



Kerbala Journal for Engineering Sciences

<https://kjes.uokerbala.edu.iq>



The Tripartite Patterns of Architectural Intent and Their Impact on Shaping Contemporary Iraqi Architectural Identity

Abdulhussien Abdali Alaskary¹, Ali Majid Hameed^{*2}

¹ Department of Architecture, College of Engineering, University of Baghdad.

² Department of Architecture, College of Engineering, University of Samarra.

* Corresponding author, Email: ali.baghdadi@uosamarra.edu.iq

Received: 20 September 2025; Revised: 15 March 2026; Accepted: 26 March 2026; Published: 31 March 2026

Abstract

The Architectural Intent is a spoken language without any sounds; it extends the forms, lines, and even materials. The designer uses his intent to express his own design view, which is not related to the function or elements. From this point of view, the Architectural Intent is used as a tool to analyse and understand contemporary Architecture and its identity renewal types. This study aimed to explore the effect of the Architectural intent types (the individual, the collective, and the hybrid) on the present Iraqi Architecture Identity formation, by using four central dimensions; The Design Vision, the Architectural Purpose, the stylistic affiliation, and the position of heritage. This study used the applied analytical Methodology which is the most effective Methodology to explore the study goals with a subjective approach. By four local case studies of the present most outstanding Iraqi Design Projects: Iraqi Central Bank tower (ICB), Bismayah City, Bodor Al-Najaf, and General Secretariat of the Iraqi Council of Ministers building (GSICM) projects. The main outcomes of this Study, the Hybrid type of the architectural intent had the common characteristics for both other types, therefore it refers to the balanced route to produce a present local identity architecture. The main recommendations were to strength the hybrid intent by using it as a strategic connectivity tool between Man and his built-up environment.

Keywords: Intent, Iraqi heritage, individual intent, collective intent, hybrid intent.

1. Introduction

Architecture transcends mere construction to become a profound expression of functional spaces, cultural values, and human civilization's evolution (Alani, 2014). It reflects aesthetic standards, cultural contexts, personal identities, and socioeconomic structures, thereby playing a crucial role in shaping collective identity. In post-conflict Iraq, which has experienced significant reconstruction and urban expansion since 2003, architectural analysis becomes particularly critical. Contemporary Iraqi architecture serves as both a physical manifestation of national identity reconstruction and a site where global architectural trends negotiate with local heritage and modernization imperatives. Urban redevelopment projects embody a nation grappling with its historical legacy, challenging present, and aspirations for future prosperity.

2. Research Problem

2-1- Problem Statement:

Despite two decades of architectural production in post-2003 Iraq, there exists no systematic framework for analyzing how "design intent" shapes architectural identity. The proliferation of imported, non-site-specific projects raises concerns about cultural authenticity. Three deficiencies exist:

- Absence of analytical tools to evaluate design intent and architectural outcomes
- Unclear typology of architectural intentions in Iraqi practice
- Insufficient understanding of which approaches balance international excellence with local sensitivity

This gap prevents informed decision-making and may perpetuate cultural alienation through imported paradigms.

2-2- Primary Research Question:

How do different types of architectural intent—individual, collective, and hybrid—shape the architectural identity and cultural authenticity of contemporary Iraqi buildings, and which type offers the most viable pathway toward contextually grounded yet internationally relevant architecture?

This study pursues four interconnected objectives:

- Develop an analytical framework evaluating architectural intent through: (a) design vision, (b) architectural purpose, (c) stylistic affiliation, and (d) attitude toward heritage.
- Analyze four representative projects:
 - ICB Tower, Baghdad (Zaha Hadid) (Al-Obaidi, 2020), (Zaha Hadid Architects, 2011)
 - Bismayah New City (Hanwha/HAE-AN) (Hanwha, 2013)
 - Bador Najaf housing (Dar Al-Omran/Rasem Badran) (Dar Al-Omran, 2021)
 - General Secretariat Building (Manhal Al-Haboubi) (Al-Haboubi, 2019)
- Establish a typology of architectural intent (individual, collective, hybrid) and correlate each with observable characteristics and cultural resonance.
- Assess each intent type's compatibility with Iraqi cultural and environmental conditions.

2-3- Hypothesis

The type of architectural intent fundamentally determines architectural identity and cultural authenticity:

- (Individual Intent): Produces iconic, innovative architecture, achieving global distinction but with limited contextual integration and reduced local cultural accessibility.
- (Collective Intent): Produces functional, standardized architecture fulfilling immediate needs but lacking distinctive cultural expression and local identity articulation.
- (Hybrid Intent): Synthesizes creative excellence with cultural sensitivity, producing architecture rooted in Iraqi heritage yet engaged with global discourse—offering the most promising pathway toward unified, dynamic national architectural identity.

Scope: 2003–2025; Baghdad and Najaf; four case studies; focus on architectural concept and identity (excluding technical/economic details).

Methodology: Qualitative comparative case study analysis using the four-dimensional framework.

This study makes three critical contributions:

- Theoretical: Introduces a rigorous analytical framework applicable beyond Iraq.
- Practical: Provides tools for distinguishing culturally grounded design from importation.
- Cultural: Advocates for architecture authentically articulating Iraqi identity while engaging global discourse.

Architecture become a deep expression of functional places, and a reflection of human civilization in its changing environment (Alani, 2014). It acts as a mirror that shows different aesthetic standards, cultural contexts, personal identities, and the socioeconomic standing of property owners, making it an important part of forming a group identity. In reconstruction and urban expansion after long years of conflict.

ICB Tower which designed by late Zaha Hadid (Al-Obaidi, 2020), (Zaha Hadid Architects, 2011) Bismayah New City, a megaproject of the urban development plan Designed by South Korean company Hanwha Architectural & Engineering consultant HAE-AN Co Ltd (Hanwha, 2013). The Bador Najaf project was Engaged in RASO design By Rasem Badran supervision in Dar Al-Omran (Dar Al-Omran, 2021); while the General Secretariat of Iraqi Council of Ministers Building designed by architect Manhal-Al Haboubi (Iraqi architect) (Al-Haboubi, 2019).

The operational hypothesis is that the kind of architectural intention driving a project configures its architectural identity:

- Personal subjective motivation is likely to lead to unique, symbolic or innovative architecture.
- The initial intent designs are often functional, institutional and economic driven architecture.
- Hybrid intent is an intermediate attitude between very open and very local, with roots and openness coexisting...The most promising trajectory for a unified yet contemporary identity.

3. Literature Review: Architectural Intent and Identity in Academic Studies

Interest in the theme, on an international and local scale, of architectural intention has significantly grown in the last decades, both with respect to scientific research and education as well. These works depart from a static understanding of architecture, aiming particularly at more dynamic and changing aspects, under the influence of cultural, social and political interferences.

A. The Global Perspective on Architectural Intent and Identity

Jennifer Tran's book "Fixed Illusions: Architectural Identity in History" (J. Tran, 2017) is considered the leading work that undermines traditional views of architectural identity. Tran insists that identity is not a timeless or historically given category, but rather it is (much like gender or race) a dynamic one that is inflected by culture and discontinuous in history. Relying on theorization by Bourdieu, Foucault, and Barthes, she debunks the idea that meaning in architecture is derived only from built form or the architect's intention. It is rather meaningful that emerges through users' interpretations and the use of both in their changing socio-cultural contexts, so that architectural identity is considered as a moveable construct becoming with time (J. Tran, 2017).

Similarly, the report "A Study of Building & Identity" published by ADAM Architecture (ADAM 2015) describes place identity in architecture and urban design as a combination of qualities that give a location its specific sense over time. Which points out that this identity arises through continuity, and distinguishing characteristics, 'read' as form, texture, material, colour, and detailing—and despite its permanence, it is subject to change when social, political or economic great transformations occur (ADAM 2015).

Hoshyar Nooruddin, in his essay "Architectural Identity in an Age of Change" (Nooruddin, 2015), argues that architectural identity is not just a resulting issue but also one of survival as it is highly connected to political systems and the form of democracy implemented at the decision-making stage. They suggest that although authoritarian rulers dictate one identity from above, ignoring cultural variance among groups, democratic nations enable a more democratic user participation in defining an architectural collective identity. This is consistent with the idea of "[freeing] architectural identity", which often occurs during times of politics reformation, and brings new space to identities that mirror cultural diversity Nooruddin (Nooruddin, 2015).

More generally, there are other studies that have examined the relationship between architecture and the formation of national identity. For instance, history has shown that architecture has always been one of the arms from the cultural stockade states used to construct national symbols: see, for example, *Contested Discourses: National Identity and Architecture* (Abdulhadi, 2017). While the state in numbers of modern states still concern themselves with architecture which speaks a national identity, their grip is declining, opening up architecture to become a space of discourse for meaning making and alluding to collective identities (Abdulhadi, 2017). By the same token, the review of *National Identity in Architecture* (Al-Ghamdi, 2022) addressed roles (social, educational and private), modes (natural, artificial or imposed identities) and themes (style, memory and geopolitics) all of which provide for a framework within which sense-of-place embody status in the built environment could be understood (Al-Ghamdi, 2022).

Lastly, we have the study *Cultural Imprints on Material Forms: An exploration of architectural heritage and identity*, discussing the co-dependent relationship between both architecture and identity on one hand, and cultural heritage on the other. It is a reminder that not only do cultural processes shape the material environment itself, relating form and space to culture, but also that an architectural heritage is more than an inheritance from the past: it is a processual deposit of cultural memory that reflects society's relationship with its material surrounds.

While earlier theories by Tran (J. Tran, 2017) and Nooruddin (Nooruddin, 2015) treated identity as a fluid socio-political construct, Baper (Baper, 2024) advances the field by asking a critical methodological question: "Can Architectural Identity Be Measured?" Baper moves beyond descriptive analysis, suggesting that identity can be decomposed into tangible indicators, providing a more rigorous basis for academic study.

Complementing this, Cao et al. (Cao, et al., 2024) introduce a psychological dimension, arguing that "Authentic Pride" acts as a mediating factor between regional architecture and building identity. This suggests that the intention of the architect must resonate with the emotional and cultural pride of the occupants to successfully establish a lasting identity.

B. Studies on Architectural Intent and Identity in the Iraqi Context

In Iraq, where the layers of history can be read in even contemporary forms, a reputation and from has an added significance. Colonial Influence, Knowledge dynamics and the rise of Iraqi architecture in the present (1936–1958) (Fathalla, 2024) emphasizes the existence of a Western architectural knowledge supply brought about to use as Iraq's architectural production base at that time. It illustrates the way in which Western architectural models and techniques of construction entered Iraqi architectural practice, meeting with a variety of responses by local architects. Some sought to synthesize Western ideas and local tradition, some were simply seduced by Western modernism. It was these kinds of connections that influenced the Iraqi architecture as well, and contributed towards shaping its identity (Fathalla, 2024). The physical manifestation of identity is increasingly studied through the "interface" of the city—the facade. Ismail & Abd Elkader (Ismail, et al., 2023) demonstrate in their study of Amman that house facades are not merely aesthetic choices but are deeply interconnected with the city's collective architectural identity. In the local context, Tayeb & Saber (Tayib, et al., 2024) provide a granular analysis of Sulaymaniyah, identifying that the choice of finishing materials is a primary driver of architectural identity. Their work bridges the gap between theoretical "intent" and the "material reality" of contemporary Iraqi cities, showing how globalization and material availability compete with traditional identity.

Nooruddin's study (Nooruddin, 2015) also shows that the Iraqi case contributes to saying that there was no respect for minority heritage and its imposition with modern (International Style), The new challenges have given after 2003 as well as opportunities. In all, these essays lay at least some of the groundwork for understanding the cross-roads between architectural intention and historical/political/cultural contingencies that shape Iraq's modern building identity. To summarize the theoretical landscape, the following table compares the key perspectives discussed:

Table 1. Summary of The Previous Studies.

Focus Area	Key References	Study Objective	Critique / Limitations
Socio-Cultural	(J. Tran, 2017)	Identity as a "becoming" process; focus on user interpretation.	Diminishes the role of the designer's original intent.

Material/ Physical	(ADAM 2015)	Identity is "read" through form, texture, and materiality.	May lean toward aesthetic superficiality if context is ignored.
Political/Civic	(Nooruddin, 2015)	Identity is a byproduct of the political system (Authoritarian vs. Democratic).	Focuses on macro-politics, potentially overlooking individual agency.
Nationalist	(Abdulhadi, 2017), (Al-Ghamdi, 2022)	Architecture as a tool for state-building and national symbolism.	National identity often ignores the nuances of sub-cultures/minorities.
Hybrid/ Historical	(Fathalla, 2024)	Synthesis of Western modernism and local tradition (Iraqi Case).	Risk of "colonial" dependency in architectural thought.
Quantification	(Baper, 2024)	Developed a framework to measure identity indicators.	From abstract theory to empirical validation
Psychological	(Cao, et al., 2024)	Explores the role of "Authentic Pride" in identity.	From structural form to emotional resonance
Material/ Urban	(Ismail, et al., 2023); (Tayib, et al., 2024)	Impact of facade materials and residential design.	From "total building" to the "surface/interface" of the city.

4. Theoretical Framework: Concepts in Contemporary Architecture

To comprehend contemporary architecture, it is necessary to focus on its principles, which are more than just formal and functional, but also philosophical, axial and stylistic, along with the conceptions of heritage.

A. Architectural Intent: Function, Value, and Design Vision

In modern design, the architectural intention is the concept that does not pay attention to the sake of simplicity, functional economization and structure ordering with a famous law “The function is first and above all” (Al-Ani, 2018). The essence of architecture is demarcated by this principle – design is fundamentally use, not appearance (Al-Ani, 2018). However, beyond a functional utility, architectural intentionality includes an intentional intentionality: the consciously stated affirmation or denial of design decisions. This kind of intention requires a great power of imagination, an imagination fed by diversity and vitality, while also possessing the ability to realize as accurately as possible in fact what one wants to see.

The concept (or design concept) is the basis of every architectural project, and there are remaining steps to follow (Abdullah, 2020). The better quality of representation (the more exact, explicit and precise an idea is formulated), the more realistic way this concept is designed respecting intentions (Abdullah, 2020). The vision of design is highly effective when it comes to solving problems with innovative techniques, communicating with the potential users through drawings, models and visuals while taking into account long-term sustainability, which should cater for both present and future needs (Abdullah, 2020). It includes a core idea, preparatory sketches and the choice of materials and finishes which express the idea (Abdullah, 2020). There are various design visions, such as planning-oriented

vision, structure vision, sculpture vision, function vision and environmental consciousness (Abdullah, 2020).

Apparently, then, architectural intent is not directly reducible to simple functional foreshadowing; although there are many layers of significance involved (what do you believe in philosophically – form follows function?); how creative can you be (can you make the theoretical thoughts concrete) and problem-solving strategically, with respect to things like sustainability and user-attention). This multi-layered definition reifies architectural design, not as a mere technical calculation, but an intellectual and artistic venture that has sociological implications. Beyond this, still, critique of projects cannot be solely about the form and function – to critique it's we must delve into philosophy, design creativity and strategy behind the making of a designer's work, leaving intention as an analogue to the key stones of Criticality.

B. Architectural Values: Emotional, Urban, and Technological

Values are other things that matter to some type of life, and they differ greatly in where they fall within the great panorama of acts and relations that make up human life. It is difficult to leave a value alone, because values are part of a hierarchy that influences the behaviour of people and groups. Thence on to vary the categories of value in architecture: emotional values, related to sensibility and delight; urban values, where common architectural properties make up the city fabric that is cohesive; technological ones regarding novel working of matter and machines.

The most familiar face of something related to architectural worth, which contains status and reputation. After all, houses of worship are not just buildings — they're symbols. Even better, because the idea of "architectural value" isn't just what architects and others ever originally intended—that it has complex and layered simultaneous readings, including not least "values added by receivers." Such programs become resources that become detachable from the initial composition, in that they externalize them and solidify these medial intentions as reified retroactive qualities within a process of sense making accruing to meanings of the building." The building's full meaning is thus co-created by public gaze and community-based uses, making architectural value liquid, contingent and ever-changing.

This broader definition of architectural value implies that the judgment of a building is not confined to what the architect intended, but must also involve how it was received and interpreted in society. Dynamic view is especially useful in cultural contexts like Iraq, as there are historical and social values that aged structures can acquire.

C. Stylistic Affiliations: Modernism, Regionalism, and Eclecticism

Contemporary architecture manifests in diverse stylistic affiliations, each reflecting distinct design approaches.

- **Modernism (Modern Architecture):** Modernism was developed in the 20th century, and it means simplicity, simplicity, efficacy, open spaces with large window panels and glass facades to improve the utility area and clarity (Al-Ani, 2018). Contemporary architecture honours the "honesty" of materials and structure, not adorned with traditional decorative coatings; its main function element being (Al-Ani, 2018). Note that some definitions of modernism collapse the category into a postmodern or general contemporary practice that returns to decorative and historical subject matter. Here, the emphasis is on the original canonical ordering of modernism.

- **Regionalism:** Regionalism in architecture stems from vernacular architecture and is based on the structure of local customs, natural resources, and climate. Response to the existing urban texture is essential and usually implies materials from surrounding areas, which promote sustainability and contextual afflatus. Regionalism is the simplifying of mass and form, treating manmade objects as if they were natural objects. Orienting them to their environment through multinational culture and product commencement. It is located in a conceptual framework that allows differences with coherence (Al-Qaisi, 2015). In response to modernism's indifference towards place, regionalism merges modernist ideas with climate-oriented and cultural attributes. But it also may degenerate into just a flavor of the month local application (Dar Al-Omran, 2023).
- **Eclecticism:** Eclectic architecture is a design that mixes different eras' styles in one building, not following a singular architectural style. This style was predominant in Spain late nineteenth century. The dichotomy between modernism (with its functionalism and material truthfulness (Al-Ani, 2018)) and regionalism, and with their emphasis on tradition and locality, is a prevailing tension in new Iraqi architecture. While regionalism holds potential for cultural identity and sustainability, threats emerge from the tendency (considering heritage only) to superficially copy (Al-Qaisi, 2015). "So, they're grappling with 'the problem the architects in Iraq are facing, and it's the biggest problem: how can you move away from just pure copying of style to where there is articulation between heritage principles and what we need for modern life."

D. Contemporary Architecture Heritage:

In rich historical legacies such as Iraq, the contemporary architecture intersects with heritage.

- **Importance of Integration:** The cultural approach is preferring for consideration of historical profile in the context of modern design. It expresses respect for history and enriches the national identity. At the same time, it connects the past with the present and enhances cultural tourism (Al-Haddad, 2021). This intermingling not only creates linkages among dwellers but also increases their affection for the national identity (Al-Haddad, 2021). The traditional architecture also narrates our roots and recreates the ancient construction style (Al-Haddad, 2021).
- **Integration Strategies:** Strategies may include the use of traditional ornamentation, natural and local materials (stones, clay) to bridge tradition with modernity or improvement in terms of energy demand (Al-Haddad, 2021). It might also be possible to draw on the inspiration for traditional solutions – e.g., from internal courtyards which shade and ventilate the unit (and have also been shown to increase thermal comfort and reduce energy use (Al-Haddad, 2021)). In a more abstract sense, heritage can be re-enacted to meet current functional needs in what is sometimes described as: 'reading heritage through the lens of modernity', an approach taken by European. This is a procedure that operationally unlocks its authenticity as historicity by cross mapping and refracting the ancient for contemporary significance.
- **Challenges:** Heritage integration poses a number of challenges, although it is an important issue. The cost and labors of craft work make it so that developers should not like to utilize it. And also match the traditional and creative needs, that requires high skills (Al-Haddad, 2021). Furthermore, the design industry of heritages is at its initial stage, and the practice of architecture tends to "Westernization." And there is another question in the same muddle, some design talents do not

understand that schools of thought, they do not even know the history of schools' dialectic and development scenario, to shallow vapid without essence imitation.

The debate about the incorporation of heritage in Iraq is marked by a dynamic between cultural obligation and practicality. At the same time, while on the one hand heritage is an attempt to re-empower identity and link history with contemporary times (Al-Haddad, 2021), these aspects have become co-opted by economic costs, a lack of understanding of traditional philosophy and (perhaps most significantly) current fashions for superficial 'Westernized' aesthetics.

5. Methodology: Comparative Analysis in Architectural Research

To achieve the objectives was adopted for this study, which combines the applied analytical method with the comparative qualitative method. This dual framework enables a systemic deconstruction architectural project within the Iraqi context.

A. Applied Analytical Method: Deconstruction, Reconstruction, and Critique

The analytical process follows a scientific approach to examine architectural logic by deconstructing projects into individual elements and reassembling (synthesizing) them to reveal concealed motivations. Its central moments are analysis, in the figure of deconstruction (unraveling its individual elements), synthesis, as the reuniting of those scattered elements to grasp their relations, and critique and judgment."

Analytical skill is the act of identifying and defining a phenomenon or issue, framing a general research question, collecting and analyzing data obtained from appropriate sources related to that question, in order to formulate evidence-based conclusions based on logical reasoning connecting the evidence from these sources to this research question.

On the other hand, applied research is a design type that attempts to address a problem or phenomenon associated to specific community by adopting its everyday life issues. It contains a wide variety of practice materials, assessments and guidance.

Particularly in the context of architectural research in a developing country like Iraq, the relationship between the analytical and applied is crucially pertinent. On the one hand, the applied dimension ensures that the findings remain relevant in terms of societal matters such as housing crisis and cultural identity loss , which Iraqi society is currently facing the analytical approach on the other hand allows a systemic deconstruction of the complex architectural project to components of form and matter. This two-fold approach goes beyond description to a position of potential use within architecting and policy-making in Iraq.

B. Comparative Qualitative Method: Case Studies and Variable Identification

Qualitative research is based on the social sciences and involves gathering information through dialogue or conversation so that you can learn what people think and why they think it (Al-Hamdani, 2020). It supports multi-faceted exploration and direct contact with the participants for inquiry into motivations and opinions (Al-Hamdani, 2020). Appropriate methods include interviews with individuals (to uncover personal thoughts), digging into archives (to use the documents and records as they exist), and observation (to gather information on subjective elements) (Al-Hamdani, 2020).

A relative quality perspective is employed to compare and contrast the science content across cases. Also it is focusing on influential factors and essential contributing and controlling variables. In this Study the projects are examined through four key theoretical framework constructs: architectural

intent, architectural values, stylistic affiliation and heritage attitudes. To ensure a systematic comparison, four key Analytical Variables were identified to examine the projects:

- Architectural Intent (v1): The primary purpose and vision.
- Architectural Values (v2): The underlying principles and ethics of the design.
- Stylistic Affiliation (v3): The aesthetic and school of thought.
- Heritage Attitudes (v4): The method of dealing with historical and cultural layers

By making it possible to look beyond superficial correspondences, this method enables us to pinpoint both local solutions and general tendencies that cut across single-case studies. Thus, what is read has been enlarged from isolated case by case descriptions to an orderly comparison that reveals underneath layers of the Iraqi architectural scene in order to know how and why (what for) both these differences and similarities are elaborated on in their dealing with elementary architectural matters.

B. Steps of Application to the Selected Projects

For the necessary analysis, we performed the following:

- Case studies selection: Four projects were selected as case studies; each was selected on an individual basis: the Central Bank of Iraq Building, the Bismayah New City project, the Bador Najaf project and the general Secretariat of Iraqi Council of Ministers building.
- Single case analysis: The theoretical variables and concepts (intent, values, style, heritage) were tested against the project's character by interpreting each project with them.
- Cross-case analysis: Through the separate analyses, they were compared also systematized between the projects, revealing shared elements and differences, major trends and divergent ways which mark or link the cases.
- Conclusions and recommendations: Recommendations were developed from the comparative analysis, highlighting implications for Iraqi architecture today, in relation to heritage and modernity.

5. Analysis of Selected Iraqi Architectural Projects

A. Central Bank of Iraq Tower

- **Architectural intent and design vision:** New Central Bank Building The new design of the proposed Central Bank building was offered by Zaha Hadid, an Iraqi-British architect who passed away in 2016 (Al-Obaidi, 2020), (Zaha Hadid Architects, 2011)—who was contracted in 2010 to construct the new building and the design revealed to the public (Fig. It was proposed as a major monument of symbolic meaning that should reflect Iraqi culture (Central Bank of Iraq, 2022). Reaching a height of 172 meters (38 stores, three subterranean levels and 35 superstructure level) the tower has extraordinary floor heights with heights generally around six meters in response to its monumental scale (Al-Obaidi, 2020). The building combines various purposes such as a currency museum, closed box theater and a capacious multi-purpose hall for functions (Al-Obaidi, 2020). It is characterized by cladding in pinewood, glazed roofs on the corridors which form views of the shape of the tower and floor plates which increase their extensions with curving geometry as it rises, that conveys an accurate 3D design output during its construction (Al-Obaidi, 2020).
- **Embodied architectural values:** This is a value of innovative and unique form expressed in the sign of high technology, reflecting the ability of modern architecture to obtain punctiform shapes (Al-Ani, 2018). It also signifies symbolic value and prestige, not only as the Central Bank building but an

icon of Iraq's aspiration for modernity and global recognition (Central Bank of Iraq, 2022), (T. Al-Obaidi, 2019). Also, from an aesthetic point of view, the tower can be considered a significant symbol, a stunning architectural masterpiece (T. Al-Obaidi, 2019), flawless, classic. In contrast with the expressive shape, it is a multifunctional project (museum, theatre, event hall) that follows the modernist concept of functionalism and can be used for several functions (Al-Ani, 2018).

- **Stylistic affiliation and stance on heritage:** The tower itself is unmistakably a product of the advanced modernist, or deconstructivism architectural language that Zaha Hadid has made her own, not free-form geometries and structural intricacy. It is praised as a “timeless architectural masterpiece” (T. Al-Obaidi, 2019), highlighting its originality (Al-Ani, 2018) rather than its explicit relation to Iraqi tradition. Unlike other works here, regional motifs or decorative heritage elements are not directly entered. Instead, the interest is in advanced technologies, new materials and purity of line (Al-Ani, 2018).

The Central Bank Tower, by means of its state-of-the-art international modernism, signals progress and innovation (Al-Obaidi, 2020; T. Al-Obaidi, 2019) but also deliberately separates itself from manifest Iraqi architectural conventions. This is, in fact, a calculated strategy to present a forward-looking image of the nation that values global architectural accolades and high-tech wizardry over cultural continuity. It therefore represents one extreme end of the spectrum in post-2003 architecture and has fully embraced Western design principles, particularly at the expense of local heritage.

B. Bismayah New City

- **Architectural intent and planning philosophy:** Bismayah New City is a mega-housing project proposed to alleviate Iraq's significant housing deficit and urbanization (National Investment Commission, 2014). Designed to house 100,000 residential units for around 600,000 inhabitants, it is situated approximately ten km southeast of Baghdad (Hanwha, 2013; National Investment Commission, 2014). Commissioned by South Korean company Hanwha E&C together with HAE-AN (Hanwha, 2013), the project focuses on a fast process of construction and the use of premium materials, where precast concrete is set as a main building system—the only possible solution for the very short schedule (Hanwha, 2013). The city has modern infrastructure, housing, shopping centers, schools, hospitals and parks (National Investment Commission, 2014). Includes eight towns, 59 street blocks and 834 residential developments.
- **Urban and social values:** The main objective of the project is to solve the housing problem by means of large-scale low-cost housing (National Investment Commission, 2014). It reflects sustainable urban values through incorporating green technologies and sustainable urban design (National Investment Commission, 2014). However, the courtyard type buildings contribute to bad orientation towards the outside and a very poor relationship with the main streets, leading to weak socialization as a concomitant. Suggested cures are better accessibility, program diversity and hybrid spaces.
- **Stylistic affiliation and stance on heritage:** On an architectural level, Bismayah recalls a 1960s-70s modernist model of mass production and uniformity. It is designed entirely new rather than growing on the existing settlement³⁴. "Modern" flats and "Traditional" flats are interspersed for visual diversity (Hanwha, 2013), but such meshes seem superficial. Although the traditional fabric of Baghdad is clearly very different: dense low-rise organically developed settlements, narrow streets and climate-responsive courtyards (Dar Al-Omran, 2023); Bismayah represents a stark contrast in that it is a planned, higher density solution with little diversity. Instead of contributing to the vibrant street life, these courtyard blocks further retreat into themselves and do not fulfill the central social role of the street in traditional Iraqi cities. Therefore, the so-called “tradition” in

Bismayah seems to be mostly formal rather than a reflection of complex social and cultural heritage and climatic logic.

C. Bador Najaf Project

- **Design philosophy and intention:** Master planned in the center of Najaf, Bador Najaf aims to provide a different approach to sustainable and human urban inhabitation. It aims to provide spaces of celebration for material culture and practices, while supporting sustainable urban development. Co-led by Dar Al-Omran (architect on record is Rasem Badran) and Al-Ghadir Company as developer (Al-Ghadeer, 2022), the scheme would feature over 1,400 units on a land (General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, 2023).
- **Cultural and sustainability values:** Keeping tradition and transforming it to current needs. It is based around the principles of (1) belonging, (2) well-being and (3) community sustainability (Dar Al-Omran, 2021). Integration of local tradition into modern architecture is considered an aesthetic and cultural responsibility (Al-Haddad, 2021). The structure also relies on sustainable materials and passive cooling methods to support energy efficiency.
- **Stylistic affiliation and attitude toward architectural heritage:** The design is embedded within Iraq's diverse urban makeup. The drawing inspiration from traditional elements of architecture and social values. It is in consonance with the integrated comprehensive approach that Dar Al-Omran pursues: Culture-sensitive and sustainable design. (Al-Haddad, 2021).
Bador Najaf is a conscious design that forms an organic part of the region. In contrast to the "cosmetic" formal borrowings, regarding courtyards and shaded alleys it reveals functional, climatic and social heritage values: there's a historical cohesion, connecting conditions of living.

D. General Secretariat of the Iraqi Council of Ministers Building

- **Architectural conception Architects' desires and vision:** The Secretariat building by the architect Manhal Al-Haboubi aimed to be a monument that was one of his interests for Baghdad [38]. Its shape reflects the ancient history of Iraq and the power and aspirations of its citizens [38]. The original design features a colossal cube languishing across the Tigris River, an echo of ancient Iraqi identity in counterpoint to modernity. Security was quite a focus with beautiful formal entry's being distinct for visitors/staff/VIP [38]. Interior decor is influenced by local art, colors and textures [38]. The entrance uses a fountain that pays respect to the past and rises in spirit to the future [38]. Overview of the building large compounds halls, and containment Buildings parking lots are there in addition to state-of-the-art systems (Central Bank of Iraq, 2022).
- **Embodiment of architectural values:** The building represents an ideological value as a symbol of the sovereign nation state and develops a sign system of "highly symbols that reflect Iraqi culture" ((Central Bank of Iraq, 2022). It reflects living culture in the round city plan of Baghdad, cuneiform inscriptions and Islamic ornamentation on its façades. Its operational best practice on entrant separation promotes security over effectiveness.
- **Features association; Attitude toward old-new:** The tower employs calculated eclecticism, linking history with the contemporary. The solid cube splits into two curving, dynamic-looking towers to express dynamism and continuity. There are gardens, terraces and water features that have been compared to the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. In this process, hereditary elements are not imitated, but reinterpreted to create a symbolic narrative that draws a link between Iraq's past and future.

The Secretariat is the architectural embodiment of post-war nation-building as a previous” modern” agenda in authentic and modern, rather than dichotomously with conflicting shapes, through a selective re-reading can live together.

	
a. New Basmayah City	b. Central Bank of Iraq Tower (Zaha Hadid)
	
c. Badour Al-Najaf (Dar Al-Omran- Rasem Badran)	d. General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers Building (Manhal Al-Haboubi)

Figure 1. The Analysis of Selected Iraqi Architectural Projects.

A. Central Bank of Iraq Tower (Zaha Hadid):

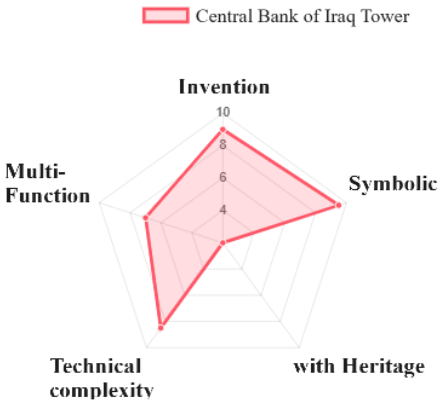


Figure 2. The Analysis of The Central Bank of Iraq Tower Project.

Purpose: A Crowbar of World Modernity -In it, the post-revolution Iraq expresses its representation in terms of a world-known architectural symbolization (linked with technological development and sculptural form). The representation highlights the extreme values of innovation and universality with

a low value of visceral confrontation with local formal heritage. This is an ethical detachment from the heritage of shape, for something which is futuristic.

B. New Bismayah City (Hanwha E&C):

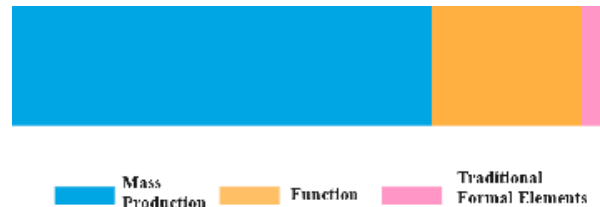


Figure 3. The Analysis of The New Bismayah City Project.

Intention: According to the chart, the philosophy of design is largely inspired by "productivity" and "functionality", because it greatly exceeds other requirements in terms of dimensions like "traditional elements". This is a spread that masks an unassailable face of assimilation, which cannot penetrate through the vein like blood stream of heritage driven urban design concepts.

C. Badour Al-Najaf (Dar Al-Omran - Basem Badran):

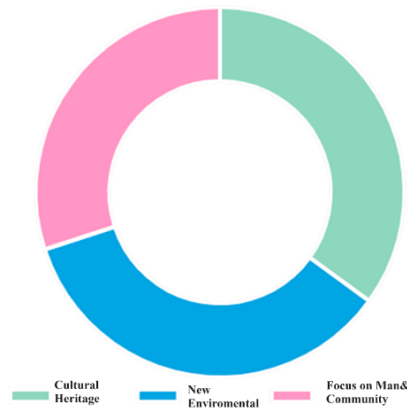


Figure 4. The Analysis of The Badour Al-Najaf Project.

Desired Approach: This project will try to find a compromise between material/technical and socio-cultural parts making. The pie chart denotes the amalgamation of its core philosophies-heritage, modern sustainability and community vision. This 'reality' (urban and rural) establishes the project as a model of conciliation between indigenous identity and modernity.

D. General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers Building (Manhal Al-Haboubi)

Intent: Conscious selectivity of identity narrative



Figure 5. The Analysis of The General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers Building Project.

The work takes a selective method in which it deliberately weaves together signs from different historical moments within an overarching framework of contemporary design. The plan exemplifies how Sumerian and Islamic traditions are combined with modernist forms to create a new architectural story linking the richness of Iraq's history with ambitions for the future, using architecture as a tool in nation-building (Dar Al-Omran, 2023).

Extending from that, the resultant analysis of the selected four Iraqi architectural works shows a diversity in design strategy representing the country emerging and facing both opportunities and challenges for reconstruction as well as for redefining identity. A summary of the major comparisons can be made across four variables by reference to Table 2.

Table 2. The key comparisons can be summarized across the four variables.

Variable	Central Bank of Iraq Tower (Zaha Hadid)	New Bismayah City (Hanwha)	Bador Al-Najaf Project (Dar Al-Omran – Rasem Badran)	General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers Building (Manhal Al-Habbobi)
Architectural Intent	Global icon, modernist symbolism, multifunctional program	Addressing the housing crisis, mass production, master-planned city	Sustainable, human-centered living, respect for heritage	National symbolism, integration of history with the future, governmental functions
Architectural Values	Innovation, uniqueness, prestige, symbolism, aesthetics, functionality	Social (housing), sustainability, community building	Cultural (identity), belonging, well-being, sustainability	National symbolism, cultural continuity, heritage, security, functionality
Stylistic Affiliation	Advanced modernism (deconstructivism)	Productive modernism with superficial integration of tradition	Integrated regionalism	Conscious eclecticism
Position toward Heritage	Deliberate rupture with formal heritage,	Superficial incorporation of tradition within a modernist fabric,	Genuine synthesis of heritage principles (functional and	Symbolic and functional integration of heritage

	emphasis on global modernity	challenges in social interaction	social) with sustainability	(cuneiform, Islamic, Babylonian gardens) within a modern design
--	---------------------------------	-------------------------------------	--------------------------------	---

7. Conclusions

The comparative analysis shows that nowadays, Iraqi architectural projects use differing tactics when it comes to dealing with modernization and tradition:

- **Symphonic Expression of global modernity as progress symbol:** Central Bank of Iraq Tower signifies the country's wish to achieve global architectural acknowledgment TO THE FULL adoption of advanced modernism in Zaha Hadid SIGNATURE. In the context of forward-looking, future-oriented national imagery around innovation and technological might (even at the expense of explicit impingement of traditional architectural Iraqi motifs), this is a project that places great store on its identification as national. The willing break with history serves as a strategy for the future, rather than a return/cultural continuity.
- **Re-integrating heritage in mass production:** Bismayah New City is an example of how modernist ideas could be applied on a larger scale (pre-fabrication and mass production) to provide a solution for the housing emergency. In this notion of combining "traditional" and "modern" styles, the contribution to development is questionable in both detected landscapes. Although some features of its design are used, the general form and exclusive use of industrialized systems is completely different from the traditional urban fabric types that generate social life and a finely grained climatic and spatial response. This leads to questions about how deadly "tradition" is in mass housing projects and whether it meets cultural aspirations or becomes a mere face making.
- **Integrated regionalism as utopian model:** the Bador al-Najaf proposal. The authors consider the Bador al-Najaf project as a more developed regionalist approach that aims to synthesize traditional Iraqi architecture (i.e. courtyards and shaded passages adapted to climate, community), with sustainable contemporary related practices. This project is a sophisticated interpretation of tradition, not only the formal quotation but the functional and social integration of traditional ideas. It emerges, then, as an inspiring model of how identity might be reconciled in local terms with the demands of modern development.
- **CONSCIOUS ECLECTICISM IN NATION BUILDING:** Conscious eclecticism is phenomena seen with GS that can follow a conscious route to adopting historical references (such as the cuneiform or Islamic tile decoration) when it comes to symbolism and functionalism in 'modern' times. The project seeks to construct an architectural narrative that looks at the past and a future vision of ambition, revealing the capability of architecture in becoming an actor in nation building in a post-conflict setting. There is an understanding of the function of the vernacular at play here that distinguishes itself from a literalist or tight regionalism that would adopt modernist faith; Heasley's is a heritage, but one re-imagined and not mimicked.

Together, these projects reflect a tension between modernity and global influences in the architecture of Iraq today, on one hand trying to keep up with the rest of the world while striving on the other to assert its cultural identity and heritage. These approaches vary from surface and nominal (with a bias towards formal citation) to deep and pervasive integration of heritage, functional reference, or

social reinterpretation. Moreover, architectural value is postulated not to be an aspect of the intended meaning of architects but rather interpretations on the part of users/society, so that buildings become dynamic entities continually built and rebuilt by way of the interpretation and social interaction.

8. Recommendations

According to the above discussion, recommendations can be issued to improve architectural work in Iraq as follows:

- **Heritage:** Architects and developers need to move past superficial mimicry of traditional ornament toward a deeper understanding of the principles underlying traditional architecture — how it works, its place in the social life and climate of society. This involves investing in academic research and pedagogy of architecture that bridges the world's theories with local practices.
- **Supporting Local Talent and Cultural Sensitivity:** Notion of the roles of architecture in nation-building and culture memory keeping should raise public awareness.
- **Flexible urban policies:** The public sector needs to develop an urban policy/regulation framework in the cities that balances innovation with preserving the local character and providing incentives for projects where heritage conservation is integrated seamlessly and on sustainable terms, considering cost implications.
- **Documentation & Design using technology:** Existing traditional architecture from the site can be documented, studied, analyzed as per the contemporary technology (surveying equipment), mapping coding system, etc. Re-used directly for modern planning and designing to take care build heritage, and obtaining rue cost effective innovative building heritage projects.

"Contemporary Iraqi architecture is at a crossroads, whether it will serve as another trend which follows the global way of things or be defined by a particular cultural identity and respond to future needs. It will be achieved only if architects, developers, governments and society at large work together."

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

-Yes : During the preparation of this work, the authors used the SciSpace website (<https://scispace.com>) in order to obtain academic translation and list the related studies. This service was strictly used for linguistic and literature review assistance without generating the manuscript's core text or formulating the study concept. After using this service, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and took full responsibility for the content of the published article.

Disclosures

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare in relation to this report.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to acknowledge the administrative and technical support provided by their respective institutions, the University of Baghdad and the University of Samarra. Also, to The unlimited

support by the Esteemed Editor and reviewers of Kerbala Journal for Engineering Sciences, Finally to the Associated Prof. Dr. Ahmed Fayeq – Nahrain University/ College of Engineering- for his support.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

ICB	Iraqi Central Bank
GSICM	General Secretariat of the Iraqi Council of Ministers building
Hanwha E&C	South Korean company Hanwha Architectural & Engineering consultant HAE-AN Co Ltd
RASO	Rasem Badran supervision in Dar Al-Omran

References

- [1] A. A. Al-Ani, "Modern architectural design: Concepts and principles," *Journal of Engineering Sciences*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 45–58, 2018.
- [2] A. F. Al-Hamdani, "Qualitative research methods in social sciences," *Journal of Human Sciences*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 30–43, 2020.
- [3] A. M. Abdullah, "Design concept in architecture: Elements and types," *Journal of Urban Planning and Architecture*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 22–35, 2020.
- [4] ADAM Architecture, "A Study of Building & Identity: In Place," INTBAU, 2015. [Online]. Available: (<https://adamarchitecture.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/In-Place-INTBAU-2015.pdf>).
- [5] Al-Ghadeer Real Estate Development Company, "Bodor Al-Najaf Project," *Al-Ghadeer Real Estate Development Company*, 2022. [Online]. Available: <https://alghadeer-re.com/projects/budoor-al-najaf>
- [6] Baper, S. Y. (2024). Can Architectural Identity Be Measured? *Buildings*, 14(5), 1379.
- [7] Cao, Z., Mustafa, M., & Mohd Isa, M. H. (2024). Regional Architecture Building Identity: The Mediating Role of Authentic Pride. *Buildings*, 14(4), 1059.
- [8] Central Bank of Iraq, "CBI New Headquarters," Central Bank of Iraq, 2022. [Online]. Available: <https://www.cbi.iq/page/113>.
- [9] Dar Al-Omran, "Bodor Al-Najaf Project," Dar Al-Omran, 2021. [Online]. Available: <https://www.daralomran.com/projects/budoor-al-najaf-project>.
- [10] Dar Al-Omran, "Rasem Badran: Architectural philosophy and projects," *Dar Al-Omran*, 2023. [Online]. Available: <https://www.daralomran.com/about/rasem-badran>
- [11] General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, "New Headquarters Building," *General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, Iraq*, 2023. [Online]. Available: <https://cabinet.iq/details.php?id=123>
- [12] H. Al-Qaisi, "The concept of regionalism in Iraqi architecture," *Journal of Architectural Engineering*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 78–90, 2015.
- [13] H. Nooruddin, "Architectural identity in an era of change," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, vol. 32, no. 4, pp. 321–335, 2015.
- [14] Hanwha E&C, "Bismayah New City Project," Hanwha Engineering & Construction, 2013. [Online]. Available: <https://www.hanwhaenc.com/eng/business/architecture-housing-development/bismayah-new-city-project>.
- [15] Ismail, M. A., & Abd Elkader, W. A. (2023). The Interrelationship between the Design of House Facades and the Architectural Identity of the City: Amman City as a Model. *Dirasat: Human & Social Sciences*, 50.(6)
- [16] J. Tran, "Static illusions: Architectural identity, meaning and history," Ph.D. dissertation, Curtin University, Perth, Australia, 2017.
- [17] K. A. L. Abdulhadi, "Contested discourses: National identity and architecture – The University Campus as a product of Time and Place," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK, 2017.
- [18] M. Al-Haboubi, "General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers Building," Manhal Al-Haboubi Architects, 2019. [Online]. Available: <https://www.manhal-habbobi.co.uk/project/general-secretariat-building>

- [19] M. Al-Obaidi, "Zaha Hadid's legacy in Iraq: The Central Bank of Iraq Tower," *Architectural Review*, vol. 248, no. 1485, pp. 60–65, 2020.
- [20] M. R. M. N. Al-Ghamdi, N. N. M. Noor, and K. Abdullah, "Review on national identity in architecture through the understanding of its roles, typologies and themes," *International Journal of Sustainable Construction Engineering and Technology*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 1–11, 2022.
- [21] N. S. A. Alani, "The role of architecture in shaping the identity of the city," *Journal of Engineering and Sustainable Development*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 27–42, 2014.
- [22] National Investment Commission, "Bismayah New City," *National Investment Commission, Iraq*, 2014. [Online]. Available: <https://www.nic.gov.iq/english/news/bismayah-new-city-project>
- [23] S. M. Al-Haddad, "Integrating heritage in modern architecture: Challenges and opportunities," *Journal of Heritage Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 55–68, 2021.
- [24] T. Al-Obaidi, "Zaha Hadid's architectural vision for Iraq," *ArchDaily*, 2019. [Online]. Available: <https://www.archdaily.com/923381/zaha-hadids-architectural-vision-for-iraq>
- [25] Tayib, A. Y., & Sabir, H. M. A. (2024). The Influence of Façade Finish Materials on Architectural Identity-Sulaymaniyah City as a Case Study. *The Scientific Journal of Cihan University–Sulaymaniyah*, 8(1), 94-117.
- [26] Z. F. Z. Fathallah, "Knowledge mobility and the emergence of contemporary Iraqi architecture (1936–1958)," *Buildings*, vol. 14, no. 9, pp. 2740, 2024.
- [27] Zaha Hadid Architects, "Central Bank of Iraq Headquarters," Zaha Hadid Architects, 2011. [Online]. Available: <https://www.zaha-hadid.com/architecture/central-bank-of-iraq-headquarters/>

الأنماط الثلاثية للقصد المعماري وتأثيرها في تشكيل الهوية المعمارية العراقية المعاصرة

الخلاصة: إن القصد المعماري هو لغة منطوقة عبر الأشكال، والخطوط، وحتى المواد ولكن بلا أصوات. يعبر المصمم فيها عن مقاصده ورؤيته التصميمية الخاصة، فهي غير مرتبطة بالوظيفة أو العناصر. ومن وجهة النظر هذه، يُستخدم القصد المعماري كأداة لتحليل وفهم العمارة المعاصرة وأنماط تجديد هويتها. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف تأثير أنماط القصد المعماري (الفردية، والجماعية، والهجين) في تشكيل الهوية المعمارية العراقية الحالية، عبر أربعة أبعاد مركزية: الرؤية التصميمية، والغرض المعماري، والانتماء الأسلوبي، وموقف التراث. تم اعتماد منهجية التحليل التطبيقي كونها الأكثر فاعلية لاستكشاف أهداف الدراسات ذات النهج الذاتي. ومن ثم تطبيق المؤشرات على أربع دراسات حالة لأبرز المشاريع التصميمية في العراق. مبنى البنك المركزي العراقي، مدينة بسماية، بدور النجف، ومشروع مبنى الأمانة العامة لمجلس الوزراء العراقي. أظهرت النتائج الرئيسية لهذه الدراسة أن النمط الهجين للقصد المعماري يمتلك الخصائص المشتركة لكلا النمطين الآخرين، وبالتالي فهو يشير إلى المسار المتوازن لإنتاج عمارة ذات هوية محلية حديثة. وكانت التوصيات الرئيسية هي تعزيز القصد الهجين من خلال استخدامه كأداة ارتباط استراتيجية بين الإنسان وبيئته المبنية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: القصد، التراث العراقي، القصد الفردي، القصد الجماعي، القصد الهجين.