular include the use of traditional Arab styles such as the Makhtaf (wind catcher), the lantern dome, and the Mashrabiya (wooden screens).
well-being in responsible and meaningful ways. By ‘genetics’, I am referring to an architecture that remains stagnant in a golden age and keeps attempting to use its architectural and architectonic elements as they are. Copying ornaments that Frampton called ‘glibly decorative’, would also result in the sense of placelessness that architecture must avoid in the current era. As AlSayyad (1995, 23) explains, individuals in the age of globalization belong to different cultures, their identity keeps changing, and the connection of their world culture and space can become placeless. For him, placelessness can happen in the context of traditional settlements in a global era, when the cultural experience of individuals becomes less rooted in the place and more based on the information.

Both technology and new architectural ideas can be considered as information. Whether it is through excessive technology, through excessive reliance on historical elements, or through a pastiche of geometries and ornamentation, Islamic architecture has to evaluate its priorities. This traditional architecture cannot evolve unless researchers and architects can understand the symbolism and meaning that lies behind its architectural patterns and architectonic details. The understanding of the symbolism means that architects will not rely on copying, but they will instead invent a new way of rethinking such an architecture through its principles.

Moving from the ‘glibly decorative’ to Frampton’s _arriere garde_, one should determine the benefits of his approach. He refers to these attempts to revive lost vernacular forms as simple-minded, while he (Frampton 1983b) explains the strategies and the inspiration that should drive the process of mediation between world culture and vernacular architecture. He writes:

>The fundamental strategy of Critical Regionalism is to mediate the impact of universal civilization with elements derived indirectly from the peculiarities of a particular place. It is clear from the above that Critical Regionalism depends upon maintaining a high level of critical self-consciousness. It may find its governing inspiration in such things as the range and quality of the local light, or in a tectonic derived from a peculiar structural mode, or in the topography of a given site (21).
Paying closer attention to elements such as natural light, tectonics, or form will likely influence the mediation process to create a precise system that deconstructs and reconstructs the aesthetics of the place. Critical regionalism can be the mediator between the universal civilization, where technology and a ‘rush’ to revive traditional patterns are dominant, such as in the case of the office building in Tunis. Such an approach would avoid the “Whiplash-Arabesques” of Victor Horta or the pastiche of Islamic geometric patterns imposed by an advanced post-industrial technology in Dubai or Tunis. The inspiration may take place through elements that are timeless such as light, topography, and the morphology or topology of structures coming from the Medina of Tunis. Architectural theorists Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre explain that mediation between local and global sources as called for by critical regionalism of architectural identity is a key element. Also, they emphasize the importance of using local design elements in distinctive ways to limit the universalization of architecture. In their essay “Why Critical Regionalism Today?”, the authors (Tzonis and Lefaivre 1990) support Frampton’s Critical Regionalism while arguing that:

One contemporary trend of Regionalist architecture-Critical Regionalism -is a more original movement which has come about as a response to new problems posed by contemporary global development of which it is strongly critical, and that the poetics of this new movement are to a great extent different from if not antithetical to other architectural regionalist techniques of the past (485).

In the context of this discussion, I remain inclined to suggest that the negotiation of different sources of contemporary identities shall take place only through mediating the local, its ethics and its aesthetics, and the Global, through its technologies. However, following Frampton’s position, one should note that “the mediation of universal technique involves imposing limits on the optimization of industrial and post-industrial technology” (Frampton 1983b, 21). The point here is that universal techniques of buildings and materials should not lead to the standardization of the field. Universal techniques might also lead to the generic use of ornaments, as in the case of the previous office building, where laser technology was used to copy some Islamic geometry on the
façade of the post-industrial looking building. The adaptation of architectural details should not be reduced to geometric patterns or visuals that aim to produce an image of what Islamic architecture of the fantasy land is, an image that is highly praised by orientalists. In the case of the Medina of Tunis, for example, architects should understand how ornament is not only purely decorative but also spiritual when it reflects infinity of the creator and the creation, an aspect that I will discuss in the next chapter.

Figure 4-7: Faleh, Majdi. 2010. CEPEX “Tunisia Export” Office Building in Tunis, Tunisia

Aesthetics are a central issue as the ‘face’ or the image of the country that facades and buildings reveal. As seen in Figure 4-7, for instance, The main semi-circular façade of La Maison de L’Export\textsuperscript{12} comes with a mixture of architectural vocabularies and ornaments. It is an institution that tries to promote a certain modern face to investors through an architecture that supposedly appeals to both modern and traditional tastes. That includes a green curtain-wall, gray cladding, a black cladding for the entrance, and

\textsuperscript{12} CEPEX or Le Centre de Promotion des Exportations is a public-sector Institution that is affiliated with the Tunisian Ministry of Commerce and Industry. It was created in 1973 and it aims to promote the private sector as well as exportation. No information has been found in relation to the actual building and its architecture.
most importantly an Islamic geometric floral pattern. The latter comes to ‘embellish’ the post-industrial façade of this building, or maybe it comes as an attempt to ‘balance’ the contemporary and modern look of the façade and the Islamic context of the country. Ornamentation is copied and forced onto this façade to add legitimacy to its Islamic context. The optimization of industrial and post-industrial techniques that Frampton asks architects to limit takes place here. The excessive use of technology overwhelms the architecture of the building in its attempt to balance global and local sources of architectural identities and to present itself as the Export Hub of Tunisia. The building becomes a pastiche of ornaments, from the traditional and the modern eras, and thus promotes itself as an ‘image’ that can be exported internationally. Such an image can attract local and international investors and clients.

From the dilemma of excessive technology, one should compare and contrast such an approach with that of the Medina of Tunis. Aesthetics of the vernacular buildings of the Medina and its dense urban fabric seemed to be confined to its walls and to find little grounds outside in the twenty-first century. There is not a broader consideration of the terrain for design intervention and the implementation of ‘good’ principles governing the urban structure of the Medina, privacy principles, and light, necessary in the kind of architecture that is inherent to Islam. What is also needed is to learn from and adapt from precedents versus mere copying of borrowed architectural technologies. For example, architects can proceed by learning from the architecture of the medina, how it has adapted its architecture to its geographical context, how it used elements such as light and geometry. This learning curve is at the heart of critical regionalism, and it would strengthen the architectural qualities as a local architecture of Tunisia and Islam.

What has been said does not exclude the importance of aesthetic judgment as it has a high significance in the construct of architecture in the Medina of Tunis. Aesthetic judgments are also a component of ethical and legal judgments; by being an aesthetic failure, a building will be judged as a moral failure, as well (Taylor and Levine 2011, 49). In the case
of modern Tunis, Cite Ennasr (Figure 4-8), a thriving high-class neighborhood, built two decades ago, presents all sorts of architectural styles and patterns on its facades. A mix of ornamentation, of arches, of bay windows, and small useless balconies, do nothing but add more to the failure of the architecture of such a project. In a jungle of concrete, architectural styles are diverse; we find the modern architecture, and others mixing modern and traditional styles that we cannot even describe as Arabic-Islamic (Faleh 2008, 87). However, is critical regionalism the only way forward? Does it have any limitations?

Figure 4-8: Faleh, Majdi. 2008. Urban and Architectural Chaos of Cite Ennasr in the Grand Tunis, Tunisia

Critical Regionalism seems to provide a way forward for architects to revolutionize local architecture and come up with social, environmental, and cultural solutions into local architectures. Maybe there was an attempt to ‘critically regionalize’ Tunisian office buildings by integrating modern steel laser cutting technologies, bay windows, arches and Islamic geometric patterns. However, some critics of critical regionalism, such as Keith L.Eggener, claim that this concept is highly problematic in that it
reflects a post-colonial tendency, especially when applied to the architecture of post-colonial or developing nations (Eggener 2002, 228). Tunisia is one of these post-colonial countries that continues to struggle with its architectural identity. Eggener also emphasizes his point by explaining that critical regionalism comes as a force imposed from outside thus diminishing the quality of the architecture it is trying to empower. He writes:

Identifying an architecture that purportedly reflects and serves its locality, buttressed by a framework of liberative, empowering rhetoric, critical regionalism is itself a construct most often imposed from outside, from positions of authority. The assumptions and implications it bears have undermined its own constructive message and confounded the architecture it upholds (Eggener 2002, 228).

Eggener also notes that critical regionalist rhetoric help to exemplify “the revisionary form of imperialist nostalgia” as explained by Jane Jacobs (2002, 14-15). For him, such an approach can induce architecture into marginalization rather than empowerment. In this context, I would partially agree with Eggener in the sense that critical regionalism should be an approach that comes to balance and not to marginalize the local architecture of Tunisia and the Emirates. The source of mediating architectural styles should be the local architecture more than modern technologies. Technology should be a tool to enhance local architectures. Liberating local architecture is good, and ethical in essence, but liberating while dominating or marginalizing can create a more significant gap between architecture and its context.

4.5 Conclusion

Architectural dilemmas as suggested by Lagueux are at one and the same time also ethical problems, so they are internal to the practice of architecture. “This is because the solution of ethical problems is a constitutive part of practicing architecture” (Lagueux 2004, 122). Each decision made and each solution proposed by architects is a value judgment of architecture. For instance, what is left from the Medina of Tunis is a reflection of the architectural and planning decisions and the rational system of planning the settlement. As Micaud (1978, 232) emphasizes “the still legible Medina is the best clue we have to the ethos of a society that
made a high art of urban life”. As explained above, applying critical regionalism, deconstructing and reconstructing architectural identity would empower identity as in the case of vernacular cities, but it can also neutralize the connection between architecture and its context. Thus, it is highly recommended to find the right balance between what is there, what is needed, and the actors of this change, namely architects.

Another influential writer from the 1960s is Christopher Alexander. In his essay, *A City is not a Tree* (1965) discusses vernacular or old cities, and suggests that architects should revisit their original ordering principles including their planning methods and restore them in our modern cities. Original ordering patterns should be reconsidered including the ‘organic’ layout of traditional cities. The aesthetics of these traditional cities should also be well-thought-out without falling into a whiplash pastiche as described by Horta. To the contrary, the mere imitation of the materiality of old cities makes architects and planners’ decisions a failure. An architectural decision can create stronger bonds between community members, but it can also divide them and create shapeless spaces where interaction is limited. In the Medina, for instance, the Suqs create interesting societal dynamics where people share not only business and trade but also religious and political knowledge. It is known for being a place of exchange and encounter. Socially, architectural decisions impact the way of life and orchestrate the environment where social life will be held. These several factors seem to remain internal to the practice of architecture, and thus one can support this claim as Lagueux (2004) does:

> Since they are designing the theater in which social life necessarily takes place, architects have the duty to plan buildings that are able to generate feelings that are ethically acceptable. It is in this sense that ethical problems are necessarily an internal part of the problems they have to solve in order to achieve success in their art (123). 

Beyond feelings and romanticism, architects should design spaces that are conducive to specific values and practices. In the case of the medinas, one of the most crucial aspects is privacy and the gradual hierarchy between the public domain and the private one, but also the concept of equality and humbleness (versus excess) that Islam promotes.
Consequently, with its white facades, simple forms, and few openings, one could see an aspect of equality between neighbors. Architecture being a social statement and a unifying factor of different communities can also make a valid ethical statement. In the context of Islamic cities, one might refer again to the example of the Medina of Tunis whose urban fabric exists in a way that unifies its different sections and their occupants, while ensuring their privacy. In the eighth century, Jurisprudence or the Maliki Fiqh defined the most important urban and architectural features from a legal and a religious perspective. They were used to resolve conflicts between neighbors (Hakim 1986, 19). Architectural decisions as explained by Lagueux are also about decision-making in a context where each decision has a considerable impact on people’s lives. Architecture can generate feelings of pessimism as well as optimism, sense of depression as well as of liberation, and sense of aggression as well as peace.

In light of the analysis of ethics and aesthetics in the context of the Medina of Tunis, empowering architectural identity, through understanding its meanings, is the solution to balancing modernity and tradition. There is no need to give up the architectural traditions, to overuse them, or to overuse post-industrial technologies such as steel and concrete structures and large-scale bay windows. Balance is the key. That said, the ethical standards that continuously helped to build the Medina should be understood and should be respected by architects as long as they revive local construction techniques and reinvent the use of materials. Its aesthetics also need to follow its ethical principles. The goal is to balance ethics and aesthetics or function and beauty based on the local customs and practices (Urf) as well as on religious customs (Fiqh). The economic, political, and social considerations that Harries (1997) fails to engage with needs to be taken into consideration. The technological context is also as important as the previous ones. One needs to adopt a different approach that moves beyond the Heideggerian approach and the narrative of the loss of Middle Eastern Cities. The narrative of loss tells us the story of a great and flourishing civilization that was partially lost through colonization and globalization discourses (Elshehtawy 2004d). Disregarding the context would not give enough justice to the medina, and falling into a romantic
A regionalist approach to the loss of place neither would be beneficial. Indeed, as Frampton explains, architecture should distance itself from excessive progress and an excessive return to the past forms. He writes:

Architecture can only be sustained today as a critical practice if it assumes an arrière-garde position, that is to say, one which distances itself equally from the Enlightenment myth of progress and from a reactionary, unrealistic impulse to return to the architectonic forms of the preindustrial past (Frampton 1983b, 20).

Hakim’s (1986) understanding of the theater of social and spiritual interaction where Islamic architecture thrives, is significant since he relies on explaining the Fiqh principles, which helped to set the architecture of the Medina of Tunis based on Sharia principles and codes that respond to a specific sociocultural context. Without understanding its ethics and aesthetics, one might fall into an empty narrative. One should also understand the analysis of dual-cities that evolved with colonialism. Understanding how the European city evolved next to the Medina, which I discussed in the previous chapter, helps the reader to understand how the reading of a city can move beyond the Islamic without necessarily overshadowing the principles of Fiqh that researchers can use in the current century. It is necessary to understand the sources of tension, earlier discussed in the previous chapter, without omitting the focus on religion and local agents.

Such a process would help architects and researchers to approach the ramifications east/west without following a neo-Islamic or a Western-style type of city. The ethical debate needs to start from the sources: What were the ethical and aesthetical principles that guided the design and building of the Medina of Tunis? Moreover, how was the ethical and aesthetical debate in the Medina of Tunis shaped?
5. Islamic Principles and the Influence of Fiqh on the Planning of the Medina, a Source of Architectural Mediation

5.1 Introduction: The Universal Value of the Medina of Tunis

In this chapter, I will argue that the negotiation of the modern and traditional sources of identity needs to proceed from first understanding the ethics that determine the architectural value of the Medina\(^{13}\) of Tunis. In fact, architects need to look at the Medina not only for what it tells us about the past but also for the merit in discerning the Medina’s principles of design and planning. The latter are underlying this medieval settlement’s foundation, development, and occupation and they can be rewarding when turning to Islamic architectural traditions for solutions to design problems in the current age and to draft socially-aware architectural codes.

Hence, this chapter will first investigate the Islamic city principles based on Ibn al-Rami’s valuable writings. I will explore the evolution of the Arab-Muslim city through an analysis of pre-modern legal documents of Ibn al-Rami, the construction master who lived in the Medina in the fourteenth century. I will also examine actual cases of ḥkJām al-bunyān or Rulings of Construction based on his Kitāb al-iʿlān bi-ḥkJām al-bunyān (The Book of Pronouncing Judgments in [Matters of] Building). In fact, past and present are the foundations of society’s identity as well as its architectural identity, and “society’s past and the way that society conceives of its history provides modes of continuity which give the present its authenticity” (Al-Hathloul 1981, iii). From this analysis, I will look at the influence of privacy, an ethical value, on the architecture and planning of the Medina of Tunis. Thus these aspects will be explored using scholarly studies and architectural diagrams of this historical Medina. This strategic settlement is:

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\(^{13}\) The spelling Medina (capital M) will be used to refer to the Medina of Tunis. medina (lower case) refers to Arab-Islamic cities in general.
Located in a fertile plain region of north-eastern Tunisia, and a few kilometers from the sea, the Medina of Tunis is one of the first Arabo-Muslim towns of the Maghreb (698 A.D.). Capital of several universally influential dynasties, it represents a human settlement that bears witness to the interaction between architecture, urbanism and the effects of socio-cultural and economic changes of earlier cultures. Under the Almohads and the Hafsids, from the 12th to the 16th century, Tunis was considered one of the greatest and wealthiest cities in the Arab world. Numerous testimonies from this and earlier periods exist today. Between the 16th and 19th centuries, new powers endowed the city with numerous palaces and residences, great mosques, zaouias, and madrasas (UNESCO).

In addition to its historical significance, as the UNESCO report confirms, the Medina of Tunis is also one of the best prototypes of medinas or vernacular settlements in the Islamic world. This Medina is geographically and historically strategic to the Maghreb area (Western North Africa) as well as to Southern Europe, and that is why it has been considered for at least four centuries as ‘universally influential’. It was historically an essential part of the Ottoman Empire from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. The Medina of Tunis was, from its foundation in the fifth century till the nineteenth century, a crossroad of civilizations with a complex urban fabric. The latter is a reflection of social and cultural customs that were defined by Islamic jurisprudence.

The Hafsids, whose era was wealthy, founded a mature Berber dynasty that expanded from western Libya, through Tunisia, to eastern Algeria. Tunis reached maturity both politically and geographically during the Hafsids era (1229-1574), and the only school of thought that followed this period was Maliki (Hakim 1986, 17). The rulers of the Hafsid dynasty selected Maliki scholars for high positions of state and madrasas, “where Maliki juridical texts were the heart of the curriculum” (Dunn 2012, 37). The Maliki rite was unchallenged until the Ottomans arrived in the sixteenth century (Moore 1965, 10). Even after the Ottoman rule, Tunisia still follows the Maliki Fiqh. Law, societal values, and culture still constitute the backbones of the Maliki foundation in the country.

In Islamic teaching and more so in Maliki thought, privacy is an essential feature of jurisprudence and conduct, and it derives from the Arabic concept of Ḥormat or blessed rites. Ḥormat is also a word that was cited
multiple times in the Qur'an referring to sanctity thus elevating privacy to the level of a rite. Given its importance, along with the principle of *Haya'*\textsuperscript{14} or modesty (Siraj 2011, 717, Boulanouar 2006, 136), Muslims applied the same values to their architecture, and they built settlements where one continues to be protected from the eyes of strangers. The transition from primary thoroughfares to secondary alleyways and then into the courtyards of houses reinforces the social and spiritual dimensions of privacy. The exterior white and minimal façade of the dwelling protects the interior, and thus the house and its courtyard become a sanctuary of family life. The structure of the house in Islamic culture, for instance, is subsequently designed to preserve the value of privacy inside the home (Memarian and Ranjbar-Kermani 2011, 71).

These principles of jurisprudence, spatial transition, and protection play a significant role in establishing the well-being of residents within the walls of the medinas. However, one needs to understand some of the socio-religious values, particularly those bearing on the definition and provision of privacy, to suggest if the architecture and planning of this vernacular settlement can be a source of inspiration for contemporary architecture. The Islamic values, of *Hormat* and *Hayaa*, describe the ethics underpinning the built fabric of the medina and promise a means for negotiating between the traditional and the modern sources of architectural identity.

5.2 Islamic Principles of Planning and Design based on the Writings of Ibn al-Rami

In order to have an understanding of the immense influence of Islamic law on the construction in the Medina, this research will analyze Ibn al-Rami’s judgments as a builder as well as his treatise *Kitāb al-iʿlān bi-ḵākm al-bunyān*. I suggest that art historian Ernst Grube\textsuperscript{15} and orientalist Johann

\textsuperscript{14} In a narration, Abu Hurayrah reported in Sahih Al Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: “Belief consists of more than sixty branches and Haya’ is part of faith” (Al Bukhari 9).

\textsuperscript{15} Grube, Ernst J. 1978. “What is Islamic Architecture?” In Architecture of the Islamic World: its History and Social Meaning, edited by George Michell, 4-10. London, UK: Thames and Hudson. Grube defined Islamic architecture as focused on its interiors and somehow introspective, which is displayed through spatial and architectural configuration.
Ludwig Burckhardt\textsuperscript{16} missed this area in their analysis of Islamic art and architecture. These art historians focused on the formal properties of buildings and urban fabrics and the resulting ‘hidden’ qualities of Islamic architecture. Before explaining the Islamic principles of planning and design of the Medina of Tunis, a background explanation demonstrating the relevance of Ibn al-Rami’s (d. after 1333) work is necessary.

The complex structure of the Medina of Tunis follows specific urbanistic rules and codes governing social behavior, privacy, and mutual respect as core elements for structuring its space. These principles emanate from Islamic law. In the fourteenth century, Ibn al-Rami, a master builder or Banna, elaborated these codes as principles for building the complex and organic fabric of this Medina. The principles governing construction and land occupancy in the Medina of Tunis were used by judges to resolve public matters and conflicts between neighbors. In his treatise, Kitāb al-iʿlān bi-ḥkām al-bunyān (The Book of Pronouncing Judgments in [Matters of] Building), Ibn al-Rami explains several jurisprudence principles based on the Maliki Fiqh of North Africa. In his Kitāb (book), Ibn al-Rami included explanations of Islamic jurists about subjects related to construction and details of cases he tackled personally (Ibn al-Rami 1999).

During his lifetime, his peers were prominent legal advisors such as Ibn Abd Rafiee (d. 1332) and Al Ghouri Al Safaxi (d. 1299). His connection with them follows from his role as an official in charge of building roads and souks. Judges also appointed him to resolve conflicts arising from such constructions given his experience as a member of the group of experts Ahl Al Maʿrifa Wal Basar\textsuperscript{17}. While the matter of his Andalusian roots is uncertain, it is certain that Ibn al-Rami lived in the Medina of Tunis most of his life if not all of it (Brunschvig 1947, 129). In Brunschvig’s Urbanisme


\textsuperscript{17} Translated as the experts of knowledge and vision. For more readings about this group of experts, one can refer to Ibn al-Rami, Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim. 1999. Ahl Iʿlān bi-ḥkām al-bunyān (The book of pronouncing judgments in [matters of] building). Edited by Bin Slimane, Farid. Tunis: Markaz Al-Nashr Al-Jamii (Centre de Publication Universitaire). In this treatise, the authors refer to Ibn Khaldun who described that group as the ones who had expertise and knowledge in construction, and claimed they have the experience that others do not have.
Medieval et Droit Musulman\(^1\) (1947), the application of Maliki law to roads, walls, neighborly relations, and other components of urban life are understood. Brunschvig also relies on the works of fourteenth-century master builder Ibn al-Rami (Abu-Lughod 1987, 157). Both Ibn al-Rami’s experience and the continued reliance on his work in the nineteenth century shows the importance of understanding and applying the influence of Islamic law on construction in the twenty-first-century Islamic world.

Many researchers have also paid particular attention to Ibn al-Rami’s works, and it was published four times, but no real translation existed until 2017\(^2\). Azib (2015, 181) explains that the Ministry of Justice in Morocco first published Ibn al-Rami’s manuscript in the *Fiqh Maliki Magazine* (Majallat al-fiqh al-mālikī wa-l-turāth al-qaḍā’ī bi-l-Maghrib), and more precisely under the numbers 2, 3, and 4 in the year 1982. Doctor Farid Ben Slimane\(^3\) additionally published it, and that version was well received and commented upon. Abdulrahman Al-Atram also used it as part of his master’s degree at the University of Imam Muhammad Ben Saud in Riyadh, in the year 1983, and he wrote another scholarly edition of two volumes in 1995 (Hakim 2007, 103). Besides these authors and researchers, Besim Hakim also used Ibn al-Rami’s works while researching the principles of structuring space in the Medina of Tunis back in the 1980s (Hakim 1986).

Having researched the Medina of Tunis, Besim Hakim explained how he worked with a goal to learn and adapt the traditional lessons of its planning and architecture and apply them to contemporary building codes. During this process, Hakim (2008) reported how he relied on the works of master...
Ibn al-Rami and explained the importance of Ibn al-Rami’s treatise on buildings. He states that:

Ibn al-Rami, a master builder from Tunis (d. about 1350 CE), wrote a comprehensive treatise on building and urban codes and related customary laws of his region. He draws on previous and contemporary works and also on local opinions and practice, including his own. This treatise has been studied extensively by the present author and its rationale and main cases recorded and published (22).

Understanding the legal principles applied to the habitat of the Medina of Tunis would help to avoid the myths of nineteenth-century orientalists that misrepresent its provenance, planning, and architecture. The lure of Orientalism relies on “fictitious depictions of the Islamic city” leading to generalities and overshadowing legal and traditional practices (Kahera 2011, xxvii). Ziauddin Sardar, a contemporary London-based award-winning writer, explains that the understanding of Islamic law is necessary to sidestep these fictions and construct an ethical basis for habitat and so, to be part of Muslim history in a constructive way. Sardar also explains the importance of considering the Islamic city, with each complex structure as it helps to realize its potentials (Sardar 1985, 217-220). He adds that it is necessary to conserve its cultural property, especially in the current age of modernization, because the axiom of this era is ‘West is best’ and traditional is outdated and regressive (Sardar 1985, 217-220). Sardar also adds that “the traditional social symbols, which have informed every dimension of community life for centuries, have been assaulted by technological civilization to the extent that Muslims themselves speak of them as outdated and backward and feel ashamed of them” (Sardar 1985, 220). The many examples cited by Sardar help us to reaffirm the argument of this thesis that Islamic architecture can be a mediator between modern and traditional values in the Islamic city. This can happen only when learning from existing sources of value, including Ibn al-Rami’s manuscript.

The fact that Ibn al-Rami is a reference point for many writers from different eras demonstrates that his treatise is influential in determining the building codes used in the Medina of Tunis under the framework of Maliki Fiqh. There has been a growing scholarly awareness of how Islamic laws regulated the
built environment of Muslim medinas, as demonstrated previously. This discourse continues until today as seen in recent studies including the one by Simon O’Meara (2009, 1) where he points out how “this element of Islamic law (fiqh al-bunyân) be considered a discourse that established a legal aesthetic of architectural space and contributed towards the replication of the medina environment”. Having also relied on Hakim’s (1980) and Brunshvig’s (1947) works while referring to Ibn al-Rami’s treatise, O’Meara (2009, 2) explains the time frame during which Islamic law was influential in shaping the Arab-Muslim medina. He states:

There exists a body of Islamic law (fiqh) which indicates that a particular type of neighbourhood space was deliberately replicated in the Arab-Muslim medina from approximately the tenth to the nineteenth centuries – a time frame that encompasses both the ‘ville classique’ and the ‘ville traditionelle’.

This Sunni Islamic law or fiqh al-bunyân derived more from the Ḥadith and to a lesser extent from the Qur’an. This process of learning from the fiqh in neighborhood spaces and adapting it to changing circumstances both in time and space gives it more validity to be studied and to be applied in the current century. This strong validity is present because the sources of value in the Islamic built environment are comprehensively grounded in its Fiqh books, which continue to be used even today. One should relate to Sardar’s view that “the traditional systems have stood the test of time and their superiority is now beginning to be realized” (Sardar 1985, 220). He also explains that not all contemporary and modern products are inherently bad and that Muslims “lack an understanding of Islam and appreciation of contemporary reality” (Sardar 1985, 220). Consequently, one needs to understand how Ibn al-Rami derived some of these principles of the law from the Ḥadiths and how they were applied in the building of medinas, their streets, neighborhoods, houses, and courtyards to be able to apply them in the contemporary context.

Ibn al-Rami’s work “draws on previous and contemporary works and also on local opinions and practice, including his own” (Hakim 2008, 22). In the context of this thesis, it is relevant to know that customary laws, dating

21 New City versus Classical City
back to the Byzantine Empire, continued to have an influence in Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In 533CE, a lawyer by the name of Armenopoulos wrote these laws in a manuscript called Julian of Ascalon’s Treatise of Construction and Design Rules from Sixth-Century Palestine (Hakim 2008, 22). In the tenth century, Ibn Al-Imam wrote a treatise called Rules for Abutting Buildings and Prevention of Damages and his book also relied on customary laws or Urf to describe its impact on the architecture and planning. Later, in the fourteenth century, Ibn al-Rami followed the same path and demonstrated how Islamic law had influenced architecture in the medina. One should point out that both Byzantine and Islamic laws “recognized local customary practice” (Hakim 2008, 22) and their use continued both geographically and historically across the region. Thus, studying these laws would be beneficial to confirm how they would be valid in bridging the gap between traditional and modern architectural identities. These laws of Fiqh, indeed, can survive in the current century.

In the next section, I will select for analysis the ethical principles that informed the architecture of the medina. Ibn al-Rami himself only discussed the ethics of construction, but its aesthetics were inferred indirectly. The principles of the law that are particularly relevant to this thesis are defined as follows (Orihuela Uzal 2006, 153-154, Hakim 1986, 19-22):

**Harm**: an action of a dweller should not present a potential risk or danger by presenting a nuisance to his neighbor. Hakim explains that the essence of this principle is that its exercise allows one to exercise their full rights without causing any disruption or harm to their neighbors. In the Qur’an, Allah said “o ye who believe, eat not up your property among yourselves in vanities, but let there be among you traffic and trade by mutual goodwill. Nor kill [or destroy] yourselves: for verily God hath been to you most Merciful” (Arberry, 4:29). In the Ḥadith Prophet Muhammad also said: “do not harm others or yourself, and others should not harm you or themselves” (Ahmad and Ibn Majah, Ref.7, p.77).

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Obstacles: temporary or permanent obstructions should not obstruct any public street. Abu Hurairah narrated that Prophet Muhammad said: “if a man is walking in a street and finds a branch of thorns and removes it, then God will thank him and forgive him” (Ref.6, p.285).

Excess of water: no blocking of the supply of water. The Prophet (PBUH) recommended that people need to share water and any surplus has to be shared for drinking or irrigation. This principle helped to establish the public water fountain in the streets of the medinas. Abu Hurairah once reported in the Hadith that “on the Day of Resurrection God will not consider [or support], and will make a man face severe torment who had excess water in a thoroughfare and denied it to the passer-by…” (Ref. 6, p.265).

Interdependence: auto-regulated compartments. A framework based on this principle is necessary for providing solutions that meet the needs of the specific built environment in Islamic cities.

Privacy: avoid viewing the interior of patios. This principle refers to the physical and private domain of the home, which needs to be respected. Privacy is an important ethical matter in Islamic teaching and the Qur’an, and people need to respect it as part of the behavioral pattern of this society. In the Qur’an, Allah says “o ye who believe, enter not houses other than your own, until ye have asked permission and saluted those in them: that is best for you, in order that ye may heed..." (Ali, 24:27). Also, in the Hadith, it was reported by Ahmad and Al-Nisai via Abu Hurairah that “he who looks into a house without the occupants’ permission, and they puncture his eye, will have no right to demand a fine or ask for punishment." (Ref. 3 Vol. II, P. 576).

Rights of original (or earlier) usage: Priority of neighbors who settled before others when it comes to the resolution of potential conflicts. In a contemporary setting this “should be incorporated as limits to decision-making when building before others in a specific location. Also as givens for others to accept when building adjacent to existing structures” (Hakim 1986, 166).
Rights of building higher within one’s airspace, even if it excludes air and the sun from others: the right to build vertically while limiting the height to allow air and sun rays inside the neighbors’ houses. This principle follows the Maliki School and allows the owner to maximize his spatial occupation for personal benefit. In this context, a verse of the Qur’an comes to support this idea as follows: “and diminish not the goods of the people, and do not mischief in the earth working corruption” (Arberry, 26:183).

Respect for others’ property: Both ownership and integrity are fundamental principles to be respected, and no action is allowed if it causes value depression or nuisance. Prophet Muhammad once said, “if somebody who plants in someone else’s land without consent, then he has no claim to it or to its initial cost” (Rafi’ Ben-Khadij, Ref. 3 Vol. III, P.250).

Public streets: equal to up to 3.50 m wide, which is the necessary distance for two fully loaded camels to cross based on the Hadith (Islamic text transmitted through Prophet Muhammad). The cubit ranges from 46-50 cm which means that the width will then range from 3.23 to 3.50 m. The minimum vertical height is seven cubits, and that includes the height of the camel with the highest load. Abu Hurairah reported on Prophet Muhammad that “if you disagree about the width of a street, make it seven cubits” (Ref. 8 Vol.II, p. 238).

Fina: the right of use of juxtaposing spaces by the dweller of the adjacent house, so the right of use of the exterior Fina belongs to the owner or building which borders it. A Fina is utilized “for the interior courtyard of a house and to the exterior space immediately adjacent to the exterior wall or walls of a house. The latter type is allocated for the daily temporary use of the inhabitant of the house to which it abuts, without allowing occupation of the space” (Hakim 1986, 27).

Traditional activities: non-clean activities generating substances such as chemicals or any nuisance should not be located around the mosque. “Sources of unpleasant smell and uses that generate noise should not be located adjacent to or near mosques. This principle influenced the layout
and product distribution in the Suq or market which typically was built adjacent to or surrounding the major city mosque" (Hakim 1986, 22).

These are some urban planning and architectural principles that are critical in Ibn al-Rami’s analysis and apply to modern construction. The prevention of harm, physical or moral, is the main concern that is seen through the Ḥadiths of the Sunnah and the Qur’an. However, privacy, as a value, and transition (between public and private spaces), as a result of a planning method, will only be studied as a reflection of Muslim society, its cultures, and its religion. The value of privacy and the transition are tightly interconnected, and they tend to be missing from primary modern scholarly debates and planning codes in the context of Tunis. They are also the organizing backbone of such vernacular settlement. In essence, these principles or ones like them are straightforward, clear, and familiar to researchers in social sciences and planning. However, their genesis is based on an analytical study and observation of how the Muslim society works ethically respecting principles of the Islamic faith and the respective rights of the faith’s adherents. This idea has been valid and survived after the rise of Islam.

Here, we are explicitly dealing with Muslim societies where Islam, as a religion, literally means ‘to surrender’. As a faith, Islam aims to generate a system of values promoting a sincere submission to the one God, a healthy lifestyle, and protection of the privacy and the rights of the society. These ideas confirm the Ḥadith number 2331 of the Prophet (PBUH) which says “Iā ḍarar wa-lā ḍirār [fī l-Islām]” which means “Do not inflict harm nor repay one injury with another”. This Ḥadith was also translated as “no infringement, whether profitable or not” (Hakim 1986, 22). Islam pays particular attention to such Ḥadith, and this Ḥadith means that changes can take place in the built environment as long as they do not harm people (Akbar 1988, 93). So far, we have outlined several principles and values that stand out in determining the importance of planning in the medina. In the next section, I will mainly focus on how privacy, a fundamental social and cultural value of Islamic culture, is implemented in a way that protects humans from material and spiritual harm.
5.3 Privacy and Its Influence on the Structure of the Medina

5.3.1. Privacy from the Perspective of Islamic Jurisprudence: from the Maliki Fiqh

An overarching value for planners and architects that arises from connections between the principles above has helped in the planning of the Medina of Tunis; in Islamic architecture, privacy constitutes a synthesis of social and planning practices. Islamic architecture is known as the ‘architecture of the veil’ or ‘hidden architecture’ because Muslim architects always put more emphasis on the interior of the building rather than its exteriors (Grube 1978, 11, Hussain 2009). Grube (1978, 11) defines this architecture as an “architecture that truly exists, not when seen as monument or symbol visible to all and from all sides, but only when entered, penetrated and experienced from within”. Grube’s theories of a hidden architecture are valid formally because this hidden feature exists in several medinas across the Mediterranean. However, Grube’s orientalist approach does not go beyond the formal, and it lacks a deep understanding of the religious books and texts that influenced the formation of such introvert and ‘protected’ spaces. Social values, also derived from religious foundations, did not find much attention, if any, in the works of orientalists such as Grube and Burckhardt.

The decoration of facades in a traditional Muslim house is more focused on embellishing its interiors rather than its exterior facade. Based on observation, the houses of the Medina of Tunis are known for their external white facades with few openings and a minimal architecture, but their interior spaces include courtyards and rooms, whose facades are highly decorated and well-detailed including a mix of marble, stuccowork, woodwork, and tiles. Around the courtyard, interior spaces are visually protected. Privacy in Islam covers different societal spheres including family, visitors, neighbors, men, and women. This ethic of privacy is essential in Islamic architecture where:
In line with this virtue of segregating the religious building and elevating its religious atmosphere for its users, Muslim architecture introduces a further ethic, which was developed to promote the sense of privacy. Privacy in Muslim culture and the Islamic faith was expressed to create protection against the outside world, among the family members, and between the family members and visitors. It produces respect for the rights of guests and visitors, respect for the rights of neighbors and the relationship between men and women (Ibrahim 2015, 225).

Harim\(^1\), reflects privacy in Islam, as it refers to the forbidden, the respected, and the protected. Human privacy is thus crucial as it refers to “anything else that is enclosed by four walls and a roof called a house and are not and should not be accessible to anyone except those who are the residents or the owners of the house” (Memarian and Ranjbar-Kermani 2011, 70). The privacy of internal spaces gained continuous importance in the architecture of Islam, and it mostly influenced the attitudes and the layouts of traditional dwellings in the Medina of Tunis and Islamic cities.

Privacy is significant in the architecture of the Medina of Tunis. Principles deriving from Islamic Sharia Law, Qur'an, and Ḥadith, explain this core Islamic value (Othman, Aird, and Buys 2015, 13). Privacy also existed in Western law and covered issues of the personal space, privacy of information, solitude and privacy, freedom from surveillance, and protection from unwarranted searches (Warren and Brandeis 1890). Discussing Western and Islamic views on privacy is essential to consider in contemporary Muslim societies, as it allows researchers to show how this value is still significant in contemporary architecture. Scholars\(^2\) have been

\(^1\) Ḥarim is the Arabic word that illustrates the image of privacy in Islam.


undertaking extensive research on privacy in many societies in the twenty-first century. The reality is that privacy in Islam did not necessarily get enough attention from researchers (Alshech 2004, 292). Given its critical application in the practice of Islam, privacy is a term coined to represent one of the ethical values for contemporary scholars and architects. Alshech (2004, 293) explains that Muslim societies consider privacy as a fundamental principle distinguishing the private sphere from the public sphere. He adds that Islamic legal texts and Qur’anic texts contribute to the elaboration of this concept.

The notion of domestic privacy, for example, is regarded as highly relevant in Qur’anic scripts. For instance, people should not enter a house until permission is given to them. In fact, the Qur’an states that “o you who have believed, do not enter houses other than your own houses until you ascertain welcome and greet their inhabitants. That is best for you; perhaps you will be reminded” (Qur’an, 24:27). This same value is true anywhere, even in Western countries, thus it is necessary to reconstruct the spectrum of privacy in Islamic culture and architecture.

Different levels of privacy involve neighbors, male and female, family members, and individuals (Sobh and Belk 2011a). For example, across the Middle East, Muslim jurists established laws that “prevented the general public and the authorities from intruding people’s homes, bodies, private information, private affairs, and peace of mind” (Alshech 2007, 268). Visually insulated regions were established to protect visual privacy, line-of-sight distance, placement of windows, heights of adjacent buildings, confirming the principles of visual segregation between public and private (Abu-Lughod 1987, 167). The religion of Islam, being the focus of this thesis, emphasizes that the intrusion of private spaces is an unlawful act, and both

3 There are different translations of the Qur’an and here I chose this Sahih International one because it is the satisfies the intended meaning. http://legacy.quran.com/24/27
jurists or residents confirm that fact. Intrusion into someone’s private space can be a cause of great harm. Islamic law also insists on the removal of harm; thus “the concern for privacy was reflected in the physical form of the city in several ways” (Al-Hathloul 1981, 105). It would be interesting in this context to explore the jurisprudence principles based on the Maliki Madhab (school of thought) that is followed in Tunisia, to understand their implications on the ethics of architectural production and the identity of the Medina as well as their applicability in the current century. So what is the notion of privacy based on the Maliki Fiqh?

Based on classical exegetes, privacy received a highly significant rank in the legal texts of Islam and the property rights (Al-Hathloul 1981). This idea aligns with Lagueux’s statement (2004) that architectural concerns are ethical concerns in essence. Therefore, one should claim that architects and scholars need to address the issues of privacy as a value judgment by learning from several scenarios detailed in the books of Fiqh of Ibn al-Rami and other more contemporary scholars. In this context, privacy can be considered as an essential dimension in Islam thus rendering the occupied space as sacred. For example, any space that has a regular dweller must be inaccessible to the public, even if it is not residential⁴. Early classical Islamic scholars (3rd-9th C) explain that Maliki Fiqh “offers protection only to sinners whose misconduct is contained in a regularly occupied house, and it implies that what the Malikis protect here is the lawful occupancy of the house and not the misconduct itself” (Alshech 2004, 298). So how was privacy implemented in the spaces of the medina?

The house, being the heart of social life in the medina, is considered a microcosm of culture and civilization. Both world culture and universal civilization, indeed, define a cultural strategy for critical regionalism through their interaction (Frampton 1983b, 21). Some researchers also mention that “some of the main causes of the decline of Islamic culture

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⁴ Many Āḥadīth (plural of Ḥadīth) exemplify this point. Abu Hurayra said, “The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “When the eye enters, permission to enter should not be given;” Umar ibn al-Khattab said, “Anyone who fills his eye with the contents of a house before he has been given permission has gone astray.” In the Qur’an, some verses also emphasize the importance of respecting privacy. “Do not enter any houses except your own homes unless you are sure of their occupants’ consent” (24:27).
and civilization, if properly examined, could be related, one way or another, to the complex subject of housing and its own decline and its causes” (Omer 2010, V). Consequently, focusing on the values of Islamic housing can be a significant factor towards deconstructing its structure and constructing lessons for contemporary urban codes.

5.3.2. Privacy in Architecture and the Planning of the Medina of Tunis

In this part of the discussion, I will focus on how the principle of privacy is manifested through different architectural components including walls, windows, doors, streets, and I will mainly rely on Ibn al-Rami’s fourteenth-century theories and Hakim’s twentieth-century analysis of the Medina of Tunis for that purpose. The reality is that in the twenty-first century, cities such as Dubai or Tunis are subject to modernization, globalization, and capitalism leading to a frenzy to build higher buildings and large developments that are profitable. Unlike the city of Tunis, Dubai’s developments can be seen on a monumental scale due to the concentration of capital, free trade, and finance. As explained in Chapter three “The Ethical Dilemmas of Globalization in the Architecture of Dubai and Tunis”, tall buildings and transparent curtain walls remain standard features of this global era.

Zeynep Celik’s critique of Hakim’s Arabic-Islamic Cities (1986) leads to the understanding of his analytical approach to the Medina of Tunis:

Under the overarching and misleading title of Arabic-Islamic Cities, Hakim’s book is a monograph on Tunis, with references to other Tunisian urban centers. Orientalist urban history had investigated and documented the formal character of Tunis as the supreme model for the “Islamic city.” Hakim’s book endows the city’s form with new meanings by an inquiry into the practice of Islamic law, based on the understanding that the law shaped both construction and life in the city. Despite his starting point in the Middle Ages, Hakim’s keen interest in built forms led him to expand his study to a survey of the contemporary medina of Tunis, thereby implying a historic link between the initial laws and the later conventions that held the urban fabric together (Çelik 1999, 376).

Implying a historical connection between the fundamental Islamic laws, namely jurisprudence or Fiqh, and following conventions help to suggest that such regulations can be expanded to maintain the urban fabric in the contemporary age, and specifically in the Islamic context. Consequently,
it would be necessary to examine some of these principles that helped define privacy within the boundaries of the Medina of Tunis before explaining the extent of their application in the twenty-first century.

According to Abu-Lughod (1987, 172) cities are processes but not products; three Islamic principles set the foundation for Islamic cities including a “distinction between the members of the Umma and outsiders,” “segregation of the sexes”, and “a legal system”. The latter is the point of interest for this research. However, she adds that such a conception should not be applied passively because of other factors not immediately associated with a distinctly Islamic influence such as climate, technologies of construction, terrain, circulation, production, and politics, which participated in the construct of the medinas in particular. Some of the factors she mentions are practical as they reflect the changing circumstances and dynamics of this era. Architectural mediation should also consider these other factors. Thus critical regionalism, which mediates between local and global architectural languages, should transcend the form and consider external factors.

**Critical regionalism** comes in a context where freestanding high-rises and serpentine freeways are “the two symbiotic instruments of Megalopolitan development” (Frampton 1983b, 17). The changing circumstances of this century include the global economic context and capitalism. These rendered cities like Tunis into what Frampton refers to a *burolandschaft* city-scape, where universal civilization dominated local cultures. For him, ‘high-tech’ approaches and land speculation have become realities in this century. The image of cities and downtowns reflects a new reality of a dominant universal civilization. In this context, he also evaluates modern developments, and he writes that:

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5 Burolandschaft is a German term that Frampton uses in his article. He writes “The typical downtown which, up to twenty years ago, still presented a mixture of residential stock with tertiary and secondary industry has now become little more than a burolandschaft city-scape: the victory of universal civilization over locally inflected culture.” (Frampton 1983, 17)
To such a degree that any intervention tends to be reduced either to the manipulation of elements predetermined by the imperatives of production, or to a kind of superficial masking which modern development requires for the facilitation of marketing and the maintenance of social control (Frampton 1983b, 17).

Such is today’s society and market realities that require more investigation into the traditional sources, including the core beliefs of Muslim societies. Frampton would possibly consider Hassan Fathy’s New Gourna Village as mediating the impact of universal civilization with the particular elements of the place. Hassan Fathy’s village, built in the late 1946 and early 1952, recreates a sustainable private environment inside the courtyards of residences while adapting the construction to its site. Fathy’s work can be an excellent example to emulate since he used mud brick, a local material while adapting streets and courtyards to the local arid climate. In the 1980s, Hassan Fathy, among many architects, gave much attention to the context of the building (Ozkan 2002, 87). Despite not succeeding sociologically and villages being abandoned for many years, Fathy’s ideas were adopted by young architects. His approach challenged modernism and did not disregard cultural differences and collective identity (Ozkan 2002, 87). One should note how Fathy’s work and philosophy reinforce the use of traditional materials and cultural values, including privacy, without disregarding the socio-economic context of the region. He also looked at how to use and develop the right technology by turning local materials into buildings. The tenets of his project had merits and reflected humanistic values, based on the feedback from a UNESCO report that was published in 2010.

On the centenary of Fathy’s birth, El-Rashidi (2000) revisits his architecture and clarifies that “... Fathy was not, as many believed, rejecting modernity lock, stock and barrel, but rather globalisation and industrialisation as homogenising concepts that strip humans of their individual qualities, cultures and values”. In the same issue of Al Ahram, El-Rashidi (2000) also reported that Ahmed Hamed, an eight-year-long disciple of Fathy, said that “people were hesitant towards Hassan Fathy's architecture because they loved what so-called modernity offered in terms of comfort, view,
relaxation.” In the same interview, he also notes how Hassan’s work is not disconnected from the modern realities of buildings. He says:

They thought Arab or Islamic architecture would hamper this. Today we know that Hassan Bey’s work coincides very well with modern principles of comfort. You can live, and live comfortably, in such houses, in the world of today, in the context of modern man.

Indeed, Fathy’s approach did not come to hamper modern architecture but to create an intermediary role between traditional and modern sources of value in the built environment. Hassan borrowed traditional forms of Egyptian (and Islamic) architecture while keeping up with the modern qualities of comfort inside houses including privacy, as mentioned before.

Conversely, the Medina of Tunis seems to tell us a different story aimed more at emphasizing privacy, a core value in Islam, and reducing harm, a principle promoted by Maliki Fiqh. One case study explains that this same rule applies to all inhabitants including the Muezzin or Mueḏins⁶:

To begin with, the highest point in the city is the minaret. Although it serves a very basic religious function, this did not exclude it from being looked on as a place from which the muezzin, who is expected to be a pious man, could look into the surrounding houses (Al-Hathloul 1981, 106).

Islam promotes the idea that harm, regardless of its nature should be avoided. Whether it is an Imam, a Mueḏin, a dweller, or a judge, protection from harm and maintaining visual privacy is a core value of the religion of Islam. As a response to the previous case, a parapet should be built to prevent direct looking, and the use of the minaret itself is allowed when the Mueḏin cannot overlook people’s courtyards (Hakim 1986, 37). The Mueḏin can only access the minaret if he cannot see people, and when the houses are far from the Masjid (Ibn al-Rami 1999, 79). This case by itself shows the necessity of understanding privacy in the architecture of the Medina of Tunis and how architects, builders, and judges gave it considerable attention.

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⁶ A person who calls for prayer in the mosques. I will adopt the following spelling Mueḏin as it is the correct one in the Arabic language.
Intrusion causes harm, and thus it is indispensable to understand how builders avoided it when they built the spaces of the different medinas. During my fieldwork and through my observations of the dwellings and buildings of the Medina of Kairouan (Figure 5-1), I came to understand that most buildings have two levels. Whether it is a Madrasa, a house, or a shop, the height is more or less equivalent to two levels thus keeping buildings at more or less the same height while ensuring that there is no visual access inside the private spaces.

Both windows and doors (Figure 5-1) are elements contributing to the maintenance of visual privacy inside the medinas. Thus it is necessary to understand how these elements were placed to play a role in protecting the inner spaces of homes. Hakim (2008, 25) also refers to values addressed by Maliki scholar Ibn al-Imam, and states that overlooking is about “visual corridors that compromise privacy generated by the location of doors, windows, openings, and heights”. A dynamic mixture of openings on white stone walls, with few decorated doors, give the passer-by a feeling of unity in a sense that all white facades are but a protective skin of inner space and local family culture. The pure color of the facades creates a sense of neutrality exhibiting a distinctive local form through architecture. As

Figure 5-1: Faleh, Majdi. 2013. Comparison between Building Heights, Kairouan VS Tunis, Tunisia

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neutral as it is, this aspect continues to survive today on contemporary facades of modern Tunis. One can also suggest that the white tones of facades are a reflection of positivity, purity, and safety. Maybe the dwellers of the medina’s traditional homes had the image of purity in mind, or maybe it is just the custom that was respected and followed throughout generations (Hakim 2008, 26). White is also a pure color that can transcend built environments and be a color of the traditional and the modern. Through the white and bright surface, doors and windows are the only elements that allow material (people) and immaterial elements (wind, air, light) into the house.

Doors and windows are some of the main elements that visually enable people to invade the internal privacy of the house. The rule, as explained by Ibn al-Rami (1999, 68), is about prevention where a neighbor should not use any opening to look into his neighbor’s house. Hakim also explains that alarife also referred to this value in Cordoba, Spain (fifth to Eighteenth centuries) and explained that “namely locations or spaces and windows that [allow] visual access to a neighbor’s private realm is not allowed and must be mitigated” (Hakim 2008, 77). Alarife is the institution that was started in the fifteenth centuries in places such as Cordoba and Toledo (Benito 1986, 519). The norms that were used during that time focus on the construction of buildings, and their maintenance, as they are abundant and precise (Benito 1986, 519). Alarife continued to have an impact until the nineteenth century in Southern Spain (Andalusia) (Benito 1986). Therefore, such customary laws and urban codes can adapt to several historical and geographical contexts (as in Toledo) because they emanate from people and they are created for the people to implement and ethically construct their cities and homes.

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8 A Spanish word derived from the Arabic word al-arith. It refers to someone who has knowledge and expertise in his field. In this context, Hakim (2014, 74) explains that alarifes should be loyal and of good reputation; they also should have a knowledge of geometry and an understanding of engineering. In terms of law, they should be able to judge disputes between people in the area of construction, and they shall collaborate with alcalde (judge). Their multiple tasks include the inspection of the town’s wall, the king’s property, wall’s height, water channels, damage from smoke, and more importantly (in our case) the intrusion into the privacy of homes through windows. As in the case of Ibn al-Rami’s treatises, alarifes also relied on detailed treaties and case by case scenarios, when it comes to privacy and the solution of each case.
Ibn al-Rami also reported that if a neighbor had an old door or an old window that harms his neighbor’s privacy, then the neighbor’s window cannot be closed because it is not new (Ibn al-Rami 1999, 68). Based on the Diwan of Sheikh Ben Yunus⁹, a neighbor should be banned from opening a window towards his neighbor’s dwelling, even if that window existed for a long time. Jurists applied such a ruling in the Medina of Tunis, and Ibn al-Rami had never seen a judge who decided otherwise. However, and in the same case, the other neighbor should make his building taller to avoid visual intrusion (Ibn al-Rami 1999, 68). Al-Hathloul (1981) further explains this rule, where he refers to the different types of openings and the customary judgments in Tunis:

At a later time, Ibn al-Rami, when speaking of doors and windows that looked upon neighboring houses, introduced two types of openings: new (hadith), which according to general belief (al-mashhur) were to be sealed, and preexisting ones (qadim), which were left as they were. However, he emphasized the fact that “as it is generally understood, the viewer is to be prevented.” This implies that even if the opening was not sealed, one should not be allowed to use it in order to look upon his neighbors. Ibn al-Rami also relates that, in Tunis, the customary judgement as well as the actual practice was to prevent intruding and uncovering (109).

To ensure visual protection between neighbors, it was ruled out that a window should not be low enough to allow a passer-by to look inside the house (Figure 5-3). The sill should be 175 cm to be considered adequate. Overall, the general rule is that the sight line from an exterior window should be above the head level of a standing person who is inside (Hakim 1986, 36). In a more detailed case, about existing new windows, Caliph Umar Ibn Al-Khattab (Allah be pleased with him) explains that when a man builds a room with a new window, then the ruling is to place a bed behind that window. The person would then stand on it, so if he was looking at what is inside that, he should be banned. A chair can replace the bed, and the overall rule is that its height should be a maximum of 5 šibr¹⁰ (or span) and a minimum height of 4 šibr. Al Lakhmi adds that the man standing on the chair should have good eyesight (Ibn al-Rami 1999, 67). In the Maliki Fiqh,

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⁹ Sheikh Muhammad Ben Abdullah Ben Yunus the Sicilian

¹⁰ Šibr, Sibr or شبر is a measurement unit and it is about five fingers. It is equal to 11.592 cm in the Hanafi Fiqh, 8.832 cm based on the Malikis, and 15.456 cm with the Hanbali and Shafiee schools of thought.
a šibr unit is about 8.832 cm so the total height of the element on which one would stand would be between 35.32 cm and 44.16 cm, as shown in the diagram (Figure 5-2). Hakim (2008) also points out that “the original codes do not specify dimensions but rather intention and performance” (29).

Consequently, the prescriptive nature of the codes can vary and architects can adapt them to different cultural, geographical, and social contexts. Regardless of the culture, location, and society, privacy continues to be a highly respected right in Islam. The design of homes, for example, is an expression of an essential distinction between public and private spaces (Sobh and Belk 2011b, 322), whether the dwelling is in Tunis (Dar Arabi) or some Gulf countries (Bait Shaaby). What remains essential are the fundamental values that connect societies, by reference to
privacy, which is a human need. What is also important to note is the level of detail noticed in these codes as well as the considerable attention to human scale. These aspects should remain a top priority for urban designers and architects in the twenty-first century.

Regardless of the prescriptive nature of these codes, one should suggest that in the context of this research, such rules can play a mediating role between traditional and modern sources of value in the built environment. This mediation does not only mean changing or adapting construction methods, but it also means regulating and managing the built environment based on local customs. Sobh and Belk (2011b, 322) emphasize that the public sphere in contemporary Muslim societies expects the manifestation of religious conduct, and “the strong behavioral constraints faced in public are likely a key reason that privacy within homes is so central in Muslim societies”. The Qur’an and Ḥadith are the primary sources, but local customs are also valid sources that benefited the regulation of Muslim space, in the Medina. According to Benkari (2016, 56), ‘urf11 differs from one school of thought to another, precisely in the case of her research on the Ibāḍī School12. She also explains that its jurisprudence gave its scholars enough freedom and means “to evolve and adapt the legislation to the transformations that the community goes through from time to time” (61). Core values, such as privacy, remain of paramount importance and moral worth.

Hakim (2008, 26)’s research on Mediterranean urban and building codes supports this vision. He explains that “both Byzantine and Islamic law recognized local customary practice” (26), or what is known as ‘Urf. Hakim also shows how necessary change is in the built environment and how these Byzantine and Islamic codes have a common goal “to deal with change in the built environment by ensuring that minimum damage occurs to preexisting structures and their owners” (24). Privacy and the protection from visual intrusion is one of the values that Hakim analyzes. Thus one can

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11 ‘Urf is an Arabic word referring to customs agreed upon among people and it was established from a generation to another. The application of ‘Urf can be as strong as the law.

12 Ibadi movement is a school in the Muslim world that is dominant in Oman. It also exists in Tunisia (Djerba), Algeria, Libya, and Zanzibar.
conclude, based on these two examples from Oman and Tunisia, that customary law and traditions are essential in the current time. Current building codes can largely benefit from prescriptive details on how to locate windows and doors to ensure the privacy of homes, an area that seems to be lacking in the contemporary debate among architects. Ibn al-Rami describes many other cases about architectural elements, so it would be relevant to analyze some of them as a future reference for architects looking at privacy.

Ibn al-Rami explains in a different instance that in addition to controlling building height as a potential source of visual intrusion, doors can also be a medium of visual intrusion, and thus the Maliki Fiqh determined a way to prevent it. In the chapter on “The one who builds a window that opens towards his neighbor’s courtyard”, Ibn al-Rami explains in Kitāb al-iʿlān bi-ʾakām al-bunyān that a neighbor should not build a room from which he would look at his neighbor’s courtyard (Ibn al-Rami 1999, 69-70). Also, a neighbor is not allowed to have a window from which he can look into his neighbor’s Skifa or entrance, so windows are not allowed if people are seen in the opposite house. In another case, he explains that Judge Abu Abdullah once said, based on Ibn Rushd, that a Sharjab or Mashrabiyya\textsuperscript{13} can cause more harm when one can see the same thing, whether this structure exists or not (Ibn al-Rami 1999, 69-70). This example clarifies that the ethical function of a Mashrabiyya should reinforce the protection of privacy and not undo it.

These construction codes continue to cover more aspects of the built environment including the heights of buildings. In fact, it was reported by Ibn Kunana (Abu Zayd Kairouani and Al Hilw 1999, 193) that if a neighbor wanted to raise the height of his building to cause harm, then he would be banned from doing so. So, he cannot do so (building higher) unless there is a real need for it (Ibn al-Rami 1999, 73). Many of the cases, I would say,

\textsuperscript{13}Mashrabiyya: mentioned as Sharjab in this context. It is also called Shanshul or rushan is some kind of projecting oriel window made out of wood and located at the second level or higher. It is traditionally an important element of Arabic and Islamic architecture until the twentieth century, thus it is found in traditional cities such as Fes, Tunis, Cairo, Jeddah, etc. The word derives from the root Shariba which means to drink. It is indeed an architectural element that absorbs both light and air through its small openings.
are based on narratives coming from Imam Malik’s teachings and transmitted all the way to his followers in North Africa, and particularly the ones who once lived in the Medina of Tunis. The same teachings continue to thrive - more so in writing - in the twenty-first century. What is also interesting is that all voices are mentioned based on real stories and actual cases that look at the infliction of harm on a case by case basis reflecting how *Fiqh* or Jurisprudence functions. To me, such a book of codes also reflects the power of people to understand how to organize their public (shared) and private spaces by themselves based on *Fiqh* principles. It is not only about judges and their rulings, but it is also about how dwellers are part of the decision-making process to ensure a life without harm respecting privacy.

People genuinely participated in this process through their discussions with different judges and scholars, including Imam Malik. What is more interesting is that the different narratives look at several cases and social spheres (people). The narratives include ‘obstructing wind and sun’, ‘on rental property’, ‘on towers in gardens and farms’, ‘additional floors’, ‘on minarets or roofs of mosques’, ‘on shops’, and many other cases exemplifying how people were part of the process (Ibn al-Rami 1999, 72-78). Dwellers of the Medina reported different cases, discussed them, transmitted them, and learned from them. Thus their feedback became part of a written code that protects their privacy, safety, and socio-cultural traditions.

This idea can be framed in the context of critical regionalism. According to Frampton (1983b, 29), this process aims “to complement our normative visual experience by readdressing the tactile range of human perceptions. In so doing, it endeavors to balance the priority accorded to the image and to counter the Western tendency to interpret the environment in exclusively perspectival terms”. By this Frampton refers to a loss of connection with the environment or as he mentions in his own words “a suppression...and a consequent distancing from a more direct experience of the environment” (Frampton 1983b, 29). Frampton’s idea of engagement seems to be more phenomenological than ‘community
engagement.’ One should emphasize that the active engagement of citizens can maintain urban codes while connecting people more to their surroundings thus establishing a strong sense of place. Community participation, as explained by Hakim (2008, 36), helps to establish this connection by setting up a network pattern in a dynamic living system. He points out that “networks of communications generate feedback loops, and such systems learn from mistakes. Thus, a community can correct its mistakes, regulate, and organize itself” (Hakim 2008, 36).

It is instructive to apply such a dynamic process of community involvement by getting them to give their feedback about urban and regional planning matters emanating from existing town planning codes in modern cities such as Tunis. Feedback also existed in traditional towns including Tunis. Hakim (2008, 35) describes both positive and negative feedback. He explains that positive feedback is related to top-down prescriptive codes (i.e., zoning laws). He also points out that negative decisions affect the relationship between neighbors. A pertinent example he cites comes from Ibn al-Rami’s treatise about privacy. Where a window of one house overlooks the private domain of the other house, then if the window existed before the new neighbor built his house, “he must respond by laying out the house so that overlooking would not occur” (Hakim 2008, 35). Feedback from neighbors about such urban matters is at the heart of decision-making, a system that has its roots in ancient civilizations including the Islamic and the Near Eastern.

Currently, around the world, the feedback process is widely used, especially in Western countries. Community involvement consists of workshops that allow citizens to voice their concerns and share their opinions about planning and architectural decisions. According to Duany, Speck, and Lydon (2010, n.d.), dictators are the only people who can turn private plans into a reality. The authors also explain that “wise governments and developers understand that the time to seek community participation

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14 Hakim (2008) explains the concept of network pattern through traditional Mediterranean urbanism. This urban system has a capacity to learn, grown, and experiment by following the rules of such an urbanism. This creates a dynamic system that permits the community to provide feedback, which Hakim refers to as a network pattern.
is at the outset, allowing public opinion to help guide the project rather than to derail it at a later date”. The planning commission of New York city also mentions that “community-based planning is essential to the city’s vitality. People who are close to neighborhood issues can clearly identify community needs and advocate passionately for local concerns” (NYC Planning 2016).

In Western Australia, planning proposals need to be shared with owners and occupiers if there is an approval process involved (Western Australian Planning Commission 2015). The same report also explains that “the decision-maker, upon receipt of any comments from adjoining owners and occupiers, is required to consider and balance comment(s) with its technical opinion when it exercises its judgment to determine the proposal” (Western Australian Planning Commission 2015). Such case studies from Australia and the US explain the importance of community participation in decision-making, a principle that was discussed and explained in length in this thesis through the analysis of Ibn al-Rami’s urban treatise as well as Hakim’s contemporary studies.

Since 2014, the Tunisian government included participative democracy15 in the Tunisian constitution. Before that, the government has relied on a top-down approach where planning decisions take place without the consultation of citizens. Maybe Tunisian local governments and architects would benefit from implementing workshops enabling their citizens to get

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Nawaat, l’Economiste Maghrebin, and Leaders, also wrote about the topic, questioning where Tunisia is going after its postdemocracy phase.
involved in suggesting building types and civic spaces, similar to the SmartCode by Andres Duany and his team.\textsuperscript{16}

The goal of this research is not to idealize the treatise of Ibn al-Rami and the related code, but rather to investigate the depth of its socio-cultural values with comprehensive care for the inhabitants in the first place. These codes do not sound rigid, but they represent a dynamic and an understandable story-telling. Later on, people from all walks of life can use these codes in their construction. This image is similar to how the Hadith was transmitted in Islam and gathered by different scholars like Imam Malik or Muslim and Bukhari. Now, how about the rest of the architectural elements within the domestic sphere?

The treatise of Ibn al-Rami also looks at doors. Qadi Abdul-Rafi (judge) explains that “a door should be set aside from the one opposite unless the street is wide enough that its activity will obstruct the opposite door” (Hakim 1986, 38). In exceptional circumstances, a door can be opened opposite another door if the street is seven cubits\textsuperscript{17} wide (Figure 5-4) or more located on the street with heavy pedestrian traffic. Based on the teachings of Maliki scholars, the neighbor who owns that existing door has the right to say:

\begin{quote}
I benefit from the place in front of my door in which you want to open yours. I open my door with no one intervening on my privacy, and I bring my loads near my door without causing inconvenience to anyone. Thus, I wouldn’t let you open a door in front of mine or near to it since you may use it as a reception and entertainment area or for comparable matters (Al-Hathloul 1981, 112).
\end{quote}

Entering from exterior doors and respecting the private lives of inhabitants is another crucial ethical value that derives from privacy. With respect to the privacy of dwellers, one is not supposed to face the door completely when it is open (Omer 2008, 491). A visitor should stand by the corner of

\textsuperscript{16} “The SmartCode enables the implementation of a community’s vision by coding the specific outcomes desired in particular places. It allows for distinctly different approaches in different areas within the community, unlike a one-size-fits-all conventional code…Being Transect-based, the SmartCode ensures that a community offers a full diversity of building types, thoroughfare types and civic space types and that they have characteristics appropriate to their locations in the environment.” (The Smart Code n.d.)

\textsuperscript{17} Cubit: an ancient unit based on the forearm length. 7 Cubits is equal to 320 cm.
the door to avoid looking inside the house (Suwayd 2005, 22). Even the front door should be designed in a way that it does not give direct access to private spaces (Omer 2014). These rulings and many others show that even the social behavior in the Medina should comply with specific ethics respecting the privacy of interior spaces. It is also evident from the observation of the doors of the Medina (Figure 5-5) that these elements do not lead directly to the house but to the Skifa, or the first vestibule upon entering the house. More cases and scenarios described by Ibn al-Rami are shown below in (Figure 5-6).

Figure 5-4: Faleh, Majdi. 2017. Windows, Doors, and Privacy, Nahj al-Basha, Medina of Tunis, Tunisia

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18 Abdullah Ibn Busr said, “Whenever the Prophet (peace be upon him) knocked on a door, he did not face it. He used to stand at the right or the left side and if it was permitted, he would enter and if not, he would return” [Imam Ahmad and Abu Dawud].
In the next section, I will briefly review some parts of the last version of the Tunisian Code de Batir (the code of construction), of 24 April 2007. Also, I will look at Code de l’Urbanisme (Planning Code), based on the law N94-122 of 28 November 1994 related to the code of territory planning and
urban planning. In relation to the main argument, the evaluation of these codes will derive principles and lessons from traditional codes. Here I attempt to identify the gaps in their content to improve the quality of the contemporary built environment.

The first observation of these codes shows that the language used is rather technical, imposed by the Tunisian government, and lacking any connection with its citizens. The discussion of social matters and customs seems to be missing from these guidelines. One of the greatest hurdles architects are encountering in this century may be that they are looking at ethics in terms of codes and professional conduct (Fisher 2008, viii). However, I believe, planning codes should learn from traditional codes and involve communities, feedback, and an adaptive system that mitigates past and present lessons. According to Akbar (1989, 30), “the major structural difference between contemporary cities and the early Muslim garrison towns is that today individuals do not control public spaces directly. They are now controlled by external agencies, such as municipalities”.

The Ministere de l’Equipement is the regulating body that promulgates such laws and codes as part of the Code of Ethics for construction and architects. I would even qualify such approach and legislation as a top-down approach where a somewhat universal, abstract, and generic language is used. Let’s take for example one article of the Code de l’Amenagement Du Territoire et De l’Urbanisme, validated and signed on 28 November 1994 by the former dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. As mentioned before in this chapter, only dictators can impose decisions and turn private plans into reality excluding public participation. This has been the case for Tunisia for twenty-three years. In fact, the first article, for instance, stipulates the following in regards to the planning and development of space, as well as the archeological sites and traditional environments:
The provisions of this Code shall lay down rules for the organization and optimum use of space, the Planning, creation and development of Urban areas in order to: condition the living environment, ensure the rational exploitation of resources, protect the safeguard areas, protect natural and cultural sites, including archaeological sites such as defined in section 2 of the Heritage Code, Archaeological, Historical and Traditional arts. It also aims to ensure safety and public health, and to ensure a rational distribution between urban and rural areas, in the context of harmonization between the economic development, development of social and ecological balances, aiming to ensure sustainable development and the right to of the citizen to a healthy environment (JORT 1994).

As comprehensive as it may seem, such code from the government official JORT (Journal Officiel de la Republique Tunisienne)\(^{19}\), does not necessarily express the concerns and needs of specific populations and their cultural upbringing. Another survey of the codes does not reflect at all any values that are dear to Tunisians and their Muslim culture. The code seems to be useful, yet it disregards non-technical aspects including social and religious values (i.e., privacy) and their impact on planning, architectonic details (doors and windows), and decision-making. Such a ‘generic’ code can be even copied and applied directly to another country. The code promotes a global vision of planning but disregards the local values that are inherent to Muslim culture.

The level of detail, case by case study, and description help conclude that jurists designed the code, detailed by Ibn al-Rami, to serve the people of the Medina of Tunis in the fourteenth century. Contemporary planning codes need to rely on feedback from the community, as described before, and this feedback should also influence decisions. Re-creating the character of the Medina, beyond the architectural form can rely on such an approach. This ethical architectural code does not ignore both the religious and social values of society, yet Ibn al-Rami calls on many sources from Imam Malik and others who lived in the Arabian Peninsula between 711 AD and 795 AD, in an era known as the Golden Age of Islam. Heights, windows, and doors constitute the first elements that reflect privacy in the architecture of the Medina. From the vertical dimension to the horizontal one, there is a transition that happens between spaces allowing for a more

\(^{19}\) JORT is the official Gazette of the Republic of Tunisia, and it is an official document published biweekly by the state of Tunisia. It contains all laws, official statements, and legislations.
conservative approach to preserve the interior of houses. This transition is another principle that I will discuss in this research to determine its impacts on the planning of the Medina and how it can be revisited in the contemporary age.

5.4 The Principle of Transition in Planning and its Impact on Privacy

Many medinas were considered chaotic and lacking formal elements of planning. Such are the views of some Orientalist scholars such as Creswell, Grunebaum, and Lassner\(^{20}\), who misconstrued the traditional Islamic cities due to their preconceptions (Akbar 1989, 22, Akbar 1984, 155). Their distorted views overshadowed the reality of organic and traditional Islamic cities, which in fact rely on Islamic values and customs to account for their urban morphology. Akbar (1989, 30) explains that except private properties, territorial boundaries are not clearly demarcated in modern cities, and professionals use physical elements to define public and private spaces. However, he notes, that in traditional Islamic cities planning defined spaces as having a unique meaning that families and tribes controlled, unlike external agencies in modern cities that are remote from the places they control (Akbar 1989, 30). The point of value-based planning and its impacts on traditional cities needs more investigation. This is helpful to understand how architects and legislators can enhance the transition between public and private spaces in modern cities.

By understanding the logic behind traveling from the walls of the Medina (public sphere) to the inner heart of the unit or the dwelling (private sphere), one should be able to comprehend the influence of the socio-religious codes on the medina’s overall planning. Therefore, understanding

\(^{20}\) K.A.C. Creswell (1879 – 1974), Gustave E. Von Grunebaum (1909 – 1972), and Jacob Lassner (1935–). In his book Islamic Visual Culture, 100-1800, published in 2006, Oleg Grabar explains that Creswell had limited linguistic abilities when he spent his life in Cairo; he is also an example of the ethnic and racial prejudices related to the caricature of the Orientalist. Akbar (1989, 22) also explains that Creswell’s Arabic abilities led him to understand the verb ikhtatta as ‘marked out,’ which led him to conclude that Basra, Fustat, and Kufa were chaotic labyrinths. In the same page, Grunebaum highlights the limitation of Muslim towns because of their lack of theaters and gymnasiums, and Lessner noted that Basra and Kufa evolved rapidly leading to little awareness about city planning.

its configuration can be used to add more sources of social, cultural, and religious values to the contemporary built environment. As explained before, inhabitants are excluded from the decision-making process. The unthinking and abstract duplication of historical practices and architectural forms is not the goal of this research, but this section attempts to revisit traditional principles of urban transition to evaluate their applicability to modern cities.

Figure 5-7: Faleh, Majdi. 2017. Organicity of the Medina of Tunis, Tunisia
The complex and organic urban fabric of the Medina of Tunis also played a major role in creating different levels of transition between urban spaces. A visitor or a dweller goes through various stages to reach the courtyard of a building or a house. From the fortification (Sur), historically one enters the Medina of Tunis through one of its gates (Bāb) depending on the Bāb he uses. Then he travels through the bazaars (Souq), the public square (Sāḥa), different levels of streets (Ṣāra’), until reaching the unit (Dār), then the main entrance (Ṣiqfa) and later the courtyard (S’han Ṣaddār). Consequently, a logical transition happens between public and private spaces, and this provides a value of a different kind such as the ease of access and a hierarchy of spaces between the exterior and the interior. This same idea also reinforces socio-cultural values including the importance of privacy in the Medina. So, let’s analyze the different architectural components that set the scene for this urban transition from the outside (public sphere) to the inside (private sphere).

5.4.1. The City Wall (Sur)

The wall is a standard architectural component that is seen in Arabic-Islamic Cities as well as in Renaissance Europe. In the Far East too, particularly in China, through the ages cities must have walls (Tracy 2000, 6) such as the Great Wall of China. Planners erected these ramparts for protection and military defense against invaders (Figure 5-8; Figure 5-10). In the Ninth Century, the Arab geographer El Yacoubi identified its structure, where he explained that the wall was out of clay and brick except the side facing the sea where it was out of stone (Messikh 2000, 41). The Medina of Tunis is surrounded by two lines of defense thanks to the existence of the Rabads (districts) and Kasbah (Hakim 1986, 60). Preserving the inside using durable materials and different structures continues to be an integral part of such traditional settlements.
Through the gates, a few of which remain today, one enters the Medina of Tunis. For instance, from the colonial city, one enters the Medina through Bāb Bhar gate which has been standing alone without any walls on both sides (Figure 5-11). Traditionally, such gates were the first encounter with the Suq or the traditional Bazaars that lead to the central mosque. Akbar (1993) explains the logic behind placing gates and the responsibility of dwellers in ensuring the transition of visitors to the next level. He states:

Gates are logically controlled from one side, that is, by those living within the space. Because a family or group of families controlled who went into and out of their gate, the gate was a very important means of maintaining their autonomy; those who lived inside could shut out those coming from without. Doors or gates could be found not only in dead-end streets, but also closing off sub quarters, quarters, and whole (141-142).

Akbar (1993) also explains in the same context that neighbors had some control over the gates, as gates to dead-end streets were erected by them, at the request of the authority on certain occasions. When removed, the space behind them became public. The transition is necessary to consider in contemporary cities, such as Tunis, where inhabitants can be part of the controlling body of their cities. The issue becomes alarming in the contemporary context when architecture becomes an exclusive object of the architect and inhabitants “started to recklessly
disregard this misconceived architecture in the same manner since it does not reflect their values anymore” (Fardpour, MacKee, and Morrison 2016, 164).

Within this transition, flexibility exists, and noticeably residents had more independence, responsibility, and control. As autonomous as they were, these gates were symbols of architectural transition but also of a democratic transition between public and private spaces. Gates are symbolic and reflect the social and cultural structure of the Tunisian society who once lived in the Medina and followed specific customs (Urf) they mutually agreed on. This point, in particular, reflects a holistic strategy of planning Islamic medinas based on a grassroots approach that relies on feedback and community engagement, thus establishing a dynamic built environment with principles that can be transferred to the contemporary age. These principles can be transferred in the current century through community workshops inviting dwellers of several neighborhoods to reflect on the future of their area and to make decisions in relation to how to protect its safety and access to it.
Figure 5-10: Public Domain. 2006. Walls and Gates of the City in 1888, Medina of Tunis, Tunisia.
5.4.2. Traditional Markets (Suq)

From the Bab ḏar gate, one moves directly to the Suq or traditional markets. The plural form of Suq is Aswaq, and it refers to the place for goods and necessities, and in Tunis, the name of Suq still relates to the activity that takes place there (i.e., Suq al-Haddadeen or Blacksmith market, Suq al-Attarin or perfumes market). The Suq is one of the essential elements of an Arabic-Islamic city, as in Tunis, where its urban integration, development, and characteristics contribute to the elaboration of the city (Hakim 1986). Rules and guidelines were set to plan these structures ethically, based on their location as well as on the functions that they incorporate. These public domains, as I will explain later, contribute to the principle of transition and they indirectly ensure privacy between private
and public spaces. Several types of Suqs appeared based on these locational factors. Hakim (1986, 80) explains the different Suq types in the Medina of Tunis based on their location:

(a) The major Suq area around Jami al-Zaytuna, the city’s major mosque. These are usually single-stor[e]y structures with covered pedestrian streets. They primarily have one single use, that of the Suq and its facilities. The whole area can be locked up by a minimum number of strategic gates. The Suqs (aggregates of many shops) are assembled in numerous combinations. (b) The linear continuous or semi-continuous Suq. These occur on the major city thoroughfares, particularly those connecting major gates with the core of the city. They are sometimes covered with vaulting. These linear Suqs use the ground floor or street level and are overlapped on upper levels by other uses, particularly housing. (c) Suqs which occur close to major gates (Bab) of the city. They capitalize on this location because of its function as an activity node. They occur on both sides of the wall and can be viewed as an extension of the linear type from within. (d) Weekly or seasonal markets using open areas, usually Bat’has which are relatively well located on major thoroughfares. Occasionally they require portable makeshift facilities. (e) Suwaiqa: the term in Arabic implies mini-suq. These are groups or clusters of neighbourhood shops which are scattered in the city, but which usually occur at places that function as the Muhalla or neighbourhood centre. They usually house a bakery, grocery, possibly a nearby Mesjed and occasionally a Hammam. The shops are created from the surrounding housing fabric.

In fact, through observation and urban analysis of the structure of the remaining Medina of Tunis in the twenty-first century, the Suqs continue to be participatory elements ensuring both transition and privacy. The Suqs of Medina of Tunis have high potentials to be reinvested in the contemporary setting by learning from their dense urban fabric and the transition between mini-suqs and neighborhoods. Maybe Tunis would benefit from its Islamic urban fabric if architects and planners attempt to bridge between the past and the present as Jan Gehl did in his project of the Suqs of Oman. Gehl’s team designed an urban vision for the city of Muscat where he proposed a development strategy for Al Malawih Souk. In describing the project, Gehl’s team aim to reinterpret traditional Omani projects in a modern fashion mainly by focusing on people and creating a space for socializing. They write:
Reinstating traditional souk culture in a contemporary interpretation of traditional Omani gathering places. A patterned fabric canopy, inspired by the ornamental screens of historical Omani architecture, provides the dappled shade of the trees where people used to meet and sell their wares. Combined with a series of new arcades along the facades of existing buildings, the souk canopy creates a comfortable, naturally ventilated meeting place for buying fresh produce, dining and socialising – a family place welcoming women and children (Gehl People).

Undoubtedly in the case of the Medina of Tunis, the transition between the different types of markets ensures a smooth circulation and a logical distribution of commercial and regular activities based on the buildings surrounding the Suq. and its frequency and its closeness to the main walls and gates, while creating a space for people. Clean activities, for instance, are placed around the mosque and non-clean ones close to the fortifications, as explained previously in the Ḥadith. This principle is similar to what can be seen in postindustrial cities nowadays, where factories are on the outskirts of modern cities, and “clean” activities are in the city center. It would then be valuable to look at how the Tunisian contemporary urban codes promote the concept of hygiene or cleanliness in urban spaces.

The Code de l’Amenagement du Territoire et de l’Urbanisme stipulates under the section Regulation of Hygiene and Roads that the owner of a property should be responsible for the application of the rules related to public hygiene and public roads. It also explains that accordingly, any individual sanitation system is prohibited over the extent of the subdivision that can connect to an existing network. It is also forbidden to use any method of connection to the primary network that prevents its ventilation. In any case, the connection to the wastewater network shall be carried out following the technical requirements and the rules applied by the departments concerned (Ministere de l’Equipement 1995). Contemporary urban codes of Tunis show some similarities with traditional ones as they prioritize public interest and the protection of the environment. Traditional neighborhood patterns have a well-integrated system of public, private,

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21 Code of Planning of the Territory and Urbanism, and precisely Article 29, the law promulgated by the Ministry of Equipment and Habitat of 19 October 1995.
and semi-private spaces existing within a dense urban fabric and allowing for more control over hygiene and hierarchy of spaces.


This concept can have a potentially positive impact on modern cities, like Tunis, where density and the segregation of spaces based on their “cleanliness” can enhance the quality of living and the planning of urban spaces. After the Arab Spring, waste has asphyxiated the capital Tunis. Figure 5-12 shows Bāb Sa’doun, one of the old gates of the Medina of Tunis, surrounded by waste. This situation, which continues to be seen in 2018, was triggered by the weak role of local municipalities. One can suggest that the modern city can be organized into districts with the most polluted ones located on its outskirts. Commercial districts can also be grouped based on their specialty, similar to the Suqs, to ensure a more comfortable filtration and organization of cleaning urban spaces. As dynamic as they might seem, these Suqs constitute a backbone of the Medina of Tunis. It is the very first public sphere, a “gigantic show stage, [and] a colossal theater” (Heller and Mosbahi 1993, 192).

The change of their size, linearity, and shape shows how the morphology of these urban elements ensures a fair and reasonable distribution of a variety of businesses. These Suqs are planned ethically to accommodate several activities and to enhance the functioning and dynamism of several public spheres (Figure 5-13) and clusters progressively and without interruption. Their planning and their location help to create different economic clusters while protecting the sanitary conditions and health of
the inhabitants. Thus, these urban spaces are designed to enhance the values mentioned. The numerous combinations of these Suqs go hand in hand with the way streets planners arranged them; therefore, it is necessary to understand the system of streets in the Medina.

Figure 5-13: Faleh, Majdi. 2017. Graphic Illustration of the Public Spheres and their Concentration in the Medina of Tunis, Tunisia
These Suqs are planned ethically to accommodate several activities and to enhance the functioning and dynamism of several public spheres (Figure 5-13) and clusters progressively and without interruption. Their planning and their location help to create different economic clusters while protecting the sanitary conditions and health of the inhabitants. Thus, these urban spaces are designed to enhance the values mentioned. The numerous combinations of these Suqs go hand in hand with the way streets planners arranged them; therefore, it is necessary to understand the system of streets in the Medina.

Figure 5-14: Faleh, Majdi. 2015. Suqs of the Medina of Tunis, Tunisia
5.4.3. The Street (Shari’)  

As one enters the Medina of Tunis from Bāb Bḥar, Jāma’ Ezzitouna Street is the first urban element that connects the European city (colonial) to the Medina and one of the oldest mosques in the Medina, Ezzioutna Mosque. The street (Shari’) or thoroughfare street (Tariq Nafiḍ) is an open and continuous street, which is accessible by everyone. The opposite type of access or closed access is known as cul-de-sac or the ‘no-exit street.’ It is also known as a Zanqa in Tunisia where this type is not public and belongs to adjacent or bordering neighbors (Hakim 1986, 24). One of the vital qualities of Arabic-Islamic cities, including Tunis, is the width of these streets. The minimum width is seven cubits (3.23-3.50 m) based on the Islamic text of Ḥadith, which stipulates that “if you disagree about the width of a street, make it seven cubits.” (Muslim Via Abu Huraira, Ref.8 Vol.II, 238). The height of the street was also defined based on the scenario where a man riding a fully loaded camel should be able to pass through easily (Hakim 1986, 26, 2008, 31). In respect to the social codes of the Arabic-Islamic culture, windows are usually placed above eye level on the street side, as explained previously. Hakim (1986, 34-35) also explains, that doors, along streets, are also set back from each other to ensure this principle of privacy, mentioned in the Ḥadith, and to avoid viewing the interior of the house, Its occupants, and their belongings. The same principle was continuously discussed by Ibn al-Rami in his manuscript that I analyzed in the previous sections on privacy.

Hakim (1986, 64) explains the transition between the different types of streets in the Medina of Tunis and how they gradually connect with each other:
The system of through streets is composed of: (a) First-order streets which make up the backbone of the system and connect all major city gates (Bab) with the core of the Medina where the major city mosque and surrounding Suqs are located. (b) Second-order streets which could be identified as major quarters (Mahalla) streets: these connect between the primary streets and are the main access routes within and between adjacent quarters. They tend to form shortcuts across the first-order streets. (c) Third-order streets which could be identified as minor quarter streets. These provide access and linkages to areas within quarters (Mahallas) which are not serviced by the second-order streets. They tend to be used by people belonging to the quarter or others who require frequent contacts there.

To ensure a fair and a logical distribution of activities, the streets of the Medina follow a certain hierarchy guiding the visitor from the exterior to the interior of the district and maintaining the transition between its public and private domains (Figure 5-15). One should contrast this same characteristic of Islamic cities with that of modern cities of the Muslim World, including Dubai. Housing districts in the medinas, traditionally, present a homogenous pattern of private and public spaces. These spaces are well connected, but they have become a “combination of detached ones[spaces]” where “residents have no sense toward the place outside their house” (Fardpour, MacKee, and Morrison 2016, 161-162). Indeed, as explained, governments in modern Muslim countries have been controlling planning operations through a top-down approach. The process of authenticity and continuity within the Islamic built environment was interrupted. This contemporary interruption between Islamic traditions happened due to the capitalist power-driven process of constructing the built environment, and not because of the changes of architectural styles including the modern and the postmodern (Al-Lahham 2014, 70). Additionally, the capitalist power-driven process has disconnected the inhabitants from the production process of the Islamic built environment (Al-Lahham 2014, 68). Dubai’s traditional neighborhoods, for example, have continuously faced dereliction since the 1960s, and “the historic centre of Dubai started to be eroded around 1961 when two roads were to be cut into the old city to improve the traffic flow” (Boussaa 2016, 177).

At the same time and precisely in New York, Jane Jacobs protested Robert Moses’ proposal to build an expressway through Manhattan in the 1960s.
Jacobs and Moses's conflict is similar to the 'battle' between imposed power-driven approaches and human-driven organic traditional cities. Jacobs' critique of American downtowns in the 1950s explains how critical that period was for the future of cities. Modern projects, looking alike and reflecting no individuality and no tradition, did not revitalize cities in the US as Jacobs explains,

> From city to city the architects' sketches conjure up the same dreary scene; here is no hint of individuality or whim or surprise, no hint that here is a city with a tradition and flavor all its own. These projects will not revitalize downtown; they will deaden it. For they work at cross-purposes to the city. They banish the street. They banish its function. They banish its variety... (Jacobs 1958, 126)

Dubai’s traditional urban fabric could have been saved if there was a similar movement from local citizens during that time. One cannot help but wonder what Jane Jacobs would think of both Dubai and Tunis as they have been moving away from traditional patterns and embracing modernity. Few researchers and academics, including Karrie Jacobs, asked the same question about the heedless hysteria of cities like Dubai without Jacobs. My answer to this question emanates from Jacobs writings about how vital streets are. She calls for the revival of the tradition and flavor to revitalize downtown. Jacobs (1958, 127) also considers streets as a “nervous system” that has a more important function in the city structure compared to other parts. In a way, I would say that Jacobs would have supported the traditional pattern of learning from the transition between the ‘nervous system’ of streets in the Medina of Tunis. She would have probably even pushed the citizens of Tunisia to decide what results they want, as she claims in relation to American cities (Jacobs 1958, 131).

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22 In 2008, Urbanist Karrie Jacobs wrote an article called “Boomtown Blue” where she describes her trip to Dubai while pondering what Jane Jacobs would think of the city. For Karrie Jacobs, democracy is the ultimate answer that helped to shape the city’s future.
The transition between the streets of the Medina is an expression of a complex organicity in this traditional settlement. The transition pattern reflects a common planning scheme known in traditional Islamic Cities and
Medinas (Fes, Marrakesh, Tunis, Kairouan, Sousse, Algiers, Jerusalem, Damascus, and many others). The Medina of Fes, for instance, is considered the spiritual center of Morocco. The urban history of medieval Fes is known for epitomizing “the almost sacred requirement of Islamic urbanism to ensure a secure and inviolable private space for its citizens” (Ennahid 2002, 119). In his analysis of the ‘structuring principle’ of Islamic urbanism, Ennahid (2002) explains that the separation between the public sphere and the private sanctum is evident through “every single hierarchical unit of [a] settlement with varying degrees of structural and jurisdictional complexity” (132). He also explains how the structure of the network of streets follows a hierarchical order, and it goes as follows:

1. Two major traffic arteries (the streets of tal’a kabira and tal’a as-sghira) connecting the city’s core to its periphery. 2. Main streets or durub, sing, darb (e.g., darb Garniz) connecting the city’s quarters to the main traffic arteries. 3. Secondary streets connecting blocks of house compounds to the main streets. 4. Cul-de-sacs or driba (the smallest unit within the road system) connecting house compounds to secondary streets and to the rest of the road system (131).

This system of hierarchy in the Medina of Fes (Figure 5-16; Figure 5-17) seems similar to the one implemented in the Medina of Tunis. This planning system is also a response to a social code that ensures the protection of the interior but also to an environmental code that helps to protect the streets from harsh weather conditions. A similar structure exists in the Medina of Tunis thus emphasizing protection, transition, and privacy.

Figure 5-17: Faleh, Majdi. 2014. Different Levels of Streets in Fes al-Bali, Medina of Fes, Morocco

However, the organicity and the human scales are being marginalized today, as explains Omar Hassouni, architect, and heritage expert at ADER (Rehabilitation and Revitalization of the Historic Medina of Fes). In an interview conducted on December 9, 2014, the interviewee stated that:

The Medina of Fes, unlike the Museum of Islamic art, is not a museum and people still live here. In Doha, they did not have much of this, and even if they found artifacts, they did not progress heritage. In Morocco, people live within heritage sites but these [buildings and settlements] are considered past, and the modern life has transformed many factors including the car and mobility. We can develop heritage, but our people do not have the same connection with heritage to be able to revisit it. The connection with heritage is now broken. You might be living within heritage sites but the way of interacting with it is different, and even functions have changed. For instance, rooms nowadays have a specific function [sleeping, eating, etc.] but back in the past, a room can be dedicated to sleeping during the night and a living room during the day. This does not exist anymore now. Culturally, families are smaller, and Masjids are only dedicated to prayers. They close after that (Hassouni 2014).
Despite this cynical vision about the future of heritage in Fes and similar medinas, one should propose new ways to engage with writers such as Frampton and Alexander. The organicity of Islamic cities can be beneficial to the contemporary setting of modern cities in the Islamic world, but also to how they can adapt to changing times. The flexibility of functions in traditional houses, as mentioned by Hassouni, can also offer opportunities for modular designs in modern homes. The Islamic city is similar to an organic body where changes are progressive between different spaces of a dense urban fabric and where inhabitants participate in defining the rules of planning. Christopher Alexander’s (2002, 135) views on the “intensification of mass-production and mass-modern planning, where the images driving egocentric building design often arise” is a confirmation of the main subject of this thesis. Images of cities and the financial process of urban development that is “at odds with the organic harmony of towns and land” (Alexander 2002, 135) in the twentieth century is a valid idea that Dubai and other modern cities exhibit openly. In his book, The Nature of Order (2002-2005), Alexander shows how several built and unbuilt developments, and houses, in particular, try to reinvent traditional urbanism (Hakim 2008, 38). It would then be beneficial in the context of explaining the mediation between traditional and modern sources of architecture identities, to understand how Alexander approached the subject and to revive the functions of traditional Islamic cities mentioned by Hassouni (2014).

The Medina of Tunis, for instance, has an organic structure that follows codes, rules of Fiqh, and citizens’ participation thus creating a dynamic system that Hakim (2008, 36) calls generative process when he refers to Mediterranean traditional urbanism. Traditional organic systems in medinas

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23 The Nature of Order is an essay on the art of building and the theories behind life, liveability, structure, cities, and spaces. It is a four-volume book and the result of twenty-seven years of research. The first book is The Phenomenon of Life, the second is The Process of Creating Life, the third is A Vision of a Living World, and the fourth is The Luminous Ground.

24 Hakim (2008) compares Byzantine urban codes with Islamic urban codes and looks at several Mediterranean cities to show the striking commonalities between Islamic and non-Islamic traditional codes. He describes the process of planning as “This is what occurs in a typical traditional built environment, that is, the cell referred to is the agent or individual household, the embryo is the town under formation and once formed will continue to experience change and growth. The genetic information is the rules and codes that individuals follow without being dictated by a top-down authority. The small governing regions correspond to neighborhoods in the town” (2008, 36).
are dynamic, similar to living bodies, and they can grow and experiment with the codes or rules of Fiqh that are in place. According to Alexander (2002, 86), traditional buildings can be distinguished from modernistic designs by the processes they contained; processes are similar to nature and “depended on structure-preserving smooth unfolding at every stage” (86). If he were to describe the organicity of Tunis, as he described the ‘harmonious’ evolution of traditional Amsterdam or villages in Austria, Alexander would have certainly supported the view that “all or almost all the actions taken were structure-preserving, structure-enhancing. At every step, minute adaptation was occurring, Everything fit perfectly into the whole” (Alexander 2002, 97). Alternatively, if he were to observe the hierarchy of the streets of the medina, Alexander would have explained how such structure supports the social and cultural existence of the inhabitants and the living environment within a dense urban fabric, without falling into bank loans and financial dilemmas that he refers to in modern times.

As one observes the morphology and functions of streets within the Medina of Tunis, one notices that Suqs are vibrant entities of transition. These linear elements constitute the backbone of the structure of the Medina ensuring the transition from the economic function to the religious and the later the social. The economic function is not dominant or prevalent, as in the case of modern mass production. In fact, commercial streets which are mostly streets, are directly linked to main mosques (Ezzitouna, Hammouda Pacha), and they showcase the harmony and the connection that exists between these two functions. The second order streets, as the name indicates, are located at a second level to ensure the transition from primary streets to different quarters and then to the neighborhoods. The third-order streets are located within quarters. They ensure the transition from second-order streets to the residential quarters or Maḥalla thus supporting the social, cultural, and religious codes of the Medina.

As discussed before, the Cul-de-sac is another level of streets that ensures the protection and access of private properties while being connected to any of the three streets. Whether it is in Tunis, Fes, or in Damascus, the cul-
de-sac ensures a gradual transition from the public space to the private one. According to Ennahid (2002, 126), in the Medina of Fes, it is easy to notice that the location of the cul-de-sac constitutes an extra private space, and giving access to the house. Le Tourneau (1949, 229) explains that secondary small streets and cul-de-sac are core components of what he calls ‘real quarter’ in the Islamic city.

As shown in the next diagram (Figure 5-18), the urban design and the tortuous and complex structure of the streets inside the Medina define several boundaries within its urban space and confirm the hierarchy of Islamic cities or medinas in particular. The city’s networks or road system is where one notices the substantial proportion of private spaces compared to public spaces. According to Le Tourneau, the structure of Muslim cities in North Africa was defined by the buildings and not according to the streets (Le Tourneau 1949, 26). The street in the medinas plays the role of a channel within the urban space. Unlike what Le Tourneau said, one should state that it has a crucial role in ensuring the applicability of social and cultural codes and maintaining privacy. These constitute essential values for Muslim societies in the global age. Streets of the Medina of Tunis may not have a strong structural function, compared to modern city thoroughfares and boulevards, but they play a central role in the physical and spiritual connections between spaces.
From the scale of the street, the morphological analysis of the Medina of Tunis continues to cover another urban scale that is at the intersection of streets, social and economic activities. The public square is the next level that will be discussed to showcase how the principle of transition exists and how public squares generate social, economic, and religious activities.

5.4.4. Public Squares (Batḥa or Saḥa)

A public square or Saḥa is another essential element in the structure of the Medina. This public space is a central element that connects the flow of people and activities. It is a dynamic intersection of different streets thus generating a different dynamic of social, religious, and cultural activities ranging from prayers to commerce. Hakim explains that

These are usually formed at the Y-junction of three primary streets. Within the Medina, this type predominates and is usually where the Mahalla or neighborhood facilities, such as Masjid, bakery, or grocery shop were located. Occasionally in the Medina, the Bat’ha is a proportioned and geometrically regulated space in front of a significant building (Hakim 1986, 61).
As important as it might seem, the Batḥa plays a major role in drawing the crowd, activities and defining points of interest within the Medina. They also ensure the transition from a Maḥalla (neighborhood) to another, and thus they are an integrative component of the identity of the Medina of Tunis. The Batḥa remains a core element in Tunisian popular culture, a place of meeting, an encounter, a place for cultural exchange, and even a place for favorite football games within those neighborhoods. It is a political, social, economic, and cultural beacon, where the human scale is the guiding concept of these souks. The Batḥa is also a vital element of modern urban life in Tunisia given its human scale and the traditional behavior of Tunisians to gather and meet in such spaces.

Figure 5-19: Faleh, Majdi. 2015. A Public Square of Suq Al Berqah, Medina of Tunis, Tunisia
From the historical to the modern, Danish architect and researcher Jan Gehl also reinforces the importance of a human-scale environment in the twenty-first century. He explains the importance of involving the community in the process of planning cities. In his research, he considers city planning as a continuous process and not a fixed one, which is the case for traditional medinas and modern cities. Gehl (2011, 85) contrasts a “functionally segregated city structure that is dependent on the automobile”, such as Los Angeles with traditional cities where “the public spaces are effectively located alongside and facing the streets. Such city structures can be found in nearly all old cities, and are, in most recent years, again gaining a foothold in new projects in European cities”. Many urban developments in Nordic countries, for example, including Copenhagen have attempted to revive dense urban fabrics including urban squares.

5.4.5. The Residential Unit (Eddar)

From the public square or la place publique, one travels to the unit or Eddar. Depending on its scale, the house can be small or large. From the outside, one does not notice any differences between houses given their white and minimal façades with few openings. Ksar is a term that describes large houses in Arabic, and it also refers to palaces until the end of the nineteenth century (Hakim 1986, 93). Dar Lasrem, a well-known example, was considered a palace given its large scale, but it is also a dwelling or more specifically a house. As one makes a transition towards the interior space, privacy is at the heart of this sanctuary, the house. Omer (2017) explains the idea of the house being a holy sanctuary and how vital that fact is to influence the entire community:

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25 Danish architect and urban designer born in 1936 and based in Copenhagen. His publications widely known discuss how to improve the urban quality and planning of cities for people. Some of his publications include Cities for People (2010), New City Spaces (2000), New Life City (2006).

26 The Lasrem’s house was built between 1812 and 1819. It is considered a large traditional Tunisian dwelling and home to the Association de Sauvegarde de la Medina de Tunis (ASM).
By the same token, seeing a home as a guarded earthly heaven may help its inhabitants to stay away from the impacts of the wrongdoings in the outside world. Its inward-looking form and its blank outer walls with minimal openings symbolically signify the house’s isolation from the outside world, as well as its immunity to all the bad influences that the outside world may contain [...] This is why our understanding of the house is a broad one, making it a family development centre which is capable, alongside other social establishments, of transforming entire communities. Also, if need be, a home can to a large extent function on its own in supplying its occupants with guidance, ability, and audacity to act properly and eventually succeed in life.

In the context of the residential unit, and as described by Hakim (1986):

Palaces tend to occupy a large area and usually had more than one courtyard; at least one was allocated for service quarters. Occasionally these palaces might also have a walled garden; in addition, they are usually richly decorated on the inside, especially the primary courtyard and the major rooms flanking it (93).

Figure 5-20: Faleh, Majdi. 2017. The Principle of Transition into the House, Dar Lasrem, Medina of Tunis, Tunisia
The house is a development center for its inhabitants and follows a similar organic structure to that of the medina (Figure 5-20). Let us then try to understand the structure of the house (Dar or Eddar), in general, and the way this structure was conceptually and ethically structured; later we can also explore the different dimensions of the courtyard, being the vibrant heart of the house. Hakim (1986) explains the origins and the planning of the houses of the Medina and where the concept of the courtyard comes from:

The concept of a house planned around an open space or courtyard appeared in the Middle East with the earliest cities there; a prime example is the city of Ur in southern Iraq. Symbolically, however, the first Islamic house is that built the prophet Mohammad on his arrival in Medina, as a dwelling place for himself and his family, and as a meeting place for the believers. The courtyard surrounded by walls is its essential feature. A shelter from the sun, to protect the faithful at prayer, runs along the wall facing the Qibla or Mecca. Rooms built along another side were occupied by the Prophet’s wives, and their entrances facing the courtyard were fronted by a porch of palm branches which could be screened, if required, by curtains of camel hair. This front annex of rooms, which recalls the Riwak, and the movable screen of the nomadic tent kept the dwelling in touch with the outside world and served as a vestibule. They soon became essential features of the Arabic-Islamic house (95).

Through my observation of several courtyard houses in the Medina of Tunis, including Dar Lasrem (Figure 5-20), I noticed a similar planning strategy that helps the inhabitant or the visitor to make the transition from the outside world to the inside. This transition happens from the public domain (the street) to a semi-public sphere (Skifa), to a semi-private sphere (Driba), and later to a private sphere (courtyard and rooms). The principle of transition, between spaces and different domains, reinforces the concept of privacy that characterizes Arabic-Islamic houses since the time of the Prophet. By correlation, the several transitions in the case of Dar Lasrem follow the different screens in the case of the Prophet’s house. Materials and techniques change throughout the ages, but the adaptation of the concept of transition is always possible. Consequently, one can apply it in the twenty-first century by relying on community intervention and planning. Such a process bridges the gap between the local context of Tunis and global methods.
5.4.6. The Courtyard (*Wust ad-dar*)

![Figure 5-21: Faleh, Majdi. 2017. 3D Modeling of the Courtyards including Dar Lasrem, Medina of Tunis, Tunisia](image)

The courtyard (*Wust ad-dar*) or the center of the Maghrebi House of North Africa has a symmetrical layout, and the rooms are located around it (Bianca 2000, 80). The courtyard house aims to protect the privacy of the inhabitants based on the Islamic law of planning and building (Bianca 2000). It is an enclosure supporting the urban transition, from the public to the private domains, while offering environmental protection as well as privacy to the inner space. It is the last sanctuary before reaching the rooms. The layout of the courtyard helps to adjust visual privacy from outside, and it allows family members to connect with the sky and the sun, or nature in general. This architectural sanctuary offers a high level of acoustic protection. The courtyard, as Suha Ozkan explains, is a typology that symbolizes a culture, a typology that exists from China to Morocco, and an element that ensures the connection with nature, and precisely between earth and sky (Ozkan 2006, xv).

All these features confirm not only transition but also privacy thus ensuring the protection of people, their culture, and their environment. It is a multipurpose dynamic entity. The courtyard existed in North African settlements before Islam and particularly with the native Berbers and the Romans, later they became an integral part of Islamic cities in the Maghreb.
Al-Masri (2010, 204) notes that poor populations in cities such as Fez, Cairo, and Damascus still occupy courtyard houses, but this urban structure has been facing physical changes due to economic and demographic pressures. In modern Cairo, for example, the courtyard lost its environmental function due to the increase in the number of floors to four and more, and it disappeared totally afterwards. This is due to an increasing middle class, population, and the importation of Mediterranean trends (Salama 2006, 49). The same applies outside the Mediterranean and precisely in Kuwait, with the emergence of oil-driven economies, like in Dubai. This economic reality resulted in replacing the courtyard house with the modern villa and the apartment, leading to the significant destruction of the old city of Kuwait, “where traditional quarters have been demolished to make way for new developments” (Al-Masri 2010, 204). Few courtyards still exist, but they are in a state of decay (Al-Masri 2010, 203-204). In the midst of a dialogue between local and global sources of architectural identity, the courtyard has become a marginalized entity.

Inside the Medina of Tunis, this component remained unchanged between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries (Revault 1967). Most of the courtyards of the Medina of Tunis are from the eighteenth century (Sibley 2006, 50). However, “the number of contemporary courtyard housing projects built in North African cities is low” (Sibley 2006, 61). In the Tunisian context, the use of the courtyard is sometimes noticeable in modern touristic projects such as hotels and resorts. However, the observation of Yasmine El Hammamet touristic project, the Ramada Plaza hotel (Figure 5-22) in Gammarth27, or the international style hotel Le Sheraton (Figure 5-23), shows the courtyard as purely an aesthetic element.

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27 Gammarth is an affluent suburban neighbourhood outside of Tunis and close to the Mediterranean Sea. Real estate developments tend to be exorbitant in this area.
The Tunisian courtyard has become an object to draw tourists and fill the hearts of those who are nostalgic for a lost Islamic tradition. Such is the Orientalist attitude that Western scholars and European travelers focused on, and from which Edward Said has continuously warned us. This purely romantic and orientalist approach continues to shape courtyard architecture, in particular, by reducing its cultural and spiritual values to a form-based consumerist icon.
The tendency of building courtyards for touristic purposes has existed even in the 1980s. One should refer to French architect Serge Santelli’s Residence Andalous in the city of Sousse. This project was completed in 1981, and it consists of one or two level houses around courtyards, connected along the main axis and ornamented with ceramic and planted with local plantations. During the same period, 1981-1983, this project was awarded the Aga Khan Award for Architecture. In Fact, “the jury found particularly praiseworthy the restraint with which materials and forms have been used, and the subdued nature of the colour scheme which enable this group of buildings to achieve its imagery whilst avoiding pastiche” (Aga Khan Award for Architecture 1981-1983).

Ozkan (2006, xvi) also comments on this project and explains that it “brought back from the Islamic era of Andalusia the richness of courtyard planning”, which combines historical elements of old palaces and natural elements with well-treated materials. The project in itself is a good attempt to reinterpret traditional courtyards using pure forms and materials. However, the focus on touristic and economically driven projects only remains the concern that Tunisian architects, for instance, should raise.
Even though economic realities exist, as Harries (1997) discussed in the previous chapter, courtyard housing should become a central theme for architects in the Muslim world and its spiritual values should also be at the vanguard of the research.

The dialectic of the identity of the courtyard house in the Muslim context against global, modernist ideals consistently emphasizes the continuous constructions and the challenges it faces in the twenty-first century. As central as it continues to be, the courtyard is losing its importance in the current age and time, raising the question of values in the built environment. This same question is central to Kenneth Frampton’s theories of critical regionalism, where he actively emphasizes that “the eclectic procedures of historicism can only result in consumerist iconography masquerading as culture” (Frampton 1983a, 149). This research contends that the courtyard cannot evolve through pure imitation of historical forms but rather by cultivating both traditional values and form. The courtyard is widespread in Arabic and Islamic culture as it creates a beacon for social interaction away while protecting the privacy of the inhabitants.
Undoubtedly, reinventing courtyards was the case of few residential projects conducted at the American University of Sharjah (AUS) in the UAE, completed in 2003, despite the resistance that this idea encountered. In fact, the choice of courtyards seemed suitable as an exterior space for private and public activities, but the architect/engineer’s consultant explained that such a choice is not suitable for a “VIP Villa”, inferring the detached villas should be the precedent to follow (Mitchell 2010, 224). Professor Kevin Mitchell from AUS also explains the wider context and states that “in spite of their widespread use in the past, courtyard types do not enjoy universal appeal in regions throughout the Middle East and North Africa, where the climatic advantages of a courtyard are clear” (Mitchell 2010, 223).

The trend of using courtyards as precedents for contemporary architecture is not gaining popularity in an era where building higher, bigger, and more massive structures are the drivers of this contemporary age. The ‘VIP Villa’ model is dominant among architects and developers, in Tunisia as well as the UAE, where the architectural image is a priority. The marketing of iconic architecture is the main goal, and the inspiration comes from heritage to serve purely hostile attitudes of appropriating heritage. Wouldn’t it be better for architects to invest in understanding traditional Islamic architecture without divorcing it from its context?

The courtyard houses designed for AUS were, indeed, inspired by Hassan Fathy’s works, wind tower houses of Yazd (Iran) and the UAE, as well as Jean-François Zevaco’s courtyard housing in Agadir, Morocco. Mitchell
(2010, 226-228) points out that the design of AUS interpreted local and regional precedents of traditional architecture. The design approach used in this project opens up for the possibilities played by privacy, hierarchical planning or transition and even light. These three can perform a mediating role between traditional Islamic principles and the contemporary era, ensuring the mediation between past and present Islamic architecture. The author explains that “in the courtyard houses at AUS, the relationship between public and private was addressed through circulation routes established by the placement walls and the arrangement of transition spaces and distribution of rooms in the plan” (Mitchell 2010, 226-228). In the context of this thesis, the relevance of this project consists of the use of courtyards, dividing public and private spaces, and “the courtyard housing at AUS relies on a formal division and clearer assignment of functions” (Mitchell 2010, 228).

This contemporary project ensures privacy and transition between public and private spaces. AUS courtyard housings follow Frampton’s theories of critical regionalism by examining local morphologies of the courtyard in Arab-Islamic housing and adapting them to meet contemporary needs. Such an example can be relevant in reinventing courtyard spaces outside of the Medina of Tunis and beyond pastiche-like touristic projects. One does not need to copy the transition between public and private spaces as it is (en chicane), but architects should instead adopt new strategies similar to the wall running through Kallini House28 (1945) by Hassan Fathy separating public reception rooms from family rooms.

The last principle in this analytical survey of the medina is about the concepts of Batin vs. Dhahir. The Batin known as the inner aspect of the self or thing is critical in Islam and its works accordingly with the Dhahir, which refers to the external aspect. By correlation, these aspects also apply to Islamic architecture and courtyards. The outer walls are typically minimal with few openings. Decoration covers the courtyard although only residents and their visitors occupy it (Hakim 1986, 95-96). One can even

28 More details about Hassan Fathy’s Kallini House can be found at: https://archnet.org/system/publications/contents/3528/original/DPC0304.pdf?1384775505
describe the courtyard as a sanctuary that celebrates both architecture and social life in traditional Tunisian homes. It is a place of gathering and a place for creativity, but it is also a sanctuary that confirms transition and privacy.

Figure 5-26: Faleh, Majdi. 2015. Courtyard of Dar Lasrem, Medina of Tunis, Tunisia

This aspect of Baṭin and Dhahir is a reflection of how Islamic architecture was defined as “the architecture of the veil” early in this chapter and the introductory chapter. Even though such a definition is orientalist and does not analyze social and cultural dimensions, the courtyard remains a secure connector between two worlds: the private world of the inside and the public world of the outside. It is the ethical element that protects the privacy of dwellers while also hiding the sumptuous interiors. One can observe in the case of Dar Lasrem that the variety of materials of the courtyard (stucco, marble, tiles) emphasizes the concept of hidden interiors. Aesthetically speaking, it is a rich architectural component that reflects the aesthetic values given to complex geometry in Islamic design but also:

The strong formal statement of this architecture is not a matter of aesthetics only but reflects (or induces) an existential experience of being centered in space. The shape of the courtyard establishes a strong vertical aspiration by the simple fact that its upper rim constitutes the primary window of the house, orienting the eye and the mind towards the sky (Bianca 2000, 81).
The courtyard represents a spiritual element that brings light into the interiors and strengthens the connection between the dwellers and the outside while protecting them from the outside world. On the spiritual dimension of the courtyard, Bianca (2000) explains its timeless dimension by saying that:

Symbolically speaking, the symmetrical and totally balanced order of the courtyard can be interpreted as the timeless centre of gravity of the house, while the periphery responds to the given circumstances and pressures of the earthly environment. The timeless quality of the courtyard space is also enhanced by the symbolic dimension of the ornamented walls with their geometrical patterns and occasional Qur’anic calligraphies, which support the concept of the home as the sanctuary of the family (81).

This spiritual sanctuary (Figure 5-27)\(^\text{29}\), the courtyard, can be qualified as a connective space between the spiritual and the mundane. It is the end and the start of a spiritual journey within Islamic architecture. It protects, but it also reveals. It is a physical element but also a spiritual one. Geometry meets light inside this sanctuary. Ethics and aesthetics also meet inside this same sanctuary negotiating between timeless and intangible features.

\(^{29}\) This figure is not to scale because it only shows the concept of the courtyard as a spiritual connector.
(light) and material features (geometry). Such an encounter confirms Lagueux’s (2004) statement that architectural decision is an ethical decision. One might find it fascinating, as well, to explore light and geometry in this architectural beacon and discover their spiritual dimensions as well as their importance in the negotiation between different sources of contemporary identities.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter carefully examined how the architecture of the Medina of Tunis maintained and strengthened religious and socio-cultural codes of ethics, and suggested different ways of using them through case studies, from the Middle East and Tunisia, or reflections. Privacy ensures the negotiation between local and global sources in Islamic architecture; Ibn al-Rami’s jurisprudence (Fiqh) manuscript shows how that principle was applied in planning the Medina and how that reflects the necessity of privacy in Islam. This chapter also shows that this fair negotiation is maintained through a transition in planning and a hierarchical urban structure, where one travels from the fortifications to the courtyard. This gradual transition between public and private spheres also reflects the socio-cultural codes of North African medinas and its people.

In addition to that, the reliance on the principle of Fiqh or Jurisprudence in the architecture of the Medina shows a keen interest in the roots of social and cultural codes that were inspired by Islam since its evolution in the Arabian Peninsula. Whether it is privacy or transition, one should understand how and why Ibn al-Rami studied the principles that derived from the teachings of Imam Malik and other scholars and used them later on in the fourteenth century. He is indirectly telling researchers of the twenty-first century that the logic is the same even though times changes and that revisiting these principles is an option to balance different sources of identities, including the local and the global, and the traditional and the modern.
The next chapter will study two aesthetical principles that are timeless, namely light and geometry, exploring their spiritual values and material character inside the courtyard, in particular, and the Medina of Tunis in general. Further on, these points will be used to understand the applicability of some of the past ethics and aesthetic values of the Medina to the modern context of Tunis. The reading of this Islamic settlement has the potential to revive and extract architectural and planning methods which can be applied to modern buildings of the twenty-first century.
6. Light and Ornament as a Reflection of Material Culture and Mediation in Islamic Architecture

6.1 Introduction: Light as a Spiritual and Ethical Connector

The presence of light is by no means foreign to Islamic architecture as well as to its religious domain. It is another ethical and aesthetic element that transcends both time and space. As ‘timeless’ as light’s association with metaphysical concerns might appear, light can play a significant role in negotiating between traditional and modern sources of value in the built environment. In this way, one can find an inspiration in Frampton’s critical regionalism and precisely his discussion about light. Frampton (1983b, 21) states that “…critical regionalism depends upon maintaining a high level of critical self-consciousness. It may find its governing inspiration in such things as the range and quality of the local light”. Frampton’s call for a self-consciousness seeks to address a “tactile range of human perceptions” (Frampton 1983b, 29) without eliminating senses such as smell, hearing, and taste. Architects can revive the poetics of building by being sensitive and considerate of natural elements such as light.

In a different context in South America, Mexican architect Luis Barragán (1902-1988) sought to revive the dimension of light in his modern and colorful houses, courtyards, and interior spaces that are a reminder of the traditional Mexican traditional pueblos or villages. Barragán was also impressed and influenced by Islamic architecture in Spain, “all of which he reinterpreted with a modernist sense of composition” (Goldberger 1988, par. 5). In his own words, the architect explores the poetics and importance of light as it penetrates inside the spaces he creates (Figure 6-1). His approach calls for a sense of light that creates tranquility while he criticizes the excess of glass used in homes and offices, noticeable in modern Dubai and Tunis. He writes:
Architects are forgetting the need of human beings for half-light, the sort of light that imposes a sense of tranquility, in their living rooms as well as their bedrooms. About half of the glass that is used in so many buildings - homes as well as offices - would have to be removed in order to obtain the quality of light that enables one to live and work in a more concentrated manner, and more graciously. We should try to recover mental and spiritual ease and to alleviate anxiety...The pleasures of thinking, working, conversing are heightened by the absence of glaring, distracting light (Smith 1967, 74).

Barragán’s regionalist approach moves away from the international approach, which focuses on the excessive use of glass and form. He calls architects to consider the spiritual dimensions of light by controlling light inside the interiors of buildings, an aspect that can be noticeable through the alleys and courtyards of the Medina of Tunis. One finds himself compelled to study in depth the meaning of light in Islamic traditions to re-engage its spiritual importance in shaping contemporary architecture in
cities like Tunis. Architects cannot value the importance of immaterial subjects, such as light unless its spiritual dimension is valued.

In the Medina of Tunis, light penetrates homes through the courtyard, a sanctuary, adding value to its architectural and architectonic elements. It is a dynamic and ephemeral element that enhances the quality of spaces. It is a spiritual element that poetically connects the inhabitant with the divine. Its aesthetic appeal and its reflection on architectural elements evokes emotions and defines shapes. Whether it is a courtyard or a light well (Figure 6-2), light participates in the ‘architectural’ scenography and confirms the morphology of architectural elements by occupying their surface. In the National Parliament House of Dhaka, for instance, Louis Khan introduced light poetically inside the building through simple geometric shapes (rectangles, circles, squares), mixing light and pure geometry in a modern fashion, while reinterpreting form and light of Islamic architecture (Figure 6-3). Louis Khan once said:

I sense Light as the giver of all presences and material as spent light. What Light makes casts a shadow and the shadow belongs to Light. The mountain is of Light; its shadow belongs to Light. I sense Threshold, Light to Silence, Silence to Light, the ambiance – Inspiration, wherein the desire to be, to express, crosses with the possible. The rock, the stream, the wind inspires the will to express, to seek the means of imparting presence. The beautiful in the material is transformed from wonder to knowing which in turn is transformed to the expression of beauty that lies in the desire to express (Kahn and Twombly 2003, 229).

Light is an object for philosophical reflection. It is metaphysical, and it reveals the expression of beauty within the material. As a timeless element, light has the potential to endorse different sources of architectural identities from the past and the present. The idea of exploring light inside the house calls on the notion promoted by critical regionalism in Frampton’s work as he considers light as an inspiration in creating a regionalist architecture. Light is both traditional and modern, global and local, as it transcends all times and spaces (Frampton 1983b, 26-27). As it transcends time, civilizations, architecture, and places, its presence can play a mediating role to negotiate between different sources of contemporary identities, and more precisely, between the local and the
global. Light can also be the mediator between the traditional and the modern sources of value in the built environment, as explained in the example of Luis Barragán and Louis Khan. In Byzantine Churches, for instance, natural light was used to reinforce religious feelings. Moreover, Potamianos (1996) explains how natural light is a spiritual and aesthetic element in Byzantine churches adding more to the religious experience. He writes:

Since light was conceived of, both theologically and aesthetically, as being expressive of the essence of God it would have seemed most appropriate to devise a geometry based on shapes capable of exploiting natural light for the enhancement of particular images and religious experiences" (125).

Light is both an ethical and an aesthetical element, whether it penetrates a Byzantine Church in Greece, a Mosque in Istanbul, a house in the Medina of Tunis, or a house designed by Barragán in Mexico. However, its connotation has changed throughout time. In the context of this research, the focus will be on the spiritual dimension of light in the architecture of the medina and precisely the courtyard to determine its importance as a mediator of several architectural identities.

The light of God, the Light of the Prophet, Cities of Light in Islamic Spain, the Moonlight of Ramadhan, and the Light of Islam are several expressions denoting the popularity of light in Islamic culture. 'Nur' or light has had different meanings in the religion of Islam, and it has remained related to several aspects of the divine as well as the mundane. Light also transcends the spiritual and non-materialistic dimensions to cover material grounds as in architecture; in the architecture of Islam, light played a major role in shaping spatial configurations and shifting the dynamics of space where it

Figure 6-3: Rossi101, 2011. Play of Light Inside the Dhaka Parliament Building, Dhaka, Bangladesh, Creative Commons. https://creativecommons.org/
penetrates (Faleh 2016, 171-172)\textsuperscript{30}. The physicality and materiality of light transcend its spiritual dimension, in Islam, but it also completes and reflects the phenomenal experience of the universe. The Architecture of Islam, as an expression of the unity of Muslims and their worldview, is itself regarded by architects as the mere reflection of the power of light and all its mystical and physical dimensions. Light is as vital to this architecture as it is to the universe and its presence manifests through courtyards, walls, corners, and architectonic details (Faleh 2016, 171-172).

6.1.1. Its Spiritual Dimension: Excerpts from the Qur’an

A whole chapter of the Qur’an was about light, and its characteristics and spiritual dimensions are evident through Surah An-Nur, coming from Ali’s (1975) translation:

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His Light is as if there were a niche, and within it a Lamp: The Lamp enclosed in Glass; The glass as it were a brilliant star; Lit from a blessed Tree, An Olive, neither of the East nor of the West, Whose oil is well-nigh luminous, though fire scarce touched it; Light upon Light! Allah doth set forth parables for men: and Allah doth know all things. (Surah 24:35 A Nur-The Light)

This Ayah (verse) of the Qur’an is both popular and intriguing as it called for more interpretations since the rise of Islam. The spiritual dimension of light and the creation of the universe are both interconnected here, and the God of the heaven and the earth is the light of these different worlds. The metaphor of His light transcends all dimensions, and it has neither limits nor boundaries. In this verse, the word light is introduced in the same context as natural elements such as trees, olives, and fire; but it also appears to be setting the scene for a sacred universe. On the mystic notion of light and the parable dimension, Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1975) explains the well-known parable of light and states that:

\textsuperscript{30} This chapter is based on a conference paper and publication I presented in 2016. See Faleh, Majdi. 2016. ‘The Mediterranean Region: “Islamic” light in the architecture of the sublime.’ WIT Transactions on The Built Environment 159: 171-181.
Embedded within certain directions concerning a refined domestic and social life, comes this glorious parable of Light, which contains layer upon layer of transcendental truth about spiritual mysteries. No notes can do adequate justice to its full meaning. Volumes have been written on this subject, the most notable being Ghazali’s Mishkat al Anwar (237).

Among the ninety-nine names of Allah, An-Nur exists in the Qur’an as one of the attributes of Allah. He is, indeed the light of the heavens and the earth but it is also said that all his other attributions are luminous names, as well. For Muslims, Allah has the power of the universe and, as a creator, He blessed humans and creation not only with the physical light but also with the light of knowledge and faith (Faleh 2016, 173). Continuously, the light has a high share in Islam and a significant dimension as part of Islamic values. Often, Qur’an uses An-Nur in contrast with Dhulumat or darkness emphasizing its importance in the transition from darkness into light, and from ignorance into faith (Fatani 2006, 467).

Light is a vital factor in life and a reflection of purity and soul. Within this divine cosmos, the soul of humanity is in search of the divine, both physically and spiritually, through faith and knowledge. That is why it is necessary for the context of this thesis to appreciate different architectural methods including projects by contemporary architects Louis Khan, Luis Barragan, Tadao Ando, and Hassan Fathy. These architects sought to reintroduce light in their architecture through walls and openings, and they considered controlling it as a necessity to create a regional or local architecture. However, it is also essential to understand its symbolic and metaphysical dimension in the realm of Islam to appreciate its use and presence in the architecture of Islam or the medinas.

As mentioned in Surah An-Nur, the glass does not necessarily shine by itself unless light penetrates it. Thus the image of the glass was compared to a brilliant star. By correlation, the light of Allah illuminates His followers, and they help to enlighten others thus enhancing humanity (Ali 1975). The Qur’an draws an analogy between light and the straight path of peace and guidance, cited in the following verse “by which Allah guides those who pursue His pleasure to the ways of peace and brings them out from darkness into the light, by His permission, and guides them to a straight
path” (Qur’an Al-maidah, 5:16). The use of the Arabic verb Yɒɦreeɣ , which means to bring out, and the verb Yahdee, meaning to guide, shows the spiritual connotation and the importance that light has as it is a central factor comparable to the straight path that leads to inner peace.

An-Nur is continuously cited in the Qur’an to explain the reason for the creation and the image of darkness, inferring Satan, is also contrasted with that of the right path in several instances. The clear path is constantly referred to as An-Nur (Qur’an a-nisāa, 4:174) and the light that was sent down is a clear illustration of the importance of this dimension in Islam as it leads to success in life and the hereafter (Qur’an al-’a’rāf, 7:157). The importance of light in Islam is central to the goals of existence on earth. Its presence appears to be a perfect illustration of progress, success, and civilization. The reflection of the divine light is present in the physical world of the Muslim sphere. Architecture is a field where this serenity exists through the spatial configuration of buildings, walls, and details. Light is a revelation of man’s creativity or achievements. It is intriguing, thus, to identify the importance of light in the architecture of Islam through different mediums.

The notion of light is as important in Islam as it is for the architecture of Islam or Islamic architecture. Ernst Grube mentions that “Islamic architecture is given to hiding its principal features behind an unrevealing exterior; it is an architecture that does not change its forms easily, if at all, according to functional demands, but rather tends to adapt functions to preconceived forms” (Grube 1978, 12-13). So how does the light participate in the equation and the dynamics of the interior?

Light is a dynamic element connecting interior spaces with the exterior natural world. This intangible element is both a physical connector as well as a spiritual element that can be seen as transcending its materiality to express a connection with the divine world. Through courtyards, openings, and light wells, light penetrates into the courtyard of traditional homes, mosques, and even traditional suqs. It helps to add some energy to the interiors by enlightening the space, and it also creates and defines the boundaries and character of the space precisely. Despite its beautifying
and illuminating characteristics, light underscores the imperfection of humanity and the infinity of God. The human being continuously generates different products for this world that become beautified by light. Without light, these creative products will be relatively limited. “Light underscores in its own ways the inconsequentiality, fragility, relativity, and imperfection of man, his products and this world. It, at the same time, underscores the omnipotence, perfection, absoluteness, beauty and infinity of God” (Omer 2011b, par. 5).

The next section continues to look at the spiritual values of light in Islam and its implications for the architecture of Islam. Omer (2011) also emphasizes the notion of simplicity, sincerity, and transparency in Islam and connects it with the concept of light; to him, light is simple, sincere, transparent and honest, as a human should be. Sincerity, or Ḥilaas in Arabic, is a fundamental principle in Islam, and there is an entire Surah (chapter) dedicated to it in the Qur’an. The image of the eternal and the absolute creator, Allah, explains the purity and the sincerity that Muslim believers should hold towards the one and true creator of the heavens and the earth. The same applies to Islamic architecture and the architecture of the Medina, where pure intentions are at the heart of the act of building to preserve ethical values such as privacy.

Allah is described as “begot none’ nor begotten, as “the most Affectionate, the Merciful” (Qur’an Al Ḥilaas, 112:1-4). The purity of the belief, the purity of the Creator, and the purity of light are images of how purity and simplicity enhance the quality and the splendor of its physical manifestation on earth, even if it remains untouched and timeless. Light is virtually non-existent even if it surrounds us. It is a physical phenomenon that reflects purity and physicality in a broader sense. These original dimensions as also explained as follows:
There is nothing that symbolizes these notions better than the idea of light, just as there is nothing that symbolizes the opposites better than the concept of darkness. Surely, the life of a true believer is a simple, straightforward and a clearly defined affair, from the beginning till the end. Minimalism in form and appearances, and profundity, wisdom, and luminosity in substance, meaning, and purpose, it stands to reason, are synonymous with the lifestyle of a believer. A true believer, furthermore, has nothing to hide, camouflage, mystify or veil when it comes to his relationships with his Creator and with his very self and his consciousness (Omer 2011b, par. 6).

Light, belief, and sincerity; three major concepts that seem to be interrelated in the context of defining the mystery of light but also in defining its spiritual dimension. The philosophy of light in Islam unmistakably reminds us of its importance within the built environment. Domes, light wells, walls, Musharrabiyyah or bow windows, and courtyards are noticeable elements that enrich the spatial configuration of architecture in mosques, houses, and Suqs; they also play a significant role in filtering the light inside these spaces. The visitor is guided smoothly through the subtle and minimal space, and his experience becomes purely mystical. The streets and alleys of the Medina of Tunis, for instance, show how important light is and how the transition happens from the few shadowed and transitional spaces to the alleyways and public plazas. In the next section, I will study the implication of light and color on the architecture of Dar Lasrem, located in the heart of the Medina of Tunis and home to the Preservation Society of the Medina (ASM).
Figure 6-4: Jeridi, Moez. 2018. The Entrance of Dar Lasrem, Medina of Tunis, Tunisia

Figure 6-5: Jeridi, Moez. 2018. Interior Courtyard of Dar Lasrem, Medina of Tunis, Tunisia
6.1.2. Color and Reflection

Light is a central component of the architecture of the Medina, but colors and tones of different materials also enhance the timelessness and identity of such vernacular architecture. The creative use of colors in Islamic architecture increases the character of buildings given the direct effects that colors have on people, whether materially, psychologically or spiritually (Omer 2011b). Color, in the Islamic tradition, is considered principally from a metaphysical perspective, which sees light and darkness as permanent possibilities hidden in the celestial Archetypes; color stems from pure light as Rumi reflects (Ardalan and Bakhtiar 1973, 47). The diverse materials inside Dar Lasrem, for instance, come in different tones, textures, and colors. The white tones of stucco and marble balance the tones of this central space and the colored tones of the walls create another balance of tones. The neutrality of the white tones covering the inner heart of the house is appealing and is, indeed, valorized by the light coming from the outside.

On a spiritual level, colors are a reflection of the creation of God on Earth and its perfection dimension. The built environment in the Islamic context is, indeed, a revelation of man’s creation on Earth and his mission through architecture, among other things. The diversity of the grades of tiles, for
instance, explains how important colors are in creating an ensemble of tones matched together to create a palette of lights (Figure 6-7). Each color of the traditional ceramic tile work in the courtyard of Dar Lasrem obeys to specific rules as “tilers learnt to juggle with the diversity of motifs in the most ingenious manner” (Binous and Jabeur 2002, 114). Light is also coming from the colors themselves adding another interpretation to its original transparent feature. The orange and blue tiles called Afset Essid (Figure 6-7), or lion’s paw, dominates the surface facing the entrance to the courtyard and contrasting two tones, one with its warm orange and the other one with its cold white tone. As this tile dominates the surface, it “leaves little room for the white background” (Binous and Jabeur 2002, 114), thus creating a new system of balance between colored tones and natural light. Light continues to valorize the white tones. So, how about the role of complex geometry in all this theater?

Figure 6-7: Faleh, Majdi. 2016. Variety of Construction Materials in Dar Lasrem, Medina of Tunis, Tunisia
6.2 Form, Detail, and Islamic Geometry

6.2.1. Evaluation of Contemporary Tunisian Buildings

To incorporate ornament in Islamic design (Figure 6-8) as a mediator between the traditional and the modern sources of value in the built environment, this research explores the composition of such ornamentation (material subject) as well as its purpose (spiritual subject). While the physicality and spirituality are both necessary features to construct the identity of ornament in Islamic architecture, rethinking aesthetics through ornament can stimulate architecture’s ‘raison d’etre’.

In this century, Islamic architecture is divided between architects who promote the reuse of Islamic geometry to ‘revive’ its heritage and those who are critical of such an approach as it ‘fetishizes’\(^3\) this heritage without understanding the symbolism behind its geometry and symbols.

\(^3\) Steele (1994, 31) explains that professor Dogan Kuban from Turkey has used the concept of ‘cultural fetishism’ referring to those who use traditional or past forms blindly without understanding their meaning.
Although the question regarding reinvesting or reinventing Islamic aesthetics and form is recurring among scholars and architects in the Islamic world, this delicate issue remains controversial until today. Steele (1994, 31) considers that this question of “the re-use of traditional forms and decoration is delicate as it reactivated an issue that needs solutions”. The application of Islamic decoration on “export architecture throughout the Muslim world” continues to be widespread, as Steele (1994, 31) explains. The ongoing debate raises important questions about whether or not to use Islamic decoration on buildings and where to draw the limitation. The next part will rely on the analysis of an Aga Khan awarded project which is the Sidi El Aloui Primary School (Figure 6-9) near the Medina of Tunis. The analysis will also examine Tunis City Hall (Figure 6-12) to evaluate the use of Islamic ornament in the modern age. At a later stage, it will evaluate some modern residential and hybrid architecture where the use of Islamic patterns and forms became a tendency in Tunis since the 1970s.

**The project of Sidi Aloui Primary School** (completed 1986), designed by Samir Hamaici and Denis Lesage, uses a different aesthetic approach through the display of traditional geometric patterns on the windows and Mashrabiya of the exterior façade (Figure 6-9; Figure 6-10). This project reinvested the use of traditional aesthetics on a public building, trying to sustain the local culture while revealing the exterior facade. This project is at the intersection of tradition and modernity, as it reflects modern schools while completing the traditional character and scale of the neighborhood of Bab Souika that is part of the Medina of Tunis since the sixteenth century (Bartsch 2005, 151). Steele (1994, 32) considers Sidi El Aloui’s project, which started in 1983 to revitalize Bab Souika district of the Medina of Tunis, successful because of the use of the Mashrabiya at the entrance of this public building. He also considers this innovation as a “courageous exploration of traditional forms, as both a necessary and economical

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32 Islamic geometry includes the use of complex patterns that derive from the rich historical heritage of Islamic architecture. It also includes the use of tiles decorated with geometric patterns. Forms include the use of arches, Mashrabiya, and other traditional forms.
alternative to standard governmental proposals, [which] presents an example of great value to developing countries” (Steele 1994, 32).

Independence did not necessarily improve the situation of heritage as the elite of Tunis and leaders saw in this heritage a regression towards the past (Bennasr 2010, 1). However, with the foundation of the Association of the Preservation of the Medina of Tunis in 1967, the interest in the Medina was renewed. In the late 1990s, a renewed interest in the vernacular architecture of the Medina took place in major cities (Tunis and Sfax) where both town halls attempted to create a balance between modern and traditional architecture introducing new materials such as bricks, tiles, and many others.
During the same period, since the 1990s, the architectural expression of Tunisia started to change to meet the standards of the international style of architecture through the use of glass and aluminum (Lesage 2013, 33). Despite the change of aesthetics, the Sidi El Aloui remains an expression of architectural mediation in the past decades as it reveals a complex geometry outside of courtyards, and precisely on the windows of the different facades.

This section will now focus on the **Town Hall of Tunis**, which was inaugurated on November 8, 1998, under the regime of former dictator Ben Ali. The interest in this particular building (Figure 6-11; Figure 6-12) is due to its location outside the current perimeter of the Medina, at a distance of 200 meters from the remaining parts of the Medina’s fortifications. This building was designed by the architects Wassim Ben Mahmoud and Mustapha Ben Jannet, who were the winners of a design competition. The architects aimed to “combine modernity (glass curtain walls and tradition (exterior decoration inspired from the Almohad minaret of Al Kasbah and the interior decoration that follows the spirit of traditional dwellings of the Medina of Tunis” (Lesage 2013, 33).

![Figure 6-11: Faleh, Majdi. 2015. Tunis Town Hall in la Kasbah, Tunis, Tunisia](image-url)
This statement by the architects can undoubtedly be welcomed by politicians and the general public as it illustrates an interest in the dialogue that has always been at the heart of the discussion between modern and traditional architecture. However, from an architect’s point of view, the reality seems to be distorted. In fact, the observation of interior and exterior spaces shows a renewed interest in Islamic ornament, but it lacks confidence in approaching it and reinterpreting its vocabulary. Since the 1990s, a prevalent trend in the architecture of modern Tunisian cities consists of a mixture of traditional forms (columns, arches) and curtain walls or bay windows. Arches and colonnades, in this case, are not functional but rather decorative and absurd elements to mimic the past.

The architect copied two layers from two different eras without necessarily creating an interaction of elements but rather classically superposing them. This idea is similar to philosopher Paul Ricoeur’s thesis of cross-fertilization between universal civilization and national cultures. This trend to universalize Tunisian architecture reflects a ‘wearing away’ of its past heritage, and this nostalgia can lead to some harm as Paul Ricoeur points out. Ricoeur (1965, 277) states: “it is a fact: every culture cannot sustain and absorb the shock of modern civilisation. There is the paradox: how to
become modern and to return to sources; how to revive an old, dormant civilisation and take part in universal civilisation”.

In the Medina of Tunis, one notices the central and ethical function of the traditional house and its courtyard. The latter is a social, environmental, cultural, and religious incubator. It is important to note its aesthetic dimension, even though people can only see it when entering the house. Light and geometry, for instance, are at the heart of this aesthetic experience. Though giving a value judgment to aesthetics remains an issue in the twenty-first century, the realm of aesthetics demands an evaluation of diverse styles, change of taste, behaviors, interests, as well as values of people who often take part in universal and national experiences. If architects were to create a model that mediates traditional and modern architecture, in Tunis for example, one would wonder if there is a need for highly ornamented spaces using complex patterns.

In the context of modern Tunis, one should note that the 1970s were the years where architecture in Tunisia tended to revive its heritage; whether it is a political will to build a modern state after colonization or inspiration to build a new model. Political and social realities matter to understand how local Tunisians attempted to revive the Tunisian collective memory through the use of Arabic-Islamic architecture but the spiritual understanding of the geometric complexity, for example, should be well analyzed.

This attitude is exceptionally valid after independence as the country was trying to forge its national identity and “its spiritual and cultural revendication”, as Ricoeur (1965, 277) calls it. However, such an eclectic architecture mostly characterized the facades of houses owned by the Bourgeoisie who lived in the suburbs of Tunis (Bohli Nouri 2013, 29). Even today, one still notices some of these buildings in Bourgeoisie or Middle-Class neighborhoods such as El Menzah (6, 7, 9) and El Manar (Figure 6-13). These houses display a mixture of traditional elements on their facades including Keddel, a local Tunisian stone, ceramic tiles, Mashrabiya, green or blue tiles, as well as arcades reminding us of the houses of the Medina of Tunis. This ornamental approach reinforces a reinterpretation of tradition
and modernity. Somewhat this ‘pastiche-like’ approach reflects a nostalgia of the past but an obligation towards modernization while engaging with the global and universalizing world.

Such an approach is reflective of Frampton’s critique of the “ironic vernacular”, where he explains how the nostalgia for a lost vernacular can lead to a confusing interpretation that might consequently harm the character of architecture. He writes:

> It is necessary to distinguish the outset between critical regionalism and the simplistic or ironic vernacular. I am referring, of course, to that nostalgia for the vernacular which is currently being conceived as an overdue return to the ethos of a popular culture; for unless such a distinction is made one will end by confusing the resistant capacity of Regionalism with the demagogic tendencies of populism (Frampton 1983a, 149).

The culture or the architecture of the Medina of Tunis is the popular culture that Frampton describes. The tendency to reconstruct the formal character of traditional houses through the use of ornamentation focuses on the form, and it reflects a growing movement among the Bourgeoisie of Tunis starting in the 1970s and 1980s. Bohli Nouri (2013, 30) describes these “new villas” as a mix of ornaments, where the ornamentation of facades is “an invention” of specific details reflecting the facades of the courtyard houses of the Medina of Tunis. She also considers the contrast between this new ornamentation system and the pavilion type of building that uses reinforced concrete structures and bricks; stones are used by the more affluent people who can afford it.
As Bohli Nouri (2013, 30) notes, this reinterpretation of ornamentation can be reflective of a neo-arabisance\textsuperscript{33} or neo-Moorish style, and this might just reflect an adaptation of a new modern lifestyle. Traditional courtyard houses might not be compatible anymore with such a lifestyle. The courtyard, a space open towards the sky, is redefined and it opens towards the garden thus creating a transition between the interior and the exterior reinventing a new typology of the villa house and the courtyard house. One should note that scholars and architects have not written much about

\textsuperscript{33}Arabisance, as explained in Chapter 3, is an architectural style that can be seen in North Africa as well as Spain and it creates a mixture between colonial European architecture and Islamic architecture. Neo-Arabisance is a new form of Arabisance, that the author refers to, and can be interpreted as a mix of modern architecture and Islamic architecture through the use of ornament.
this period from 1970-1990, and in particular about eclecticism between modern villas and traditional houses of the Medina of Tunis using traditional ornaments. The debate regarding the reuse and readaptation of traditional ornamentation continues today in Tunisia and reflects attempts to value the Arabic and Islamic heritage of the Medina while having an excessive obligation towards replicating modernization.

6.2.2. A Return to the Aesthetic Sources and Islamic Spirituality

Having evaluated some contemporary Tunisian projects that relied on Islamic ornament, one should attempt to understand the sources of value of the intricate geometry and the debate about its symbolic and spiritual dimensions. Ignoring aspects of the ornament is similar to building medinas without people. Maybe the findings can potentially benefit the Bourgeoisie who would like to construct modern homes using traditional ornament on their facades, be they permanent or temporary structures. In the context of material culture and Islamic architecture, the Khayamiya34, which relies heavily on Islamic geometry and calligraphy, represents a dynamic art form and an opportunity for revival. It is vital to revive traditional Islamic ornamentation, but it is also necessary to embrace various techniques of ‘doing’ and empowering Islamic art. Bowker (2014, 45) defines and describes this art form (Khayamiya) as a balance between practical design, touristic purposes, international exposure, and architectural borrowing. He writes:

To accommodate new cultural and commercial imperatives, the tentmakers have repeatedly reinvented their craft. Adaptive and entrepreneurial, they have focused their craft on the preferences of international audiences. The result is a diverse range of styles within contemporary khayamiya that combine the practical design of the touristic with appropriations from Islamic art, especially derived from ornaments from mosque architecture (Bowker 2014, 45).

Little has been written about this pure artifact, combining geometry and calligraphy, which can potentially enrich Islamic art and architecture. One can even suggest that Bowker’s approach is noteworthy to rely on in practical design as it deals with a ‘temporary’ structure, which is the tent.

34 The word Khayamiya or Khayamiyya comes from the Arabic word Khayma or tent. This represents the art of tent-making in Egypt. We will adopt the spelling that Sam Bowker adopted to ensure consistency.
Ornament transcends the surface to cover the walls and the floors at times. This artform among many can change the contemporary, touristic, or orientalist perception towards the ‘exotic’ art of the Muslim world. Bowker and El Rashidi (2016, 367) suggest different ways of mediating between global and local sources of identity in the context of Khedival Khayamiya (Figure 6-14), thus “revisiting aspects of the Khedival—such as their lyrical epigrams—could make contemporary khayamiya desirable for major museums of Islamic art. This provides a new direction that acknowledges and advances the tentmaker’s “Egyptian” cultural identity”. Similarly, Islamic art in the Medina should mediate between its practical design, an international audience, and inspiration from ornaments and buildings, without losing its geometric ‘intelligibility’ or becoming ‘too oriental’ exclusively serving tourists.

Figure 6-14: Faleh, Majdi. 2016. The Tentmakers of Cairo Exhibition “Khayamiya: Khedival to Contemporary”, Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia (IAMM) and Dr. Sam Bowker, Kuala Lumpur

Scruton (1979, 250) states that “a rule of obedience must constrain the architect. He must translate his intuition into terms that are publicly intelligible, unite his buildings with an order that is recognizable not only to the expert but also to the ordinary uneducated man”. In Dar Lasrem, one

35 Related to Khedive (خديف, ḥādīf). The Khedivate of Egypt was an autonomous state of the Ottoman Empire from 1867 to 1914. During this period, European style industries were used.
observes a white façade on the exterior with few windows, sometimes decorated, located at a specific height, and a decorated or plain wooden door (Figure 6-15). Entering the building is similar to going into a temple, calling for a sense of discovery. Both the architect/expert and the visitor discover richly decorated walls upon entering the house, and the experience continues until reaching the courtyard. The exterior hides the opulent interiors and abstracts the physical dimension of its aesthetics.

Figure 6-15: Faleh, Majdi. 2015. Main Entrance and Facade of Dar Lasrem, Medina of Tunis, Tunisia

The idea of hidden aesthetics can be understood as a way to ensure equality between dwellers. Scholars can also interpret it as a way of following Islam’s principles of modesty and building with intention. The artist and the builder show the sense of beauty and the sense of detail in its totality. One cannot observe the exterior façade only or the interior space only, but both together as a macrocosm of Islamic culture to understand the symbolism of this architecture. Scruton (1979, 206) emphasizes that the aesthetic interest in a building should be seen in its completeness meaning including every visual sign that it has. Modern architecture, though, was described as lacking “a flair for detail”, hostility towards ornament, and
architecture that is a kind of Gesamtkunstwerk36. The ideal of architecture is, therefore “aesthetically serious only if the total conception remains within the architect’s control” (Scruton, 1979 211). Architects and artists can attempt to be universal while keeping up with integrating local techniques and geometry, as in the case of Khayamiya.

Following a Heideggerian approach, Harries (2005) calls for a discourse that is highly aesthetic, which anesthetizes the social, economic, and political realities (Leach 2005, 137). Socio-political and economic contexts are necessary to consider when discussing Islamic aesthetics, but one should not place too much emphasis on seeking the origin of Islamic art in the socio-political conditions of the context. Nasr (1987a, 4) agrees with this idea as being entirely modern and non-Islamic because such an approach “reduces sacred art with its interiorizing power to simply external, social and, in the case of Marxist historians, economic conditions”. He also emphasizes that all forms and elements have a connection with the divine intellect in Islam; Islamic thought does not permit “the reduction of the higher to the lower, the intellectual to the corporeal or the sacred to the mundane” (Nasr 1987a, 4). Understanding the relation between Islamic art (geometry) and Islamic spirituality emanates from understanding the divine laws and spirit of Islam.

In my interpretation, Islamic design seems to be both similar and different to that conception of the modern movement in the case of traditional houses (Dar) of the medinas. While the exterior is white, minimal, and abstract, similar to modern and industrial buildings, the interiors, however, hide a complex mix of geometry and materials. These same interiors represent a hidden sanctuary of geometric creativity and materials. Omer (2005, 63) explains that the first Muslims produced elementary buildings with no decorative patterns or ornament; this trend then changed with the

36 A Gesamtkunstwerk is a German concept translated as a “universal work of art”. In architecture, this concept refers to a modern approach where architects are involved in all aspects of the building’s construction and decoration. For further information about the concept, see Vidalis, M. 2010. “Gesamtkunstwerk-total work of art.” Architectural Review.
first Hijrah century and specifically with the expansion of new lands. During that period, he notes:

Decorating buildings, including places of worship, in many ways was increasingly making its way to becoming a permanent and for many, the most appreciable feature of the Islamic fine arts. A set of factors, such as the rapid development of Islamic eclectic culture and civilization, as well as, the ever-increasing need for intensifying and diversifying the methods and media for propagating Islam in the lands just opened to Islam and its government—to name a few—contributed directly or indirectly to the birth of this phenomenon (Omer 2005, 63).

However, this complex geometry remained connected with the Tawhidic principles of Islam or unity. Islamic art and architecture aim to represent a spiritual life of Muslims linked to the divine creation. Omer describes “Islamic applied or decorative arts as an instrument or carrier of the spiritual; and, last but not least, the substance of the motif vocabulary of Islamic decorative arts” (Omer 2005, 63). Omer’s idea of the spiritual was also explored by English artist and author Keith Critchlow who, in the 1970s, who established connections between geometry, the cosmos, and the creation. Nasr (1976, 6) reflects on Critchlow’s important research explaining that “Islamic spirituality could not but develop a sacred art in conformity with its own revealed form as well as with its essence”. Critchlow’s writing on Islamic patterns was one of the first in the West to examine this geometry based on metaphysical and cosmological principles, which later influenced art historians and young Western architects (Nasr 1976, 6).

In a way, Critchlow’s approach enabled a mediation of ideas between the West and Islamic civilization. One of these notable scholars is art historian Oleg Grabar, who in his book Islamic Art and Beyond, questions whether mysticism and cosmic unity are the forces of creative art, by reference to Critchlow’s 1976 study (Grabar 2006, 298). Clearly, Grabar’s 1992 book The Mediation of Ornament already engaged with the forces of creative art when he explained that geometry plays the role of a mediator of feelings and spirituality despite the local variations in style (Grabar 1992, 226-227).

Decoration in the context of Dar Lasrem’s courtyard, building on Omer’s and Grabar’s ideas, is an instrument of worship, rather than a means of
extravagance leading to spiritual deterioration. Through close observation of the courtyard, one notices a broad range of local materials and palettes balanced together and including marble, tiles, stucco, and wood. Upon careful observation of several architectonic elements (pillars, doors, windows, Muqarnas), one notices the intricacy, complexity as well as the unity of these geometric shapes.

From a distance, these patterns seem too complicated, but upon close observation, one can see simple geometric forms ranging from circles, squares, lines, and dots. Infinity is the result of their complex combination (Figure 6-16). The use of geometric patterns, even differently, remained as the unifying factor between artists and people across this culture. Although reusing these geometric elements might be costly, as in the case of modern Bourgeoisie homes in the affluent neighborhoods of Tunis, reinventing them can occur at a different scale. Reusing Islamic geometry is however not the object of this research. Geometry has played a unifying role as it connects diverse Muslim groups and others under similar rules and ways of life. Oweis (2002) explains how Islamic art has remained united in

Figure 6-16: Jeridi, Moez. 2018. Rich Interiors of Dar Lasrem, Tunis, Tunisia
its use of geometric patterns, despite the vast geographical areas the Islamic World covers:

The use of geometric patterns has been another unifying factor in Islamic art and architecture. Despite the large geographic area that makes up the Islamic world, with its various ethnicities, cultures, environments, languages, and artistic traditions, Islamic art remains united in its use of geometrical patterns. A number of visual features, principles, or characteristic elements are contributing factors to the unity of Islamic art. These principles govern the elements in decorations and ornaments in Islamic art and architecture and are found especially in the use of geometrical patterns (22).

The unity of geometric patterns can be seen in Islamic art and architecture. Abstract shapes evolve gradually from simple forms, such as dots and lines, to more complex entities. El-Said and Parman (1976, xi) explain that despite the variety of materials and shapes, unity remains an essential factor in Islamic geometry. The evolution of geometric patterns from simple to more intricate elements reflects the evolution of the universe. One can even reflect that this progressive evolution is a metaphysical and a spiritual process. Chorbachi (1989, 757) reflects on the group of what he calls “international mystics [who] supported specific publications and pushed certain Islamic mystical ideas”. This includes a number of introductions on the subject of unity, multiplicity, and infinity written by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Titus Burckhardt as well as Nader Ardalan and Laleh Bakhtiar and Keith Critchlow, whose ideas will be explored in the next sections.

Geometric forms evolve gradually in Islamic art. The harmony and organicity of forms reflect the idea of infinity. Somehow these intricate shapes embody the idea of life thus creating a dynamic and holistic experience. Sutton (2007, 1) supports this view and explains that “the harmonic and symmetrical subdivision of the plane giving rise to intricately interwoven designs that speak of infinity and the omnipresent center; and idealized plant form or Arabesque, spiraling tendrils, leaves, buds and flowers embodying organic life and rhythm”. The evolution of these dynamic patterns originates from simple shapes such as the point or dot and the line. In their research on the Sufi tradition in Persian architecture, Ardalan and Bakhtiar (1973, 43) establish a correlation between the arabesque and nature; “as nature is based on rhythm, so the arabesque is
rhythmic in concept. It reflects movement marked by the regular reoccurrence of features, elements, phenomena; hence it has periodicity”. The authors reflect on the spatial and temporal dynamics of the motifs. The motifs are similar to waves or to a combination of flux and cycle exhibiting a certain order and rhythm of the spatial composition. Arabesques, as Ardalan and Bakhtiar (1973, 43) point out, “do not fill the total surface but act as forms in space set in relief against passive backgrounds”. In a way, these motifs activate the surrounding space, generating endless patterns as seen in Figure 6-17.

Figure 6-17: Faleh, Majdi. 2016. Islamic Patterns and Infinity Artwork by artist Majdi Faleh, Perth, Australia

The geometric pattern in Islamic art evolves gradually from a dimensionless point in space, which extends into a line. One clearly notices a point of departure which leads to the manifestation of the geometric forms in space. Critchlow (1976, 9) explains that “the manifestation of an action, object or thought (if it can be defined) necessitates a point of origin or departure, in relation both to the manifestation itself and to the person
who is conscious of its emergence”. A direction is taken and a point has moved away, Critchlow explains, thus reflecting the polarity of existence. Polarity expresses itself in the relationship of the central point of origin and the outer projected point, where the first one is passive and the last one is active (Critchlow 1976, 9). This dynamic polarity expresses the spiritual and philosophical nature of this art.

By rotating the line 360 degrees, it becomes a circle, and then the circle intercepts more circles. These geometric patterns create a diverse yet a unifying form that can be applied through repetition to objects, surfaces, and buildings. The complexity and designs of geometric patterns are variable from simple shapes to complex polygons and stars (Oweis 2002, 22). The gradual formation of Islamic patterns follows a mathematical logic, where lines divide circles into equal parts and transcend local and global differences and borders to reinvent an abstract Islamic architecture and its art forms. As the circle and the point become united, a sense of departure develops and a process of externalization evolves. A series of arcs are then formed. Circles intersect and the way they intersect represents “a position [which] holds essential symbolic value inasmuch as it represents a union of an origin and a manifestation where the centres of both coincide with the peripheries of each” (Critchlow 1976, 14). As more circles intersect to form a pattern, expansion can happen in different directions, even laterally as Critchlow mentions, generating more and more unity and infinite contacts and possibilities between these geometric shapes. This ‘externalizing’ growth of circles and geometries can be seen on patterns from the twenty-first century Islamic Museum of Kuala Lumpur to the Friday Mosque of Isfahan, reflecting timeless ideas and patterns evolving geographically like the universe.

This idea of the evolution and progression reflect the evolution of the universe, thus establishing an intermediary role between the material and the spiritual worlds. Nasr (1987b, 3) explains that “one feels oneself within the same artistic and spiritual universe despite all the local variations in materials, structural techniques, and the like”. The geometric universe is a one and unifying factor that spiritually connects people and worshippers.
to this universe of variations, thus creating a sense of unity and continuity within the diversity. Particular attention in several studies of Islamic design is given to unity; “a typical example is the circle with its center from N. Ardalan’s The Sense of Unity, where these two drawings of the (Zahir), the manifest of apparent, and the (Batin), the hidden or internal, are represented as the center of the circle, stand for body and soul” (Chorbachi 1989, 757). Chorbachi’s study of Islamic patterns attempted to transcend these mystic visions by using scientific and mathematical visions, which are beyond the object of this research. His analysis of the process of Islamic geometric design relied on precise interpretation and equations to come to the conclusion that “for Islamic tradition is so strong that, if we are in touch with the language of the present time and ground ourselves in this strong old tradition, we can arrive at an expression that is not only contemporary but that could be meaningful and valid in the coming century” (Chorbachi 1989, 757).

Unlike common misinterpretations, geometric patterns in Islam were not forced on Muslims to counter the use of figurative art (Oweis 2002, 23), but this art is intimately related to Islamic revelation and form or geometry. The mathematical character of Islamic art and architecture, drawn from ancient Greek sources, “derives directly from the nature of Islamic spirituality which remains always closely wedded to the experience of harmony and archetypical reality” (Nasr 1987b, 48). The beauty of geometric flowers, in Islamic art and architecture, re-captures the image of paradise and prepares the soul for the experience of paradise or Jannatul-Firdaws that the Qur’an promised to the faithful (Nasr 1987b, 48). This interaction between the spiritual and the geometric seeks to promote the spiritual function and the contemplative reading of the universe. Nasr (1987b) explains the link between Islamic revelation and geometry. He states that:
The causal relation between the Islamic revelation and Islamic art, moreover, is borne out by the organic rapport between this art and Islamic worship, between the contemplation nature of God as recommended in the Qur'an and the contemplative nature of this art, between the remembrance of God (dhikrallah) which is the final goal of all Islamic worship, and the role played by Islamic art of both a plastic and sonoral nature in the life of individual Muslims and the community or al-ummah as a whole(4).

The rapport between this art and Islamic worship creates a sense of attachment that devoted Muslims seek to reach through contemplation and Dhikr or remembrance. Traditionally, artists detach themselves from their artwork and aim for a much more holistic approach conveying a global and comprehensive dimension of the artistic expression. The Qur’an itself reflects the idea of the divine presence through natural elements including trees, plants, flowers, nature’s beauty, and the decorated book itself with similar elements to emphasize on Allah’s divine and beautiful creation (Oweis 2002, 23).

In fact, the spirituality conveyed by this complex geometry is at the heart of Islam. However, Islamic geometry should convey the idea of divine infinity and transcendence of different worlds. Omer (2005, 74) explains that “the principal objective of Islamic aesthetics is to lead the beholder away from concentrating on self or anything from this terrestrial world, and towards contemplation of Almighty God and His Oneness”. Omer’s idea of spirituality in Islamic design is also supported by Ardalan and Bakhtiar (1973, 35) who clarify how traditional man wished to show his love for his creator, where “one who is close to nature in her mode of operation cannot help but be overwhelmed by the amplitude of patterns, designs, and colors in the manifestations of creation”. Islamic geometry and its art, as designed by man, do not copy nature but they copy the way nature manifests itself “ennobling surfaces as the earth was ennobled by creation” (Ardalan and Bakhtiar 1973, 35). This similar idea promoted by philosophers such as Hegel shows the philosophical and metaphysical dimensions of this architecture and its aesthetics, which support the argument of its revival in the current century. The methods of revival can vary, and modern technologies can offer multiple ways at different costs. The question of how digital technologies can reinvent the spirit and values of Islamic art and
architecture is the subject of a separate study which we cannot go into here in any detail.

6.3 Conclusion

In Islamic architecture, ethics and aesthetics play a significant role as they structure architectural spaces, such as in the case of the Medina. Light is a timeless and endless feature of the architecture of the Medina. Light travels throughout centuries, places, and ages, and remains unchanging. Light’s spiritual dimension is the force that drives it in different contexts. The infinity of geometric patterns can only be limited by a frame, which can be a portion of the wall, a window, a door, or other architectural details. In Islamic architecture, the infinity of ornamentation starts from the simple shapes (dots, lines, circles) and expands based on mathematical logic and formulas. Science is at the heart of this aesthetic experiment. The growth of these elements is a reflection of the growth of the whole cosmos from elementary particles to more complex ones added together. The infinity itself reflects the infinity of the Creator in Islam. He is infinite. The richly decorated facades and interiors of this hidden sanctuary should be explored beyond the lure of Orientalism, and beyond the idea of the beautiful and mysterious Orient that existed in the far lands of Arabia. In fact, spirituality is a point that orientalists tend to miss, and thus it is vital for architects of the twenty-first century to understand the meanings behind such ornamentation system in a world full of icons, symbols, and capitalism. The studies of Ardalan and Bakhtiar (1973), Critchlow (1976), Chorbachi (1987), Oweis (2002), and Omer (2005) have demonstrated that mystical dimensions of Islamic patterns activate a sense of place and lead to the dynamism of Islamic geometry transcending times and places, thus supporting the main aim of this thesis.
7. Conclusion

This thesis has discussed the influence of globalization on Islamic architecture, by first examining how the concept of civilization evolved, and how architecture mediated different sources of identities from different pre-Islamic periods (i.e. Byzantine heritage) (Stierlin 2009, Clévenot 2000, Hillenbrand 1999). The economic and sociopolitical contexts have a direct influence on Islamic architecture. In the context of globalization in the Twenty-first Century, Dubai developed an architecture that reflects its image as a major global center and a hub for architectural exploration (Elsheshtawy 2013a, 2008a, 2013b, 2004a). Dubai is one example where architectural ambitions went far beyond the rational and where the character of the city has been more informed by the glamorous ‘image’ of architecture and planning (Ramos and Rowe 2013, Andrasos and Wood 2013, Kanna 2011) rather than by mediating local and global sources of identity. Local cultures give quality and value to the meaning of life, and they are a reliable tool towards progressing societies and people. In a way, local cultures have a long-term connection with local architecture, and modern and postmodern architecture have partially overshadowed traditional Islamic architecture. The exploration of Dubai, or ‘Dubaiization,’ reveals a phenomenon, which reflects the influence of globalization on architecture in the Islamic World and limits opportunities for architectural mediation.

In contrast, the analysis of the ethical and aesthetical values that qualified the urban paradigm of the Medina of Tunis showed how and why these principles had significant socio-cultural, legal, and spatial implications on the urban character of the settlement (Ibn al-Rami 1999, Al-Hathloul 1981, Hakim 1986, 2008). One aspect of the research explored the concept of how ‘the human being can be at the center of the design’, while relating this conception to more modern buildings and building processes that shared the same idea. Of particular note are the spiritual dimensions of aesthetical elements, namely light and geometry, which both enhanced the urban and spiritual character of the place (Omer 2011a). In the next
section, this research will explain the significance and value of this work for future research.

7.1 Why it Matters?

The significance and timeliness of this work need to be stressed. Historically and politically, this research takes place in a period where people, governments, and the media see the Middle East and North Africa as both an inspiration and a place of war and destruction. This research has investigated how cities are shaped and how architecture is passively or actively engaging with globalization, and technological progress, during an era of brutal and disparate changes in the Islamic world. Comparing Dubai and Tunis, through the analysis of historical and modern buildings, is by itself an essential task towards defining the impacts of globalization, past and present, on the architecture and the built environment surrounding it. This research also matters because of the political context surrounding it. Since 2011, people have taken to the streets in different parts of the Islamic world to demand two basic needs, namely dignity and freedom. Architectural coherence, urban planning, and the dynamic created within cities of the Islamic world are necessary to enhance the life, thus dignity of its citizens. Freedom for all including citizens, architects, and constructions workers is an essential base for strengthening the social and political foundations of newly liberated societies. People have demanded freedom and change, so architects are required to develop decent and honest architecture and cities. A decent and honest architecture reflects human needs and a search for cultural and aesthetic values.

7.2 What Have You Done?

This research focused on Islamic architecture and its urban metamorphosis, past and present, under the influence of globalization, to reflect on how such an architecture can be a potential mediator between different values in the built environment. The first part of this research sets up the definition(s) of Islamic architecture past and present and its dynamics within the realm of civilization, based on contemporary research in the first
chapter. Firstly, the concept of globalization was defined from a historical standpoint to allow for a comparison of past and current globalization.

The idea of civilization, which forms part of the second chapter, shows that globalization was historically different and followed different patterns of architectural production. Civilization, and in particular Islamic civilization, is defined from an Islamic and a Western conception to show how the concept evolved throughout ages, and how the metamorphosis took place within regional geographies, place, and space. The Golden Age of Islam is a period of interest that shows how civilization was geographically and culturally powerful and how it impacted different nations who lived in, around, or outside the Islamic world. Colonialism and the Tanzimat period of the Ottoman Empire is another historical period that shows how civilization was gradually changing its meaning and how it helped to create an Ottoman architectural identity. During the nineteenth century, this reorganization period sought to reform not only politics and society but also architecture through the influence of European models. This concept of ‘borrowing’ is of great interest as it shapes how Islamic architecture negotiated between local and global architectural identities of the past.

Secondly, this research defined globalization as the intensification and acceleration of cultural modes of production, whereby architecture in the Islamic world starts to search for a different architectural identity, a contemporary one for its age following Western models. Later, the third chapter explains how economic globalization, being a dominant form of globalization, has affected national identity and created uncontrollable market forces (Hirst, Thompson, and Bromley 2009). Globalization of the twenty and twenty-first centuries has continuously pushed the boundaries of architectural production (Hall and Barrett 2012, Plaza and Haarich 2015, Plaza, Tironi, and Haarich 2009). In cities like Dubai technology has helped to build an advanced engineering laboratory, a model that is currently being replicated elsewhere in the Middle East. However, globalization has also been a threat to local cultures and traditions as it continuously brings an accelerated system of progress, whereby architectural production loses some of its quality and become standardized. Planning has also followed
the same patterns and replicated different developments in Dubai, the city of spectacle (Andraos and Wood 2013). Progress, as described here, is based on technological and economic factors. The new Millennium era calls for an evaluation of progress and a revaluation of the impact of globalization on local architectures in the Islamic world. The clash of Islamic architecture and globalization emanates from this discussion and reveals the different changes that architecture has faced in two Muslim countries: Dubai and Tunisia.

The city of Dubai or ‘Dubaization’ as a phenomenon is the first case study of architectural globalization in the context of the twenty-first century, discussed in chapter four. Dubai was chosen because it is a city that fully embraced global trends of building and planning thus it is a case study that shows how far cities in the Muslim world can develop. This section on Dubai describes the birth of a fairy-tale city of the postindustrial age, and it reflects on how architectural and planning processes transformed the urban quality and the architectural production in the Middle East. In contrast, the second case study, the Medina of Tunis, explores in the fifth chapter the global challenges that this settlement faced during colonization, post-colonization, and in the twenty-first century with the dominance of the touristic sector and the growing attitude of serving tourism through heritage.

Tunis was chosen as a city located in another part of the Islamic world, namely North Africa or the Maghreb. Tunis is also a coherent case study as it exemplifies the effects and tensions of globalization on the ethics and aesthetics in and around traditional Islamic cities. Muslims inhabit settlements in diverse geographic and climatic contexts with different urban patterns from Morocco to Central and South-East Asia and significant Muslim communities can be found worldwide from London and Paris to Sydney or New York. One should emphasize that Dubai and Tunis were chosen at the expense of the mentioned cities because they clearly reflect two different approaches of architectural ethics in the Islamic world: one attempting to resist and connect with its roots (Tunis) and another one giving up and creating that follows the global trend. These
two tales of modern Dubai and historical Tunis were contrasted to determine how far each one negotiated between local and global sources of value in the built environment. Both cities represent different geographies from the Arab and Muslim world as well as different experiments in architecture and planning.

The question of identity follows the question of globalization. Identity in architecture is a dynamic concept in a dynamic context that calls for previous architectural knowledge and addresses the use of new technologies to rethink the production of architecture potentially. Globalization is a complex concept that derives from the interaction between different fields of inquiry, particularly economy and social sciences. Nowadays, global economic processes are the driving forces towards connectivity and change in our society. A present or future Islamic architectural identity cannot likely be supported unless architects and researchers start to learn from past buildings and lessons learned. This learning experience is done through understanding the contemporary debate on ethics and aesthetics in architecture, and in Islamic architecture, in particular. This research also focuses on evaluating ethics in the architecture of Islam and concludes that architects need to pay attention to the apparent connection between Islamic law and architectural production.

In the last two chapters of this thesis, the research explores the manifestation of ethics and aesthetics inside the spaces of the Medina of Tunis. Chapter six discusses the debate of ethics and aesthetics in Islamic architecture, while chapter seven uses the Medina of Tunis to illustrate these values and principles. The study hierarchically travels through the Medina, from the walls to the inner space of the courtyard while transitioning between the Suqs, streets, and houses. Based on this method, this thesis examines how privacy influenced the structure of streets, houses, openings, and courtyards with reference to fourteenth-century manuscripts of Ibn al-Rami. The transition between the urban spaces highlights how Islamic jurisprudence or Fiqh also influenced the structure of the Medina of Tunis and the planning of its spaces. Along with privacy and
transition, the concepts of Baṭin and Dhahir as a reflection of privacy in Islamic architecture, need to be acknowledged, as mentioned by Chorbachi (1987). The quality of what is hidden (Baṭin) and what is seen (Dhahir) in the medinas are useful for future designers and researchers, as they would potentially connect the boundaries of exterior and interior spaces. These principles continue to exist through contemporary examples of buildings from the current century including the urban planning strategies suggested by Jan Gehl. As one makes the transition inside the Medina, light and geometry are the last architectonic elements or details that reflect how aesthetics manifested materially and spiritually especially through the courtyard. Evaluating contemporary examples of buildings in the UAE and Tunisia, this research attempts to explain how these elements were reinvested and succeeded in negotiating local and global sources of Islamic architectural identities.

7.3 What Needs to Be Done Next?

Given its theoretical nature, this critical and analytical research will have a considerable impact on the practical level. It is true that addressing the development of the built environment, architecture, and planning is a crucial question in the Islamic world, given many of the mistakes of modern, non-Islamic, Western, planning and architectural design that this research describes (in Dubai for example). Architects and planners should think more carefully and deeply about how they will shape their future cities and architectural spaces without falling into an unproductive ‘narrative of loss’. Words and theoretical studies by themselves have some power, in negotiating between modern and traditional sources of value in the built environment. As stated in this research, the works of Harries (Harries 1997, 1993, 1984) on phenomenology and ethics, for instance, are relevant but remain abstract in providing architectural solutions such as the ones suggested by contemporary urban designers like Jan Gel. Architecture needs to be seen before being described, and it needs to be revealed before it is criticized. The synergy that architecture reveals is sometimes hard to explain through words and expressions since the architectural
experiment, the physical, and spiritual interactions with space are self-revelatory.

At the theoretical level, the field of academic research and scholarly publications need to be developed and enhanced in different academic institutions of Muslim nations. For example, there is barely any study of historical manuscripts, such as those of Ibn al-Rami’s Kitāb al-i’lān bi-ḥākām al-bunyān (Ibn al-Rami 1999), in universities and architecture schools across Tunisia. At a practical level, design and planning in different parts of the Islamic world, and particularly the Gulf cities and North African cities, need to be redefined through research based on the past and present principles and not only on past lessons. One should also question, as part of a future study, the applicability of these Fiqh principles in the current age and time and in different geographies in the Islamic world. One should acknowledge the diverse body of scholarship that focuses on Islamic jurisprudence as well as scholarship which deals with Ḥadith collections (Traditions). Further future research can look at the Six Canonical Books of Ḥadith including Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Sunan al-Nasa’i, Sunan Abu Dawud, Sunan al-Tirmidhi, and Sunan Ibn Majah. Some of these sources, including Muwaṭṭa’ of Ibn Malik, were useful in extracting some collection of Ḥadith in chapter five.

The author would like to emphasize that future research on the topic of mediation in architecture can examine the importance of different values such as harmony between the exterior and interior spaces, dark and light, pure and impure, feminine and masculine, and open and closed spaces. One should also study the multifunctionality of interior spaces, which might have affected the character of facades in Islamic architecture. In terms of architecture, sustainability and resource preservation, briefly mentioned, are core values that can be studied in a later manuscript. One should also study water and garden, examining the Garden of Alhambra or Generalife, as a central element of composition and activation in Islamic architecture and omnipresent in several contexts except for the case of Dar Lasrem where gardens are limited in size. In relation to Islamic art, further studies can investigate the influence of calligraphy and its importance.
Past Islamic architecture constitutes a revelation of how humanity synergized the environment sustainably, an aspect that this research can explore further. However, today’s focus in the media is often on the negative images of marginal Islamic culture, which has the potential to lead to a marginalization of a whole culture. It is in my opinion that, Muslim intellectuals in Tunisia and Dubai need to work together to inform the broader community of their architectural heritage to bring forward a new progressive culture of creativity. This collaboration can take place between me, as a researcher and architect, and young Tunisian architects who expressed their interest in pursuing the subject through design and writing. Such philosophical debates about the future of Islamic architecture support the idea of architectural mediation and in-depth research at the heart of Islamic architecture and globalization.

On a practical level, the architecture and planning of cities in the Islamic world need to impart a well-thought-out process embedded in Islamic culture. Islamic architecture appropriated its lessons from previous cultures and heritages, such as Byzantine civilization. Thus, as this thesis has explored, contemporary trends in architecture and urban planning enhance cross-cultural architectural evolutions. This research has shown how the understanding and application of modern processes (community involvement in planning) and modern architectural methods (rethinking form, geometry, light) confirms the theory that Islamic architecture can move beyond traditional forms while reviving the idea of community planning that once existed in the Medina in the fourteenth century.
References


