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## Abstract

"We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us" Winston Churchill 1943. The ruling Elites utilize meaning in architectural forms to exercise their political power to unite and or manipulate people, here architectural signification plays a major role in the nationhood in creating and reaffirming the cultural identity for societies.

Kurdistan is a roughly defined geo-cultural region wherein the Kurdish people form a prominent majority population, and Kurdish culture, languages, and national identity have historically been based.

Following the discovery and exploitation of oil, paralleled with investment law in 2004, Kurdistan witnessed a bulk boom in the construction industry. Kurdistan region became architecture playground. Most of the pilot projects were prepared behind borders by various international architectural styles, diminishing the regions local identity. One of the areas that suffered from the previous control system is neglecting and deconstructing of architectural identity.

The paper is based on case study and observations. An inductive method will be used to analyze pilot projects in Kurdistan and how they reflect the political system's desires instead of the culture and identity of the region. Hence Architectural identity is shaped by the political system.

The paper is using Kurdistan as case study following 1991 uprising after the creation of safety zone by UN. Projects from Erbil, Sulaimania, and Duhok will be analyzed to create a clear image for the main features of architectural identity's dilemma within the current political system. Challenges and problems facing the development of the local architecture to be addressed; recommendations will conclude the paperwork.

**Keywords:** Architectural Identity; Political system; Local identity; Kurdistan region

Iraqi Kurdistan has made extensive efforts to find its social, economic

Architectural identity of any nation is a direct product and reflection of the applied political system in the country and how democratic is the decision making in the country. Absent of the democracy in large number of countries such as in the Middle East, Africa and several countries in Asia has reflected in creating a situation where architectural identity decided by particular groups [1].

Changing the elite groups has also associated with changing the city architecture. This phenomenon has existed during history with different consequences including demolishing and transformation of the original city shape and its architecture and building entirely new cities and applying new architecture of the elite.

The Kurdish issue continues to be one of the most complex political issues that the Middle East faces today. However, Iraqi Kurdistan, after living for decades in unstable conditions, the three northern governorates of Iraqi Kurdistan, which are Erbil, Dohuk, and Sulaimania, experienced semi-liberation for the first time in 1991 as a consequence of the successful uprising of Iraqi Kurds and the removal of Saddam's regime [2].

In the period between 1991 and 2003, in spite of the establishment of the "no-fly zone" (Munir 2008) provided by the United Nations, the formulation of an emerging democratic region faced challenges in implementation. As in 1994, the civil war between the two dominant parties, concluded in 1998 by dividing the region into two different political, social, and economic systems, which belonged to two different governments led by KDP in Erbil and Dohuk, and PUK in Sulaimania [3]. With the collapse of Saddam's regime in 2003, a new phase of Kurdish history has been recorded and the Kurdistan Regional Government has been unified in 2006 [3].

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**Received** October 25, 2017; **Accepted** February 08, 2018; **Published** February 16, 2018

Identity is based on how someone or something communicates, how it 'speaks'. There are a few main categories of which architectural identity could be classed under; aesthetics, function, historical and urban context, human impact and representation [4]. The concept of identity in the field of social and political sciences is easy yet difficult. It is easy because it makes sense for everyone. Yet, it is difficult because the more it is elaborated it gets complicated and difficult to understand. Identity can be defined as a set of material, biological, psychological and cultural signs distinguishing every individual, group, population or culture from others. It is different depending on the society or nation in question and is an expression of a kind of unity, solidarity, uniformity, persistence, integrity, and non-divisiveness.

Identity refers to human beings' perception, therefore, it has two aspects: first, it is an instrument to keep control of people's mind, and second, it is a source of power for formulating new societies. The question of identity is often interpreted to be a question about people's concepts of "who they are" and how they relate to others [5]. Identity is a way of preserving the continuity of the self. It means lifestyle or life values that link the past to the present [6].

We may use identity as an instrument (or societal-guidance) to boost motivation. It is considered according to Etzioni's theory three factors, which count, as sources of identity are knowledge, commitment, and power. One may need incentives to exert those three factors. Recent literature on psychology is also prone to list identity as human needs (e.g. Maslow, Erikson, etc.). Nowadays, identity has more political overtones than psychological or even than cultural ones.

"The search for identity is a by-product of looking at our real problems, rather than trying to find identity as an end in itself, without worrying about the issues we face" [7]. Identity is a people's source of meaning and experience. Identity is the result of a self-conscious way of thinking, of separation between man and nature, an ontological one. Identity in this sense, incredibly, for better or worse, becomes a human need; it has unbelievably transformed itself into a necessity.

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With little or no local participation, the National architectural identity has been influenced by the applied decision-making system that has enabled the elite groups to decide the architectural identity of the entire country [24]. The modern national architectural identity in non-Western countries reflects a direct influence by the Western architecture. Applying this architecture in these countries was done basically by top-down decision-making process with little or no local participation. Therefore, the national architectural identity in a large number of these countries has been influenced by the applied decision-making system that has enabled the elite groups to decide the architectural identity of the entire country [23].

The change and continuity are two main forces that affect

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include a hotel. pyramidal Ryugyong Hotel. it has been called the “worst building in the history of mankind” by Esquire. It’s the Ryugyong Hotel in North Korea, where the world’s 22nd largest skyscraper has been vacant for two decades and is likely to stay that way forever (Figure 2) [38].

**CONCLUSION :** The world’s political emergence in the first decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century demands from the professionals linked to project and construction a political engagement, which in its turn leads architecture, at certain times or even according to certain characteristics, to be associated with movements, regimes or ideologies of strong social impact.

The architecture, seen as the ideal of representation by rulers linked to authoritarian regimes, and the slogans based on progress and modernization complement this relationship, therefore prompting these governments to invest heavily in the construction of buildings that hallmark, or even represent, their political thinking [14]. However, it is in the official architecture, representative of the authoritarian and dictatorial governments, that these characteristics will find ways to a better development. Countries such as Mexico, Cuba, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Brazil all assimilate the model, each of them adding its own regional flavor and thus eliciting enthusiasm from the people, as well as divulging its canons with greater intensity [39].

In 1985, President Saddam Hussein enunciated his vision of a victory monument and, four years later, he rode his white stallion under a pair of giant steel arches standing at either end of a huge parade ground in central Baghdad. The Victory Arch, Khalil explains in being not architectural but statuesque. Each archway is formed by two forearms ending in clenched fists grasping swords; the swords cross at the apex, forming a bow 130 feet above the ground. The swords have been built using metal smelted from the armor and weaponry of fallen Iraqi soldiers. Tumbling under nets at the base of each hand are hundreds of helmets, looted from Iranian corpses from the battlefield. Most are cracked and have bullet-holes (Figure 3) [40].

**CONCLUSION :** The move towards transparency lies at the heart of the federal republic of Germany in the postwar, open public access to political process especially to the elected representatives, active public participation in political system, an open market economic, a free press, and guaranteed civil liberties such as freedom to dissent [41].

Transparency acts as a metaphor in political and architecture discourse, metaphor relate to ideas and language, not things. The relation patterns formed by objects to other objects, and by ideas to objects are called “analogies”. Thus the formal, spatial, and stylistic use of transparency in postwar German architecture is analogical.

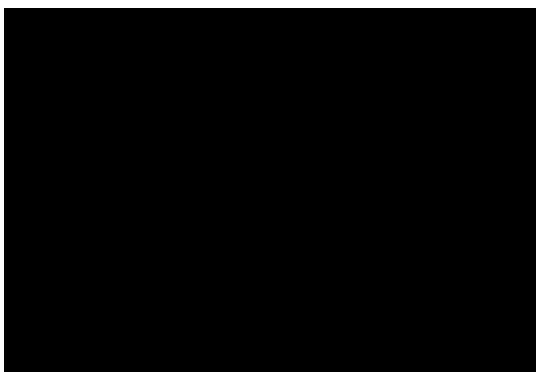


Figure 2: Ryugyong Hotel by Baikdoosan Architects, 2011 in North Korea.

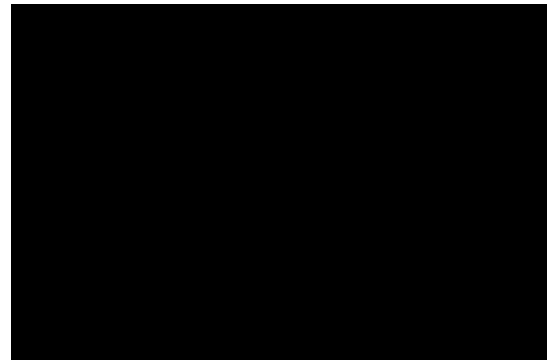


Figure 3: Victory Arch in by 1989, in Bagdad the symbol of victory.

Although some metaphors can be considered analogies, because they share rational information, the two are different as the authors of the Analogical Mind are careful to point out, “metaphors can be based on common object attributes” while analogies cannot [41].

The use of transparent formal and spatial systems, as well as see-through materials in west-Germany state architecture is therefore is analogical because it suggests the relationship between physical structure of democratic government and society, and the material and spatial structure of the buildings. The structure of democratic government in this case means a political system open to public observation [41].

Berlin Reichstag building, the project’s meaning is partly drawn from the involvement of public officials and private citizens in its creation. Architects draw on that level of meaning as a matter of a course. It is not only the public use of buildings that makes architecture a social art, it is also the architect’s engagement with clients, communities, contractors and others whose participation is required to alter the material world [30]. Today, Reichstag building is the second most visited places in Germany as Koln church is the first (Figure 4).

Islamic civilizations have created some of the world’s great cities, starting with the religion’s original site of refuge and political organizing, the city of Medina, which the pious make pilgrimages in their millions every year. Public spaces stages for history because they provide the loci for urban gathering, particularly for a city’s youth. One could argue that without cities and the spaces they inspire, nations themselves would never change.

In the Middle East, how urban space, specially spaces of public assembly, reflects the political priorities of those in power and enhances or prohibits social change. Egypt has reminded us that urban space can drive us towards a changed, perhaps unstable, but in the end better world. While Chinese believe the country should have a one-person-one-vote democracy, and generally there is a degree of faith in the central government. In the US, we tend to take public spaces and the activities they enable for granted. From the history of protests in Tompkins Square Park, to Martin Luther King’s. The majority of democracies worldwide will continue to see their hopes and pains played out in sweeping public spaces [42].

#### ▲ CONCLUSION

Despite the fact that Iraqi Kurdistan has numerous unique historical and heritage sites estimated at 1,307 [43], the Kurds have





### ▲ **1991-2003**

Following the 1991 Kurdish exodus in the Northern Iraq uprising against the regime, a brief period ensued in which semi-autonomy was given to the Kurdish region, with Kurds elected to the state government in 1992 [56]. The Kurdish council of ministries and parliament and other institutions were created by a semi-independent government, at the beginning of Kurdish reconstruction,

Kurdish architectural identity has not been taken as an important component of the development and the advancement of Kurdish culture. This period is considered as an undetermined transformation in terms of institutionalizing the new unique form of the built



going issue. Thus, despite the fact that numerous Kurdish architects had gained access to the architecture profession and became directors of urban planning and strategic projects in councils and institutes of the Kurdistan regional environment, the cultural production of two decades is not vital in contributing to the basis of the Kurdistan as the 'other Iraq' campaign led by KRG in terms of Kurdish architectural identity.

▲ **2003-**

2011

Following the Iraqi liberation war and the establishment of an

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for the three governorates in Kurdistan. The focus will in Erbil city not only for being the capital of the Kurdistan region in Iraq, But also, due to the historical value of the city for being the main source for Kurdish architectural identity which is recognized by UNESCO as world heritage site since 2014.

#### CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

The building has been designed in the Erbil Castle Revival style, which emulated classical Ottoman architecture fused with international style. Although the external architecture of the Erbil

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identity a free human right for all nations on this planet. Historical events show that changing the traditional architecture to the modern

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and understanding of the contribution of Kurdish architecture value to the sustainability of the Kurdish national identity. To achieve the national stability, the policy establishes action to construct architecture as a spirit of Kurdish nation shared between Kurdish provinces and areas. The most prominent characteristics of the built environment of Southern Kurdistan will be a total reflection of the complex social and political framework that result from the Kurdish national system and can be realized within the timeframe of the policy and thus, we have to work in several directions to achieve nation architectural identity by working in the following fields:

- Conservation and maintenance of the architectural heritage buildings.
- Build a bridge between architecture and public policy.
- Legislation, guidelines to maintain architectural identity.
- Introduce prizes with architectural identity as criteria in design competitions.
- Inventories of the architectural heritage in all municipalities.
- Web sites dedicated to promoting local architecture.
- Raising public awareness about architectural identity.
- Research on a structural relationship between certain architectural realizations and a democratic consciousness.

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