

Editorial introduction

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Editorial introduction

Special issue on urbanization in the Gulf

Guest Editors:

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With rapid urbanization and the hunger for new architectural trends, buildings built since the 1960s face the threat of being classified as old and with no value. Lately governments in the Gulf region, such as in Abu Dhabi have paid attention to such buildings and have taken steps to safeguard their modern cultural heritage and building stock ([Chabbi & Mahdy, 2011a](#), [2011b](#); [Yildirim, 2015](#)). The first paper by [Husnéin \(2017\)](#) discusses the importance of this topic and explores the role that the built cultural heritage ([Damlūji, 2006](#)) can play to improve the public realm within a sustainable urbanism.

Current trends in the preservation of our urban heritage and the creation of quality public spaces are shown through case studies, in addition to exploring challenges and exposing some of the weaknesses in the existing approaches to urban development. The author sees in a holistic approach, one solution to giving a sustainable aspect to the conservation of physical public realm heritage.

The United Arab Emirates is not the only gulf region country to experience rapid urbanization after the economic growth of the post-oil era. The Kingdom of Oman is a good example explored in the second paper by [Al-Awadhi \(2017\)](#), in which he discusses the local aspects of globalization through a case study of Sohar city. The paper first discusses the different definitions of “globalization” and its relation to economic and social aspects ([Vongpraseuth & Choi, 2015](#); [Wei & Liefner, 2012](#)), then presents its impact on land use change and urban growth ([Leaf, 2002](#); [Mahgoub, 2004](#)).

The Geographical Information System (GIS), and remote sensing, in addition to socio-economic and demographic data are used to trace the historical development of Sohar city’s growth in three time periods: the years 2003, 2010 and 2015. The study results show an increase in the built-up area and a decrease in open land and vegetation coverage.

This demonstrates the impact of the rapid globalization in Oman during the last three decades, especially the spatial impact in Sohar city, which has received 10 billion US dollars as national and international investments during the last fifteen years. Thus, Sohar moved dramatically from a small isolated city to become a bigger one with a medium size urban center.

Studies have demonstrated the impact of space design, architecture and urban form on people’s behavior and feelings, either positively as happiness,

joy, and satisfaction, or negatively as anger, anxiety and stress. Examples of aggression, crimes and thefts ([Hillier & Shu, 2000](#)) occurred mostly in the low income residential neighborhoods located in the suburbs of European cities. Such anti-social behavior has been associated with multi-story projects built during the post-World War II ([Bullock, 2002](#)) reconstruction period.

Some cities like Liverpool in the UK have learned from past housing mistakes and are making efforts not to repeat them ([Faizi, Hosseini, & Asl, 2008](#); [Godfery, 1977](#); [Wilson, 1977](#)).

However, there is a possible risk that some high-rise building projects, inspired by European Post World War II housing projects, and not located in the downtown areas of some Arabian Gulf cities, may generate social integration issues concerning low-income groups, [Anderson \(2000\)](#) or some health issues ([Wilson, 1977](#)), and criminal activity among youths.

[Mushtaha \(2017\)](#) in his paper investigates the presence of such problems in the Gulf housing projects that followed in the wake of urban forms like those built-in Europe after World War II.

His qualitative study shows that vandalism, and other social problems occur in some projects. Hence, he calls for defining the extent of existing problems and suggests setting some guidelines and rules for new development based on previous experience, studies, etc., ([Faizi, Hosseini, & Asl, 2008](#)). For example, he recommends not to accommodate low income people in high rise buildings, and prefers to locate high rise buildings in the center of a city. These measures, would in his view contribute to partially avoiding social problems in the future and provide a better-quality of life to residents.

The subject of people's satisfaction and comfort while using spaces takes us to the fourth paper by [Meziani and Hussien \(2017\)](#). Entitled: "A Study On the space layouts and configurations of shopping malls in relation to pedestrian movement behavior- Case of UAE".

Much wayfinding research has been carried out for such large buildings as shopping malls ([Dogu & Erkip, 2000](#)), hospitals ([Passini et al., 2000](#); [Rooke, Koskela, & Tzortzopoulos, 2010](#)), airport terminals ([Churchill et al., 2008](#); [Fewings, 2001](#); [Braaksma & Cook, 1980](#)), to decrease the feeling of being lost ([Carlson et al., 2010](#)) and disorientation and frustration ([Bitgood, 1988](#); [Passini et al., 1998](#)) and avoidance of negative financial, psychological and physical effects on people and visitors ([Correia, Wirasinghe, & de Barros, 2008](#)).

Studies have shown that a building's space layout has a big impact on wayfinding and people's satisfaction ([Brösamle & Hölscher, 2007](#); [Hölscher et al., 2006](#); [Hölscher et al., 2009](#); [Peponis, Zimring, & Choi, 1990](#); [Vilar et al., 2012](#)).

The objective of this research is to pay attention to the importance of a building's space layout in wayfinding and people's satisfaction, hence the attractiveness and popularity of a shopping mall, and in the future to contribute to the literature ([Gärling, Böök, & Lindberg, 1986](#)) about developing the space layout of commercial buildings through recommendations and design guidelines.

The paper explores the relationship between a shopping mall's popularity and wayfinding. It focuses on the planned and unplanned visits to some specific destination inside a mall such as 1- Frequently used facilities: prayer rooms, and washrooms; 2- Facilities attractive to families and large numbers of visitors: food courts, cinemas, and play areas, and finally 3- ATM machines.

Based on the assumption that the popularity of a mall is positively related to 1. Visitor satisfaction with wayfinding in the mall; 2. Visitor satisfaction with the location of facilities in the mall; and 3. The location of facilities in a mall is positively related to visitor satisfaction with wayfinding in the mall, surveys were conducted in the city of Abu Dhabi, followed by the application of the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) technique to verify the above hypotheses.

The paper starts with a strong literature review and covers types of wayfinding, its factors and variables, etc., then presents the methodology, the results analysis and discussion. The results of applying SEM verified the hypotheses about the relationship between the attractiveness and the popularity of a shopping mall and the wayfinding on the one hand and the building space layout on the other. The paper's authors will follow up their research by wider case studies, involving international examples.

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