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**An examination of heritage protection and conservation practices in
the pilgrimage city of Najaf**

By:

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Dedication

“To the memory of Khalil Abid, my wonderful dad and teacher, who has supported me in every way”

To my beloved homeland Iraq

To my lovely wife, daughters and son

To my mum, brothers, and sisters

To my father in law, relatives and friends who supported me all the time

Foreword

Before starting my PhD, I gained a BSc in Architecture in 2001, and an MSc in Urban Design Architecture in 2008 from the University of Technology in Baghdad. My dissertation involved an assessment of the environmental impact on the townscape of the historical commercial streets in Baghdad. It was an independent study, carried out without taking any conservation module. I never believed that conservation could play a significant role in protecting and sustaining our national and local identity until I arrived in the UK. During my English courses, I visited some historical cities in the UK, and found how these cities had become like open museums, narrating and protecting the stories of the nation. I certainly do not need any book to read how people lived in these cities. Rather it made me consider why, in Iraq, we cannot protect our national and local heritage. Internationally, conservation has become a significant approach to preventing the destruction of heritage, and there are different approaches to and charters on heritage which could be used in Iraq to support national and local heritage.

Most Iraqi researchers have focused on Baghdad as a case study, but there are many other significant historical cities in Iraq, such as Najaf, which I want to shed light on in my PhD. Najaf has a long history, being older than Baghdad, but few researchers have focused on it in depth. As a result, I decided to challenge myself first, and in consequence to address the political, documentary, and other difficulties that came with such a focus. There is a phrase which I heard while collecting data in Najaf: “Najaf is like the Vatican of Shia, but with a significant difference between their conditions”. Day by day, I grew to like the city more and more, and I discovered some new materials about its value, although I am not from Najaf, and I have never lived there. My main motivation is to stop the destruction in the town, which

threatens its identity; to support Najaf to become a contemporary city, and to see it listed as a World Heritage site. I hope that this thesis will become a corner stone in local and national studies about Najaf and other historical cities, and support good heritage practices by raising the level of understanding of conservation values on the ground.

During my journey I looked at three case studies in order to understand the complexity of legislation and organisations, and their political governance. These case studies cover the diversity of Najaf's cultural heritage. The research methods were based on archival and document investigation, site visits, and a series of interviews. The final outcomes show the overlap of structural government and the unclear legal framework on the ground. To sum up, Najaf old town is in very poor condition and needs urgent support, which takes the form of a number of specific recommendations from various perspectives, including methods of improving knowledge and understanding about heritage protection, developing policy and control, integrating conservation management practice processes into town planning and decision making, and promoting partnership and engagement.

Summary

Key words: conservation management, Najaf, cultural heritage, protection, development control

As the urban environment rapidly changes, conservation management plays a significant role in increasing people's awareness about heritage, its protection and enhancement. With increasing attention paid to the care of cultural heritage, conservation management systems that protect and enhance cultural heritage, and control new development, continue to evolve at local, national and international levels.

The pilgrimage city of Najaf, in Iraq, has a long history yet many of its buildings are under threat as a result of unclear conservation management in practice. This thesis addresses questions about the value and significance of Najaf's heritage, the city's development policy relating to conservation and the impact of interventions in its historic fabric. It explores levels of understanding about conservation values in the context of contemporary Iraq. To achieve this, three case studies are presented that examine conservation knowledge in terms of the value placed on preserving physical and social fabric, local and national development control procedures and current conservation practices. The original contribution to knowledge that this thesis makes is in outlining how heritage has been understood, designated, protected and managed in Iraq, along with a critical analysis of current conservation infrastructure.

The findings show that the Iraqi people and authorities have a limited understanding of conservation management and few clear policies or controls are currently being employed in practice. In Najaf, key decision makers prioritise accommodating

pilgrims and modernisation of the city, rather than safeguarding heritage. The thesis argues that the heritage documentation system is inadequate and that there is significant overlap in decision-making responsibilities. The study therefore proposes the rationalisation of policies and regulations; overhaul of Iraqi heritage education programmes to include architects, planners, politicians, archaeologists, key-workers and others; and further support for better rehabilitation procedures where conservation plans are often lacking and building activities involve unqualified workers.

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Abbreviations

| | |
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| ICOMOS | International Council on Monuments and Sites |
| MMPW | The Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works |
| MoCTA | The Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities |
| NGO | Non-Government Organisations |
| PBoHA | The Public Board of Heritage and Antiquities |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| WHL | World Heritage List |

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Introduction

Since the mid-20th century, increasing attention has been paid to conserving cultural heritage at the international level, through different international charters and conventions, such as the Venice and Burra charters, structured through international organisations such as United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). The concept of cultural heritage is difficult to define. UNESCO states that cultural heritage is divided into two main parts: tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The first deals with movable (sculptures, paintings, and manuscripts), immovable (archaeological sites, monuments, and so on), and underwater cultural heritage (underwater ruins and shipwrecks); the second delineates the intangible cultural heritage includes performing arts, oral traditions, and rituals.¹

Both Orbasli and Ahmad refer to the tangible and intangible entities of heritage; with the first study addressing what protection means legally,² and the latter explaining the scope and definition of heritage, from the physical heritage of individual buildings and sites to groups of buildings, historical areas, environments and towns.³

¹ UNESCO, 'Definition of the Cultural Heritage | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization', (UNESCO, 2016).

² Aylin Orbasli, *Architectural Conservation: Principles and Practice*, (Blackwell Science Ltd, 2008), p. 47.

³ Yahaya Ahmad, 'The Scope and Definitions of Heritage: From Tangible to Intangible', in *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, (Routledge, 2006), pp. 292-300.

The Council of Europe agree that heritage should cover both natural and cultural heritage, and so refer to the following:

***Monuments:** all buildings and structures of conspicuous historical, archaeological, artistic, scientific, social or technical interest, including their fixtures and fittings;*

***Groups of buildings:** homogeneous groups of urban or rural buildings conspicuous for their historical, archaeological, artistic, scientific, social or technical interest which are sufficiently coherent to form topographically definable units and;*

***Sites:** the combined works of man and nature, being areas which are partially built upon and sufficiently distinctive and homogeneous to be topographically definable, and which are of conspicuous historical, archaeological, artistic, scientific, social or technical interest.*
(Article 1)

Prott and O’Keefe explained how “*the cultural heritage consists of manifestations of human life which represent a particular view of life and witness the history and validity of that view*”.⁴ Jokilehto defined cultural heritage as “*the entire corpus of material signs - either artistic or symbolic - handed on by the past to each culture and, therefore, to the whole of humankind*”.⁵

He further states that:

“As a constituent part of the affirmation and enrichment of cultural identities, as a legacy belonging to all humankind, the cultural heritage gives each particular place its recognizable features and is the storehouse of human experience. The preservation and the presentation of the cultural heritage are therefore a corner-stone of any cultural policy”.⁶

Cultural heritage is thus an expression normally used to define anything that has value inherited from the past, and that should be protected. Accordingly, on a national level, every country formulates its own terminology and interpretation of heritage. In Iraq (Mesopotamia) the earliest civilizations first developed more than six thousand years ago, with cities established, empires created, monumental buildings constructed, and a writing system developed. Thus, a large region of cultural heritage is currently under threat from political upheaval, civil war and

⁴ Lyndel V. Prott and Patrick J. O’Keefe, ‘Cultural Heritage’ or ‘Cultural Property’?, *International Journal of Cultural Property*, 1 (1992), 307.

⁵ Jukka Jokilehto, ‘Definition of Cultural Heritage: References to Documents in History’, *ICCROM Working Group ‘Heritage and Society*, (2005).

⁶ *Ibid.*

unrest, government policies relating to socio-economic development and globalisation, cultural change and simple mismanagement.⁷ Values can also be contested, as arguments may arise, as what is regarded as of great value to a particular generation or group may be dismissed by others as worthless.

This research focuses specifically on Najaf, a historic Islamic pilgrimage city in Iraq. It has been selected for this study because it is one of the most important places in Islamic history, especially for Shi'a⁸, since it was the chosen burial place of Imam Ali, the cousin of the Prophet Mohammed. Imam Ali chose Kufa (now a suburb of Najaf) as the Islamic capital in 656, and more than a half century after his death, in 661, the Imam Ali tomb was founded and a new district developed around it. In the following two centuries, the Imam Ali Shrine location grew in both size and status into a distinct urban district, and was managed by the adjacent city of Kufa for most of its administrative affairs.⁹ Up to the present, Najaf old town has been divided into four main neighbourhoods surrounding the shrine: (the *Al-Houaiesh*, the *Al-Mishraq*, the *Al-Imarah* and the *Al-Buraq*). Today, the Imam Ali Shrine, the *Wadi Al-Sallam* great cemetery and traditional schools characterize Najaf. Due to its religious significance, the shrine is a focus for contemporary devout Muslims as a city of knowledge: it has more than 50 traditional religious schools, and has been home to many important religious scholars throughout history.¹⁰

There are some significant issues facing the Najaf old town in terms of managing its heritage. Firstly, the level of understanding of the significance of heritage is still unsatisfactorily low, both at government level and in local communities. The economic situation, wars, structural government and its intentions, and the education system have significantly hampered the understanding of cultural heritage.¹¹ For example, the central government has been struggling in terms of setting out clear

⁷ Selim Matar, *Iraq: Seven Thousand Years of Life*, (Beirut: Arab foundation for publishing: www.airpbooks.com, 2013).

⁸ The Shia is a movement that gives a privileged position to the Prophet Muhammad's family in the religious and political leadership of the Muslim community; most live in Iraq and Iran. As such, the term Shia in its historical development, refers to the followers of Imam Ali and the people of his house.

⁹ Hasan Al-Hakim, *Detailed of the History of Najaf: The History of Imam Ali Shrine*, (Qom: Al-Haydaria Library, 2006).

¹⁰ Hasan Al-Hakim, *Detailed of the History of Najaf: Scientific and Cultural Institutions*, (Qom: Al-Haydariya Library, 2006).

¹¹ Ali Naji Attia, 'Lecture: Protection and Promotion of Cultural Heritage to Enhance the Iraqi Cultural Identity', (Najaf: Dar Al-Turath, 2016).

methods for organisations or institutions to deal with cultural heritage management. Since 2003, successive central governments have changed the ministry which deals with heritage authority several times.¹² This change in structural government has had a negative impact on the ground, as discussed further in Chapter 7. Moreover, government documents reveal that most heritage management leaders lack awareness and knowledge of the composition, complexities and consequences of the legislative and legal environment governing heritage and antiquities at national and local levels. According to the ProCare¹³ report:

*“This explains the lack of a unified vision and clear positions regarding the overlaps, contradictions and problems arising from accumulating a large number of legislative tools that are still effective by virtue of law, although de facto inactivate in whole or in part”.*¹⁴

In addition, up to the present a complicated documentation system for recording significant heritage has led to a reduced level of understanding of Najaf’s heritage.¹⁵ Due to the state of the country in recent years, there have been few reliable sources about these transformations of heritage aspects. As a result, work management often relies on the discretion of the administrations and the transfer of accumulated experiences from veteran staff by successors, which is mostly based on oral communications or internal correspondence and memos.¹⁶ Personal interpretations are not restricted to the documentation system but are also part of decision-making, based on conservation practices. Altogether, this situation outlines the great pressures facing cultural heritage management in practice.

Even though most of the heritage elites and local communities want to protect the old town, most locals have moved away and now live on the outskirts. The new life, modernism, infrastructure services, new technology, political issues and land value have encouraged this, putting huge pressure on the social and urban fabric of the old

¹² The Ministry of Heritage and Antiquities, Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Ministry of Culture and Heritage and Tourism.

¹³ ProCare Services De Consultations is a company from Canada, contracted with the UNESCO for assisting the Iraqi government to develop a national Tourism Strategy.

¹⁴ ProCare consulting Services, 'Assisting the Government of Iraq to Develop a National tourism Strategy', (Baghdad: UNESCO office for Iraq, 2013), (p. 56).

¹⁵ Haidar A Kamona, 'Architectural and Schematic Harmony between the Imam Ali Shrine and the Old City', ed. by Publishing Society Forum / Najaf and النشر منتدى جمعية (Najaf: Publishing Society Forum / Najaf 2009).

¹⁶ ProCare Services, 'Assisting the Government of Iraq to Develop a National tourism Strategy', (p. 79).

town as a result. The question is about what heritage means in a Najafi context and how it is understood at the local level. Kamona clarified that even the local municipality of Najaf and the Najaf urban planning authority want to protect the identity of the old town, but most of the employees do not have sufficient appropriate skills and expertise to enable them to do this.¹⁷ In fact, up to the present there has been significant tension in Najaf between those who adopt a traditional approach, and the majority who advocate modernism. This conflict covers all the physical and social fabric of the heritage cities. Accordingly, widespread conservation practices are still limited to some specific cases.¹⁸ This issue is related to other points: for instance, the education system, training courses, regulation, and the number of specialists available.¹⁹ Up to the present, non-qualified builders have dealt with the conservation of heritage sites, both at national and local level.

The other significant issue is the huge number of pilgrims²⁰ going to the Imam Ali Shrine, which has had an impact on the shrine and the old town as well (Figure 1-1). The shrine's objective as an institution is to accommodate the huge number of pilgrims and offer services to them. Therefore, their ambition is to cover the whole area of the old town, because there is an integrated relationship between the shrine and its surroundings.²¹ As a result, some projects have changed the morphology of the shrine as well as targeting its surrounding area. Incrementally, the shrine is losing its unique characteristic as the only geometrical shape in the organic fabric.²²

¹⁷ Kamona, 'Architectural and Schematic Harmony between the Imam Ali Shrine and the Old City'.

¹⁸ Attia, 'Lecture: Protection and Promotion of Cultural Heritage to Enhance the Iraqi Cultural Identity'.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Since 2003, millions of pilgrims have traveled to the town every year.

²¹ Abdul Sahib K. ShirAli, 'Whimper Alleys الازقة نشيج : An Overview of the Current Condition of the Shrine and Its Future', ed. by Imam Ali Shrine Institution (Najaf: Dar AL-Kafeel, 2014).

²² Department of Architecture. Shahid Beheshti University and Presented by: Ali Attia, 'Lecture in the Shrine: The Extension Project of the Imam Ali Shrine', (Najaf: Imam Ali Shrine Institution, 2015).



Figure 1-1 Aerial view of shrine and its surrounding area shows the huge number of pilgrims (source: 'Official Web Page of the Shrine Foundation', Najaf, 2015).

The old town might arguably be the city's cultural heritage, which is the context in which the question of how heritage values are understood and cultural heritage protected in the city is studied in this thesis. My research aims are to reflect the protection of heritage significance, the development of local approaches to conservation management, and the impact of interventions in the historic fabric. It is designed to consider one main question, with three sub-questions concerning three main themes: heritage protection, development control and conservation management practices, respectively. The main research question is:

To what extent are conservation values understood in the context of contemporary Iraq, with particular reference to Najaf?

The first sub-question is: what do the local communities understand and value preserving regarding the physical and social fabric of Najaf old town?

The second is: how do the key decision makers and stakeholders understand values when controlling development at local level?

The last sub-question is: what are the current conservation practices; how and to what extent do these affect the existing historic fabric?

Conservation of Cultural Heritage: Literature review

This section discusses key concepts related to the conservation of cultural heritage in previous scholars' works that address the subject areas. The literature review explains the concept of cultural heritage, modernity and tradition; the conservation management approach and its practices at international, national and local level; and finally indicates a developing research approach specific to the Iraqi context, with particular reference to Najaf. The purpose is to identify similar studies and research gaps, and to critique the various approaches to and interpretations of the meaning of conservation.

Key concepts

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, "heritage" is any part of property, land, building, or a site which has been or may be inherited.²³ Heritage has also been defined as those places, objects and practices that can be formally protected by using heritage charters, conventions and laws.²⁴ Heritage is anything that has cultural, historic, rarity, architectural, landscape, political, educational, economic, religious or any other type of value which can be inherited, conserved or passed from one generation to the next. In 1999, the Burra charter outlined that "*Cultural significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations*".²⁵ According to Orbasli a wide range of values support the significance of cultural heritage. Common values associated with cultural heritage are historical value, rarity, architectural aspects and archaeological or aesthetic values; and these are characterised by the different societies and users that convey these values.²⁶ Heritage is focused more on inherited positive qualities among generations, tangible or intangible, moveable or immovable, to safeguard the physical and social identity of the place. Turnpenny argues that it is evident that traditional definitions and management of cultural heritage depend on a large separation between intangible heritage and its cultural value, which usually comes from the physical fabric. Consequently, a new concept of cultural management has emerged which not only

²³ , in *Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. by Maurice. Waite (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

²⁴ Rodney. Harrison, 'What Is Heritage?', in *Understanding the Politics of Heritage*, ed. by Rodney. Harrison (Manchester, Milton Keynes.: Manchester University press, The Open university., 2010), pp. 5 - 42 (p. 11).

²⁵ Australia ICOMOS, 'The Burra Charter: The Australia Icomos Charter for Places of Cultural Significance', (Australia: Australia ICOMOS Incorporated, 1999), (p. 2).Article 1.2.

²⁶ Orbasli, *Architectural Conservation: Principles and Practice*, p. 38.

contains the material world and the built environment, but covers all elements of life.²⁷ According to the UNESCO convention in 2003, “intangible cultural heritage” means “*the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.*”²⁸ This is a useful concept to explain because Najaf has both tangible heritage that comes from its built environment, and intangible heritage that comes from its religious activities.

A study by Carter and Bramley emphasises the importance of values and integrating these assessments into protecting and managing significant heritage buildings or sites. It also reflects the issue of “on-the-ground management” that is often characterised by conflict between conservator and users. As a result, the study found the importance of participating stakeholders in heritage area management appreciating that these areas have a collection of values with variable levels of importance, and need to find appropriate conservation management policies and practices to respond to their relative significance. This study discusses the importance of policies and legislation for managing significant sites. Moreover, it notes the importance of increasing awareness among citizens and involving them in planning decisions.²⁹

This encouraged me to concentrate on Iraqi heritage, in order to explain local people’s perception of its value and from where these derive. The main problem for a heritage protection approach is how it can balance modernism and tradition, particularly with the globalisation wave, which may uproot the basis of identity. The main concern is that protecting national and local heritage is a minority concern at both government and community level. Pieri, in her impressive study of Iraqi heritage, found that Iraqi communities’ feeling is that “*the new is more valuable than the old*”.³⁰ This has been brought about by a number of factors, as follows: the political situation before and after 2003; a lack of government attention on heritage;

²⁷ Michael Turnpenny, 'Cultural Heritage, an Ill-Defined Concept? A Call for Joined-up Policy', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 10 (2004), 303-04.

²⁸ UNESCO, 'Introducing Unesco', (UNESCO, 2016).

²⁹ R. W. Carter and R. Bramley, 'Defining Heritage Values and Significance for Improved Resources Management: An Application to Australian Tourism', in *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, (Routledge, 2010), pp. 175-99.

³⁰ Caecilia Pieri, 'Of Modernity as Heritage, of Heritage as Future', in " *Preservation and Rehabilitation of Iraqi City Centers*", (Baghdad: Mayoralty of Baghdad, 2010).

an unclear documenting system; and international economic sanctions (1990-2003). These aspects have led to a reduction in the level of understanding of heritage and have advanced modernism, which has led to a concern to increase the level of understanding of heritage among local citizens.³¹

Many Iraqi people have an idea of the meaning of heritage, and most people would identify or recognise official heritage, which can be opposed to their own collective or personal understanding of heritage. Howard argues that not just any inherited building or site can be described as heritage, until it is identified or recognised as such.³² There is a large gap between official heritage and how it is identified, managed and promoted, and what the local community and individuals might understand to be their heritage.³³ Mydland and Grahn state that the local community's concept of its own heritage is as a social process rather than a physical thing to be protected or preserved, so cultural heritage is seen as a mechanism for the development of social relations, activities, experiences and exchanges.³⁴ Kalman states that the best way to understand a place is by investigating and assessing available data to evaluate its significance.³⁵ This is outlined in the 1999 Burra Charter process:

“The cultural significance of a place and other issues affecting its future are best understood by a sequence of collecting and analysing information before making decisions. Understanding cultural significance comes first, then development of policy and finally management of the place in accordance with the policy”. (Article 6.1).³⁶

Understanding cultural heritage is also thus a process. This can involve different explorations: for instance, historical research in terms of the nature of the heritage, and the sources which document it; physical investigations in terms of site recording and field surveying; recording evolving connections between community and place; engagement of the local community; and identifying the values attached to the

³¹ Ibid.

³² Peter Howard, *Heritage : Management, Interpretation, Identity*, (London: Continuum, 2003), p. 6.

³³ Harrison, 'What Is Heritage?', pp. 9- 12).

³⁴ Leidulf. Mydland and Wera. Grahn, 'Identifying Heritage Values in Local Communities', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 18 (2012).

³⁵ Harold Kalman, *Heritage Planning: Principles and Process*, (London, New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 177.

³⁶ ICOMOS, 'The Burra Charter: The Australia Icomos Charter for Places of Cultural Significance'.

heritage.³⁷ It is therefore important to record our heritage and to recognise its cultural significance - its impact and value - before protecting or enhancing any heritage building or site.³⁸ It should also be noted that, if traditional features have been destroyed, this means removing a significant part of the people's collective memory, which can lead to the deformation of the character of a place. According to Adam, cultural heritage is the vessel that saves and protects our identity.³⁹ In order to prevent the demolition of heritage, some governments, councils and institutions try to create active policies and legislation that designate heritage sites and regulate the built environment in the historical cities. These policies differ from place to place and case to case, because of the specificity of individual locations, people's awareness, the political context and for many other reasons. As a result, great monuments in the world have been saved, which normally reflects an increase in the meaning and value of these cultures and places. From this perspective, it is worth explaining that a local approach to heritage is therefore critical in establishing distinctive places that reflect local people's lives, cultures and heritage.

At a local level, Najaf city has enjoyed the status of a cultural and religious centre, next in importance to Mecca and Al-Medina, for the last several hundred years. The character and buildings in the old town reflect these centuries of history. Najaf old town remains one of the finest examples of a complete small concentric Islamic town. Its integrity as an urban structure is, therefore, of high importance.⁴⁰ Each part of Najaf old town has features that should be protected as cultural heritage. Some of these are tangible, such as the form and structure of historic buildings (for example traditional houses, libraries, shrines and mosques), while others are intangible, such as special social life (for example the cooperative relationships among neighbours, daily forums and lectures, and the social context as a city of knowledge) and religious rites.⁴¹ These special characteristics should arguably be protected in order

³⁷ Kalman, *Heritage Planning: Principles and Process*, p. 178.

³⁸ James Strike, *Architecture in Conservation: Managing and Development at Historic Sites*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 18.

³⁹ Robert Adam, 'Heritage', in *The Venice Charter Revisited*, ed. by Matthew Hardy (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), pp. 3-15 (p. 14).

⁴⁰ Falah Al-Kubaisy, *Najaf: The Architectural and Urban Heritage of Iraqi's Holiest City*, (BookSurge.com, part of Amazon group., 2009), pp. 45-47.

⁴¹ Haidar A. Kamona, *Perception in the Reconstruction of the City of Najaf as a Capital of Islamic Culture 2012*, (Najaf: Association forum posting in Najaf, 2010), pp. 19-20.

to keep the local identity of the town, and this requires knowledge and understanding of conservation mechanisms in practice.

Beernaert and Desimpelaere adopted the concept of heritage conservation; they note that the city of Bruges has successfully raised public awareness of these issues as a result of their policies in relation to the general public, building contractors, architects and project developers. They reported the importance of urban development and the financial requirements involved in improving and solving the problems.⁴²

Reviewing the philosophical approaches of cultural heritage conservation offers some insights into how to understand what has happened practically in conservation practice over time, and how we might approach best conservation practice in the future. The root of the conservation movement goes back to the classical period of Greece and Rome. Glendinning stated that the 15th to 17th centuries witnessed early harbingers of heritage values. However, conservation as a modern approach appeared in the late 18th and 19th centuries. It generally took an individual nation state approach (for example, in Britain, Germany and France).⁴³ After World Wars I, and II, the movement to conserve the built heritage expanded to cover a wide variety of special individual and group sites.⁴⁴ According to Orbasli, this broadened the meaning of heritage, as a result of the “*nationalistic feeling in the aftermath*” of the World Wars, as well as increasing cultural tourism, which led to extending economic value.⁴⁵ It was significant for nations to rebuild their important monuments and sites which had been damaged through the war. Some international organisations and cooperation supported much restoration work: for example, UNESCO World Heritage and the ICOMOS. Their pioneering work led to many private, non-governmental and inter-governmental initiatives worldwide in the second half of the 20th century, to protect significant world heritage sites.⁴⁶

⁴² Brigitte. Beernaert and Werner. Desimpelaere, 'Bruges, Belgium', in *Management of Historic Centres*, ed. by Robert. Pickard (London and New York: Spon Press, 2001), pp. 8-30 pp. 28-29).

⁴³ Miles Glendinning, *The Conservation Movement: A History of Architectural Preservation: Antiquity to Modernity*, (London, New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 2.

⁴⁴ John H. Stubbs, *Time Honored: A Global View of Architectural Conservation*, (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2009), pp. 242-43.

⁴⁵ Orbasli, *Architectural Conservation: Principles and Practice*, p. 20.

⁴⁶ Stubbs, *Time Honored: A Global View of Architectural Conservation*, pp. 242-43.

In 1945 UNESCO came into existence as an agency of the United Nations; with the aim of contributing to peace and security among nations through culture, education and science. One of its initial tasks was the conservation and protection of the world's heritage.⁴⁷ In 1964, the Venice Charter was drafted by 61 countries; focusing on architectural conservation and best practices in many parts of the world. It has had a significantly positive effect on the general field of heritage conservation, being recognized as a standard in legislation around the world.⁴⁸ Conservation approaches have been expanding to cover different aspects. Australia ICOMOS hosted the Burra Charter for places of cultural significance (1979, revisions 1981, 1988, 1999, 2013), for instance, which provided guidance on conserving and managing cultural heritage places.⁴⁹ In 2013, the updated Burra Charter set out a process that is divided into three main parts: understanding significance, developing policies, and managing in accordance with policy (Figure 2.1).

Figure 1.2 The Burra Charter Process; (source: Australia ICOMOS, 'The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance', Burwood, Australia: Australia ICOMOS, 2013).

⁴⁷ UNESCO, 'Introducing Unesco'.

⁴⁸ Stubbs, *Time Honored: A Global View of Architectural Conservation*, p. 137.

⁴⁹ ICOMOS, *International Charters for Conservation and Restoration: Monuments and Sites I*, (Munich.: Lipp GmbH, 2004).

According to the principles of the 2013 Burra Charter, conservation is “*an integral part of good management of places of cultural significance.*”⁵⁰ Initially, a conservation management approach will detail the importance and significant value of the site or building. In addition, it sets out clear policies and legislation that should be used during the conservation and repair.⁵¹ It should be emphasised here that no building or site remains entirely unchanged over time. They are not static: they change in many ways. For example, components decay over time, and the primary aim is to manage these specific changes to minimise losses of significant historical fabric.⁵² In other words, the skills of conservation can safeguard buildings or sites that continue to be used, protecting their cultural, architectural and/or historical value.⁵³

In 1987, ICOMOS adopted the Washington Charter for the conservation of historic towns and urban areas. This Charter focuses on the urban context of historic cities to complement the Venice Charter.⁵⁴ The charter explains that conservation of any historic town or urban area should be an integral part of coherent policies. It also introduces the notion of a “conservation plan” which should cover all related factors. The conservation plan should explain which buildings should be protected, listed, preserved, or redeveloped.⁵⁵ This chapter introduces the conservation plan, and discusses the conservation process, management, and how it can deal with different sites.

Historic England (formerly English Heritage) has mentioned that conservation is not meant to look backwards: by injecting new life into the traditional familiar life and by being capable of reversing decay, conservation plays a leading role in economic and social policy.⁵⁶ It can offer solutions for afflicted cities. There is still a debate regarding whether we should conserve and how. Expressly, Stubbs stated that the reason often given to conserve buildings and sites is that it is valued. Ideally, there

⁵⁰ Australia ICOMOS, 'The Burra Charter: The Australia Icomos Charter for Places of Cultural Significance', (Burwood, Australia: Australia ICOMOS, 2013).

⁵¹ Orbasli, *Architectural Conservation: Principles and Practice*, p. 110.

⁵² Nick Lee. Evans, *An Introduction to Architectural Conservation*, (Newcastle upon Tyne: RIBA Publishing, 2014), p. 19.

⁵³ Ibid. p. 2.

⁵⁴ Washington Charter, 'Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas', *Washington, DC: Adopted by ICOMOS General Assembly.(October 1987)*, (1987).

⁵⁵ ICOMOS, *International Charters for Conservation and Restoration: Monuments and Sites I*, pp. 99-100.

⁵⁶ English Heritage, *Conservation-Led Regeneration: The Work of English Heritage.*, (London: English Heritage, 1998).

are many reasons for conserving our built heritage, such as to save a prototype, or in order to respect religious, historical or national aspects.⁵⁷

The other key issue in the conservation of built heritage involves understanding the reasons why historical buildings or sites may need to change. In particular, Evans states that policies and legislation play a key role in balancing the significance of cultural heritage and the need for change.⁵⁸ This point leads to the importance of a conservation plan⁵⁹ or action plan, which documents the significance of a place and explains what policies and legislation are most suitable to it. In other words, the conservation plan is the process of understanding, documenting and managing change at historic buildings and sites.⁶⁰ Pickard noted that the management of the built heritage requires the implementation and formulation of some form of action plan, as well as economic development and conservation processes, to improve the built environment.⁶¹ The terms ‘conservation management’ or ‘integrated management’ are considered in the Granada Convention (articles 7, 10, 11, 12, and 13)⁶², and day-by-day the conservation management approach is developing in some countries. In 2009, Scheffler et al. stated that:

*“A cultural heritage integrated management plan determines and establishes the appropriate strategy, objectives, actions and management structures to safeguard the cultural heritage, to balance the different needs and to use historic urban areas and its cultural heritage as development asset”.*⁶³

⁵⁷ Stubbs, *Time Honored: A Global View of Architectural Conservation*, pp. 51- 56.

⁵⁸ Evans, *An Introduction to Architectural Conservation*, p. 19.

⁵⁹ The term “conservation plan” was adopted by The ICOMOS meeting in Washington 1987, and the next chapter will explain this further.

⁶⁰ Kalman, *Heritage Planning: Principles and Process*, pp. 293 - 94.

⁶¹ Rob Pickard, *Management of Historic Centres*, (Taylor & Francis, 2001), p. 5.

⁶² Council of Europe, 'Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe', ed. by Council of Europe (Granada, 1985).

⁶³ Nils Scheffler and others, 'Cultural Heritage Integrated Management Plans', *Thematic Report*, 2 (2009).

The Concept of Modernity and Tradition

Theoretically, there are two different approaches in terms of organising our social life: traditionalism and modernism. Most of the 20th century debates on political, social, cultural, and economics has been shaped according to these approaches.⁶⁴ Some approaches call for a global architectural style. For example, globalisation refers to the “*compression of the world*” as well as the “*intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole*”.⁶⁵ The concept of modernity should be explained first. Simply it means the present, and so the opposite of the past, or of tradition; accordingly, there is constant conflict between modernity and tradition.⁶⁶ Modernism focuses on creating an international language based on technical and aesthetics platforms, without looking at the local place and its society.⁶⁷ In other words, conceptually it is based on creating a universal platform which can be used anywhere. During the early 21th century, very rapidly constructed new development projects have changed the face of many countries. This approach has used new construction methods, design, and materials that ignore local communities. As a result, many people have become disillusioned with this approach because it threatens their identity.⁶⁸ At the national level, modernist architecture has moved gradually into most Iraqi cities. In Baghdad, for example, there are many new neighbourhoods with high-rise developments, and different types of modern buildings and houses. At the local level in Najaf, modern developments threatening the cultural heritage of the old town, and new neighbourhoods, have encouraged local citizens to move away from the historic town centre. This shows the importance of expanding the heritage value model against the prevalence of the modernist approach.

In contrast, some theories and approaches state the importance of a local rather than national approach, advocating, for instance, a critical regionalism during the 1980s, which aimed to balance localism and modernism. Critical regionalism responds to the question put by French theorist Paul Ricoeur: “*How to be modern and to continue*

⁶⁴ Liane Lefaiver and Alexander Tzonis, 'Tropical Critical Regionalism: Introductory Comments', in *Tropical Architecture: Critical Regionalism in the Age of Globalization*, ed. by Alexander Tzonis, Liane Lefaivre, and Bruno Stagno (West Sussex: Wiley-Academy, 2001).

⁶⁵ Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*, (London: Sage Publications Ttd, 1992), p. 8.

⁶⁶ Hilde Heynen, *Architecture and Modernity: A Critique*, (Massachusetts, Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Press, 1999), pp. 9 - 10.

⁶⁷ Hadas Shadar, 'Evolution and Critical Regionalism', *Journal of Urban Design*, 15 (2010), 229.

⁶⁸ Stubbs, *Time Honored: A Global View of Architectural Conservation*, p. 58.

the tradition; how to revive an old dormant civilization as part of a universal civilization".⁶⁹ Accordingly, the main concern of this approach is that globalisation could be a means of destroying most other types of culture. Frampton set out six points toward a critical regionalism for an architecture of resistance: "*cultural and civilization, the rise and fall of the Avant-Gard, critical regionalism and world culture, the Resistance of the Place-Form, Culture Versus Nature, and the visual versus the tactile*".⁷⁰ Frampton stated that there is a clear polarization in architectural practice between high-tech modernism and the attempted provision of compensatory strategies to mask the dominance of the universal system.⁷¹

Conceptually, the approach is to make identity a priority, and the main point of this theory is that it adapts new modern buildings so that they are compatible with the surrounding area and its historical and social context. Here, it can be stated that it does not adopt the idea of vernacular architecture or resist globalisation, but tries to "vernacularize" modern material, elements and shapes.⁷² In other words, critical regionalism is to mediate the impact of globalisation through using some of the peculiarities of place. In particular, Eggener explains that the outcome of critical regionalist architecture is to be modern and regional at the same time. This involves a particularly delicate balance of local physical and cultural characteristics with universal modern practices, materials and technologies.⁷³ It can be concluded that core concepts of critical regionalism basically secede from the modern approach, demanding a development of universalization and modernisation, but within the practice of adding some local elements. While a balance between modernism and local tradition has been adopted theoretically in most national and local Iraqi contexts of developing religious cities, the outcomes of most of these development projects are closer to modernist than traditional forms.

⁶⁹ Paul Ricoeur, *History and Truth*, (Northwestern University Press, 1965), pp. 276-77.

⁷⁰ Kenneth Frampton, 'Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance', in *The Anti-Aesthetic*, ed. by Hal Foster (Port Townsend: Bay Press, 1983), pp. 16-30.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* p. 17.

⁷² Liane Lefaiver and Alexander Tzonis, 'The Suppression and Rethinking of Regionalism and Tropicalism after 1945', in *Tropical Architecture: Critical Regionalism in the Age of Globalization*, ed. by Alexander Tzonis, Liane Lefaiver, and Bruno Stagno (West Sussex: Wiley-Academy, 2001), (p. 28).

⁷³ Keith L Eggener, 'Placing Resistance: A Critique of Critical Regionalism', *Journal of Architectural Education*, 55 (2002), 229.

Conservation approaches

Regionally, at the Middle Eastern level, two cases (Medina in Saudi Arabia and Mashhad in Iran) explain normative conservation approaches in religious Islamic cities. The first example is Medina, which developed around *Al-Masjid an-Nabawi*, the first mosque in Islam. The city developed, and there was significant clearance of its historical fabric in the context of successive extension projects to the Prophet's Mohammad mosque. Figure (1.3) shows how that happened between 1910 to 1990.⁷⁴

Figure 1.3 The progressive clearance of the historic fabric of Median; (source: Bianca, 2000)

⁷⁴ Stefano Bianca, *Urban Form in the Arab World: Past and Present*, (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 2000), p. 206.

Figure (1.4) shows how *Al-Masjid an-Nabawi* has grown from the original (red) when it was established (1050 m²), to the last extension project in 1994 (yellow), in which its area has reached (98000 m²). Periodic extension projects have led to the clearance of many significant sites and buildings (Figure 1.5) and the urban fabric (and character) of the town has been threatened. In 1982, a project was carried out by local companies to ‘rehabilitate’ the significant value of the town. They used contemporary materials and techniques in terms of building construction, and architectural decoration.⁷⁵ However, the project demolished around 1km² 110 hectares of historic fabric due to its proximity to the mosque and forced local citizens to move outside the old town, while new tall buildings (hotels) surrounding the mosque have significantly altered the city skyline.⁷⁶ According to Bianca, this continuous situation lead to isolate the *Al-Masjid an-Nabawi* from its surrounding urban fabric.⁷⁷

Figure 1.4 Development stages of Al-Masjid an-Nabawi; (source Faculty of Architecture and Urban development Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of the Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine.', Najaf, 2015, p.172. Report 2).

⁷⁵ Faculty of Architecture and Urban development Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of the Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine.', (Najaf, 2015).

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Bianca, *Urban Form in the Arab World: Past and Present*, p. 236.



Figure 1.5 Al-Masjid an-Nabawi; (source Google map).

Mashhad in Iran was established around the Shrine of Imam Al-Ridha.⁷⁸ The shrine redevelopment has gradually extended over the significant urban fabric of Mashhad in a similar way to Al-Masjid an-Nabawi, and of concern is that Iraqi pilgrims who visit Al-Medina and Mashhad determine these to be great projects, to be considered a reference point in future Iraqi religious development projects.

Specific to Iraq, the conservation management of historic cities is necessary in order to balance demographic growth against the protection of existing architectural heritage, and to effect an appropriate master plan for urban expansion. Aygen stated that:

*“Historic buildings are the most obvious and visible assets of a society’s collective memory, without which it resembles a person after an accident, concussion or trauma”.*⁷⁹

If traditional features are destroyed, this means removing a significant part of the people’s collective memory. As Adam points out: *“Without our memories we are nothing; society is nothing without its heritage”.*⁸⁰ At the national level, conservation approaches are still unsatisfactory in terms of a formal protection system and in terms of conservation practice. Many researchers and heritage elites, such as

⁷⁸ He is one of the 12 Shia’a Imams.

⁷⁹ Zeynep Aygen, *International Heritage and Historic Building Conservation : Saving the World’s Past*, (New York: New York : Routledge, 2012, 2012), p. 45.

⁸⁰ Adam, 'Heritage', (p. 14).

Mohammad Makiya, Haydar Kamona, Hassan Al-Hakim, and Rauf Al-Ansari, call for the adoption of a distinct authority which deals with national heritage, but there is no clear thinking regarding how to implement this in practice.⁸¹ As a result, the actions of multiple decision makers and authorities have contributed to a loss of local identity. Moreover, the absence of a clear documenting system has led to a loss of records and materials pertaining to the Iraqi heritage.

One of the aims of my study is to contribute to investigating and understanding heritage value from the local point of view, as well as understanding how cultural heritage has been designated, protected and managed. In addition to explaining the structure of statutory conservation management in Iraq in relation to cultural heritage, focusing on the historic city of Najaf, I examine how effective or otherwise this structure is in comparison to best international practice. Furthermore, it aims to understand the extent to which conservation practices and the protection of cultural heritages have informed the development of the city before and after the fall of the Saddam Hussain-led regime. Therefore, the study seeks to explain the main and best processes for heritage protection in practice, in terms of developing the knowledge and skills of heritage workers, builders and architects.

Arguably, cultural heritage in Najaf is under threat, with the city losing many components that have shaped Iraqi identity. In Iraq, there is an unclear relationship between the local and central government, building's authorities, national and local institutions and trusts, and local communities. In addition, there is a misunderstanding concerning what heritage value means at local and national levels, and little relationship between theory and practice. This study aims to make a reasoned judgement regarding why local residents of the old town continue to move away to the new neighbourhoods. Consequently, the main research discussion assesses whether the development of a local approach to heritage would be more effective than national policy in conservation management in Iraq. The outcome of this study will be recommendations for preventing further heritage destruction, and for appropriate conservation management to support Najaf being listed as a world heritage site. Overall, there is evidence to indicate a strong tension between those who advocate extending and developing the old town, and the minority who call for

⁸¹ Mohammad Makiya, 'Meeting with the Imam Ali Shrine Secretary Members', (London, 2014).

protection of the city. Perhaps one of the most serious defects in present policies and politics is the lack of active conservation legislation. My objective is to understand what has happened to the Iraqi heritage, with particular reference to Najaf in terms of both the development of national policies and legislation and conservation practices at a grass-roots level, in order to analyse the issues that limit or support effective conservation. A review of these policies and legislation, as well as of the network of infrastructure, is useful, in order to clarify the workings of the Iraqi system, dealing with cultural heritage and encouraging greater understanding of this issue by government departments and institutions, local government, religious authorities, the educational system, the political system and local democracy.

Developing a research approach specific to the Iraqi context

This research approaches conservation management and its processes to demonstrate what has happened to Iraqi heritage and why, as well as delineating adaptations of cultural heritage, and the care and management of them. Understanding changes over time from the top down and bottom up (government policy and conservation practice) is the key to answering the research question. Legislative policy review at national and regional levels is one way to understand and develop a history of management practices. Accordingly, the study gathered all the materials related to the relevant laws, policies and legislation in order to recognise and critique why heritage has been restricted and damaged. In addition, records of key projects, which provide evidence of local practices, were collected. Key projects in Najaf were identified: the two extension projects of the Imam Ali Shrine, as well as their preceding design competition; the 90m extension project of the surrounding area of the shrine, and the restoration *khan Al-Shilan*, one of the most significant commercial buildings in the old town. Primary materials of the projects are documented - architectural plans, documents and recordings - supporting a spatial understanding of cultural heritage on the ground. However, there is no pre-existing, clear and systematic recording system in Iraq. To gather simple materials, you have to spend much time as well as needing support or sponsorship from third parties. Even though my study is government sponsored, I still needed extra support to collect this data from official sources, and I was assisted by other researchers and local residents who helped me because they like their city and want to protect its local identity. There is still a long way to go to build an official spatial record of Iraq's cultural heritage.

This research is structured around three case studies covering the diversity of Najaf's cultural heritage, in order to examine the process of conservation management on the ground. Recently, there have been some attempts to protect significant buildings in the old town in response to concerns about uncontrolled building. For instance, the *Al-Khumaini* and *Al-Habobi* houses in the heart of the Najaf old town have been rehabilitated.⁸² Otherwise, there is great development pressure on Najaf's heritage, which has led to the loss of many significant buildings or sites. For example, development pressure has led to the demolition of the *Al-Rass* mosque inside the

⁸² Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of the Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine.'

shrine and the town wall, in addition to some historical khans and religious schools, mosques, houses and other parts of the urban fabric.

Case study analysis focuses on a case in relation to the complex dynamic context, as it can explain causal links.⁸³ My selected case studies inform a deeper understanding of both place and practice. Stake states that the case study approach has become a significant way of gathering data in a qualitative inquiry. This approach allows a choice of what is to be selected and studied.⁸⁴ The strengths of the case study approach is its depth, richness of multiple sources, understanding of causes, process and context, links between causes and final outcomes, and fostering new research approaches and questions.⁸⁵ The selection of case studies was a significant aspect of the research. The final choice was three cases, covering different aspects of the old town. The first is a selected fragment of the urban fabric in the *Al-Houaish* neighbourhood, chosen in order to explain the heritage protection system and to confirm why physical space in Najaf old town has become redundant. The second is the Imam Ali Shrine, chosen to demonstrate the current state of development control in the city, to document and designate the morphological change of the place over time, and to justify and understand the application of a conservation management framework. Finally, the *Khan Al-Shilan* was chosen, in order to be able to understand conservation management and intervention practices.

A number of reasons led me to select these three cases. I have focused on different scales, from an urban, represented by the urban fabric, to the small building of *Khan Al-Shilan*. Another important selection factor was local significance, which was the reason for selecting the shrine (due to its fundamental role in the establishment of the city) and the *Al-Houaish* neighbourhood, which hosts many significant buildings, and the *Khan Al-Shilan*, representing the memory of Najaf's political history. In addition, there was much better access to records for these cases than for other significant buildings, sites and administration systems. Moreover, the variety of current activities in a range of locations was taken into consideration, from religious activities at the shrine to the secular heritage of the *Al-Shilan*, with *Al-Houaish*

⁸³ Linda. Groat and David. Wang, *Architectural Research Methods*, Second edn (New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons, 2013), p. 421.

⁸⁴ Robert E. Stake, 'Case Studies', in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (London: Thousand Oaks, Sage, 2000), pp. 435 - 54 (p. 435).

⁸⁵ Bent. Flyvbjerg, 'Case Study', in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Los Angeles, London: SAGE Publications, 2011), (p. 314).

including both. Lastly, the variety of current usage was taken into account, from public usage of the shrine to the private usage of the *Khan Al-Shilan*. Altogether, these three case studies capture the main features of the old town and represent the variety of Najaf's cultural heritage. The selected case studies were also suitable to the timescale of my PhD research, for which the main challenge was integrating many multiple data sources in a coherent way, and establishing compelling evidence in the current unstable political context of Iraq. Each case study has evolved in different ways, therefore, through documentary investigations, observations and interviews, in order that the assets and the processes related to building and conservation can be understood in depth.

Research methods and material sources

The research follows a historical methodology, which depends on qualitative methods, the primary research methods being document investigation, interviews, and case study analysis. The tactics of historical research involves the finding, evaluation, organization and analysis of facts.⁸⁶ Furet explains that qualitative history refers to many different things: for instance, it may mean a type of procedure or source and that “*in one way or another, explicitly or not, it implies a particular way of conceptualising the past*”.⁸⁷ My study moves from general aspects of cultural heritage to the particular, through focusing on specific case studies in order to understand the past. Its main purpose is to address the history of policy, practices, and understandings of the story of the heritage of the city, recognising what has happened to Najaf’s cultural heritage and why.

As a city of knowledge, Najaf is home to several forums and local institutions: for example, the “Association Publishing Forum”, (المنتدى الناشر), “Najaf’s Writers Union” (اتحاد الكتاب النجفي), and “the Monday Forum” (المنتدى الاحد), which have begun to increase people’s awareness of the need to protect their heritage. These activities are crowned by a special initiative to save and protect the Imam Ali Shrine and the urban identity of Najaf old town, which has been adopted by Najaf’s Writers Union. On January 2nd 2016, an initiative was announced and signed by many historians, architects, writers and businessmen in the local community, consisting of 11 points, which cover the rescue of the Imam Ali Shrine and the old town, and which aim to protect the local urban identity from destruction, as discussed in more detail below.⁸⁸ My concern is twofold: to explore the perceptions of the meaning of cultural heritage; and to discuss how cultural heritage can best be protected. The main issue is evidencing, since even those parties interested in cultural heritage protection in the city have a knowledge gap regarding reconstruction versus preservation. For example, Point 4 of the draft mentions work on reconstruction and the establishment of new-build architectural monuments to

⁸⁶ Groat and Wang, *Architectural Research Methods*, p. 207.

⁸⁷ Francois. Furet, 'Qualitative Methods in History', in *Constructing the Past: Essays in Historical Methodology*, ed. by Jacques Le. Goff and Pierre. Nora (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), (p. 12).

⁸⁸ 'The Initiative to Save and Protect the Imam Ali Shrine and Urban Identity of Najaf Old Town.', (Najaf: Najaf’s writers union, NGO., 2016).

represent the local identity and heritage of the Najaf and Iraq, especially inside the old town. The current problems of Najaf originate from this point.

It should be noted that the historical research was mainly based on using Arabic documents and then translating the materials into English. The main problem of collecting these materials was the absence of a clear documentary system (i.e. a lack of heritage or government archives) and limitations in the availability and quality of primary sources. This led me to conduct interviews to provide first-hand accounts of heritage processes, particularly to develop the knowledge of local perceptions of the causes of cultural heritage destruction, and the strategies of conservation management practices and development control on the ground. Difficulties encountered, in addition to getting permission to access government materials, take photographs, and gaining access to the Imam Ali Shrine and private buildings, were to persuade selected interviewees to take part in the research. With ethics approval granted by the University,⁸⁹ the strategy was to explain the study's aims and objectives, and to reassure potential participants about the nature of the research. Interview methods in the architectural field are new to Iraqi culture, and in particular to religious scholars, and the main concern of religious scholars was the possibility that interview material could be used for political purposes. For example, one of the religious scholar's offices asked me if I was a candidate in the parliamentary elections in Iraq, and even when I said no, refused my invitation to meet. However, I found a positive response to the use of interviews overall, and this approach is discussed in detail below.

⁸⁹ I received ethical approval from the University of Sheffield to contact the applicants.

Written sources

The critical analysis of documents is one of the most common historical methods, which exploits primary and secondary materials and sources, including chronicles, maps, government documents, travel literature, local authority building warrants, planning archives, local histories and newspaper archives. In addition, I aimed to collect any relevant unpublished materials of the site or buildings, such as original or alteration architectural drawings, historical photographs, contract drawings or legal documents, which altogether are useful to understand the value of a building or site in depth.⁹⁰ In this study, the documentary investigation can be categorised on three main levels, namely international, national and local, to identify and understand local heritage values and conservation best practice. Some of this data is available from the directorate of Najaf Municipality, the Directorate of Urban Planning in Najaf, Imam Ali Holy Shrine Institution, Najaf's cultural heritage museum, and the Iraqi Public Board of Antiquities and Heritage.

Government documents were very important because they gave enough evidence to understand how Najaf's cultural heritage has been changed. The oldest maps at the archive of the Municipality of Najaf went back to only 1940, and were in a very poor condition. I obtained official permission to take photos of all the city maps on my first field trip. The directorate of urban planning in Najaf also gave me some materials: for instance, the two main master plans studies of Najaf after 2003. The first study was made in 2006 by Llewelyn Davies, in association with ADEC, sponsored by the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works. The study attempted to set out the master plan of Najaf city, as well as the old town.⁹¹ For some reason, they left the old town out and focused on the city of Najaf.⁹² In 2011, the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works / General Directorate of Physical Planning contracted with Dewan architects and engineers to set out the urban renewal of the Najaf's old town.⁹³ The Imam Ali Shrine institution asked Shahid Beheshti University in Tehran, Iran, Department of Architecture to design the extension

⁹⁰ Rob Pickard, *Conservation in the Built Environment*, (Harlow: Wesley Longman Limited., 1996), p. 177.

⁹¹ Najaf has expanded, so that the old town means the city inside the last wall, which was replaced by a ring road. The city of Najaf means the newly expanded neighbourhoods.

⁹² The City of Najaf refers to the areas outside the old town.

⁹³ Architects and Engineers. Dewan, 'Urban Renewal of the City Center of Holy City of Najaf', (Baghdad / Iraq, 2011).

project of the shrine, as well as the surrounding area.⁹⁴ It should be noted that permission from the department of the Directorate of Urban Planning in Najaf, as well as the Imam Ali Shrine Secretaries to all the available data, maps and photos of their contractors (for instance, Llewelyn Davies, Dewan and the Shahid Beheshti) were all given. All the publications were funded by the Iraqi government and their representatives.

In terms of the regulations, policies and politics, the study focuses on the acts dealing with the conservation process at both national and local levels. These are as follows:

1. The Iraqi law of ancient antiquities, 1924, Law No. 59 (1936);
2. The Iraqi Law for the general institutions of Archaeology No. 40 (1958):
3. The Iraqi Law for institutions of Archaeology and Heritage No.80 (1979);
4. Law No.55 (2002) on the antiquities and heritage of Iraq; the study of the conservation and redevelopment of the historical centre of Baghdad city / Al-Rusafa, by JCP Inc. (1984);
5. Abu Nuwas Conservation/ Development project in Baghdad (1982); and
6. The Act of Administration for Holy Sites and Shrines Shiite No. 19 (2005).

Furthermore, the study draws on international charters for conservation and regeneration, such as Athens, Venice, and the Burra charters, to examine and analysis the approach taken in Iraq and to reveal the problems identified in relation national and local heritage.

At a local level, the “Najaf is my identity” symposium in 2012 was a first step to protecting Najaf’s cultural heritage. Since then, the “Najaf charter” for the conservation and restoration of historic towns, urban areas, monuments and sites in 2013 has been introduced, in an effort to encourage the local community to protect its heritage. The Najaf charter is set out according to the international charters that deal with the cultural heritage of historical cities by UNESCO and ICOMOS.⁹⁵ The UNESCO office for Iraq also focuses more on outline documentation and support for

⁹⁴ Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of the Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine.'

⁹⁵ 'Najaf Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Historic Towns, Urban Areas, Monuments, and Sites', (Najaf: International Energy and Environment Foundation, 2013).

Najaf's heritage. In 2014 the first book, "Najaf, the Gate of Wisdom" was published by UNESCO, both in English and Arabic editions.⁹⁶

Local magazines help one to understand Najaf's cultural heritage and social life in more depth; and the *Afaq Najafia* is the most significant magazine published in Najaf and deals with local heritage. It is issued quarterly and covers modern cultural and heritage research, and studies of sacred Najaf. The *Afaq Najafia* periodical, issued from 2007 to the present, has been circulated widely, allowing historians and researchers to share knowledge. Najaf benefits from a scholar and historian, Dr Hassan Al-Hakim, who has documented its history in detail, in chronological order, from the pre-Islamic era to the present, in more than 20 volumes. His encyclopaedic work is an old idea: he said "*I was worried about repression by Saddam's regime, and so I decided to put the manuscript on hold*".⁹⁷ One other published historical work "Najaf's pasts and present" by Jaffar Mahboba, is significant to the study. This was the first book to cover and document the historical life of Najaf, the first volume of which was published in 1934. It is the cornerstone of most research on Najaf. I had the opportunity to meet the writer's son, and attained additional oral material from him, as he was a member of the Imam Ali Shrine Secretariat, and a member of the Najaf provincial council, in addition to being a citizen of Najaf.

Material sources

The site or building itself was also one of the main sources for gathering information. The types of construction in terms of building methods, style and materials provide evidence of the relevant significance of a site or building.⁹⁸ As already explained, each of the case studies was approached through a combination of documentary evidence review, site visits and on-site recording, mostly through a photographic record, where circumstances allowed. The security situation, as well as cultural respect for the privacy of Najaf's old town residents, meant only limited access was available within the city, although I benefitted from the services of a local police officer, who helped me to access and takes photos of specific places, particularly the urban fabric of the *Al-Houaish* neighbourhood. It should be noted that taking

⁹⁶ Yasser Tabbaa and Sabrina Mervin, *Najaf the Gate of Wisdom: History, Heritage and Significance of the Holy City of the Shi'a*, (Paris. Amman.: UNESCO, 2014).

⁹⁷ Ibid. p. 33.

⁹⁸ Pickard, *Conservation in the Built Environment*, p. 177.

photographs inside the Imam Ali Shrine is not allowed; nevertheless, the deputy head of the Secretariat agreed that I could use my camera, and he asked a member of the media office to accompany and help me. Finally, in terms of the *khan Al-Shilan*, the head of the museum allowed me to take pictures, which I have used to document and analyse the cultural heritage conditions on the ground.

Oral sources

Unfortunately, the Iraqi archives in general, particularly with reference to Najaf, do not have enough primary materials. Many political, religious and social reasons have led to this incompleteness in the records. Interviews have proved to be one of the most powerful ways of gathering information to understand specific approaches to cultural heritage. This decision was made in order to establish an interpretive approach to the contemporary knowledge of understanding conservation values in the Iraqi context. I conducted 30 interviews, particularly in Najaf old town. The information was gathered through dialogues with people in the city reflecting on their experiences, perceptions and practices, and this is a significant part of my data collection. Interviewees were chosen because they lived in Najaf as local residents, had researched Najaf or worked there, or because they were decision makers in central or local government, stakeholders, architects, members of heritage elites, or religious scholars from or living in Najaf (Table 1-1). Consequently, they have a significant voice in this study. It can be stated that a great many people responded to the call for participants, especially local residents, because they wanted to support their town. I can state that local residents responded and supported my research more than architects, decision makers and researchers.

The transcripts from the series of interviews were anonymised, removing references to named respondents, and replacing the name of the interviewee with a reference system for the all applicants, which contains one of these codes, followed by a number (DM = Decision Maker, RS= Religious Scholar, Arc= Architect, LR= Local Resident, and Sta= Stakeholder). The term 'stakeholder' refers to local historians, researchers, builders and writers. It should be stated that some interviewees could be categorised in two or three ways, so the most relevant was selected in these cases.

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Table 1-1 List of interviewees and why each was selected

Interview data

According to Kvale and Brinkmann the term interview refers to “*attempts to understand the world through the subject’s points of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences*”.⁹⁹ Moreover, in 2003 Corbetta stated that “*the qualitative interview can be defined as a conversation that has the following characteristics: it is elicited by the interviewer; interviewees are selected on the basis of a data-gathering plan; a considerable number of subjects are interviewed; it has a cognitive objective; it is guided by the interviewer; or it is based on a flexible, non-standardized pattern of questioning*”.¹⁰⁰ The interviews in this study are one of the methods of recording, understanding or describing the significant characteristics of the focal heritage sites and buildings. As Mason comments, with a number of particular materials and information at hand, the interview method is well suited to eliciting historical, cultural and social values.¹⁰¹

Structurally, interviews can be classified into three main types: structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. In “structured interviews”, the interviewer should ask all respondents the same questions with the same wording and sequence.¹⁰² In this form, the interviewer should set out everything in order, and therefore nothing will be left to chance.¹⁰³ In “semi-structured interviews”, there is some flexibility, as the interviewer only outlines the topic content to be covered during the dialogue. This type focuses on the content, and does not need pre-written questions. The ensuing flexibility gives the interviewer the ability to cover a variety of topics, and to ask any questions she/he believes are appropriate and fair, including requests to give further explanations if it is necessary or if the answer is not clear, and finally it establishes a conversational style, unlike structured interviews.¹⁰⁴ The last type is the unstructured interview, which is more flexible than the other two types. Bryman uses the term to describe a situation in which “*the interviewer typically*

⁹⁹ Steinar. Kvale and Svend. Brinkmann, *Interviews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*, Second edn (California: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2009), p. 1.

¹⁰⁰ Piergiorgio. Corbetta, 'The Qualitative Interview', in *Social Research : Theory, Methods and Techniques*, ed. by Piergiorgio. Corbetta (London: SAGE Publications, Ltd, 2003), pp. 264-87 pp. 264-65).

¹⁰¹ Randall Mason, 'Assesing Values in Conservation Planning: Methodoligical Issues and Choices', in *Assessing the Values of Cultural Heritage: Research Report*, ed. by Marta. De la Torre (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute., 2002), (p. 20).

¹⁰² Corbetta, 'The Qualitative Interview', (p. 269).

¹⁰³ Andrea. Fontana and James. Frey, 'The Interview: From Structured Questions to Negotiated Text', in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. by Norman. Denzin and Yvonna. Lincoln (London: Sage Publications, 2000), (p. 650).

¹⁰⁴ Corbetta, 'The Qualitative Interview', pp. 270- 71).

has only a list of topics or issues, often called an interview guide, that are to be covered. The style of questioning is usually informal. The phrasing and sequencing of questions will vary from interview to interview".¹⁰⁵ The choice among these three types of interview is dependent on the research objectives and the characteristics of the phenomenon studied. In relation to my subject area, the interviews focus more on the life and oral history of the old town through three different case studies. Accordingly, unstructured interviews were my method of conducting the interviews, because it gave me enough flexibility to gather as much data as possible, and ask different questions of different participants, according to their role.

Interviews can take different forms, For instance they can be conducted via e-mail or phone, through group interviews, or as face-to-face interviews, which are the most common form.¹⁰⁶ In this case, I relied heavily on social media communications using Facebook, Skype, Twitter and Viber. There are different reasons for using social media: for instance, they are cheaper than other communication methods, easy to use and widely used and popular. Social media helped me to conduct interviews with some architects and ordinary people, as well as the cultural elite. Facebook is very popular in Iraq, and allowed me to follow and contact many researchers, key players and ordinary local citizens, enabling appointments with them individually. In addition, most local people do not have an email, or do not use it regularly, compared to Facebook. A good example of using social media was following Sta2 through his Facebook page, creating a snowball effect, which allowed me to contact others. Firstly, he responded to my message and then helped me to gather more materials and make contact with different persons.

Asking some questions and achieving clear and useful answers from participants is a harder task than it might seem before starting. The procedure that I adopted was sending the consent form and information sheet to the participants by email, Facebook messenger, or sometimes by hand during my field trips; and then waiting for them to respond. In some cases, I asked third parties to introduce the research to the participants, particularly to decision makers and religious scholars. When they agreed, I tried to organise an interview date for the time I would be in Iraq, or to

¹⁰⁵ Alan. Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, Fourth edition edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 213.

¹⁰⁶ Fontana and Frey, 'The Interview: From Structured Questions to Negotiated Text', (p. 645).

conduct an interview via social media, if this was not possible. Thus, the snowball technique allowed this study to find as many relevant participants as possible, especially it hard to reach/involve ones, where a high degree of trust is required to initiate the contact.¹⁰⁷ Most interviews were face-to-face interviews in Najaf during my field trips, and Baghdad and London, as some of the interviewees lived there.

One example is the interview with RS1, one of the Shi'a religious scholars, a "*grand ayatollah*", born and living in Najaf. Normally, he meets people after noon prayers at his small office in Najaf, and the head office organises and manages the queue through discussions about the questions. Generally, each person sits beside RS1 and asks him one question and listens to his answer, and usually other audiences cannot hear his answer, particularly if it is a confidential question. I went with my home town friends to the office, and they introduced me to the head office, which welcomed me and gave me 20 minutes to ask questions of the sheikh. He was very interested in my subject area and encouraged me to continue to pursue it, and started to speak to the entire audience. It should be noted that one person present in the audience was a member of the Iraqi Parliament, who participated in the discussion with us.

Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, I could not reach some of the key stakeholders in city politics. One of these is Sayed Ali Al-Sistani, the famous Shi'a religious scholar in Najaf. I went to his office in the Najaf old town and met one of his assistants, who apologised for being unable to set up an interview. However, I carried out an interview with one of his representatives in Najaf. Also, I could not see the Najaf's Governor, Adnan Al-Zurfy. Finally, it surprised me that some researchers, decision makers and architects who dealt with the Iraqi heritage nationally did not respond to interview requests; comprising 20 percent of my interview approaches.

For each interview, I transcribed the full conversation in Arabic first,¹⁰⁸ and then translated only the relevant points required for the study. In this respect, I was responsible for the translation of all the Arabic materials and interviews that I undertook. In terms of the degree of reliability, I took some steps in order to avoid bias and to generate solid data on which to build and support my argument. The

¹⁰⁷ Fabiola Baltar and Ignasi Brunet, 'Social Research 2.0: Virtual Snowball Sampling Method Using Facebook', *internet Research*, 22 (2012).

¹⁰⁸ Arabic is my own and most interviewees first language.

accuracy in this research comes from dealing with different categories and types of participants and contributions (architects, local residents, researchers, etc.). These different categories of participants allowed me to minimise personal bias. I tried to contact all possible and available participants with different viewpoints. As a result of the shortage of materials about the conservation management of the old town, these interviews allowed me to gather establishing information to fill the knowledge gap and investigate the level of understanding of conservation in the context of contemporary Iraq. In fact, I collected as much information as possible, and used it as the backbone of the study.

Thesis structure

The overall structure of the thesis takes the form of eight main chapters, including this introductory chapter. Chapter 2 sets out the theoretical frame work of the process of conserving cultural heritage at three levels: international, national and local. Consequently, it is divided into three main sections: heritage protection, development control and conservation management practices. Section one, on heritage protection, considers what to protect and whether development planning should consider the needs of heritage safeguarding. It sets out the designation system of heritage in the Iraqi context. The development control section explains the principle of managing built environment processes through a planning system, developing a strategy for appropriate new development, and a set of procedures to ensure that proposed developments are appropriate. It presents an overview of the Iraqi planning system in relation to cultural heritage. The last section discusses conservation management practices, in order to explain how heritage management is implemented in terms of good practice, and what this means at the scale of regulating the city and in terms of conservation approaches. This part explains the international standard for examining and explaining the problems of Iraqi heritage, with particular reference to Najaf. Then it focuses on the methods employed internationally and their relevance nationally and at a local level in Iraq. In fact, theoretically, Iraq appears to have sound conservation policies; but there is little conservation work on the ground.

Chapter 3 focuses on the *Al-Houaish* neighbourhood and its impact on Najaf social life. This chapter is divided into three main sections. Section 1 is a brief history of the Najaf old town, setting out the main urban development, the destruction of the fabric, the challenges and the features of the old town. Section 2 focuses on the *Al-Houaish* neighbourhood in order to foster an understanding of the current situation at a neighbourhood level. The last section analyses the physical, cultural and social pressures, in order to explain the physical fabric challenges, current building conditions and social fabric challenges.

Chapter 4 discusses the Imam Ali Shrine as an institution and cultural monument, addressing the implications of cultural significance and its implementation and impact on local conservation management. This chapter is organised into two main sections in order to explain development control in depth. The first section addresses

the historical and cultural context of the shrine, its historical development and significance. It considers the shrine's organization and evolution, as well as investigating the relationship between the shrine and the town, in terms of what is distinct, why it is important, and what impact it has on Najaf. The second section focuses on the external (national) and internal (local) forces that have been acting on the shrine as a building since 2005. It details specific projects to discover their remit and impact on the shrine's historic fabric. In terms of conservation management, it discusses how and why the shrine has been changed over time, as an example of how heritage has been designated, protected and managed in Iraq.

Chapter 5 focuses on the Imam Ali Shrine in terms of the implications of the new expansion projects executed or planned by the shrine, and their impact on the local community (from 2005 to the present). Accordingly, this chapter explores the tension between heritage protection and development processes on the ground. From a broader perspective between those people who believe that the shrine's religious value outweighs its architectural and historic values and should develop to accommodate the huge number of pilgrims visiting safely, and those who believe the shrine has a great history and should be conserved in the best way possible. The chapter is divided into two main sections. The first considers the *Sahan Fatima* Project, the *Al-Ansari* proposal project, the Dewan proposal project and the 90m development project. These are presented as a critical appraisal to explain how they deal with Najaf's heritage, the strengths and weaknesses of these projects and their impact on the ground. Section 2 reviews how the shrine's heritage is perceived in principle, in terms of external legislation and local governance, and how it operates in practice, in terms of what drives management and development.

Chapter 6 focuses on one of the most significant social commercial buildings in the holy city, *Khan Al-Shilan*. It is of particular interest because its function has changed persistently over time, while its form has been preserved, even during periods of neglect. It is divided into two main sections. Section 1 gives the historical and cultural significance the *khan* in Iraq. Section 2 outlines the history of *khan Al-Shilan* and reviews its management, from its establishment to the present, as an interesting example of how conservation has recently been practiced in Iraq. An important typological survival, I argue that the *Khan's* heritage value lies particularly in the record of changes that have marked its history, and that understanding these changes

is important both in determining its significance in heritage terms and in assessing the approach taken in its recent restoration and reuse.

After explaining Najaf's conservation practices through three case studies, the degree of knowledge and understanding of values is diagnosed and the processes and practices of conservation management summarised. It can be stated that the analysis of the three case studies have identified a gap in knowledge on the ground about the content of Chapter 2. Thus, the thesis looks in detail at the infrastructure that supports or could support normative heritage management practices, what was and/or is currently present in this area, and what may be defective about this infrastructure. Conservation management of historical cities is not cheap and needs support from different agencies. Hence, it is likely that management schemes will be integrated within a wider machinery to confirm the protection of the cultural heritage. As such, Chapter 7 reviews the network of Iraqi infrastructure, including government ministries and departments, the education system, the religious authorities and decentralization and local democracy. In total, it will identify the various key players and institutions responsible for decision-making in protection, management and conservation practices. Finally, Chapter 8 makes a series of recommendations for strategies to better understand and protect significant cultural heritage. This chapter will also address how Najaf can best sustain its heritage and cultural importance, as it continues to evolve as a contemporary city.

This study demonstrates the perception of heritage understanding at a local level, achieved through interviews and case studies. It offers a new perspective on the issues Iraq currently faces in terms of conservation management and heritage evaluation. The combination of interviews and a case study analysis has illuminated the extent to which conservation is understood within the Iraqi context, according to architects, key powers, religious scholars and cultural elites, as well as ordinary people from Najaf old town. The study therefore contributes to the conceptualisation of the relationships among national and local governments, urban developers and local communities, in terms of the conservation management of the historical cities in Iraq, with particular reference to Najaf.

Aspects of cultural heritage conservation

Introduction

Cultural heritage is continually endangered by rapid urban development, globalization, demographic change and general neglect and decay. As the world begins to pay increased attention to heritage protection, conservation management and the built environment, policies and legislation for protecting, developing and enhancing cultural heritage, and for monitoring and controlling new development, continue to evolve at international and national levels.¹ Over time, the field of architectural conservation has expanded to cover a wider range of heritage assets and to include a greater range of physical interventions. There has been growing discussion in the international cultural heritage literature on the relationship between official and local understanding, and of community engagement of cultural heritage.² This chapter reviews the concept of conserving significant values at three levels, namely international, national, and local. It focuses on how the meaning of heritage has changed over time and what this might mean in an Iraqi context; how central and local governments, as well as local communities, deal with it; and how heritage is protected and managed in practice.

¹ Aylin Orbasli, *Architectural Conservation: Principles and Practice*, (Blackwell Science Ltd, 2008), p. 66.

² Leidulf Mydland and Wera Grahn, 'Identifying Heritage Values in Local Communities', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 18 (2012), 564.

We are surrounded by cultural heritage, which assists in shaping national and local identity. In 2012 Mydland and Grahn stated that many researchers had diagnosed a knowledge gap, not only between the understanding of heritage at national and local levels, but also in relation to international charters and policies. They also argued that voluntary efforts in the local community were the normal way to protect cultural heritage, especially when these heritage buildings or sites are not listed as heritage sites by the authority, or are not of national or local interest.³

The structure of this chapter is in three main sections: heritage protection, development control, and conservation management practices. Heritage protection refers to the process of regulatory controls for designated heritage, identifying what to protect and how. This involves the following elements:

- a) making a schedule of sites that require protection; securing financial provision to maintain this list;
- b) adding to or amending the list (selecting what is to be given legal protection);
- c) requiring people to protect the heritage designated on these lists through maintenance of the sites;
- d) requiring relevant parties to agree and certify what work can be done to these sites (control of potentially damaging activities by a public authority); and
- e) the provision to prosecute people who do not follow protection procedures.

The development control section further describes the effective and efficient land use of this specific building in the public interest.⁴ The last section is about employing conservation management practices to understand how conservation management is defined as a set of procedures. In addition, it explains how heritage management should work, as implemented in terms of good practice, and what this means in terms of regulating the city and setting out conservation approaches (material interventions, reuse, etc.), and the problems specific to Najaf in terms of referencing to cultural heritage as a planning concern. On the other hand, it also indicates some positive moves in the city.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Keith Thomas, *Development Control : Principles and Practice*, (London: Rutledge: Taylor and Francis Group, 1997), p. 6.

Heritage protection

The term “heritage protection” refers to the process of designating and protecting the significance of inherited objects, both tangible and intangible. This research examines the physical inherited culture, which is significant for protecting the local identity of the place. Value is a significant part of heritage protection and management, as there is no heritage without cultural value. According to Mason, value is used in reference to the positive characteristics and qualities. Cultural value is used to build connection between the past and the present.⁵ Therefore, physical heritage should be better protected in order to keep the connection between the generations. Forrest explains that there is a close relationship between value and protection, as the process of value is a dynamic social process. Different kinds of values may be attached to heritage: for instance, symbolic, aesthetic, historic, public, cultural, ecological, ethnic, legal or social value.⁶ Historic England explains that there are four types of heritage values: evidential, communal, aesthetic and historic value. The significance is the summation of these components.⁷

The early story of the conservation and protection of heritage goes back to classical Greece and Rome; and it is constantly changing to explain how communities saw the relationship between the past, present, and future.⁸ Over the past century, the protection of cultural heritage has achieved an international dimension and expanded broadly to include a wide variety of individuals, special groups and nations. The first international conference around culture heritage was in 1874 in Brussels. The declaration of the conference argued that culture was the common heritage of humankind.⁹ Developed out of the discussions in Brussels, these principles were shaped in two international agreements at The Hague in 1899 and 1907.¹⁰ The Athens Charter was the first international congress of architects and technicians of historic monuments in 1931, and recognized architectural conservation principles

⁵ Randall Mason, 'Assessing Values in Conservation Planning: Methodological Issues and Choices', in *The Heritage Reader*, ed. by Graham Fairclough, et al. (Routledge, 2008), pp. 99-124.

⁶ Craig Forrest, *International Law and the Protection of Cultural Heritage*, (Routledge, 2010), p. 4.

⁷ 'Historic England', (England: Historic England, 2015).

⁸ Miles Glendinning, *The Conservation Movement: A History of Architectural Preservation: Antiquity to Modernity*, (London, New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 9.

⁹ Jukka Jokilehto, *A History of Architectural Conservation*, (Oxford: Oxford : Butterworth-Heinemann, 1999, 1999), p. 282.

¹⁰ John H. Stubbs, *Time Honored: A Global View of Architectural Conservation*, (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2009), p. 247.

that should be accepted internationally. It sought to establish international organisations for restoration on operational and advisory levels. In addition, it encouraged legislation at national level for all countries, in order to solve problems related to the preservation of historic sites.¹¹ The Athens Charter outlined seven resolutions: “*Doctrines and general principles; administration and legislation; aesthetics enhancement; restoration of monuments; the deterioration of monuments; the technique of conservation; and the conservation of monuments and international collaboration*”.¹² In general, the Athens charter outlined the main aspects of the conservation and restoration of historic monuments, and made an encouraging start, raising awareness of conservation issues and building strong legislation to protect significant heritage in the world.¹³

After World War I, and II, some organizations supported much restoration work, working at a local and national level. These attempts were increasingly joined by many private, nongovernmental and intergovernmental initiatives around the world in the second half of the 20th century, who strove to protect significant world heritage sites.¹⁴ The conservation movement continued from this time until the twentieth century, when UNESCO organised an international conference in The Hague in 1954 to update the 1907 agreement.¹⁵ In 1964 the Venice charter was drafted by 61 countries, focusing around architectural conservation and best practices in global contexts, and many countries adopted it, wholly or partially, in different forms. It has had a positive effect on the general field of heritage conservation and is recognized as the standard in legislation around the world.¹⁶

In 1972, Paris embraced the famous general conference of the UNESCO. It focused on cultural heritage and how it was threatened because of decay, social change and economic conditions.¹⁷ They outlined the World Heritage List, monitored and managed by UNESCO in all parts of the World. The World Heritage Convention

¹¹ ICOMOS, *International Charters for Conservation and Restoration: Monuments and Sites I*, (Munchen.: Lipp GmbH, 2004), pp. 31-32.

¹² Athens Charter, 'The Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments', in *1st International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, Athens, October*, (Athens, 1931).

¹³ ICOMOS, *International Charters for Conservation and Restoration: Monuments and Sites I*, (Munchen: Lipp GmbH, 2004)

¹⁴ Stubbs, *Time Honored: A Global View of Architectural Conservation*, pp. 242-43.

¹⁵ Glendinning, *The Conservation Movement: A History of Architectural Preservation: Antiquity to Modernity*, p. 390.

¹⁶ Stubbs, *Time Honored: A Global View of Architectural Conservation*, p. 137.

¹⁷ ICOMOS, *International Charters for Conservation and Restoration: Monuments and Sites I*, p. 43.

categorised three types of built culture: single buildings or monuments, groups of buildings and sites.¹⁸ In addition, it outlined the international and national protection of the natural and cultural heritage. Due to the inadequate scientific, economic, and technological resources of the country where the property to be protected is situated, and the scale of resources needed, heritage protection at national level remains incomplete.¹⁹ According to this convention, the phrase “cultural heritage” refers to monuments, group of buildings or sites. This convention highlights the notion of heritage protection and outlines the relation to territory at local and national level.²⁰ Article 5 of the convention proposed that each country should adopt a general policy to protect its own heritage and emphasised the integration of heritage and community by giving the heritage a function in the life of the community and integrating the heritage protection in planning programmes.²¹

Heritage protection provides regulatory controls for designated heritage and Muller found that the protection of cultural property should be under national regulation and authority. The other approach sees it is a part of humankind, which should therefore be protected according to international charters and regulations.²² In England, for example, the designation is the first step to effecting heritage protection.²³ Historic England defines designation as:

*“The term given to the practice of listing buildings, scheduling monuments, registering parks, gardens and battlefields, and protecting wreck sites. Designation, more commonly referred to as Listing, allows us to highlight what is significant about a building or site, and helps to make sure that any future changes to it do not result in the loss of its significance”.*²⁴

The administrations of heritage designation are normally related to the government or trust, the relationship varying between countries, and between central and local

¹⁸ Stubbs, *Time Honored: A Global View of Architectural Conservation*, pp. 254-55.

¹⁹ ICOMOS, *International Charters for Conservation and Restoration: Monuments and Sites I*, p. 43.

²⁰ UNESCO, 'Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage', in *The General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*, (Paris: UNESCO, 1972).

²¹ UNESCO, Convention concerning the protection of the World cultural and natural heritage, Paris 1972. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>

²² Markus M Müller, 'Cultural Heritage Protection: Legitimacy, Property, and Functionalism', *International Journal of Cultural Property*, 7 (1998).

²³ 'Heritage Protection for the 21st Century', ed. by Median and Sport Department for Culture, Welsh Assembly Government (London: Department for Culture, Median and Sport, www.culture.gov.uk, 2007), (p. 11).

²⁴ 'Historic England'.

government. In England, for example, the Secretary of State for the Environment is responsible for planning policies and legislation, while the Secretary of State for National Heritage is responsible for listing buildings and conservation places.²⁵ The person responsible for designating ancient monuments and buildings at national level is the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport; Gardens and Parks are maintained through Historic England; while local planning authorities are responsible for designating only locally significant heritage.

Local planning authorities in England are also able to propose or recommend extra additions to the list; therefore, it is possible to add or downgrade their classification from the list of buildings. This could be because of a reconsideration of its value or the loss of original features, for instance.²⁶ In general, designation is an important way to protect significant heritage and the special character of cities. The selection of buildings for protection in Historic England is based on “special architectural or historic interest”, identified for their national significance. In England, this listing system is taken into account in the planning and listed building controls system, requiring applications to be made and listed building consent to be given, for example, when new development is proposed. Listed buildings are graded depending on their significance, and the system control is the same for all grades; listing merely explains the importance of the building or site. This system has led to excellent organization and management, which supports the protection of English architectural heritage in its many forms and styles.²⁷ There are different reasons for listing buildings or sites in a national heritage list; the choice is closely related to the cultural, historical and architectural significance of building or site. Examples of the criteria of listing building are as follows: historical value and its relationship to a specific period in history; being part of an important event or related to a significant historic person; having a significant architectural design, construction style or technique; having been built using significant materials or craft skills; and rarity value.²⁸

²⁵ Thomas, *Development Control : Principles and Practice*, pp. 22-24.

²⁶ Orbasli, *Architectural Conservation: Principles and Practice*, pp. 77-78.

²⁷ Department of the Environment and Department of National Heritage, 'Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment', (London: HMSO, 1994).

²⁸ Orbasli, *Architectural Conservation: Principles and Practice*, pp. 76-77.

Iraqi Heritage Protection

At the international level, UNESCO is still responsible for the “World Heritage List”. In 2016, 1031 sites are listed around the World, only 5 of which are in Iraq: Hatra, Ashur, Samarra, and Erbil citadel, and the *Ahwar* of Southern Iraq.²⁹ Unfortunately, *Hatra* and *Ashur* have been desecrated by ISIS/Daesh, while Samarra is also close to the conflict area. As a result, these three sites are also listed as a heritage building which is at risk, and currently Erbil citadel is the only safe site. In addition, Iraq has another 11 properties on the tentative list, nine of which are listed as cultural heritage sites, the other two as cultural and natural heritage sites. In 2000 the Public Board of Heritage and Antiquities submitted 5 sites, Ur, Nimrud, the ancient city of Nineveh³⁰, the fortress of *al-Ukaidar*, and *Wasit*. In 2003, the sacred complex of Babylon and the marshland of Mesopotamia were submitted to the list. Then, in 2011, *Amedy* city in the north, and *wadi Al-Salam* cemetery in Najaf were submitted. The *wadi Al-Salam* cemetery is one of the largest cemeteries in the world; it includes the Imam Ali Holy shrine, as well as the remains of millions of Muslims (Figure 2.1). Finally, the historical feature of the *Tigris River* in Baghdad *Rusafa*, which extends from the *Al-Mustansiriya* school to the Abbasid palace was listed in 2014.³¹



Figure 2.1 *Wadi Al-Salam* cemetery

²⁹ UNESCO, 'World Heritage List', (UNESCO), p. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>.

³⁰ It has been desecrated by *Daesh*.

³¹ UNESCO, 'A Tentative World Heritage List', (UNESCO), p. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/>.

Overall, they are still only a few sites listed, which is very small considering the long history of Iraq. In addition, there is no clear system to advertise them to the Iraqi public and to encourage the World Heritage List (WHL) to list more. For example, Wasit archaeological site is located close to my hometown, but I have never been there, and most of the local community do not know it is listed in the tentative heritage list. In fact, this point introduces the conflict between protection and a perceived to promote human activity in protected areas; as well as the understanding level of the conservation values in the context of contemporary Iraq. To avoid this tension, Bianca stated that conservation cannot be pursued as a single discipline, but it should take into considerations the communities' current aspirations and living patterns.³² However, up to the present the understanding level of protection heritage is still in unsatisfactory level. The *Wadi al-Salam* cemetery is currently being managed by different authorities, contrary to the terms of the WHL. Moreover, the UNESCO report stated that, up to the present, these authorities have not decided whether the site includes or excludes the shrine.³³ The most significant thing is that some heritage elites, activists, local communities and NGOs have been trying to support some sites, such as the marshland of Mesopotamia and Ur to be listed in the WHL through campaigns on social media (especially Facebook). However, LR5 explained that, up to the present, there has been no clear governmental volition to support these sites.³⁴ The other significant issue is that there is no organisation or website to explain these sites at both national and local level, compared to Historic England, for instance. It is therefore difficult to get information about them. In particular, Pieri stated that “*as concerns heritage in Iraq today, there is a gap of non-awareness between what is officially listed by UNESCO World Heritage and what is not*”.³⁵

When it comes to the national level, the Iraqi national designation system is still unclear. Iraqi law No.55 states that its aim is to preserve the antiquity and heritage in the Republic of Iraq as a substantial aspect of the National Wealth. In addition, it

³² Stefano Bianca, *Urban Form in the Arab World: Past and Present*, (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 2000), p. 335.

³³ UNESCO expert mission to Najaf, 'The Results and Recommendations of Unesco Expert Mission to Najaf for Preparation of the World Heritage Nomination File of Wadi Al-Salam Cemetery in Najaf', (Manamah, 2014).

³⁴ LR5, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

³⁵ Caecilia Pieri, 'Of Modernity as Heritage, of Heritage as Future', in " *Preservation and Rehabilitation of Iraqi City Centers*", (Baghdad: Mayoralty of Baghdad, 2010).

demonstrates the antiquities and heritage to the people of Iraq and the International community, in order to highlight the notable role of Iraqi Civilization.³⁶

Legally, Article 5 of the Iraqi Law No.55 states:

“The Antiquity Authority shall be entitled to hold its own registrations, to register the Archaeological Monuments (Buildings and Sites), besides inserting the data, documents and the attachment rights related to the neighbouring real estate and publishing it in the official Gazette to secure permanent protection and restoration”.

In addition *“The Stylistic Character of the modern buildings adjacent to the archaeological sites should also be determined, the new or renewed buildings, their heights, frontispiece and colours so they will be harmonious to the neighbouring antiquity buildings, in coordination with the Antiquity Authority and the Participation Authority”.*³⁷

Article 6 allows the antiquity authority to take over any building that has a significant feature, after paying the value of the property, rather than through expropriation, and to register the site with the Ministry of Finance. Article 7 of this law indicates that all sites should be registered in the name of the Ministry of Finance and allocated for the purposes and possession of the State Board. In practice, there is still confusion regarding the process of designating these significant sites or buildings: The State Board does not have the authority to protect private buildings, the implications of which are further discussed in Chapter 7. Law No. 22 of 2002 shows the State Board of Antiquity and Heritage is responsible for designating, and protecting heritage sites.

“In coordination with the State Directorates, the Antiquity Authority is obliged to prepare a comprehensive survey for the whole Archaic and Heritage sites³⁸ in Iraq, documenting them on the maps, the survey documents shall be provided with standard scales, inserting them within the basic designation of which as well as referring to their usages whether they were

³⁶ Presidency of Iraq Republic, 'Law No.55 of 2002 for the Antiquities and Heritage of Iraq', (Baghdad: Official Gazette, 2002), pp. 566 - 72.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ According to the Article 4 of the Law No.55: *“Antiquity: The movable and immovable property which has been built, made, carved, produced, written or painted by man, those age of which is not less than 200 years, as well as the man and animal skeletons besides the plants remains. The Heritage Material: The movable and immovable property, less than 200 years of age, possessing a historical, national, religious and artistic value”.*

merely lands or Antiquity buildings. The Real Estate Registration Office, Municipality of Baghdad or any other Municipalities concerned, shall be notified' (Article 8).³⁹

However, interviews conducted for this research with decision makers, heritage elites and architects, both at national and local level, indicate that there is no clear designation of an Iraqi heritage process in practice, as this is based on law No. 22, which does not show details of the designation process. LR5 states that the designation system currently is based on individual experience.⁴⁰ In fact, there is no national heritage list, and this could put Iraqi heritage under threat. Moreover, Article 23 obliges the authority to continue documenting heritage buildings and sites to conserve the Iraqi cultural heritage, which has led them to classify these buildings according to their historical, cultural, architectural or Islamic significance.⁴¹ Overall, there is no central record, and it is difficult to protect heritage in such circumstances.

In terms of listing buildings at local level, there have been a few attempts to list significant buildings in the Najaf old town. The main concern is the increase in the clearances of the historical urban fabric. According to the head of the Iraqi Public Board of Antiquity and Heritage, Najaf is the top Iraqi city in term of demolition and in losing its heritage and antiquity sites.⁴² Since 2003, there has been an increase in attention towards the protection of the heritage of Najaf old town and two studies of the built heritage were recently commissioned. The first study was by Llewelyn Davies, through six reports applied between 2006 and 2008. This was followed by Dewan, which submitted five reports (2011- 2015). These studies were both contracted to the central government/Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works, with the aim of setting out a master plan of the old town. In parallel, the University of Shahid Beheshti produced a different report and gave it to the Imam Ali Shrine Secretary. Only the Dewan report has any legal weight, as it has been approved by the central government.

Llewelyn Davies tried to document the historical heritage buildings in the Najaf old town through the new master plan for Najaf.⁴³ They listed 27 buildings (Figure 2.2),

³⁹ President of Iraq Republic, 'Law No.55 of 2002 for the Antiquities and Heritage of Iraq'.

⁴⁰ LR5, 'Interview'.

⁴¹ President of Iraq Republic, 'Law No.55 of 2002 for the Antiquities and Heritage of Iraq'.

⁴² Fawzia Al-Maliki, 'Najaf Heritage Buildings under Threat', (www.noon14.net/31480: Noon, 2011).

⁴³ Llewelyn Davies Yeang and ADEC, 'Holy City of Najaf: Masterplanning', (Baghdad: Republic of Iraq: Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works, 2006), (p. 141).

in very simple information and documents, but did not describe the process of designating, documenting and listing these specific buildings. According to the sixth report, buildings of historic, cultural or architectural value are scattered throughout the old town. These buildings are a key asset for Najaf and represent the city's long and rich heritage. It is important that they are protected, and where necessary, that work is undertaken to repair and conserve them.⁴⁴ The report proposed three policies to outline the protection of the old town:

Policy C1: Landmark buildings and settings to be protected and enhanced;

Policy C2: Important buildings of historic or religious significance to be protected and enhanced;

Policy C3: Traditional urban forms to be retained and enhanced; and redevelopment to be sensitive to the historic fabric.⁴⁵

The report argued that, despite previous clearance and redevelopment, there remains within the old town a rich heritage of traditional brick-built buildings and a traditional urban form of informally laid out narrow alleyways. It acknowledges that these historic neighbourhoods are now threatened by further clearance, pressure for redevelopment and a lack of investment in maintenance. It proposes key principles for protecting the heritage, including redevelopment within an existing plot structure, with a maximum of two plots to be combined for new development; buildings to be a maximum of 2 storeys; and the retention of existing narrow alleyways.⁴⁶ However, there are no clear processes to set out these principles via local governance. Meanwhile, the decision makers are struggling to select the best control system.⁴⁷ As a result, the government decided to stop this project and agreed a contract with Dewan instead.

⁴⁴ Llewelyn Davies Yeang and ADEC (Architectural designer for Engineering Consultancy), 'The Holy City of Najaf: Master Planning, Stage Four', (Baghdad: Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works, 2008).

⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 50.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 70.

⁴⁷ Arc7, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

Figure 2.2 Historical buildings in the old town; (source: Davies Yeang and ADEC, 'Holy City of Najaf: Master planning', p. 141).

Dewan then listed the buildings of value in its study, “The urban renewal of the city centre of the holy city of Najaf”. This study listed 160 buildings (Figure 2.3) in the

old town⁴⁸, and divided them into four main categories. Category (A) applies to any buildings with a high level of value, and in good condition. Category (B) deals with buildings having medium value; category (C) with low value; and (D) means buildings with no religious or heritage value.⁴⁹

This shows the different criteria for designating heritage between Dewan and Llewelyn Davies, and this is also clear from the proposed number of listed buildings. The main concern of this listing is that it has partly been produced remotely. The study did not cover all the information about these buildings.⁵⁰ For example, the 4th report intended to list *Al-Yazdi* religious school even though there was no information about it, yet it is one of the best buildings in the old town in terms of its architectural design and decoration. Another example, *Al-Khuzae* mosque, which had been proposed as a category (A) site, was described as a building without any heritage value, because it had been fully rebuilt. On the other hand, the study listed some buildings in category (A), and described them as fully rebuilt with new materials. Thus, there is no consensus regarding the designation and management of Najaf's built heritage, with the main weakness of the being that there are no universal criteria at national and local level, processes or records of designation decisions; and it can be difficult to understand why a particular building has or has not been designated. In addition, the designations do not pay attention to engaging local communities; it is a sometimes secretive system, and very difficult to access.

⁴⁸ For more details, please see appendices.

⁴⁹ Dewan Architects and Engineers, 'Urban Renewal of the City Center of Holy Najaf: Comprehensive Master Plan of the City Center of Holy Najaf', (Najaf: Republic Iraq, Ministry of Municipalities and Public Work, General directorate of physical planning, 2015), (p. 75).

⁵⁰ Department of Architecture. Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine', (Najaf: Imam Ali Shrine, 2014).

Figure 2.3: Important buildings in Najaf (source: Dewan, 'Urban Renewal of the City Centre of Holy Najaf: Comprehensive Master Plan of the City Centre of Holy Najaf', p. 76).

Historic England up to the present does not know the total number of listed buildings in England, estimating that it could be around 500 000.⁵¹ According to Historic

⁵¹ 'Historic England'.

England, listed buildings can be used like any other building; they can be changed, extended and even demolished within government planning guidance. The local authority in England uses the system of listed building in order to make decisions that balance the site's historic significance against other issues: for example its function, condition or viability.⁵² In comparison with the English system, there is no clear listing system or specific authority dealing with heritage protection in Iraq. In particular, Sta1 and Sta4 illustrated the importance of protecting significant buildings in the old town. The first interviewee explained that the local identity should be protected,⁵³ and the second argued that adopting a clear protection system encourages pilgrims to visit these sites, to support income-generation. Gradually, this will make the old town busy, and support the economic situation rather than historical, cultural, and architectural aspects.⁵⁴ I can state that a historical and physical analysis has not yet been done to enable robust decisions about alterations to heritage to be made in Najaf at present.

In terms of the provision to prosecute people who do not follow protection procedures, Iraqi law No. 55 in Articles 15, 22, and 28 lays down some points in order to protect national and local heritage sites and buildings.⁵⁵ However, this does not include sanctions. Thus, land authorities do not pay attention to protecting their own heritage buildings for reasons such as the land value and the pressure of modernism. The main frustration is related to situations in which the government does not appear to prioritise the safeguarding legacy, and each ministry, organisation or stakeholder has changed the elevations and plans, and sometimes demolished their historic buildings. For example, concern among architects and heritage elites after 2003 increased about a number of significant buildings with elevations which were covered with “*Alucobond*” (Aluminium composite panels). It is a common sight to see historical buildings being rapidly covered with these panels, as Figure 2.4 shows.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Sta1, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

⁵⁴ Sta4, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

⁵⁵ Presidency of Iraqi Republic, 'Law No.55 of 2002 for the Antiquities and Heritage of Iraq', (Baghdad: Official Gazette, 2002), pp. 566 - 72.

Figure 2.4 Historic building covered in *Alucobond* in Baghdad

It has been suggested that this material is being used because it is cheaper than other finishing materials, and makes buildings look more modern.⁵⁶ This situation obviously threatens the historical significance of built fabric, and Al-Zamili has reported that the *Alucobond* looks like a cancer.⁵⁷ *Amanat Baghdad*⁵⁸ is prevented from using it on the facades of government buildings,⁵⁹ but the problem is not restricted to such buildings. Most significant buildings are privately owned and are sometimes developed, maintained or rehabilitated without building permits.

Overall, the UNESCO report on Najaf explained that the main problem was a decrease in the level of understanding of heritage values on the ground.⁶⁰ This indicates the significance of adopting clear regulations supported by strong and active sanctions to stop heritage destruction on the ground. This situation needs collaboration among central and local government, as well as authorities, agencies and communities. Encouragingly, the Shrine Secretary has invited local audiences to share ideas in starting to discuss developing the shrine and its surrounding area, and this can only support improving and increasing local awareness toward heritage.

⁵⁶ Sta9, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

⁵⁷ Imad AL-Zamili, 'The Alubond.. Architectural Cancer with Shiny Colors', *Al-Ittihad newspaper*, (2013).

⁵⁸ *Amanat* Bagdad is the Municipality of Baghdad.

⁵⁹ 'Amanat Baghdad Prevent Using Alucobond', (Baghdad: AlSumaria News, 2013).

⁶⁰ UNESCO mission to Najaf, 'The Results and Recommendations of Unesco Expert Mission to Najaf for Preparation of the World Heritage Nomination File of Wadi Al-Salam Cemetery in Najaf'.

The other significant issues involve war and terrorism, which have put heritage sites under threat, although the international conventions (for instance The Hague Convention in 1954 and the second Protocol in 1999) have been calling for the protection of cultural heritage in all circumstances. It has been said that in any war, the first casualty is the truth, and the second is often cultural heritage property, because of inaccurate targeting, looting or terrorism.⁶¹

The Gulf Wars⁶² (1980-2003) put the Iraqi cultural heritage under threat, when military operations and missile launches destroyed many Iraqi heritage sites (for example, Babylon, Ctesiphon, Samarra and others). Although the conventional operation ended in 2003, in the wake of US-led victories and the change of regime in Baghdad, most of the museums and archaeological sites in Baghdad, Babylon, Mosel, Najaf, Basra and other cities suffered extensive looting, theft, fire and vandalism.⁶³ The shrine of al-Askari in Sammara was also fully destroyed in a bombing in 2006. At a local level, several events took place around the Imam Ali Shrine. For example, on 29th August 2003 there was a car explosion after Friday prayers in the main portal of the Imam Ali shrine, targeting Mohammad Baqir al-Hakim.⁶⁴ This event typifies the security situation in Iraq after 2003, and the Najaf local government has since closed the area around the shrine and prevented any vehicles from entering the old town. At present, it is very difficult to save and protect heritage sites because of bombing and vandalism, but they can be listed at minimum as endangered heritage sites to maintain awareness. However, heritage protection is not a priority when the central government is paying attention to improving its military strength more than other issues. This can be seen from the national financial budget allocations of Iraqi governments in the last few years.⁶⁵

In summary, the Iraqi heritage protection system is still unclear and there is a lack of information, criteria and processes. What is needed is a single, clear and active designation system to protect national and local heritage. In addition, it should be

⁶¹ Sue Cole, 'War, Cultural Property and the Blue Shield', in *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq*, ed. by Peter G. Stone and Joanne Farchakh Bajjaly (UK: The Boydell Press, 2008), pp. 65-69.

⁶² Gulf wars: (1980-1988) Iraq-Iran war, 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, 2003 US and Coalition forces invasion of Iraq.

⁶³ Forrest, *International Law and the Protection of Cultural Heritage*, pp. 59-60.

⁶⁴ Mohammad Baqir al-Hakim (1939- 29 August 2003), was a senior Iraqi Shia cleric and the leader of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq. He was assassinated in a bomb attack in Najaf in 2003.

⁶⁵ See the Ministry of Finance website: <http://www.mof.gov.iq/pages/ar/BalanceArchive.aspx>

focused on local communities. Currently, Iraqi communities do not participate in making planning decisions, and this has led to a reduced understanding of heritage.⁶⁶ However, local communities have an awareness regarding the need to protect national and local heritage, as shown by the civilian activist campaigns on social media to support Iraqi sites for listing in the world heritage list.

⁶⁶ LR3, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

Development Control

Development control is a set of procedures for ensuring the appropriateness of any new development and that proposed developments accord with the plan, or are evaluated and approved as a deviation from the plan. Thus, the strategy is to manage the built environment processes through a clear planning system in practice. As we have already seen, heritage protection designates what to protect and therefore development control planning should consider the needs of heritage protection within the plan and establish a system that can assess whether a new development harms the existing heritage. According to Thomas, development control is connected to the whole stages of building's life: initiation (setting out planning and building permission); construction; ongoing building use; and disposal (changing property function and the lease or sale of the property).⁶⁷ In this way, development control is necessary at all these stages, not a theoretical aspect. In the UK system, for example, it includes the process of issuing land-use development permits.⁶⁸

While development control predominately deals with new development projects, the conservation of existing heritage is part of the permissions process.⁶⁹ Controlling and managing change in the historical areas and buildings is very important in order to harness these processes to safeguard local heritage. A focus on the legislation and policy system at both national and local level helps to explain how significant heritage projects have been controlled.

National policies

Iraq has a long history of legislation dating back to the 18th century BCE when Hammurabi, the king of Babylon, created the first surviving comprehensive code of law to organise social life in Mesopotamia.⁷⁰ In the modern history of Iraq, until 2003 the Iraqi central governments were the key party in any decision dealing with managing or protecting cultural heritage, through several ministries and foundations. Arc10 argued that the Baath government controlled most aspects, with particular

⁶⁷ Thomas, *Development Control : Principles and Practice*, pp. 11-14.

⁶⁸ Philip Booth, *Controlling Development: Certainty and Discretion in Europe, the Usa and Hong Kong*, (Psychology Press, UCL Press Limited, 1996), p. 1.

⁶⁹ Thomas, *Development Control : Principles and Practice*, p. 177.

⁷⁰ Mansfield Peter, *A History of the Middle East*, (Harmondsworth: Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1992), p. 3.

reference to the heritage approach.⁷¹ In particular, Sta1 a historian work in Najaf said that decision makers did not think about protecting heritage;⁷² and Sta8 agreed that these several ministries had weakened the national and local heritage. In fact, any decision at that time had come from the Council of Iraqi Revolutionary Command, when the ministries and organizations only implemented decisions.⁷³

The Iraqi Law of antiquities and heritage No.55/ 2002 governs development control relating to heritage, in addition the designation of heritage clauses detailed in the section above. For example, it determines the style, colours, materials, heights and facades of neighbouring buildings in order to protect the traditional style and urban form. The authority is entitled to evacuate sites when these represent a threat to the presence of the heritage area. Article 9 of the law gives the authority the power to give permission for any new structure near significant places (or up to 1km from them). Article 10 gives permission to develop and extend mosques, holy shrines, tombs, churches, khans and other ancient buildings, in accordance with contemporary demands.⁷⁴

In addition, Article 15 forbids the demolition of historical buildings or monuments, the building of new factories under 3km from sites, the use of these sites as rubbish-collection locations, or the uprooting of plants and trees. Finally, it requires the real estate registration department to protect and prevent any new development or change the functions of it. Moreover, Article 27 states that the owners will possess the following privileges: a donation for preserving the heritage building, discharge from any taxes and other benefits. Article 28 also prevents demolition, redevelopment or re-functioning of any buildings from the list or the cancellation of such heritage.⁷⁵

Previous surveys have revealed that most management and authorities lack awareness and knowledge of the complexities, composition and consequences of the legislative and legal environment governing heritage and antiquities in Iraq. The 2013 ProCare report explains the lack of a unified vision and clear positions regarding the overlaps, reticulations and problems arising from accumulating a large

⁷¹ Arc10, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2016).

⁷² Sta1, 'Interview'.

⁷³ Sta8, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

⁷⁴ Presidency of Iraq Republic, 'Law No.55 of 2002 for the Antiquities and Heritage of Iraq'.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

number of legislative tools that are still effective by virtue of law.⁷⁶ For example, the Antiquities and Heritage Law No. 55 of 2002, whose first amendment bill is currently under deliberation, had not previously cancelled nor replaced the Ancient Antiquities Law of 1936, which means that the 1936 Law is still valid and therefore continues to remain in force to date. Furthermore, the extent to which various heritage administrations perceive the reality and consequences of a number of other laws that are still effective and directly related to their heritage jurisdiction is also unclear.⁷⁷ Perhaps Law No. 55 itself is currently outdated, and does not provide enough incentives for private owners of buildings or sites to protect and maintain their own properties. Furthermore, it does not explain how to designate, maintain or list buildings or monuments.

Overall, the law covers most of the information, regulations and penalties related to Iraqi antiquities and heritage areas, and tries to explain the relationship between the government, as an authority, and the owners. In reality, it still does not work in a perfect way because, up to the present, there has been a big gap between the legislation and practical applications. The problem of this law is that it is open-ended, without clear sanctions, and this encourages building authorities to undertake new extension projects which threaten the Iraqi heritage. This is clear in the project extending the Imam Ali shrine, which I will explain later in detail. The Act was an attempt to protect the built environment and prevent any type of reuse or repurposing. Interviewees described the ‘death of historical cities in Iraq’ and the creation of ‘Ghost Towns’.⁷⁸ The strict regulations were introduced with a protective intention but, because they prevent any type of investment or re-function in these areas and lack information on conservation management, they are not succeeding in this regard. Again, the solution could come through adopting policies that explain the functional requirements of the Act to local authorities.

⁷⁶ ProCare consulting Services, 'Assisting the Government of Iraq to Develop a National tourism Strategy', (Baghdad: UNESCO office for Iraq, 2013), (p. 56).

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ LR5, 'Interview'.

Iraqi Planning Policy History

Serious thinking about urban policy in Iraq began in 1936, when Bereck and Bronoweinever outlined Baghdad's urban planning, and in 1956 this was continued by British planners Minoprio, Spencely and Macfarlane. 1958 witnessed the first Baghdad master plan by Doxiadis, a Greek planning association. Polservice, a Polish planning team in the mid-1960s proposed a comprehensive development plan for "Baghdad 2000". In the absence of clear policies and legislation covering the Iraqi national level, between the 1970s and the early 1980s the Iraqi government tried to set out special projects in specific areas, especially in traditional areas of Baghdad. This was undertaken because of its status as one of the oldest and largest Arab cities containing much of the historic value of a range of past ages.⁷⁹ Accordingly, the central government contracted with architectural consultants and companies to set out a new master plan of specific places in the historical core of Baghdad. and these special groups had wide authority to design the sites. Subsequently, economic sanctions against Iraq and political conflict issues (1990-2003) have led to numerous urban problems.⁸⁰

In 1982, the *Abu Nuwas* conservation and development project aimed to create an active entity of exemplary quality at the historical core of Baghdad which would serve as the cultural focus for Baghdad and Iraq, conserve and upgrade selected activities and physical characteristics within the *Abu Nuwas* neighbourhood and express the cultural and historical past of civilizations.⁸¹ The basic goals of this project were to forge a link from the current renaissance in Iraq to previous periods of Arab and Islamic greatness (the Abbasid period).⁸²

In 1984, the *Al-Rusafa* study on conservation and redevelopment of the historical centre of Baghdad city started. It reflected a rising awareness in Iraq of the value of conserving its huge cultural heritage; and showed that the importance of the historic fabric in the *Al-Rusafa* was such that much of the future development would have to

⁷⁹ Akram J. M. Al-Akkam, 'Urban Heritage in Baghdad: Toward a Comprehensive Sustainable Framework', in *Journal of Sustainable Development*, (Canadian Center of Science and Education, 2013), pp. 39-55.

⁸⁰ *Amamat* Baghdad official Web Page: <http://www.amanatbaghdad.gov.iq/>

⁸¹ Arthur Erickson Associates, 'Abu Nuwas Conservation/ Development Project', ed. by Amanat Baghdad Republic of Iraq (Baghdad, 1982), (p. 8).

⁸² *Ibid.* p. 10.

match it. The study aimed to create a city centre worthy of the historic capital of Iraq, conserving and revitalizing the historic fabric; monitoring and controlling development in modern areas according to certain urban design controls and guidelines; and reintegrating the broken urban structure of the old city.⁸³ The urban development control system proposed five operative levels to ensure control: urban development, urban form, traffic control, land use and urban design,⁸⁴ but was limited to specific areas, not to the entire city or old town.

Currently, development control is based on a policy from the Ministry of the Municipalities and Public Works (MMPW) and carried out by a mixture of MMPW and regional municipality offices. The Ministry programs are established by Ministers in Baghdad, and the municipality is made aware of projects that concern them, as and when they come up. The Ministry discharges planning responsibility both from Baghdad and through its Najaf office. Additionally, an “Operational Program” meeting takes place every two weeks.⁸⁵ At local level, the process of making a development proposal is that an application for planning permission goes first to the Technical Department at the Municipality, then to the Planning Department (MMPW Najaf office). The Planning team have a checklist of issues, such as height, elevation, design, etc., against which every application is checked. This system dates from about 25 years ago and is different from one local authority to another. There is a 60-day maximum period for approval if the application is compliant with plans and policy; if it is not, it is referred to the Ministry. If it is refused, the applicant can appeal to a court.⁸⁶ Non-implementation is covered by a requirement to start work within 6 months, or to lose the permission. There is no special control of change of use, although there are specific land uses allocations (zones). In mixed-use areas, like the Najaf old town, therefore, a proposal to change the use of a building, for example, from a house to a hotel, is likely to be treated in the same way as a proposal for a larger house – i.e. there is no differentiation by use. If the site has historic or cultural implications, an application may be discussed with

⁸³ Japan JCP Inc., 'Rusafa: Study on Conservation and Redevelopment of Historical center of Baghdad', ed. by Amanat Baghdad Republic of Iraq (1984), pp. 20-21).

⁸⁴ Ibid. pp. 32-37.

⁸⁵ Engineers, 'Urban Renewal of the City Center of Holy Najaf: Comprehensive Master Plan of the City Center of Holy Najaf', (p. 204).Stage five.

⁸⁶ 'The Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works Web Page', (Baghdad, 2016), p. <http://www.mmpw.gov.iq/>.

the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, but there is clearly no formal “referral” procedure for this situation.

Overall, Iraqi cities have witnessed many projects to redevelop the cities, but these have often encountered difficulties. Many projects involving different designers and urban planners have led to Iraqi cities looking like collages, and gradually they have become incoherent. Arc4 (an architect and academic lecturer) explained that this situation is continuing at present, when most cities, through their local or central government, are contracted to different companies to update or outline new master plans.⁸⁷ In particular, Sta1 explained that the Council of the Iraqi Revolutionary Command and Council of Ministers Resolution before 2003 had the ability to change any law, policies or policies.⁸⁸ For instance, they gave the project organization structure a broad range of special powers. According to Arc6 which he is an architect and Politician, this situation weakened the power of the national authority.⁸⁹ After 2003, local government appeared as the new authority on the ground, a situation that is explained in depth in the next section.

Local policies in Najaf

After 2003, when the sitting Iraqi government was overthrown, the local governments in Iraq appeared as a new key player in terms of legislating and managing Iraqi cities. Therefore, beside the central ministries and institutions, the governorates and provincial councils contributed to shaping the policy and politics of their city or region. There had been destruction of historical buildings and a loss of identity of place. Iraqi Law No. 21 of 2008, in Article 2 states that the provincial councils are the highest legislative authority within the boundaries of the province, and have the right to issue local legislation according to the principle of decentralisation, as long as they are consistent with the constitution and the federal laws.⁹⁰ The debates which followed between multiple ministries and foundations led to confusion in the decisions and legislation. During this time, the Najaf provincial council started to promulgate legislation and policies around the city to regulate

⁸⁷ Arc4, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

⁸⁸ Sta1, 'Interview'.

⁸⁹ Arc6, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

⁹⁰ Iraqi Council of Representative, 'Law No. 21', (Baghdad, 2008).

development, as one of the most significant cities in Islamic culture.⁹¹ In fact, I am not going to say that the decentralisation is more responsive than the centralisation; but I prefer to see only one power in making decision process. The multiple decision makers could threaten conservation management, and establish new conflict among authorities.

Najaf local government has tried to set out a new vision of the old town, through encouraging decision makers and stakeholders to safeguard its legacy. The first step was in 2006, when Llewelyn Davies Yeang, in association with ADEC, started to protect and enhance Najaf's pre-eminent status within Iraq as a city of pilgrimage and place of Muslim burial. The strategic objectives of the master plan study were to preserve the dignity and integrity of the Imam Ali Shrine; and to preserve the significant religious buildings, mosques and schools in the old town, as well as secular buildings. Also, it aimed to protect the historical urban fabric and form and to adopt and apply appropriate policies to improve existing development and guidance for controlling new development.⁹² Despite the previous clearance and redevelopment in the old town, there remains within the four historic quarters of the old town a rich heritage of traditional brick built buildings and a traditional urban form of informally laid out narrow alleyways. The control of development was also covered by the report, which recommended that compulsory purchase orders be used to allow the Municipality of Najaf to obtain land or property without the consent of the owner, if absolutely necessary. This measure is generally only used if there is a major benefit to the community as a whole from a certain type of development, such as a motorway, public transport provision, new town centre, important employment, health or education site, which necessitates the removal of specific buildings.⁹³

In terms of historic buildings, the report stated that, if a building was identified as having architectural, historical interest or group value, especially where buildings comprise an important architectural or historic unity or are a fine example of planning (such as a particularly well laid-out square), the planning department should, before making any other decisions, send a copy of the application to the department

⁹¹ Sta10, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

⁹² Llewelyn Davies Yeang and ADEC (Architectural designer for Engineering Consultancy), 'Holy City of Najaf: Master Planning', (Iraq: Republic of Iraq, Ministry of Municipalities and Public Work, 2009), (p. 7). Report No.6.

⁹³ Ibid. p. 20.

of antiquities and to the newly set up committee⁹⁴ advising on the issue, which includes UNESCO. These organisations should be asked to assess the application, based on the effect of the planned work on the historical character of the building and its surroundings.⁹⁵

Additionally, the report laid down some key strategic objectives: to improve the visual quality of the setting of the shrine through control of new development in its vicinity; and to protect the visual dominance of the shrine by controlling the height of new development within the old town to below the existing parapet level of the Shrine. In terms of urban design, it looked to ensure that the scale, height, massing and design of new developments were sensitive to the historic city's core and the holy shrine, and to improve the layout of major gateways and entrances in the old town.⁹⁶ As a result, it started to set out the master plan for Najaf, as well as the old town.

However, there were concerns as to the implementation of the study and its report. The main concern was that some of their work was remote, and did not explain the mechanisms of controlling development in practice. For example, it mentions the control of building heights in the old town, but not who is responsible for managing current building heights. Though some issues have led to stoppages in work in the old town, which had been set out in the master plan of the Najaf governorate without consideration of the old town,⁹⁷ Arc6 argued that corruption was the most significant factor, and that this had led Llewelyn Davies to leave the old town and set out only the master plan of the Najaf governorate.⁹⁸ Moreover, Sta10 stated that the political power, corruption and unprofessional and incompetent figures in heritage protection had led to decisions being made without transparency.⁹⁹ In total, the final study of Llewelyn Davies focused only on the master plan of the Najaf governorate.

In 2012 a new contract was agreed with the Dewan Architect Company for Najaf's old town. The shrine secretary, as well as the Najaf Governorate, aimed to rehabilitate, develop and protect the urban fabric, as well as improving the historical,

⁹⁴ The committee is including UNESCO and Iranian advisers.

⁹⁵ Yeang and Consultancy), 'Holy City of Najaf: Master Planning', (p. 20).

⁹⁶ Ibid. p. 7.

⁹⁷ Arc7, 'Interview'.

⁹⁸ Arc6, 'Interview'.

⁹⁹ Sta10, 'Interview'.

cultural and religious identity of the old town, and to develop the surrounding area of the Imam Ali Shrine to accommodate the huge number of visitors, including religious schools, mosques and tombs, because they normally have a great deal of significance in local people's memory. Moreover, the aims were to rehabilitate, repair, renew and maintain the buildings with historical, religious, cultural and architectural value. The other goal was ensuring that social elites, religious scholars and populations of the old town contribute at each stage of the process and informing people on the development and decisions.¹⁰⁰ To achieve the aims and objectives, the 2015 Dewan report set out the operation strategies for the master plan. Firstly, it aimed to preserve and enhance the quality of religious and historic buildings and monuments of the town by improving the conditions around the precinct of the Imam Ali shrine and its surrounding area. Secondly, it wanted to preserve the scale and the character of the traditional urban fabric through a combination of conservation. Thirdly, it intended to define the criteria for conservation, renovation, restoration, individual or joint redevelopment of individual buildings within the historic fabric, on a plot-by-plot basis. These strategies come as a reaction to stopping, or at least reducing, the huge demolitions taking place in the urban fabric of the old town.¹⁰¹ The masterplan proposal also tried to improve the quality of life of local residents and visitors by adapting, renewing and substituting the old housing stock in the residential area, where necessary.¹⁰² Dewan defined the incentives and penalties to be used to improve compliance with building regulations and to deter infringement and to protect local heritage in the context of new development.¹⁰³

The report focuses on different aspects of the urban renewal of the old town, for instance Land Use Policy (Figure 2.5). The foundation for land uses policy of the old city of Najaf lies in the provision of sufficient space to accommodate the crowds of visitors during the days of mass visits to the shrine, as the squares and streets of the old city get crowded, which requires a variety of services and facilities, in addition to

¹⁰⁰ Engineers, 'Urban Renewal of the City Center of Holy Najaf: Comprehensive Master Plan of the City Center of Holy Najaf', (p. 4).

¹⁰¹ Dewan Architects and Engineers, 'Urban renewal of the City center of Holy Najaf', (Iraq: Republic Iraq, Ministry of Municipalities and Public Work, General directorate of physical planning, 2012), pp. 2-7).

¹⁰² Ibid. p. 4.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

having enough space for visitors to move through.¹⁰⁴ As a result, the early stage of the study focused on providing these spaces around the holy shrine, depending on the movement of visitors and how they enter and exit the space. However, there remain issues within the report around the implementation of its objectives and proposals. For example, one question to be addressed is whether the report really carried through its democratic aims as, for example, it is clear from the interviews conducted that public participation within the report was limited.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

Figure 2.5: Proposed land uses of Najaf old town; (source: Dewan, 'Urban Renewal of the City Centre of Holy Najaf: Comprehensive Master Plan of the City Centre of Holy Najaf', p. 11).

Moreover, the special nature of the old town requires particular consideration to achieve the balance between the need for space and visitor services, on one hand, and between the preservation of the traditional fabric of the old city as much as possible,

in order to maintain urban identity, on the other.¹⁰⁵ A serious concern with this proposal is that the final design proposal focused more on accommodating the huge number of visitors rather than the preservation the old town. In addition, they proposed to change the land use of some parts from residential to commercial, in contrast to the strategies for improving the quality of residents' lives, and preventing the destruction of the urban fabric.

One of the biggest challenges in determining the heights of buildings is maintaining the urban fabric of the ancient city with the dominance of the Imam Ali shrine on the overall spaces of the city. Thus, the 2015 Dewan report proposed the height of buildings near the shrine and its surroundings to be a maximum of 2 storeys, and the area of mixed use in the middle to be built up to 4 floors, and later the peripheral areas to have no more than 6 floors.¹⁰⁶

This recommendation has been condemned by heritage elites, architects and local citizens because it will lead to a weakening of the fabric of the old town and its skyline, as well as hiding the dome of the shrine. Most interviewees stated that the regulations prevented any building being built higher than the outer wall of the shrine, so that all the current high buildings in the old town are therefore illegal. In this particular, Arc5 stated that high buildings in the old town threaten local identity.¹⁰⁷ In addition, DM1 a member of the shrine secretary explained that what has been happening has not been agreed, and there was no clear authority to stop it.¹⁰⁸

Implementation of the 2015 Dewan masterplan proposal will mean demolishing and reconstructing many parts of the walled town. This has caused concern about damage to the old town's fabric, architectural unity and local identity. The final proposal of the report divided the old town into six main parts (Figure 2.6), and the report proposed designs for each.¹⁰⁹ In fact, the design guidelines seem to be creating a modern city with historical character, in contrast to a local architectural approach (Figure 2.7). They proposed, for example, to rebuild all the grand *sug* in a modern

¹⁰⁵ Engineers, 'Urban Renewal of the City Center of Holy Najaf: Comprehensive Master Plan of the City Center of Holy Najaf', (p. 7).

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Arc5, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2016).

¹⁰⁸ DM1, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

¹⁰⁹ Engineers, 'Urban Renewal of the City Center of Holy Najaf: Comprehensive Master Plan of the City Center of Holy Najaf', pp. 50 - 53).

style, which would mean demolishing many significant and historical buildings in the old town. The report proposes to extend commercial activities by increasing the number of hotels and retail units along the *Suq al-Houaish* and extending the commercial area at the edge of the old town via a new residential-commercial area.¹¹⁰ It should be stated that this proposal was nevertheless considered to be a conservation approach, but the final outcome is closer to being modernist.

Figure 2.6 Proposal building density in the old town; (source: Dewan, 'Urban Renewal of the City Centre of Holy Najaf: Comprehensive Master Plan of the City Centre of Holy Najaf'; 2015, p.68).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Figure 2.7 Proposed design of buildings; (source: Dewan, 'Urban Renewal of the City Centre of Holy Najaf: Comprehensive Master Plan of the City Centre of Holy Najaf'; 2015, p.83).

In terms of development control, Dewan stated that the proposed city centre executive committee, with the assistance of the Najaf Development Authority, should become the new main decision-making body for the implementation of the Najaf Urban Renewal Plan. In addition, it recommended that, in terms of controlling changes of use, the authorities should start requiring planning permission for this from the developer or individual proposing it. Treating development as change of use, like any other alteration to the built environment, will help to identify whether the proposed use fits with the adopted Urban Renewal Plan. To become viable, any development or conservation plan must be based on matching institutional rules and mechanisms that enable and articulate its actual implementation. Without such provision, the best plans will remain mere paperwork and will therefore represent a wasted effort. In terms of the implementation, Dewan has proposed that a framework of laws, regulations, manuals and financial incentives that will guide future development activities be established.¹¹¹ The 2012 Dewan report also proposed establishing monitoring and development control systems concerning urban rehabilitation at (plot-by-plot) micro-level (e.g. by GIS-Systems), and a dedicated urban rehabilitation office for the old town within the Najaf Municipality, in order to assist residents, private owners and investors (including *Awqaf*¹¹²) in the incremental implementation of the plan, based on the demonstrable effects of initial pilot projects. Finally, it recommended establishing public-private “Development Corporation” for joint (and controlled) redevelopment of vacant land and multi-plot urban redevelopment, according to the plan’s principles.¹¹³

Some local citizens, heritage elites and researchers reacted to these proposals by trying to make an official complaint to the planning authority in Najaf.¹¹⁴ The shrine secretary was also disappointed in the proposed design and regulations in terms of building height, because it would not work in the city context. The shrine institution showed its disappointment and insisted that there was no obligation to follow these proposals because the shrine would choose the best expansion design for its activities, according to its own priorities.¹¹⁵ In general, therefore, it seems that there is a problem in relation to the perception of cultural heritage at different levels, and the

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 204.

¹¹² *Awqaf* means the religious endowment.

¹¹³ Engineers, 'Urban renewal of the City center of Holy Najaf', (p. 32).Report stage 3.

¹¹⁴ Sta2, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

¹¹⁵ DM2, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

development project and urban renewal plan for the old town was born out of this dilemma.

It is clear that there is little coordination of different projects by the local authority. For example, the holy shrine institution has become a newly strong force in the old town. They contracted with Shahid Beheshti University to design a 90 metre project around the Shrine, as is explained in Chapter 5. In particular, Arc5 (an architect and one of the extension design team), Arc7 (an architect working in a small local practice), and Sta2 (consultant which has been worked shrine secretary advisor) explained that there was a disconnection between the designers of Shahid Beheshti and Dewan, and between the decision makers and the authorities. Dewan proposed extending the shrine and its surrounding area in the early stages of their master planning process. However, in the final report, they left the area clear because the shrine institution had contracted with another designer to design it.¹¹⁶ Arc5 explained that the designers of Shahid Beheshti did not directly contract with Dewan; they only outlined some critical points about the Dewan proposal.¹¹⁷ At the same time, Dewan also made an official complaint about Shahid Beheshti's work because they contracted to develop the whole of the old town.¹¹⁸ More broadly, during the last few years, parallel works have been carried out by different authorities for developing and managing the old town, without any type of collaboration between them. DM1 stated that there are no heritage specialists managing the city, and most of the decision makers do not care about heritage. Hence, the shrine has been starting to buy any available building inside the old town. There are three main reasons for acquisition: firstly, to achieve the 190-metre area surrounding the shrine; secondly, to protect the historical and heritage buildings; and finally, to prevent any misuse in the future by the land authority.¹¹⁹ Consequently, Shahid Beheshti designed the 190m area surrounding the shrine, as well as the *Sahan Fatima*¹²⁰ of the shrine extension project.

The absence of a clear government authority on the ground has enabled Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to play a significant role in protecting local

¹¹⁶ Arc7, 'Interview'.

¹¹⁷ Arc5, 'Interview'.

¹¹⁸ Arc7, 'Interview'.

¹¹⁹ DM1, 'Interview'.

¹²⁰ *Sahan Fatima* is the biggest extension project, and I will explain further in the chapter 5.

heritage. NGOs can assist in raising the understanding level of heritage at both regional and local levels. In some cases, they may also take over the protection and running of cultural heritage sites. In 2013, the “Najaf is my identity” conference by the International Energy and Environment Foundation in Najaf set out the “Najaf charter” for the conservation and restoration of historic towns, urban areas, monuments and sites, based on the international charters and conventions by ICOMOS and UNESCO. According to this charter, there are three approaches to protecting Najaf’s local identity. Firstly, this involves conservation of all heritage sites, buildings and monuments in Najaf in terms of its architectural style, and maintaining them according to international criteria. Secondly, it sets out regulations and standards to control and organise the architectural design of new development buildings. Thirdly, it aims to conserve the traditional systems of energy and encourage sustainability in the old town.¹²¹

The Najaf charter focused on nine articles concerning protection at city level: neighbourhood, single buildings, religious buildings, monuments and crafts, sustainable energy and principles, documenting and legislating, training and collaborating, and the mechanics of the heritage application on the ground. In addition, the charter proposes annual prizes to encourage the conservation of architectural local identity. Accordingly, there are two prizes, one for heritage buildings which are conserved by owners in the best way, and the other to new buildings which are designed according to the architectural principles of the city.¹²² This new approach in the city should encourage designers, authorities and communities to work together to protect Najaf’s heritage. It marks the culmination of NGOs’ work in Najaf, and now that the charter is gradually spreading its influence, some local officials, politicians and religious leaders having begun to encourage it.¹²³ The charter has tried to cover most areas related to the protection of Najaf’s identity, but a problem is that it is still works at the NGOs level but not in the Iraqi political context. In other words, it lacks the power of implementation on the ground.

The NGO movement emerged in response to the partial destruction of Najaf’s heritage. On January 2nd 2016 the Najaf writers union collaborated with some local

¹²¹ 'Najaf Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Historic Towns, Urban Areas, Monuments, and Sites', (Najaf: International Energy and Environment Foundation, 2013).

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Sta8, 'Interview'.

caretakers of in an initiative to save and protect the Imam Ali Shrine and the urban identity of Najaf old town. Their main concern was the rise and spread of new buildings inside the old town and around the shrine.¹²⁴ These redevelopment projects were accompanied by unprecedented government negligence, and as a result only around 30 percent of heritage buildings, which already needed special maintenance and protection, have survived. At the same time, more than 70 percent of the current buildings in the old town are not connected to or do not represent the architectural, cultural and urban identity of Najaf.¹²⁵ This high proportion has resulted from the fact that the developers did not base their plans on a clear methodology designed to ensure that new builds reflected the local identity.

As a result, in 2016 The Writers' Union put forward an 11 points initiative. The first point is to stop all construction work surrounding the shrine, and set out clear sanctions to prevent redevelopment that threatens its identity as the focal point in the old town. All of the first five points are focused on reactivating all national and local policies and legislation, in order to be able to protect cultural heritage, specifically law No.55 of 2002 for the Antiquities and Heritage of Iraq. The initiative also proposes to establish a new institution (governmental or non-governmental) to monitor development and to manage significant cultural heritage buildings and sites. Moreover, point 7 demands that local government set out clear regulations to conserve local identity. Points 8 and 9 encourage heritage elites, young people and students to understand their local heritage and to work to define architectural significance at the local level: for instance, the *Al-Subat*¹²⁶, traditional houses, religious schools, alleys and khans. The tenth point calls for the listing of the old town in the World Heritage List, as well as the *Wadi Al-Salam* cemetery. The last point focuses more on determining heritage as an extra source of local income through rehabilitating the traditional urban fabric and reusing its buildings according to the best conservation practices.¹²⁷ Considering this initiative, it can be argued that there are still misunderstandings regarding heritage. On the one hand, it calls for the protection and conservation of all the historical and heritage buildings and

¹²⁴ Sta2, 'Interview'.

¹²⁵ 'The Initiative to Save and Protect the Imam Ali Shrine and Urban Identity of Najaf Old Town.', (Najaf: Najaf's writers union, NGO., 2016).

¹²⁶ It is a valuable architectural feature in Najaf; simply it is vault over the alleyways and then building room over it to extend houses.

¹²⁷ 'The Initiative to Save and Protect the Imam Ali Shrine and Urban Identity of Najaf Old Town.'.

monuments in Najaf old town. On the other hand, it seeks to establish new architectural buildings in the old town to support local identity. In my position as a researcher I think their effort should be focused on conserving the current condition of the urban fabric, and maintaining all the buildings in the old town, instead of building new ones. Also, it can be argued that this involves repetition in terms of creating or activating a legislation system on the ground; and that these points are condensed to one direct point, particularly as the current process of protecting and managing cultural heritage is not adequate to our needs.

To summarise, the 2013 *Procare* report stated that there are currently no quality control systems nor any quality assurance mechanisms and standards in place in relation to development and conservation in Najaf old town, or elsewhere.¹²⁸ Local controls and executive tools at the governorate level ignore or contradict the Antiquities and Heritage Law. In other words, I can state that, in some cases local controls take precedence over the Antiquities and Heritage Law post 2003. They allow or tolerate the distortion or removal of heritage buildings, which are demolished without reference to the antiquities authorities, and are usually replaced with random hotels that distort the heritage environment and lack quality.

¹²⁸ ProCare Services, 'Assisting the Government of Iraq to Develop a National tourism Strategy', (p. 121).

Conservation management practices

Up to the present, the conservation management of significant buildings or sites has no single international consensus in relation to best practice, and moreover policies and legislation vary considerably from site to site, and from one country to another. International charters and conventions have appeared to safeguard and manage heritage sites that reference the national policies and laws in which they are located.¹²⁹ It is notable that the first conservation movement focused on safeguarding listed buildings and monuments, while the second movement concentrated instead on groups of buildings, townscapes and urban spaces between buildings. It was recognized that the original protection policies were significantly limited in effect.¹³⁰ These international standards are being used to examine the approach taken in detail to reveal the problems at national and local levels in Iraq. In general, the international organizations and charters have been trying to outline the principles and processes of conservation nationally and locally, sharing the material among governments, NGOs and researchers and thus enabling governments to shape their own policies and legislation dealing with historical and cultural sites and increasing awareness of heritage. It should be noted that the international organizations update their materials and principles regularly, which means that their conservation practices are dynamic. No singular tools or prescriptions are recommended for appropriate decision making in the best heritage conservation practices; in particular, some scholars and researchers have adopted the guidelines below to protect heritage:

*“Build mutual trust and understanding; adopt sustainability as a unifying principle; take shared responsibility; institutionalize public participation; continually refine and use decision-making tools; collect and analyze important information (gather data for evaluation); use incentives to encourage innovation”.*¹³¹

The Burra Charter sets out conservation practice in Article 26 and 27:

¹²⁹ Orbasli, *Architectural Conservation: Principles and Practice*, pp. 67-68.

¹³⁰ J. Teller and A. Bond, 'Review of Present European Environmental Policies and Legislation Involving Cultural Heritage', *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, 22 (2002), 613.

¹³¹ Randall Mason, 'Assesing Values in Conservation Planning: Methodoligical Issues and Choices', in *Assessing the Values of Cultural Heritage: Research Report*, ed. by Marta. De la Torre (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute., 2002), (p. 26).

“Conservation may, according to circumstance, include the processes of: retention or reintroduction of a use; retention of associations and meanings; maintenance, preservation, restoration, reconstruction, adaptation and interpretation; and will commonly include a combination of more than one of these”.¹³² (Article 26)

The approach to conservation practices is developed under the title of a “conservation plan”, which seeks to set out future development guidelines through understanding, designating and managing its value. The conservation plan should be simple, relevant, dense, clear complex and flexible, rather than standardised.¹³³ Flexibility gives more space for moving among different places and sites within the conservation framework. Kerr stated that the conservation plan is a starting point, not the end of best practice.¹³⁴ In particular, the UK’s Heritage Lottery Fund explains that a conservation plan requires research and coordination to set out a document that covers why heritage is significant, how it is sensitive to a change of use, and what policies should be employed to maintain its significance.¹³⁵ Stubbs stated that most countries have successful conservation processes but application in practice usually poses challenges. Accordingly, the best conservation practices should have a clear rationale and action plan, as well as a commitment to quality.¹³⁶

Pickard showed the importance of the management of historic centres at different European cities and explained the concept of integration in heritage conservation. Integrated conservation includes an acknowledgment of the responsibility of local authorities, citizens’ participation, appropriate financial mechanisms to support such actions and legislative reform to confirm action to safeguard both architectural complexes and individual buildings. He provided evidence of different approaches to the conservation management of historical cities, offering an opportunity to assess and reflect on the types of management tools and approaches that are required to sustain the quality of historic centres as assets of the common heritage.¹³⁷ In particular, Beernaert and Werner stated that conservation management of historical sites seems to be effective when looked after by urban policies, politics and

¹³² Australia ICOMOS, 'The Burra Charter: The Australia Icomos Charter for Places of Cultural Significance', (Australia: Australia ICOMOS Incorporated, 1999).

¹³³ James Semple Kerr, 'The Conservation Plan', in *The Heritage Reader*, ed. by Graham Fairclough, et al. (USA, Canada: Routledge, 2008), pp. 322 - 30.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 330.

¹³⁵ Heritage Lottery Fund, 'Conservation Plans for Historic Places', *HLF, London*, (1998), 6.

¹³⁶ Stubbs, *Time Honored: A Global View of Architectural Conservation*, pp. 146 - 47.

¹³⁷ Robert Pickard, *Management of Historic Centres*, (Taylor & Francis, 2001), pp. 1-6.

legislation.¹³⁸ Today, in the field of managing cultural heritage, there is still a significant gap between theory and practice. In terms of theory, there is a deficiency of research to enable practitioners to recognise and designate innovative approaches, and to disseminate and document best practices for managing cultural heritage. In practice, there is a significant delay in shifting to a more holistic approach by governments, authorities and planners.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Brigitte Beernaert and Werner Desimpelaere, 'Bruges, Belgium', in *Management of Historic Centres*, ed. by Robert. Pickard (London and New York: Spon Press, 2001), pp. 8-30 (p. 29).

¹³⁹ Ana Pereira Roders and Ron van Oers, 'World Heritage Cities Management', in *Facilities*, (Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2011), pp. 276-85 (p. 277).

Conservation Practices at National and Local Level

At the local level, if decisions are influenced and regulated by planning officers and elected members, conservation is usually an integral part of the planning process. As at national level, the work of another municipality department will impact on historic monuments and buildings, including planning and development, social services, infrastructure, transport and public welfare.¹⁴⁰ In England for example, local authority planning departments have conservation officers whose role it is to advise on applications regarding conservation areas and listed buildings, besides working on projects regarding the enhancement of historic places. In Tunis, Tunisia, the old town preservation department has played a key role in planning, capacity building and social welfare as part of its work to enhance, conserve and regenerate the historic quarter. Some authorities have formed “design guidelines” to inform conservation and new development in historic quarter.¹⁴¹ Such a role is not evidenced in Najaf and the structural government which deals with conservation heritage is unclear. Different authorities and institutions without a clear collaboration system are responsible for reviving heritage, and the UNESCO report agreed with this point.¹⁴² The municipality of Najaf is responsible for building permits, which includes any type of construction, such as new-build development, rehabilitation or restoration. The directorate of town planning is responsible for applying policies and setting out land use practices. The Department of Antiquities in Najaf is responsible for managing archaeological sites. Altogether, in some cases, they do not have the power to apply their policies for various reasons, such as land owners or the political situation.¹⁴³ Sta3 stated that the main problem in a context where heritage is not a governmental priority is that budgets are insufficient, institutions lack trained staff and local government and private sector interests are stronger than national legislation.¹⁴⁴

In terms of Najafi heritage management, the 2009 Llewelyn Davies report recommended that their master plan form the basis for determining planning, stating that:

¹⁴⁰ Sta2, 'Interview'.

¹⁴¹ Orbasli, *Architectural Conservation: Principles and Practice*, p. 70.

¹⁴² UNESCO mission to Najaf, 'The Results and Recommendations of Unesco Expert Mission to Najaf for Preparation of the World Heritage Nomination File of Wadi Al-Salam Cemetery in Najaf'.

¹⁴³ Sta8, 'Interview'.

¹⁴⁴ Sta3, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

“The main way in which the authorities can implement the Master Plan is through the approval or rejection of planning permissions. Any application for planning permission has to be considered with a view to the policies set out in the Master Plan and any other major considerations”.¹⁴⁵

They also made recommendation in terms of monitoring and reviewing the master plan, as this is an essential part of the planning process and is needed to establish what is happening against aims and targets. They proposed a numbers of tools for monitoring the project, including the use of GIS mapping and regular reports.¹⁴⁶ In order to implement the proposed Master Plan in the best way, they recommended that the Najaf Municipality, as a main authority on the ground, should have to work closely with other land owners and bodies involved with the development in Najaf. This includes public bodies, private agencies and individuals, and national and international involved in the development or regulation and funding of development in Najaf. The report planning guidance addressed urban design principles, streets and footpaths, community facilities, housing and public utilities. They also recommended that central and local governments play a significant role in implementing the plan by carrying out positive development as the land authority in its own right, through their own development activity, lettings and property management, and by working in partnership with other authorities and agents involved in development.¹⁴⁷ Adherence to such a process could promote equality of opportunity, defend community rights and prevent corruption, but while the government authorities are committed to the action plan, various examples show that they do not carry this through in practice. The clearest examples are the developing projects of the traditional mosques in the Najaf old town by the Shi’a Religious Endowment, where the historical mosques were rebuilt, destroying the fabric of heritage value. Sta1 (local historian which has been overlooked for documenting Najaf) argued that the Endowment demolished and rebuilt *Al-Tossi* mosque, which is one of the oldest mosques in the town.¹⁴⁸ Sta4 an archaeologist and local resident also disagreed with the Endowment demolishing most the historical mosques in the old town. For example, he explained that they demolished *Al-saygh* mosque, which went back to the Ottoman era, and rebuilt it

¹⁴⁵ Yeang and Consultancy), 'Holy City of Najaf: Master Planning', (p. 40).Stage 4: City wide delivery

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. pp. 44 - 45.Stage 4: City wide delivery.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. pp. 41 - 42.Stage 4: City wide delivery.

¹⁴⁸ Sta1, 'Interview'.

with the same plans, but by using concrete instead of the original material (bricks). He argued that the Endowment had large sums of money, but that they spent it on projects without a clear plan.¹⁴⁹ Overall, the Najaf Religious Endowment demolished and rebuilt most historical mosques of the old town, except *Al-Hindi* mosque.¹⁵⁰

In 2015 Dewan's Najaf Urban Renewal Plan its processes and mechanisms are set out in terms of implementing and enforcing the proposals, monitoring the progress of implementation and its effects, and reviewing the proposals, based on feedback as part of the monitoring process. The report states that "*If the Urban Renewal Plan is to become accepted by all parties, it is essential that the Municipality takes enforcement action against any development that does not have planning consent or is not in accordance with an approval*".¹⁵¹ Accordingly, any new development, reconstruction or conservation project that takes place outside of the defined guidelines undermines the successful implementation of the urban renewal plan and weakens the plan itself. The local authorities, Najaf Municipality and the Directorate of Urban Planning in Najaf, should therefore enforce the need for submission and approval of planning applications before any development is undertaken. To achieve this, the 2015 Dewan report proposed establishing a new authority, "The Najaf Development Review Authority", which is responsible for designating, controlling and implementing the plan.¹⁵² In fact, establishing a new authority dealing with Iraqi heritage is demanded mostly by the heritage elites, particularly Makiya, one of the most significant Iraqi architects, who has called for the adoption of a new authority to manage national and local heritage several times.¹⁵³ Up to the present, central government has not responded to this call.

Overall, where a new construction redevelopment project without planning or building permission has taken place, or where the land authority has not complied with negotiated planning conditions. Dewan proposed that the local authorities need to investigate each case and take appropriate action through one or more of the following methods:

¹⁴⁹ Sta4, 'Interview'.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Engineers, 'Urban Renewal of the City Center of Holy Najaf: Comprehensive Master Plan of the City Center of Holy Najaf', pp. 204 - 05).Stage 5.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Mohammad Makiya, 'Meeting with the Imam Ali Shrine Secretary Members', (London, 2014).

1. Settle the case by negotiation or agreement (the preferred option);
2. Force the developer to comply with pre-arranged conditions;
3. Enforce conditions by making the developer apply for retrospective planning permission;
4. Prosecute or take other legal action (including fines), where appropriate, or
5. Take direct action to remove non-compliant use or development (such as eviction or demolition).¹⁵⁴

In total, these two reports make recommendations for an action plan to further support the protection and conservation of key priority cultural heritage sites. However, they do not mention the implementation process in the short, medium and long term. Theoretically, the implementation of a conservation approach should address an approach to the existing fabric. Najaf's historical buildings use local materials and traditional techniques. They usually have thick walls which can play a role in thermal performance, and have a natural ventilation system.¹⁵⁵ The current approach to conservation focuses on conserving traditional materials, as well as building techniques. International charters, such as the Washington Charter 1987, adopted the idea of conserving traditional materials. The second objective of this charter stated that:

“Qualities to be preserved include the historic character of the town or urban area and all those material and spiritual elements that express this character, especially:

- a) Urban patterns as defined by lots and streets;*
- b) Relationships between buildings and green and open spaces;*
- c) The formal appearance, interior and exterior, of buildings as defined by scale, size, style, construction, materials, colour and decoration;*
- d) The relationship between the town or urban area and its surrounding setting, both natural and man-made; and*
- e) The various functions that the town or urban area has acquired over time.*

¹⁵⁴ Engineers, 'Urban Renewal of the City Center of Holy Najaf: Comprehensive Master Plan of the City Center of Holy Najaf', (p. 205). Stage 5.

¹⁵⁵ Michael Forsyth, 'The Philosophy of Repair', in *Materials and Skills for Historic Building Conservation*, ed. by Michael Forsyth (Oxford, Malden, Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), (p. 1).

*Any threat to these qualities would compromise the authenticity of the historic town or urban area”.*¹⁵⁶

The ICOMOS Charter on the built vernacular heritage set out these guidelines in practice:

*“Replacement of materials and parts: Alterations which legitimately respond to the demands of contemporary use should be effected by the introduction of materials which maintain a consistency of expression, appearance, texture and form throughout the structure and a consistency of building materials”.*¹⁵⁷

Overall, international charters set out guidance in terms of conserving, using and replacing traditional materials in the conservation process. In fact, there is a degree of flexibility in relation to selecting the technique because there is no single correct approach. In particular, building technique is different from place to place, and region to region,¹⁵⁸ and in some case from builder to builder.¹⁵⁹ The international organization and charters outline the principles and processes of conservation, share information among governments and researchers, support and advise governments on shaping policies around historical sites, and increase people’s awareness toward heritage. The best aspect of this is that they update their information and principles when they need to, and this explains how a conservation movement can be transformed from a static to a dynamic process.

At the local level, one of the goals of the 2015 Dewan report is to determine the technical construction which should be approved in the project to take into account the patterns of traditional architecture and fabric heritage of the area, which are of a sensitive nature (E.g. construction materials, developments patterns and building height).¹⁶⁰ However, the final outcome did not mention the use of materials in the conservation process at both city and building scale. In fact, up to the present, there has been no clear regulation or guidance to manage the conservation process on the ground at building level. As a result, the land owners, builders, designers and project

¹⁵⁶ Washington Charter, 'Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas', *Washington, DC: Adopted by ICOMOS General Assembly.(October 1987)*, (1987).

¹⁵⁷ International Council On Monument And Sites (ICOMOS), 'Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage', (Mexico: ICOMOS, 1999).

¹⁵⁸ Orbasli, *Architectural Conservation: Principles and Practice*, p. 137.

¹⁵⁹ Sta9, 'Interview'.

¹⁶⁰ Engineers, 'Urban Renewal of the City Center of Holy Najaf: Comprehensive Master Plan of the City Center of Holy Najaf', (p. 4).Stage 5.

managers can change any detail, land use or materials for their properties. This situation will be explained further with the case study of the *Khan Al-Shilan*.

There is a major problem specific to Najaf in terms of referencing cultural heritage as a planning concern. More detailed regional studies are needed to determine the best conservation management practices and to set out clear guidance on heritage management, particularly the approval of appropriate physical interventions. Moreover, the Iraqi system needs to initiate national dialogue on the future of conserving national and local heritage to bring about consensus and formally endorse a clear strategy and policy directives, undertaking a legal review to deliver a clear and coherent legislative agenda to amend or introduce new heritage regulations. It also needs to involve the development and activation of effective implementation tools and mechanisms delivered by authorities with sufficient professional skills and experience.

To summarise, this chapter has set out a framework of aspects of cultural heritage conservation in order to examine heritage protection standards and conservation practices in the pilgrimage city of Najaf. Through the themes outlined in this chapter, the research seeks to provide evidence of the different ways for the protection of cultural heritage. I find that heritage authorities in Iraq do not have a clear conservation process plan to designate, protect and manage significant sites and buildings. Therefore, this thesis investigates this area in more depth by employing three case studies to consider the extent to which conservation values are understood in the context of contemporary Iraq. The next chapter focuses on a small fragment of the urban fabric of the old town, in order to explain what local communities understand and value in relation to preserving the physical and social fabric of Najaf old town.

Representing Najaf: an investigation into current pressures on the physical and social fabric of the *Al-Houaish* neighbourhood

Introduction

This chapter seeks to examine the extent to which the physical and social fabric of the *al-Houaish* neighbourhood has become redundant, and why the original families of long-standing descent now choose not to live there. The ultimate aim of this chapter is to answer the research sub-question of what the local communities understand and value about preserving the physical and social fabric of Najaf old town. The *al-Houaish* neighbourhood is a significant part of the Najaf old town, a pilgrimage city in Iraq. It has a special character, and is of particular interest because it has historical and cultural value, but it has been neglected. The aims of this chapter are to highlight the current pressures on the social and urban fabric; and to explain why that fabric is worth protecting, and what the difficulties are in doing this.

A key issue is why these residential buildings in the urban fabric of the *al-Houaish* are empty or redundant, and to explain this we need to understand the relationship between the physical and social fabric of the city. Therefore, this chapter is divided into three main sections. Section 1 sets out the historical development of Najaf's old town and its social fabric challenges, in order to explain why the local citizens have tended to move to the outskirts of the town. Section two investigates the *al-Houaish* neighbourhood, in order to understand the character and significance of the main features of the *al-Houaish*, and to examine the significance of the traditional *Najafi*

courtyard house in more depth. Section 3 considers physical fabric pressures, exploring why buildings that used to be domestic have been abandoned, re-purposed or rebuilt. The chapter uses documentary evidence and evidence gathered through interviews with stakeholders, local residents, heritage elites and decision makers.

Section 1: A brief history of Najaf's old town

Urban development

The holy city of Najaf developed around the Imam Ali Shrine and gradually grew to become a big city (Figure 3.1). The emergence of the urban fabric of the old town reflects the vernacular architecture of a specific region, in terms of the density of the public realm and the typology of domestic buildings.¹ Until the second millennium, the major land use in the historic city core was for residential neighbourhoods supporting local community activities. Residential communities were located historically to the north of the shrine, with neighbourhoods latterly extending to the west and south. Over 10 centuries, the development of the old town was determined by the perimeter of the city wall, and there were 6 phases of the old town, resulting from the growth of its residential population² (Figure 3.2).³ The first wall was built around 200 meters from the shrine and the second was built by Abdullah bin Hamdan; No documents related to these constructions survive. The third wall was built in 982, while the fourth was built in 1010, with a diameter of 1250 meter. The fifth wall had a diameter of 1721 meters, and within this wall the dwelling surrounds the shrine. The last wall was built in 1788, and was renovated between 1802 and 1811.⁴ It was completely demolished by the government and replaced by a ring road in the early 20th century. Sta1 (a local historian which has been overlooked for documenting Najaf) mentioned that, after demolishing the wall, its physical space worked as ring pathways around the town, and became the nucleus open space which

¹ Haidar a Kamona, 'Environmental and Natural Features of the City of Najaf', *Afaaq Najafiya*, 25 (2012) at 29.

² Architects and Engineers. Dewan, 'Urban Renewal of the City Center of Holy City of Najaf', (Baghdad / Iraq, 2011b) at 217.

³ Haidar a Kamona, 'Architectural and Schematic Harmony between the Imam Ali Shrine and the Old City', in Publishing Society Forum / Najaf and جمعية منتدى النشر (eds.), (Najaf: Publishing Society Forum / Najaf, 2009).

⁴ Mohsen Al-Modafar, *City of Najaf: Genius Meanings and the Sanctity of the Place*. (Iraqi Cities; Baghdad: House of cultural affairs, 2011a) at 167 - 75.

hosted most of the town's social activities. Local citizens met there every night when the main gates of the town were closed.⁵ The *Shahid Behshti* report of 2014 also states that the lines of the former walls become active alleyways inside the old town.⁶

The holy city of Najaf had small, overlapping and unorganised neighbourhoods, and this situation continued until the late Ottoman era in 1865, when the first external intervention divided the old town administration into four main neighbourhoods (*al-Houaish, al-Mishraq, al-Imarah and al-Buraq*). The next step of the Ottoman government was to record the number of houses and their locations, followed by a census to enable compulsory military service.⁷ It should be noted that this intervention was regulatory but it was not particularly influential on the physical and social fabric of the old town. In other words, it did not undermine the continuity of the city's fabric.

Figure 3.1 Extension of old town over time; (source: Dewan Architects and Engineers, 'Urban Renewal of the City Centre of Holy City of Najaf', Baghdad / Iraq, 2011, p. 172. Stage 1).

⁵ Sta1, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

⁶ Department of Architecture. Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine', (Najaf: Imam Ali Shrine, 2014) at 214.

⁷ *Ibid.*, at 216.

Figure 3.2 Morphology of holy city of Najaf (development of the main walls); (source: Shahid Beheshti, 'The Project of Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine', pp.205- 07).

Until 1949, Najaf's old town had a coherent ring-shaped organic form, with the shrine at its centre, surrounded by its four neighbourhoods (Figures 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5). In this sense, anyone walking within the city along its narrow zigzagging alleys had no apparent direct path to the shrine, and only saw the impact of its wide and dominant space when in close proximity. This relationship contributed to the experiences of visitors in terms of their feelings of reverence and faith, as appropriate

to holy places.⁸ The organic form is a major characteristic of Arabic and Islamic cities, and adds much historic value to the old town. Consequently, it is difficult to find a regular geometrical shape inside Najaf's old town, apart from the Imam Ali Shrine itself, which has thus added to its importance (as discussed further in the next chapter). The meandering pathways taken by pilgrims to the shrine afforded the shrine grater drama, as the golden domes and minarets appear and disappear as a result of the continuously altering viewpoints. Overall, the old town shape can be likened to a solid block, interconnected with multiple routes and passageways.⁹

Figure 3.3 Aerial view of the holy city of Najaf, 1918, (source: Gertrude Bell, 'Photographs', in Gertrude Bell Archive., Newcastle: Newcastle University, 1918).

⁸ Haidar a Kamona, 'The City, and Its Architecture Impact', *Summer*, 27 (1971).

⁹ Haidar A. Kamona, 'The Urban Structure of the Najaf Old Town: Problems and Solutions.', *Afaq Najafiya*, /10 (2008b).

Figure 3.4 Aerial view of the holy city of Najaf, 1936; (source: The *Khan Al-Shilan* museum).

Figure 3.5 Najaf's old town map before main roads cut; (source: Municipality of Najaf archive).

In 1949, sections of the historical area were selected in order to create direct roads to the shrine to allow vehicular access and improve movement for visitors. This intervention also led to the demolition of a part of the Imam Ali Shrine.¹⁰ *Al-Tosi* Street, for example, providing direct access to the shrine and divided the *al-Imarah* and *al-Mishraq* neighbourhoods. In 1955, further new streets were opened up in the old town (*al-Sadiq* Street and *Zain al-Abideen* Street) and this effected the physical division of the four main neighbourhoods (Figure 3.6), with the significant side effect of weakening both the urban and social fabric.¹¹ It should be noted that most local citizens live according to their clan, families and occupations in the old town, and this encourages them to support each other.¹² This intervention has reduced the length of the walk through the zigzag alleyways, since locals and pilgrims use the new roads, which are shorter and straighter. Usually, this weakens the relationship between communities and place; therefore, step-by-step, they have come to care much less about it. Arc7 an architect working in a small local practice said that local communities had begun using vehicles to go to work in the old town, particularly those who had moved to the town's periphery, and that this had reduced daily communication with the urban fabric.¹³ This is not limited to the local communities; pilgrims can go directly to the shrine by car too.¹⁴ This change also disjoins the continuity of the physical fabric of the old town, as well as the new roads around the shrine itself, weakening the cohesion between it and the surrounding area.¹⁵

¹⁰ Yasser Tabbaa and Sabrina Mervin, *Najaf the Gate of Wisdom: History, Heritage and Significance of the Holy City of the Shi'a* (Paris. Amman.: UNESCO, 2014) at 82.

¹¹ Jaffar Baqir Mahboba, *Najaf's Pasts and Present*, 3 vols. (2; Najaf: Al-Adab Press, 1957a) at 83. Volume 2.

¹² Jaffar Baqir Mahboba, *Najaf's Past and Present*, 3 vols. (3; Najaf: Al-Numan Press, 1957b). Volume 3.

¹³ Arc7, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

¹⁴ Lr5, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

¹⁵ Haidar A. Kamona, *Perception in the Reconstruction of the City of Najaf as a Capital of Islamic Culture 2012* (Najaf: Association forum posting in Najaf, 2010) at 51-52.

Figure 3.6 Najaf's old town after cutting of new roads; (source: Imam Ali Shrine archive).

Later, in 1986 the decision to remove a large part of the *al-Imarah* historical neighbourhood created a new open space close to the shrine, weakening its impact as the only large space in the old town, as well as isolating it from its urban surroundings.¹⁶ The Baath regime argued that this intervention should improve and develop the old town in order to enable it to accommodate visitors. However, most researchers, historians and local residents interviewed for this research believed that political-religious issues drove the decision to demolish this area (Figure 3.7). Indeed, DM1 (a member of the shrine secretary) stated that demolishing many buildings and spaces within the historic fabric was part of the repression inflicted by Saddam's government on local Shia religious scholars, including those which hosted religious activities. A similar clearance of historic neighbourhoods also took place in Karbala¹⁷ old town in 1991.¹⁸ There is some credence to this belief, as the *al-Imarah* had the most significant religious schools, as well as the dwellings of religious

¹⁶ Urban Planning Authority- Iraqi Government, 'Development Plan for the Najaf Old Town', in Urban Planning Authority (ed.), (Baghdad, 1986).

¹⁷ Karbala is important as another historical pilgrimage city in Iraq; it has two main shrines for Imam Hussain and Imam Abbas, the sons of Imam Ali.

¹⁸ Dm1, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

scholars, and many local mosque neighbourhoods. Another reason was perhaps to reduce the proportion of Shia visitors to the shrine,¹⁹ given that it is an important holy site for both Sunni and Shia Muslims.

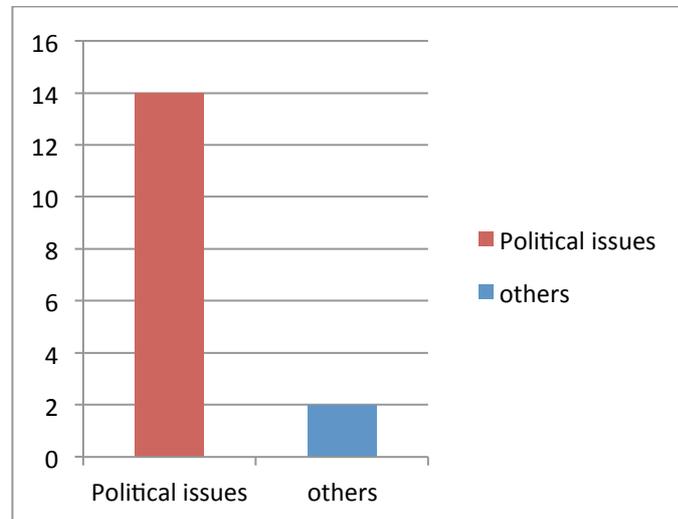


Figure 3.7 Reasons for demolition of *al-Imarah* neighbourhood in 1986

The result of the works of the 1980s was that Najaf lost many significant traditional buildings dating back over 200 years. In 2009, Kamona tried to summarise the heritage protection process as regards the Baath regime: on the one hand, the government's intention was to improve and develop the shrine and its surrounding area, but on the other, they removed one of the most significant residential and religious cultural areas, and left it for more than a decade as an empty site.²⁰ In total, more than 300 significant historic site features, traditional houses, religious schools, cemeteries and libraries were demolished.²¹ As shown in Figures 3.8 and 3.9, the old town has lost its architectural character; human scale and historical value when we compare its layout before and after the opening of the streets, including the 2014 plan of current properties under construction that have been developed by the Imam Ali foundation. Figure 3.10 shows changes to the old town morphology over time, and Figure 3.11 illustrates the configuration of Najaf's current neighbourhoods. According to the above, it can be stated that the political factor was the most significant impact on the development aspects of the old town, but equally there was

¹⁹ Lr3, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2014).

²⁰ Kamona, 'Architectural and Schematic Harmony between the Imam Ali Shrine and the Old City'.

²¹ Sta8, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2014).

no clear heritage protection system in place, which increased heritage destruction on the ground.

Currently, the quality of the new buildings in the old town is low, and the old *Suq*, such as the booksellers' shops, now have ceilings made of plastic material. The original structures are being demolished and rebuilt in contemporary materials. With gentrification, the social structure is being lost.²² In terms of outlining the characteristics and qualities of the old town; it can be stated that heritage buildings locally mean any building having a skin wall built from brick, supported by an Islamic arch and some decorations. Evidence of this can be found in the report of *Bahashti*, which stated that there are different reasons that have led to the demolition of the built heritage of Najaf's old town.²³

Figure 3.8 Najaf's old town map, 2003; (source: The archive of the Directorate of Urban Planning in Najaf).

²²Sta3, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2014).

²³ The Faculty of Architecture and Urban Development Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of the Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine.', (Najaf, 2015) at 51.

Figure 3.9 Najaf's old town map, 2014; (source: Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine').

Figure 3.10 Morphology of Najaf's old town; (source: Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine').

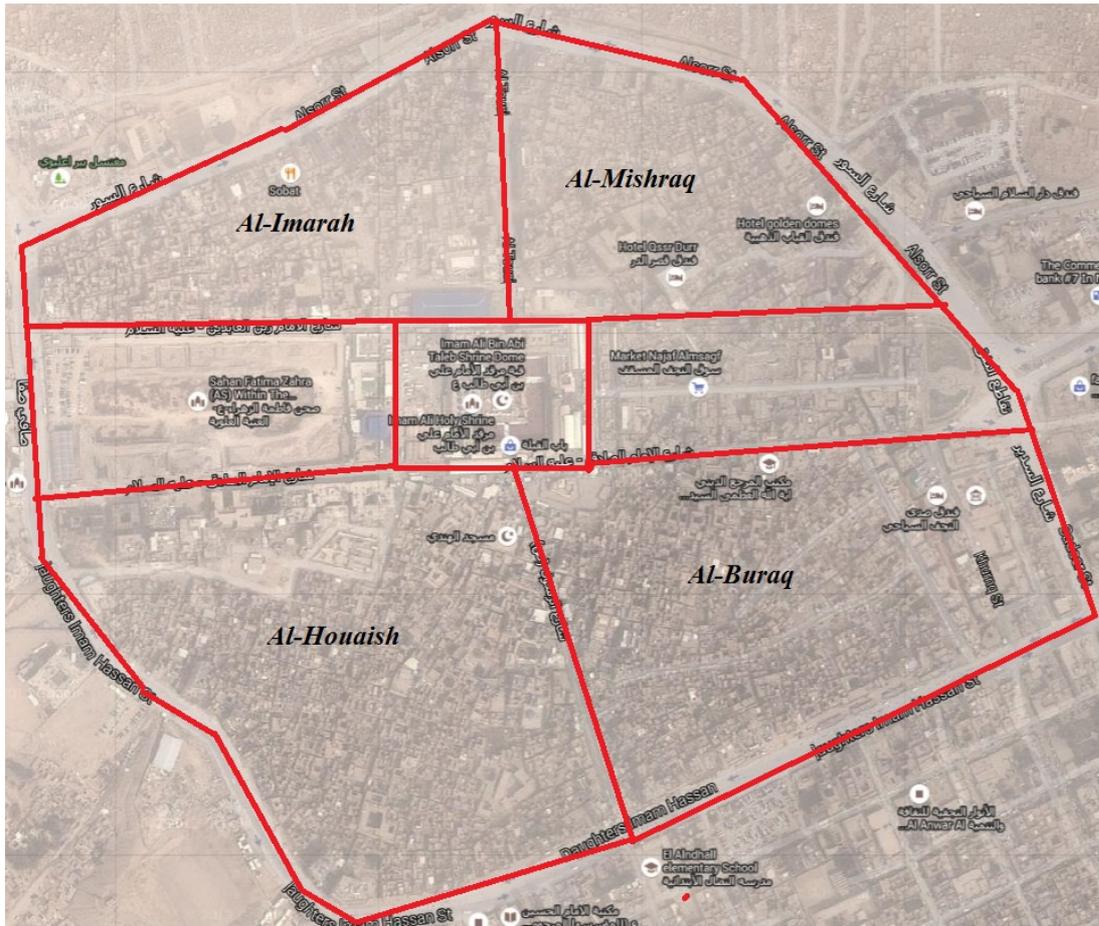


Figure 3.11 Current four main neighbourhoods of Najaf's old town; (source: Google map).

Social fabric challenges

The pressures of a new lifestyle are changing the social fabric of Najaf's old town, with local citizens moving away, despite its history, although some locals are still living there. During research interviews, it became apparent that local communities placed greater emphasis on the protection of the cultural heritage than local and central governments. Various reasons have led to a change in the social demography of Najaf's old town and weakened social relationships and activities in the historic neighbourhoods: for instance huge number of pilgrims, conflict, politics and modern life in the new neighbourhoods.²⁴ The number of citizens has gradually risen, from several families living around the shrine to approximately 400,000 persons in the 1940s, followed by a dramatic decrease to less than 10,000 in 2010, while the number of citizens in the entire city of Najaf has reached more than half a million in the new millennium (Figures 3.12, 3.13).²⁵

Figure 3.12 Changing numbers of local citizens of Najaf's old town.²⁶

²⁴ Sta8, 'Interview'.

²⁵ The Archive of the Najaf directorate of Statistics.

²⁶ The Figure is by the researcher, and the data from the Najaf directorate of Statistics.

Figure 3.13 Number of citizens in Najaf.²⁷

Historically, the demolition of the sixth wall encouraged families and the next generation to move outside the old town. However, the first major exodus from the old town began in the mid-1970s, when new neighbourhoods were established that offered a more comfortable and stylish life. Some citizens moved outside the old town, due to increased wealth.²⁸ Some had large extended families, so the original houses in the old town could not host them. Accordingly, some sons moved to new neighbourhoods when they married, but their daily jobs remained with their parents or relatives inside the old town.²⁹ The new wide streets supported the new generations' use of cars to travel between their new homes and the old town. This led to a weakening of the relationship between the new generation and the old town. The youth did not walk inside the town, and the old town for them became just a source of earnings.³⁰ Furthermore, Arc7 (An architect working in a small local practices, and university lecturer.) stated that people who moved to the suburban supported their relatives moving away, particularly when comparing the small-sized and densely-packed houses inside the old town to the large houses with wide streets and many new facilities on the outskirts.³¹ This migration led to a change in the social structure of the old town, but at this point many families retained possession of their

²⁷ The Figure is by the researcher, and the data from the Najaf directorate of Statistics.

²⁸ Dewan, 'Urban Renewal of the City Center of Holy City of Najaf', at 307.

²⁹ Arc7, 'Interview'.

³⁰ Lr6, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

³¹ Arc7, 'Interview'.

own old houses in the old town. Arc1's view of why the local citizens moved out of the old town is that the expansion of Najaf was a natural phenomenon and a necessity because of the expansion of the population in the 1950s and changes in the social structure, and thus met people's expectations and needs. The old town did not and could not satisfy an emerging middle class, and there was no desire to reinvigorate or revive the old town as a historical and cultural asset.³² In total, modernism, conflict, wealth, and a high population density in the old town played a part in changing the social fabric during this period.

In addition, politics played a significant role with regard to changes in the social demography of Najaf's old town. The Najaf old town is one of the few surviving cities from the middle ages in Iraq. The government do not currently pay attention to safeguarding it, potentially due to a limited understanding of its heritage.³³ In the 1970s The *Baath* regime forced the displacement of some people in the old town to Iran. The regime felt these people's origins were not Arabic, or thought that they supported the Iranian government. This situation was not limited to Najaf's old town but covered most of the Shia cities and involved the targeting of different types of Iraqi citizen, such as religious scholars, merchants and employers.³⁴ As part of the deliberate remodelling of society, the *Baath* regime conducted confiscations of property, giving it to people who supported the Bath regime from different cities. Sta8 argued that some of the local families moved out of Najaf's old town because the new families made trouble for them.³⁵

The mid-1980s witnessed a new wave of displacement in Najaf old town, especially from Basra city³⁶, as a result of the gulf war between Iraq and Iran. They chose to live in Najaf because it was safer than their cities, and Iran never targeted it during the war, for religious reasons. Most people returned to their cities, and some stayed in Najaf old town. In fact, the local community of Najaf's old town disliked the new refugees from other cities, and those who were able moved out of the old town. It should be mentioned that the local citizens of Najaf old town determined that every family who lived inside the walls before its demolition were 'native' residents and

³² Arc1, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2014).

³³ Sta1, 'Interview'.

³⁴ Lr5, 'Interview'.

³⁵ Sta8, 'Interview'.

³⁶ Basra is one of the biggest Iraqi cities, located in the south of Iraq.

others were ‘foreign’, even if born in Najaf.³⁷ The native community still wants to protect the old town even if they do not live there, as a part of a cultural struggle over identity and history.

Politically, 1991 witnessed a popular uprising in most Iraqi cities after the end of the occupation of Kuwait. The movement was focused around the holy cities and their religious scholars, and Najaf was deliberately targeted by the Baath regime, using missiles and military units.³⁸ Najaf lost many of its significant buildings, with the old town suffering afterwards from neglect and consequential demolition during the 1990s. Moreover, many local citizens emigrated to Western Europe and the USA through Saudi Arabia and Iran, while, Sta3 said that the *Baath* regime arrested many of the remaining young citizens.³⁹ This event played a significant role in destroying the social fabric of the old town, as the population was significantly reduced.

After the overthrow of the Saddam regime in 2003, Arc6 as an architect and Politician explained that the quota system among the parties has enabled many non-specialists and incompetent people to become key figures in managing and developing the old town.⁴⁰ Arguably, Sta8 stated that the desires of the politicians are the key to decision-making. Indeed, the decision makers do not discuss cultural heritage issues with their advisors or specialists.⁴¹ The main concern is that most are part of the ruling group, and that would be dangerous and put heritage sites and buildings under threat.⁴² As a result, the current urban fabric condition is neglected and uncared for, which also encourages the local community to move outside the old town. Since then, the security situation appeared as a new reason for moving outside the old town. Sta4 stated the increased numbers of security check points and the long queues encouraged some families to move.⁴³ Then and now, changes to the local community and in land use has led to a decline in relations among local citizens. After 2003, many religious students returned to Najaf to study religion, so it has once again become one of the biggest cities of religious knowledge in the Islamic nation. After 2003, its religious sessions and activities increased, leading it to play a

³⁷ Sta4, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

³⁸ Lr5, 'Interview'.

³⁹ Sta10, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

⁴⁰ Arc6, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

⁴¹ Sta8, 'Interview'.

⁴² Sta2, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2014).

⁴³ Sta4, 'Interview'.

significant role in the local land make-up of the neighbourhood, as many religious students now live in and around this area. According to the Dewan survey, more than a quarter of Najaf old town's houses are now rented out, as demonstrated by the statistics in Figure 3.14.⁴⁴

Figure 3.14 Proportion of house occupants in the old town.⁴⁵

An increase in the number of visitors to the shrine has brought great pressure to the old town.⁴⁶ The new generations look to the old town as their source of income. Therefore, after moving from the old town, they have started to rent their houses as private rooms to visitors and religious students. This has led to land being developed to become hotels and to accommodate other commercial activities inside the urban fabric, and thus to further numbers of local residents moving outside of the town.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, local residents that were interviewed still wanted to protect the old town in order to show other people their identity. In particular, al-Ali stated that the old town land prices had jumped to 6 to 8 million Iraqi Dinar (ID) per 1 m², but was less than half a million ID per 1 m² in the new neighbourhoods.⁴⁸ The land value of religious cities in Iraq has risen greatly; especially in the areas close to the shrines,

⁴⁴ Dewan Architects and Engineers, 'Urban Renewal of the City Center of Holy Najaf (Old Town)/ Stage 2', in General Directorate of Physical Planning Republic of Iraq/ Ministry of Municipalities and Public Work (ed.), (2; Baghdad/ Iraq, 2011a) at 56.

⁴⁵ The Figure is by the researcher, and the data from the 2011 *Dewan* report – stage 2.

⁴⁶ Sta2, 'Interview'.

⁴⁷ Arc7, 'Interview'.

⁴⁸ Nasir Al-Ali, 'Increasing in the Land Prices of Najaf', *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, 9 August 2008 2008.

which have become worth more than \$ 40,000 per 1 m².⁴⁹ Expressly, Sta4 explained that his family sold their own house inside the old town during the 1990s at a cheap price in order to move to the new neighbourhood, while now its value is 50 times higher.⁵⁰ In particular, Arc7 argued that the new generation who have moved outside the old town do not care about protecting the social fabric of the old town, but only want to earn money from it.⁵¹ LR6 supported this idea: his concern is the rapid changes to the current social and physical fabric, which threaten the traditional life of the place.⁵²

In conclusion, periods of neglect by successive governments and authorities have led to the old town not keeping pace with the requirements of modern life, and not satisfying basic social requirements, which has encouraged local citizens to move to the outskirts of the town. As a result, most of the younger generation do not live there. Moreover, the rocketing land values have encouraged this generation to sell their inherited properties, particularly where they are not living in them. Overall, political, social and economic factors have influenced the destruction of the social fabric of the old town and it may not now be possible to reactivate Najaf's social life. Any conservation plan should focus on both tangible and intangible heritage, and the government could offer some financial aid to support social life on the ground. Recently, UNESCO has started to investigate and document the intangible heritage of the old town, and Sta2 and some heritage elites participated in workshops at the UNESCO office in Amman in 2016. In addition, a UNESCO mission visited Najaf to document significant social activities, in order to list them in the World Heritage List.⁵³

⁴⁹ Nasir Al-Hasoon, 'Fantastically High of Land Value in Najaf, Karbala and Baghdad', *Voice of Iraq*, 2015.

⁵⁰ Sta4, 'Interview'.

⁵¹ Arc7, 'Interview'.

⁵² Lr6, 'Interview'.

⁵³ Sta2, 'Interview'.

Section 2: The *al-Houaish* neighbourhood

2 – 1 Selected segment of *al-Houaish* urban fabric

The south-western neighbourhood in the old town, called the *al-Houaish* (figure 3.15), particularly its inner sections, contains the only places in Najaf that retain something of the flavour and spirituality of the old town.⁵⁴ There are several reasons to select this segment of the urban fabric to explain the connection between the physical and social fabric in terms of what has happened more recently to cause the local community to move out. The first is that it has the only two surviving examples of the *al-Subat*, a valuable architectural feature, which is explained below. Secondly, some of these areas will be a part of the extension of the Imam Ali Shrine project (the next chapter will explain this further). Thirdly, it has one of the most significant book markets (*suq al-Houaish*) at national and local level, and has extended into the residential area, changing its fundamental use. Lastly, the *al-Hindi* mosque is located here, the biggest mosque in the old town (after the shrine), as well as different examples of traditional house types, though nowadays most have been abandoned or demolished. Ultimately, this selective fabric (Figures 3.16, 3.17 and 3.18)⁵⁵ has a special character and environment, and historic and communal values, but it suffers from mismanagement. Therefore, I am going to focus more on the main architectural element of the selected area in depth, namely the *Suq al-Houaish*, the *Masjid al-Hindi*, the residential area and its urban fabric, the traditional houses, and the *al-Subat*, to explain what the local communities understand and value preserving of the physical fabric of the old town.

⁵⁴ Tabbaa and Mervin, *Najaf the Gate of Wisdom: History, Heritage and Significance of the Holy City of the Shi'a* at 52.

⁵⁵ Please find the appendices for further detailed photos.



Figure 3.15 Selected fragment of urban fabric in 1940; (source: Iraqi land and property registry, 'Najf's Old Town Master Plan', Municipality of Najaf, 1940).

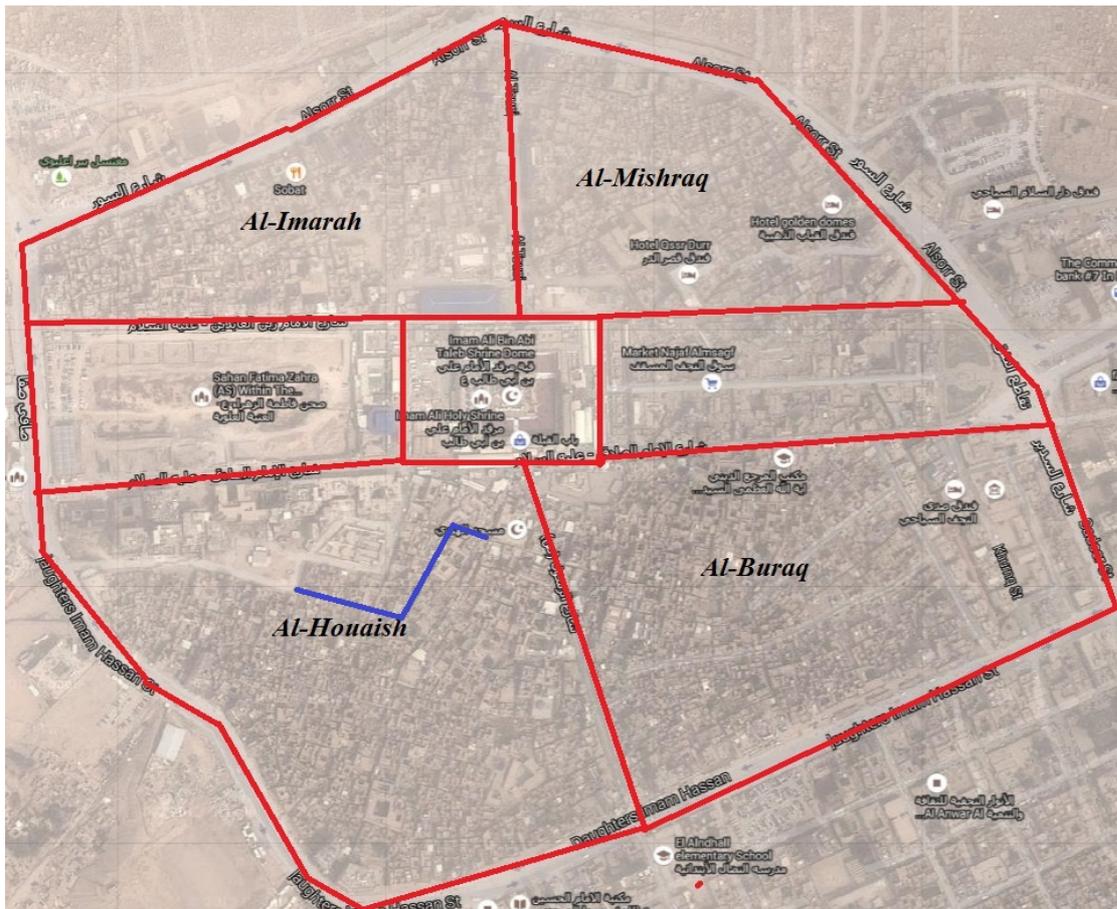


Figure 3.16 Urban fabric of *al-Houaish* neighbourhood, showing selected area; (source: Google map).



Figure 3.17 Selected fragment of urban fabric in 2015;(source: The archive of the Directorate of Urban Planning in Najaf).



The *suq al-Houaish*

The *suq* is an Arab market, meaning the place for goods and necessities.⁵⁶ It is one of the classical landmarks of any Islamic city, usually located at their centre. There are different types of traditional *suqs* in Arabic cities: around the mosque (usually the major), linear *suqs* (double sided, continues or semi- continues), *suqs* close to city gates and weekly or seasonal *suqs*.⁵⁷ It should be noted that trades divided into groups according to function or occupation is the main features of Arabic *suqs*. For example, perfume, clothes, bookshops, footwear products and jewellery can be bought at the *suq*.⁵⁸ Hakim documented the five main elements of the *suq*:

- *“the typical shop varies in size, with the depth usually greater than the frontage width;*
- *typical series of shops with or without an arcade, usually occurring within a neighbourhood;*
- *a typical segment of a suq system has a vaulted passageway;*
- *on a large scale, the typical intersection of four spines encloses within it islands of shop clusters, and*
- *the sketch indicates a typical context for a building”.*⁵⁹

In Iraq, there are only two specific streets for selling books. The first is *al-Mutanabi* Street in the historical core of Baghdad, the capital of Iraq, and the other is the *suq al-houaish* in Najaf. Generally, there were three main *suq* in the Najaf’s old town, the great *suq*, the *suq al-houaish* and the *suq al-Imarah*.⁶⁰ Architecturally, the urban form of the *suq al-houaish* is a cluster of shops along a narrow, double-sided passageway; most of the shops are narrow islands (Figure 3.19). LR6 said that most of the original shops were built using local materials (bricks and plaster).⁶¹ The *suq al-houaish* was a normal *suq* in the old town until the 1990s. After the Hussain regime weakened, the previously suppressed religious bookshops started to appear in place of other shops. Before this, the government prevented the buying and selling of

⁵⁶ Besim S. Hakim, *Arabic Islamic Cities: Building, and Planning Principles* (London, New York, Sydney and Henley: KPI Limited, 1986) at 80.

⁵⁷ Muthana Al-Sammarai, 'The Characteristics of the Components Traditional Markets (Suqs)', (Technology- Baghdad, 1989) at 12-19.

⁵⁸ Hakim, *Arabic Islamic Cities: Building, and Planning Principles* at 81.

⁵⁹ Ibid., at 128.

⁶⁰ In 1986 *suq al-Imarah* was fully demolished by the Saddam government.

⁶¹ Lr6, 'Interview'.

most religious books, and there was only a specific building (*the qaisariya*)⁶² which offered photocopies of religious books. After 2003, religious studies dramatically increased, generating a demand from scholars for such books. The *suq al-houaish* became a significant location for bookshops because it is close to both the *al-Hindi* and the *al-Ansari* mosques, which host most of the religious sessions, in addition to the Imam Ali Shrine.⁶³ As a result, the *suq al-houaish* has expanded and parts of the *al-Houaish* have changed from domestic to predominantly commercial uses. As discussed in Section 1, the proximity to commercial activity has created pressure on local residents to move away from the *al-Houaish*.

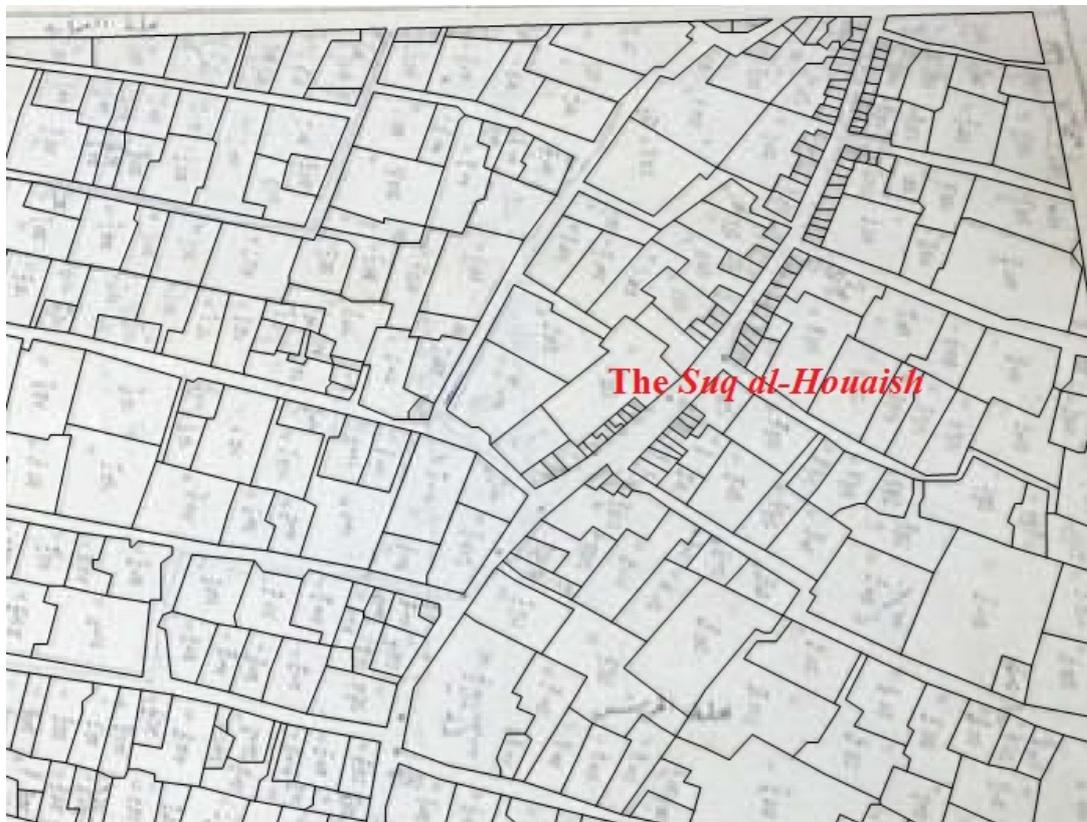


Figure 3.19 The *suq Al-Houaish* in 1940; (source: Iraqi land and property registry, 'Najf's Old Town Master Plan').

The *suq al-Houaish* has specific publishing houses, such as *Dar al-Hikma* publishing, in addition to many bookshops and booksellers. It has become a significant part of the old town; therefore, the government has begun to maintain it as a part of the

⁶² The *qaisariya* is a specific market element, usually of an oblong hall, roofed and colonnaded with a double row of rooms, often domed, with a door at one or both of the short sides that was securely locked at night.

⁶³ Sta4, 'Interview'.

Najaf capital of Islamic culture 2012.⁶⁴ In the rehabilitation process, the restoration principles applied can be criticised in that the historic buildings have been made to look like new buildings (Figure 3.20).⁶⁵

The Dewan report also proposed contemporary additions as part of its proposal “to rehabilitate Najaf as a living historic city, celebrating its religious functions and providing satisfaction to residents and visitors alike”.⁶⁶ The report suggested extending commercial activities, increasing the number of hotels and retail outlets along the *suq al-Houaish*, and extending the commercial area at the edge of the old town by creating a residential commercial area (Figure 3.21). The current proposed extension of the *suq al-Houaish* is to replace the residential area; and this has led to an increase in land value and a reason for locals to sell and leave.⁶⁷ The plan also proposes that the local community move outside this area, to become a part of the commercial area.⁶⁸ It should be noted that some interviewees determined this proposal to be a normal part of the development of urban life. For example, LR5 said that the old town, with particular reference to the *suq al-Houaish*, should develop to become like a contemporary city.⁶⁹ In addition, Sta9 explained that the *suq al-Houaish* should be extended, in order to offer some activities for pilgrims and local citizens.⁷⁰ However, there are limits to how far the Dewan proposal can be taken in practice, and any proposal would need to consider the impact on homes, shops, and libraries.⁷¹

Apart from developing the surrounding area of the shrine (which will be discussed further in the Chapter 5), the 2014 report of the University of Shahid Beheshti explained that the *suq al-Houaish* has significant value and should be protected and rehabilitated using traditional methods, as well as having its facades improved. In order to protect the physical shape of the *suq al-Houaish*, the report commented on the current roofing of the *Suq*, which obscures the view of the shrine, proposing

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Sta9, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

⁶⁶ Dewan Architects and Engineers, 'Urban renewal of the City center of Holy Najaf', (Iraq: Republic Iraq, Ministry of Municipalities and Public Work, General directorate of physical planning, 2012) at 2.

⁶⁷ Sta4, 'Interview'.

⁶⁸ Architects and Engineers Dewan, 'Urban Renewal of the City Center of Holy Najaf: Comprehensive Master Plan of the City Center of Holy Najaf', (Fifth edn.; Najaf: Republic Iraq, Ministry of Municipalities and Public Work, General directorate of physical planning, 2015) at 50-53.

⁶⁹ Lr5, 'Interview'.

⁷⁰ Sta9, 'Interview'.

⁷¹ Sta2, 'Interview'.

different solutions, such as using temporary or retractable roofing.⁷² One of the main objectives of the Shahid Beheshti designers was to support the local communities to understand the significance of the *Suq* through protecting the current condition of it.⁷³ However, the Beheshti report did not mention the heritage protection plan in any other way, so it thus misses the first point of heritage protection.

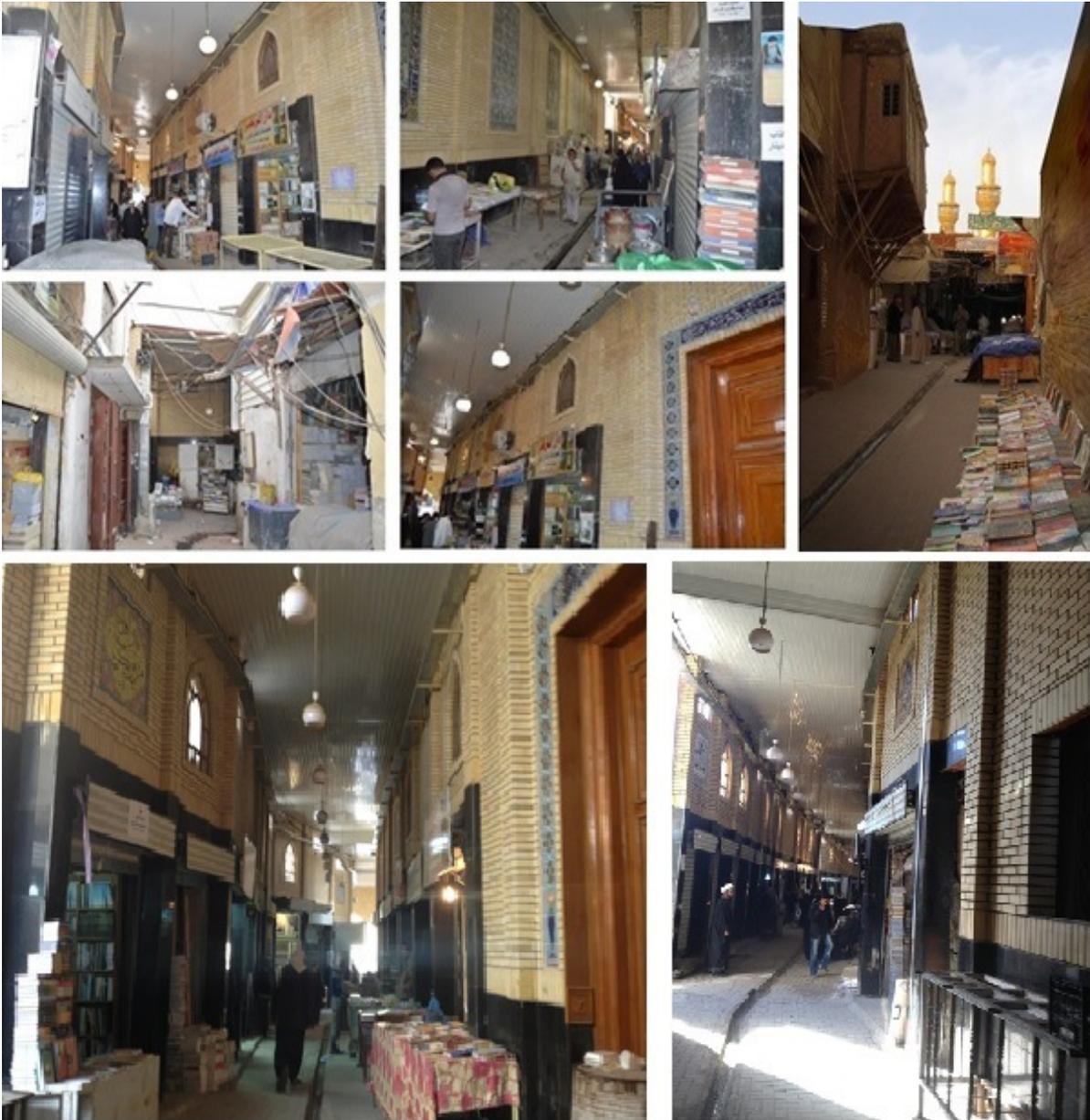


Figure 3.20 Current condition of *Suq al-Houaish*

⁷² Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine', at 125.Appendix B-2.
⁷³ Arc5, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2016).

Figure 3.21 Proposed land use map of *al-Houaish*; (source: Dewan, 'Urban Renewal of the City Centre of Holy Najaf: Comprehensive Master Plan of the City Centre of Holy Najaf, 2015', p. 49).

Overall, the *suq al-Houaish* remains in poor condition, although it has been gradually extended to contain many dwellings after a change in their function.⁷⁴ This situation has influenced both the physical and social fabric of the neighbourhood. Sta4 argued that the change in the land use of the *al-Houaish* neighbourhood had had a negative impact on the social fabric of the town, and most of the original families had moved out.⁷⁵ In particular, some interviewees (for instance Sta4, Sta5, LR1, LR3 and LR5) said that they understood the significance of the *suq al-Houaish* and that it stood in their memory as a landmark. However, their main concern is that there is no clear documentation system for the *suq al-Houaish*, in terms of its shops, dates of use, previous and current functions, and any other details that could help to set out a clear conservation plan.

⁷⁴ Sta4, 'Interview'.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

The *Masjid al-Hindi* (mosque)

Any tourist or visitor to the holy city of Najaf who wanders through its narrow pathways and deserted streets and neighbourhoods rarely fail to find a mosque, as nearly every street in the town has one. The mosques occupy a large area and many are religious schools as well.⁷⁶ One of the most significant mosques is called the *Masjid al-Hindi*, which was built in 1835, and is named after a rich Indian family who lived in Najaf. It is the second largest religious building in the old town, after the Imam Ali Shrine. It is also one of the most significant religious schools in the holy city of Najaf and hosts many social and religious activities.⁷⁷ In 1955, Sayid Muhsin al-Hakim⁷⁸ decided to extend the mosque through buying two houses beside it, which meant that it become square-shaped as a result. The new area became the open space besides the mosque building.⁷⁹ It is also one of only two mosques to have survived in their original form in the old town, when the Shai endowment rebuilt the other mosques.⁸⁰ In particular, LR1 (a historian and local resident) said that its historical value comes from having hosted many events and meetings over time, and most the *Shia* religious scholars had prayed or taught in it.⁸¹

Its main entrance overlooks the *Suq al-Houaish*, and a smaller entrance overlooks *al-Rasoul Street*, creating a spatial connection point between these two significant districts.⁸² The main significance of this mosque is that it hosts most of the significant events in the city, including religious lectures and local activities. After 2003, it returned to hosting these religious activates and sessions as the main religious school in the town, thus supporting shops in the *suq al-Houaish* to sell books.⁸³ It is clear from the data collection and interview transcripts with (Arc1, Arc5, Arc7, LR1, LR2, LR3, Sta1, and Sta4) that this mosque has significant value in terms of its size, history, and activities, and that local communities understand these values.

⁷⁶ I. Ieef Heritage Group, *Najaf Heritage at Risk* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013) at 34-35.

⁷⁷ Hassan. Al-Hakim, *Detailed of the History of Najaf: History of Shrines and the Peace Valley*. (3; Qom, Iran: Al-Haydariya Library, 2006) at 94-99. Volume 3

⁷⁸ He is *Shia* religious scholar (Grand Ayatollah) (1889-1970).

⁷⁹ Hameed M Al-Daraji, *The Heritage Buildings in Najaf: characteristic between Past and Present* (Baghdad: Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2014) at 69.

⁸⁰ Sta4, 'Interview'.

⁸¹ Lr1, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2014).

⁸² Engineers, 'Urban Renewal of the City Center of Holy Najaf (Old Town)/ Stage 2', at 56.

⁸³ Sta4, 'Interview'.

The residential area and its urban fabric

Looking in more depth at the physical and social context of the residential area is really to understand the structural organization of the *al-Houaish* neighbourhood. Firstly, in the holy city of Najaf, the roads, pedestrian pathways and intersections contribute to the old town's organic fabric, as local citizens and visitors move around the old town. The width of these pathways is between 1 and 6 metres, becoming narrower when you go to the heart of the neighbourhood, where it sometimes becomes less than 1 meter in width.⁸⁴ Historically, the dimensions of the typical alley depended on the dimensions of a fully loaded mature Arabian camel.⁸⁵ The difference between the alley and a street is that the users feel like one big family because they live close to each other, and so, for example, they usually exchange food every day.⁸⁶ In general, local residents felt responsible for raising public awareness and support, and encouraged people to keep the alleys clean and safe.⁸⁷ Accordingly, the human scale of these pathways encouraged and shaped strong relationships among local residents,⁸⁸ particularly when the clan, families or occupations were the main social structure. *Mahboba* documented most of these families in his book "Najaf's past and present", explaining in his third volume the history of the scientific, literary and famous families who lived in Najaf old town.⁸⁹ In terms of the *al-Houaish* neighbourhood, some families and groups lived there: for instance, *All-Mahboba*, *All-Adwa* and others. Overall, Al-Hakim documented more than 200 families who lived in the Najaf old town.⁹⁰ These clusters have formed the core of the local community, and this has helped the community to build strong relationships. One clear example of this is when any family dwelling has no spare room to accommodate a newly married son and his wife; the family will ask the neighbour if they can have an unused room in their house. If so, this room becomes a part of their house.⁹¹ This situation explains the overlap between dwellings on the ground.

⁸⁴ Dewan, 'Urban Renewal of the City Center of Holy City of Najaf', at 230.

⁸⁵ Hakim, *Arabic Islamic Cities: Building, and Planning Principles* at 21.

⁸⁶ Lr4, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

⁸⁷ Lr3, 'Interview'.

⁸⁸ Kamona, 'The Urban Structure of the Najaf Old Town: Problems and Solutions.', at 40.

⁸⁹ Mahboba, *Najaf's Past and Present*.

⁹⁰ Hasan Al-Hakim, 'The History of Scientific Families in Najaf', *Turath Al-Najaf*, 1/1 (2009), 232 - 65.

⁹¹ Sta1, 'Interview'.

There are different examples of these alleys and its relationship with pathways (Figure 3.22), and up to the present it has been impossible to use any vehicle inside these urban alleys. As a result, there is tension between those who advocate protecting the cultural heritage and those who support modernizing the space. In some cases, the narrow alleys provide the modern developers and decision makers with a crucial opportunity to replace these alleyways with wide roads because it is impossible to offer basic services to local residents, such as fire escapes or a sewage system.⁹² In addition, as explored in Section 1, this is a reason for local residents to move outside the old town in search of a better material quality of life, using cars and other new technology and facilities.⁹³ This shows that the urban fabric of the old town needs an extraordinary amount of work to protect it from the wave of modernization. Moreover, the alleyways are also frightening at night because they do not have any type of street-lighting system and there are no signposts or maps to help to support pilgrims' progress through these narrow alleyways.⁹⁴

The solidarity of the neighbourhood in the past was reinforced by significant social and administrative activities and responsibilities. The main social activities in the old town were hosted in special urban spaces (called locally *fadhwa*). these spaces have different shapes, sizes and types, depending on its location.⁹⁵ In fact, these spaces acted as a forum for the local communities, so local residents spent time speaking together and sharing news. Because the old town is surrounded by a wall, it has insufficient open spaces, therefore *fadhwa* became a neighbourhood club and most local citizens met there every night.⁹⁶ According to LR3 (local resident and was a member of the shrine secretary), these *fadhwa* offered local citizens, particularly the youth, with a place to meet others and play. In the 1970s, these spaces became daily markets from early morning until midday.⁹⁷ Nowadays, the *fadhwa* has been designated as a neighbourhood centre, so the *fadhwa al-Houaish* host many religious

⁹² Sta8, 'Interview'.

⁹³ Sta2, 'Interview'.

⁹⁴ Arc5, 'Interview'.

⁹⁵ Architects and Engineers Dewan, 'Urban Renewal of the City Center of Holy Najaf (Old Town)/ Stage 2', in General Directorate of Physical Planning Republic of Iraq/ Ministry of Municipalities and Public Work (ed.), (2; Baghdad/ Iraq, 2011a) at 237.

⁹⁶ Sta1, 'Interview'.

⁹⁷ Lr3, 'Interview'.

and social activities, such as processions, which are called “*Mawakib*” locally, particularly during *Muharam*,⁹⁸ as well as being the market for the neighbourhood.⁹⁹

Figure 3.22 Examples of enclosed spaces in Najaf old town

⁹⁸ *Muharam* is the name of the first month of the Islamic calendar, and it is one of the four sacred months of the year. It has a special event on the tenth day of Muharram, called the Day of Ashura, when the Imam Hussain and 77 persons from his family and supporters were killed in the al-Taff battle in 679 in Karballa.

⁹⁹ Sta4, 'Interview'.

Traditional houses

The urban fabric of Najaf old town features many traditional houses. There are some traditional rules, for instance that all roofs must be at the same level, so the old town was the same height and the shrine stands in the middle, as the focal point. However, these traditions have changed, and many houses have been replaced by high-rise buildings, and now about 100 buildings are higher than the shrine (Figure 3.23).¹⁰⁰

Figure 3.23 Building height in the old town; (source: Dewan, 'Urban Renewal of the City Centre of Holy City of Najaf', p. 25. First stage).

Traditional houses in Iraq evolved like the residents, being the product of a long period of evolution, including characteristics, materials and qualities which are the product of generations.¹⁰¹ This section investigates the significance of traditional houses in terms of size, scale, materials, types, architectural methods, and how many still exist. Initially, the traditional type of Najafi house was built around a main

¹⁰⁰ Dewan Architects and Engineers, 'Urban Renewal of the City Center of Holy City of Najaf', (Baghdad / Iraq, 2011b) at 24. First stage.

¹⁰¹ John. Warren and Ihsan. Fethi, *Traditional Houses in Baghdad*, ed. Elizabeth Mclane (Horsham, England: COACH Publishing house LTD, 1982) at 40.

courtyard which covered the whole plot on two floors plus basements, becoming the entity around which the social activities of local families revolved.¹⁰²

Historically, the courtyard house dates to the ancient Babylonian civilization in Iraq. The concept of the courtyard dwellings at that time was to achieve privacy, particularly for women, as well as environmentally, as it was a place to escape from the sun's heat. The shape of the courtyards originated in the ancient temples and palaces, the first buildings erected in the city. They were built to get the same basic requirements and principles, using local materials, skills and techniques, as far as possible.¹⁰³

The courtyard is the fundamental space of the traditional house, providing sunlight and fresh air. In terms of privacy, the courtyard, by its location, usually in the middle of the house, also helped to reduce circulation space within the dwelling.¹⁰⁴ It can be described as the main concept of the courtyard house as a building located on a piece of land framed by a continuous perimeter wall of considerable mass, acting as a defensive barrier, which produces the internal courtyard, and provides the backbone for domestic activities and movement.¹⁰⁵ The size and shape of courtyards were usually irregular in the old town. The house rooms look inward, over the enclosed individual private space, which is open to the sky (Figures 3.24).

Figure 3.24 Ground floor plan of traditional house in Najaf old town

¹⁰² Falah Al-Kubaisy, *Najaf: The Architectural and Urban Heritage of Iraqi's Holiest City* (BookSurge.com, part of Amazon group., 2009) at 68.

¹⁰³ Saher M. Al-Kaissi, 'The Influence of Natural and Cultural Environment on the Fabric of the City, with Special Reference to Iraq', (The University of Sheffield, 1983) at 124.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, at 616.

¹⁰⁵ Lr3, 'Interview'.

The selected area has assorted types of houses, in terms of plot size as well as courtyard size and location. In terms of the dwelling area, different reasons have led to these variations, such as economic or social status, or the size of families.¹⁰⁶ The 2014 Beheshti report divided the dwellings into two main types: notable and commoner dwellings. Notable dwellings are normally for religious scholars, politicians and merchants, so they are large; commoner houses have smaller areas and courtyards.¹⁰⁷ In addition, most houses have an upper floor and basement. In terms of the size and location of the courtyard, the selected area has six different parts: the courtyard in the middle, and a double courtyard or no courtyard in front and at the back (Figure 3.25).¹⁰⁸

Figure 3.25 Different types of traditional houses in the Al-Houaish neighbourhood¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine', at 3.B-3)

¹⁰⁸ Engineers, 'Urban Renewal of the City Center of Holy City of Najaf', at 240.Stage 1.

¹⁰⁹ The data from the archive of the Directorate of Urban Planning in Najaf.

Functionally, the traditional houses in Najaf's old town are divided into two main parts: the outer part is for a male guest, locally called "*Barrani*", and the inner part for the family and a female guest, who is locally called "*Juani*". The courtyard connects them, and contains the water well. Until now, Iraqi culture on the ground has mirrored these concepts, so most current houses have a guest room at the entrance of the house. This emphasis on privacy was the outgrowth of social and cultural customs that demanded division between males and females. LR3 explained that the *Barrani* of his family house had two rooms, a toilet and basement. The big room was a guest chamber, and the small room was more private. The *Juani* was the biggest part, and consisted of a courtyard surrounded by bedrooms, kitchen and bathroom. The house entrance was divided in two, towards *Barrani* and *Juani*, and the main entrance did not give direct view to the *Juani*, in order to add more privacy to the domestic area.¹¹⁰

The traditional house had a stairway which led to a wooden balcony, and this gave access to the bedrooms, roof and other spaces.¹¹¹ The religious identity of Najaf's old town added more privacy and confidentiality to the residential area. There is no direct view onto the *Juani*, and the outer doors do not directly face each other, for the sake of privacy.¹¹² In this city of knowledge, the *Barrani* offer an opportunity to the scholars to meet each other without it having any impact on their family life.¹¹³ This idea is clear in Najaf, especially in the religious scholar's houses. Some houses have a library room which supports citizens' wider reading.¹¹⁴ The traditional houses are physically self-sufficient, so environmental solutions were a priority in an era without modern technology.¹¹⁵ The designers in Najaf's old town created exclusive buildings whose beauty was considered as well as their usefulness and sustainable function when facing unfavourable environmental conditions. These issues were very important in Najaf's ancient architecture, which located the city and its buildings in relation to the direction of sunlight and winds. It also considered the direction of the

¹¹⁰ Lr3, 'Interview'.

¹¹¹ Hayder S. Al-Safaar, 'Najaf Community in the Reign of Ghazi King 1939-1932 Part 1', *Afaaq Najafia*, 13 (2009) at 124-25.

¹¹² Kamona, *Perception in the Reconstruction of the City of Najaf as a Capital of Islamic Culture 2012* at 37.

¹¹³ Haidar Al-Saffar, 'Najaf Community During the Era of the King Ghazi 1932-1939 - Part 3', *Afaaq Najafia*, /15 (2009) at 96.

¹¹⁴ Lr1, 'Interview'.

¹¹⁵ Arc2, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

city extension, the directions of paths, and the locations of squares (for passing air through passages, houses and markets).¹¹⁶ Accordingly, the limited space and harsh climate conditions encouraged the builders to think more about vertical levels. The vertical section of any house in the town is bigger than the plan.¹¹⁷ Moreover, the overall compact layout of the residential fabric area provides a barrier which raises the wind movement above the roof level of dwellings.¹¹⁸ The other methods are that the traditional houses were built close to each other (Figure 3.26) to help them to protect each other from sand storms and solar radiation. In addition, the environmental solutions helped shape residents living conditions, according to seasonal temperatures, so they used the basements during hot summers, ground floors during acceptable temperatures, and upper floors during cold periods.¹¹⁹

Figure 3.26 Traditional house in the old town

The traditional houses in the holy city of Najaf are characterised by their basements, which are called “*sirdab*” locally, having a depth of between 6 and 25 meters.¹²⁰ These were also used as storage areas, and provided refuge when the town was under foreign attack. Deep basements are not found in any other historical Iraqi cities.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ leef Heritage Group, *Najaf Heritage at Risk* at 38.

¹¹⁷ Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine', at 37.

¹¹⁸ Al-Kaissi, 'The Influence of Natural and Cultural Environment on the Fabric of the City, with Special Reference to Iraq', (at 636.

¹¹⁹ Sta1, 'Interview'.

¹²⁰ Mohsen Al-Modafar, *City of Najaf: Genius Meanings Ang the Sanctity of the Place*. (Iraqi Cities; Baghdad: House of cultural affairs, 2011b) at 177.

¹²¹ Al-Kubaisy, *Najaf: The Architectural and Urban Heritage of Iraqi's Holiest City* at 68.

Most are separated, but some are connected between houses. Historically, these connected basements played a significant role during the liberation movements against the occupation of the Othman Empire and Great Britain. This was particularly true when they were used for secret meetings, and to shelter people wanted by the authorities, to facilitate their movement out of the city.¹²² They are therefore a significant part of the city's cultural heritage. Nowadays, most of these basements cannot be used, as a result of a rise in the water table level. In addition, the electricity and new air-conditioning systems have also led to a reduction in the use of basements, as they are no longer a necessity during summer.¹²³

The other main feature of the traditional house is the screened bay window, which is called locally "*Shanashil*". These windows on the upper floor can allow the sun's rays to enter the house. Normally, carved decorations made of a different kind of wood to the rest of the house can be found there (Figure 3.27). There are two types of *shanashil*, inside and outside, and for a variety of reasons, including the privacy and social traditions, Najaf's old town houses have an inside *shanashil* more often than an outside one.¹²⁴ At the local level, the inside *shanashil* is called *aursi*, and it normally has a door and decorated windows.¹²⁵ It is clear from the interviews and local investigations that the *shanashil* has disappeared gradually from the old town, as a result of the continuing development process on the ground. Also, most the new dwellings in the new neighbourhoods do not use this type of window. As a result, this element is in danger of disappearing from the urban fabric, not only in the Najaf old town, but in the whole of Iraq.

In terms of the materials used in construction, the traditional houses were usually built out of local materials (fired bricks and wood); the basements and ground floor were built of brick, while the upper floors were regularly built of wood and bricks, in order to minimize the load on the ground floor (Figure 3.28). The Dewan survey showed that 81% of the material used was fired bricks.¹²⁶ Conversely, most of the current buildings and constructions use concrete, which is imported from outside the town. This has impacted on environmental comfort, and the current dwellings are

¹²² Sta5, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

¹²³ Arc7, 'Interview'.

¹²⁴ Sta7, '2015', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

¹²⁵ Engineers, 'Urban Renewal of the City Center of Holy City of Najaf', at 183.Stage one.

¹²⁶ Ibid., at 201.Stage one.

based on using different sources of energy, such as electricity and petrol, for air-conditioning.

Figure 3.27 Current condition of *al-Shanashil* in selected area

Figure 3.28 An example of the traditional house

Threats to traditional housing

Unfortunately, the courtyard house type has gradually broken down, for a variety of reasons. They did not offer a comfortable modern lifestyle, especially since air-conditioning systems appeared in the 1980s,¹²⁷ at the same time as contemporary architecture offering wide varieties of houses were built, simulating worldwide modernity. As shown in the photos (Figure 3.29), most of the houses are in very poor condition: dilapidated or redundant. It is impossible to live in some of them now, and some are difficult or dangerous to access. Overall, most of the traditional houses in the old town, with particular reference to the selected area, have been neglected, abandoned and are in a very bad condition, and the function has changed to mostly warehousing, hostelry or other commercial functions. According to the 2014 *Shahid Beheshti* survey, 69% of the current house owners want to sell their property.¹²⁸ Ultimately, this is the pressure which has meant that traditional houses no longer function in the original way.

Overall, traditional housing is under threat, and this indicates the importance of adopting a national campaign to support traditional houses in historic areas. There are two approaches to dealing with this problem. The first, which has been adopted by some decision makers and religious scholars, is to demolish these houses and rebuild the town, so that it becomes a contemporary city, and to extend the shrine to cover the whole area.¹²⁹ The second approach is advocated by two main groups. The first group adopt the idea of redeveloping the entire housing stock to change their function as accommodating pilgrims, local museums etc. This approach supports the main function of the old town as a pilgrimage city. The other group has called for significant houses to preserve the social life of the old town, and to encourage land authorities to protect their properties.¹³⁰ The *Shahid Beheshti* specifically proposed conserving eight groups of houses in the old town based on their value.¹³¹ The problem is that no authority has begun to execute this proposal, and it is similar to

¹²⁷ Arc7, 'Interview'.

¹²⁸ *Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine', at 248.*

¹²⁹ Rs2, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

¹³⁰ Arc5, 'Interview'.

¹³¹ *Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of the Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine.'*

other projects which remain on office shelves.¹³² The overall condition of the local traditional houses is very poor. Sta2 said that they wanted to film a television series about the life of “Najim Al-Bakal”, one of the significant figures of the 20th revolution in Najaf, but the series director did not find any traditional place in Najaf in which to locate the story. Finally, they decided to film in Basrah city, in the south of Iraq.¹³³ To sum up, these traditional courtyard houses have gradually been abandoned, demolished or reused because they did not reach the new lifestyle requirements.¹³⁴ Arc7 an architect working in a small local practice argued that, due to the new technology and electricity, the courtyard cannot offer a comfortable place, and most residents prefer a modern design.¹³⁵



Figure 3.29 Current condition of traditional houses in the old town

¹³² Arc6, 'Interview'.

¹³³ Sta2, 'Interview'.

¹³⁴ Lr6, 'Interview'.

¹³⁵ Arc7, 'Interview'.

The *al-Subat*

Most Arabic and Islamic old towns are surrounded by walls for defence, which limits the potential to build new houses or extend internally. The limitation of space and building density has led builders to think more about new vernacular solutions. Consequently, historically builders and architects found a new method to extend the houses through building vaults over the alleys and then building rooms over the vaults, normally on the nodes' and alleys' connections.¹³⁶ This architectural feature is called "*al-Subat*" locally, and it is one of the most significant vernacular features of the local residential area. Until the 1970s some buildings of this character remained, but there are only two surviving ones at present. This rarity adds more significance and value to them.¹³⁷ It should be noted that this feature is found in different countries, such as Tunis and Syria, but it is only found in Najaf's old town in Iraq. Structurally, there are three types of support: between two walls; between wall and column; and between two columns (Figure 3.30).¹³⁸ Thus, the *al-Subat* has cultural, architectural and historical value and arguably need protection.

Figure 3.30 Alternative support system for the *al-Subat*; (source: Hakim, *Arabic Islamic Cities: Building, and Planning Principles*, p. 128).

¹³⁶ Haidar a Kamona, 'The Historical Impact of Demolish Al-Sobat', *Almada newspaper*, 2008a p. 16.

¹³⁷ Sta4, 'Interview'.

¹³⁸ Hakim, *Arabic Islamic Cities: Building, and Planning Principles* at 127.

The biggest *subat* in the old town is called the *Subat Ali Agha*, and it became more significant than before when *Ayatollah Sayed Abu al-Hassan al-Esfahani*¹³⁹ lived in a room over the *al-Subat* at the beginning of the 19th century.¹⁴⁰ Unfortunately, currently the *al-Subat* is in very bad condition, as the photos below show (Figure 3.31), and it is not designated as a significant element on the ground.¹⁴¹ In particular, Sta4 argued that, up to the present there has been no official heritage list at local level.¹⁴² It is still in poor condition compared to its state over the last 100 years. This reflects the low level of understanding and interest in preservation of both local communities and authorities.



Figure 3.31 Current condition of the large *subat*

¹³⁹ Shia religious scholar.

¹⁴⁰ Sta5, 'Interview'.

¹⁴¹ Sta8, 'Interview'.

¹⁴² Sta4, 'Interview'.

The second *subat* is smaller than the first, and, as shown in the above photos, is also neglected and has many cracks (Figure 3.32). Sta5 stated that the *al-Subat* is one of Najaf's cultural heritage features, but there are no clear conservation processes to protect it. It is at risk, as there is the potential that it could be demolished soon.¹⁴³ It seems that the directory of archaeology in Najaf has been collaborating with the Imam Ali Shrine to try to maintain the *al-Subat* as a historical monument in the old town, but they have no clear strategy for this.¹⁴⁴



Figure 3.32 Current condition of the small *al-subat*

¹⁴³ Sta5, 'Interview'.

¹⁴⁴ Sta4, 'Interview'.

To summarize, this is the nature of the site, its characteristics, conditions and treatment. In fact, the area and buildings lack proper documentation, and the city lacks an existing physical survey at the scale of individual properties, so it is not easy to establish the extent of dilapidation across the neighbourhood. The previous surveys by Dewan, Beheshti and others focused on the whole town, not on individual properties, therefore it is not easy to establish the scale of decay across the neighbourhood. Moreover, these studies only proposed some buildings or sites to be listed locally or nationally, but there is no official local list on the ground.¹⁴⁵ The old town, with particular reference to the *al-Houaish*, needs a comprehensive survey to cover all the individual properties in order to investigate its origins and what is new-build, in relation to both the social and physical fabric. In this study, it has not been possible to carry out a comprehensive survey due to a number of reasons. Firstly, this detailed survey needs a large team to implement it (at least 15 workers), which is well beyond the remit and constraints of this study. Secondly, it would take between 9 and 12 months to collect all the available data, and this is a significant proportion of the time available for PhD study. Thirdly, it would cost approximately \$10000 per month to cover the expenses (accommodation, team salaries, and travel); and such a budget was not available. The other main issue is the current security situation in Iraq; the project would need extra support from local and central government. Finally, because it is close to the offices and houses of many Shia religious scholars, it would need extra support and prior approval, and some places do not allow photos to be taken.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

Section 3: Physical and cultural pressures

Current condition of buildings

It is best to explain the condition of the current buildings of the selected area to allow for an understanding of the context, and thus whether or not it is worth preserving. This implies information about its history, typology, etc. and also the state of its conservation and how to establish a renewal, repair and maintenance strategy. Obviously, there is need for a team on the site, and possibly a steering committee.¹⁴⁶ Unfortunately, although the Llewelyn Davies and Dewan studies documented the most significant historical buildings in the old town and put them in a special group as listed buildings, they did this without any information on the original architectural, historical or any other aspects of the building, and without any primary documents, as evidence. As regards the destruction of heritage buildings, Najaf's old town has occupied the top rank in Iraq.¹⁴⁷ From a cultural heritage protection perspective, this is insufficient. However, as stated earlier, it was only possible to produce some photographic evidence to document the current condition, which indicates that it is neglected and unmanaged. Figure (3.33) shows that there are many demolished or empty properties, which LR5 argued was due to the fact that their owners wanted to change their use into hotels.¹⁴⁸ However, Sta1 said that the current condition is not acceptable, waste in everywhere, and that this reflects a lack of care on the part of the local authority.¹⁴⁹

In terms of decay, any urban fabric, materials, structure and content of historic or significant properties can be affected.¹⁵⁰ Stubbs states, "*No structure can escape natural decay. All building materials are vulnerable to deterioration over time with some materials, such wood, being more vulnerable than others*".¹⁵¹ In addition, Orbasli argued that any change or alteration to property use or in its structure may put the property under pressure, and this type of decay can later put a building in jeopardy.¹⁵² She explained

¹⁴⁶Sta3, 'Interview'.

¹⁴⁷Fawzia Al-Maliki, 'Najaf Heritage Buildings under Threat', (www.noon14.net/31480: Noon, 2011).

¹⁴⁸Lr5, 'Interview'.

¹⁴⁹Sta1, 'Interview'.

¹⁵⁰Aylin Orbasli, *Architectural Conservation: Principles and Practice* (Blackwell Science Ltd, 2008) at 112.

¹⁵¹John H. Stubbs, *Time Honored: A Global View of Architectural Conservation* (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2009) at 95.

¹⁵²Orbasli, *Architectural Conservation: Principles and Practice* at 113-14.

that any unexpected loads (additional or new) on the structure will threaten the structural integrity of the historical buildings.¹⁵³ This is exactly what has happened in most traditional houses in the old town, where owners have changed them into hostels to accommodate pilgrims.¹⁵⁴ As previously stated, the rapid change in land use threatens the urban continuity as well as the social and physical fabric of the old town. The next section explains the challenges to the physical fabric of Najaf old town.



Figure 3.33 Current condition of selected urban fabric area

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, at 130.

¹⁵⁴ Lr2, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2014).

Physical fabric challenges

The rapid change in land use and new buildings built inside the fabric of Najaf's old town are the main challenge currently faced by those seeking on the conservation of its built heritage. This is not unique to the physical fabric; changes in land uses destroy the history of a place and the local community. In this particular, Sta3 stated that most parts of the old town are under continuous demolition, being replaced by tall buildings. Sta3 (a consultant working with UNESCO mission to Najaf) went on to say that the new buildings are of poor quality and poor design.¹⁵⁵ They have nothing to do with the traditional building technology and the climate. The problem is that most of these buildings, particularly those built after 2003, do not have official government permission.¹⁵⁶ According to the policy of the old town, all the buildings should be no higher than the external wall of the Imam Ali Shrine. The 2011 Dewan survey explained that about 100 buildings in the old town are more than 5 floors high.¹⁵⁷ Today, 35 buildings (mostly hotels) in the old town are more than 9 floors high, and there are more under construction (Figure 3.34). The Commission of Integrity in Najaf has begun to investigate these buildings, and who gave permission for their construction.¹⁵⁸ The new buildings obscure views of the shrine and damage the continuity of the urban fabric and skyline.¹⁵⁹ I do not say that contemporary structures are less valuable than nineteenth century vernacular forms, but that they change the town's form, from one building dominating (the shrine) to several buildings. In particular, Arc2 (An architect working in local and national practices, and design one of the extension projects of the shrine) said that these new structures should be appropriate to the town context to be acceptable.¹⁶⁰ Arc5 argued that he looked over the roof of one of the dwellings in the old town, and could not see the shrine.¹⁶¹ As a result, these new, big, and modern structures are changing the continuity of the physical fabric, and destroying the collective memory of local citizens and pilgrims.

¹⁵⁵ Sta3, 'Interview'.

¹⁵⁶ Dm1, 'Interview'.

¹⁵⁷ Engineers, 'Urban Renewal of the City Center of Holy Najaf (Old Town)/ Stage 2', at 59.

¹⁵⁸ Wissam Al-Zagrawy, 'Commission of Integrity in Najaf Investigate About the Corruption of 35 Hotels in Najaf', *Al-Mada Newspaper*, 24-8-2013 2013.

¹⁵⁹ Ali Naji Attia, 'Lecture: Protection and Promotion of Cultural Heritage to Enhance the Iraqi Cultural Identity', (Najaf: Dar Al-Turath, 2016).

¹⁶⁰ Arc2, 'Interview'.

¹⁶¹ Arc5, 'Interview'.

Figure 3.34 New high buildings in Najaf's old town

The UNESCO expert mission visited Najaf in 2014 to evaluate the great cemetery and the Imam Ali Shrine for possible inclusion in the World Heritage List. They mentioned that demolition and construction, with new buildings higher than three levels tall, impacted on the value of the shrine and the cemetery. They also stated that the development toward modernism focused on accommodating visitors and some commercial activities without paying attention to protecting the old town's heritage value. Indeed, these plans are inconsistent with the conservation process. Accordingly, the fact that many institutions deal with managing Najaf heritage on the ground also has a negative impact.¹⁶² For example, Dewan proposed a design for the surrounding area of the shrine, but there is no obligation for the shrine secretary to adopt it. The secretary thinks it is a private area, so they can select the best proposed

¹⁶²Unesco Expert Mission to Najaf, 'The Results and Recommendations of Unesco Expert Mission to Najaf for Preparation of the World Heritage Nomination File of Wadi Al-Salam Cemetery in Najaf', (Manamah, 2014).

design.¹⁶³ As a result, they contracted Shahid Beheshti University to design the surrounding area, without paying attention to the Dewan proposal.

Most of the interviewees (for instance, DM2, RS2, Arc5, Arc7, LR1, LR3, Sta1, Sta2 and Sta4) thought that the shrine should be the highest building in the old town, and this is related to the faith and respect for the Imam Ali Shrine. According to DM1, the building and construction work in the old town usually takes place from midnight to 4:00 am, when the Najaf local government and the other institutions are closed.¹⁶⁴ DM1 thinks that this is due to corruption. DM2 said that this situation is continuous because there is no clear management system on the ground: there are multi-decision makers, and most do not care about protecting heritage.¹⁶⁵ Overall, illegal construction work is a big challenge facing heritage protection, and the government cannot currently offer any clear methods to stop it. Table 3.1 shows current land use according to the Dewan survey.

Table 3.1 Numbers, ratios and areas of old town land uses, (source: Dewan, 'Urban Renewal of the City Center of Holy City of Najaf, 2011', p. 17. Stage 1).

¹⁶³ Dm2, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

¹⁶⁴ Dm1, 'Interview'.

¹⁶⁵ Dm2, 'Interview'.

Up to 2003 the majority of town land use was residential. A significant underlying issue in the city is the huge number of visitors, and traffic jams, pollution, litter and crowded spaces which arise in consequence are putting great pressure on the local fabric and infrastructure. In 2011 Dewan started to document the land use of the old town, as a part of an attempt to inspire the urban renewal of the city centre. Residential and commercial land uses were the main activities, as Table No. 3.1 shows.¹⁶⁶ Despite an increase in the number of commercial activities, residential accommodation is still the most common function of buildings in the old town. Makiya, Kamona¹⁶⁷, Sta2 (consultant which has been worked shrine secretary advisor) and others supported the idea that a single agency should be created from the existing authorities to review further development in the old town, because they thought multiple decision makers and agencies without clear regulations damaged the heritage.¹⁶⁸

In fact, the increase in land value is one of the main reasons for this rapid change in land use. There is insufficient accommodation, restaurants and other services in the city to receive large numbers of visitors. Perhaps this shortage is a result of the repression imposed by the Ba'ath regime or mismanagement of the religious cities. In particular, Sta8 stated that, during 30 years of *Baath* rule, no positive work was undertaken in the old town.¹⁶⁹ In most pilgrimages in religious and historical cities, the economic factor can be seen as a key reason for protecting and managing the built heritage.¹⁷⁰ With regards to the selected area, *Suq al-Houaish* is one of the most important commercial and cultural streets in the old town, and can play an important role in supporting Najaf's cultural heritage. The biggest problem is that the decision makers and the shrine secretary do not appear to care about the cultural heritage, nor think about it as a new source of economic growth.¹⁷¹ Moreover, there is a lack of continuity between the decision makers that has led to random maintenance and the destruction of many parts of the cultural heritage properties.¹⁷² Hitherto, what has happened on the ground is tragic, because step-by-step losses to the historical

¹⁶⁶ Engineers, 'Urban Renewal of the City Center of Holy City of Najaf', at 225.

¹⁶⁷ Mohammad Makiya, and Haidar Kamona are Iraqi architects.

¹⁶⁸ Sta2, 'Interview'.

¹⁶⁹ Sta8, 'Interview'.

¹⁷⁰ Al-Modafar, *City of Najaf: Genius Meanings and the Sanctity of the Place*.

¹⁷¹ Sta1, 'Interview'.

¹⁷² Arc1, 'Interview'.

characteristics of the urban fabric have generated money. Then and now, there is an increase in commercial land use instead of residential area, and the local and central government still lacks control over this. Sta10 argued that the local government was beyond the reach of the authorities as a result of the corruption.¹⁷³ In particular, DM1 also implied that local government supported these changes in land use, even though they were illegal.¹⁷⁴

The other significant problem faced by the protectors of the built heritage of Najaf is the changes in building materials used to create unique buildings that pay little attention to their surroundings and its history and identity. Currently it is normal to see new materials, for example steel and concrete, on the new elevations of the *al-Houaish* neighbourhood (Figure 3.35). LR6 said this was due to the lack of a monitoring system, so property owners can change any parts of a building without permission. Moreover, property owners cannot afford specialists and architects, so the developments are based on their own or the builders' skills.¹⁷⁵ Arc7 had a different point of view, seeing new materials as a normal result of culture exchange, as property owners will want to change window shapes or materials or put a new iron frame over the elevation.¹⁷⁶ The lack of understanding of what heritage or vernacular architecture means on the ground has resulted in architecture without architects. Indeed, this is not limited to building materials but includes new forms, types, shapes and colours which damage the integrity and continuity of the townscape.¹⁷⁷ This could be a result of the weakness of the local authority, but it also reduces the local community's perception of its cultural heritage. So far, most of these interventions have been created by non-architects, and the final outcome is far from the original vernacular architecture.

¹⁷³ Sta10, 'Interview'.

¹⁷⁴ Dm1, 'Interview'.

¹⁷⁵ Lr6, 'Interview'.

¹⁷⁶ Arc7, 'Interview'.

¹⁷⁷ Sta2, 'Interview'.



Figure 3.35 Changes in use of materials and building types

The photos above show how these new materials surround the original buildings. This demonstrates the importance of adopting a clear conservation action-plan, based on local conservation management guidelines, to monitor work and building materials, especially in relation to the urban facades, in order to protect local identity and continuity. In particular, LR5 explained that land authorities used these types of structures and materials because they thought it was part of modernity.¹⁷⁸ The main concern is that they copy-paste these materials and shapes from different places and

¹⁷⁸ LR5, 'Interview'.

sites without paying attention to local identity.¹⁷⁹ Moreover, there are no clear sanctions to prevent or stop them, and thus a wave of change has swept the old town.¹⁸⁰

Another issue is that new lifestyles and the hot weather encourage local citizens to use new and modern technology, such as air conditioning systems. As a result, there are many types of window, which distort the buildings' façades. As stated earlier, the new air conditioning systems have encouraged citizens to abandon the basements. Altogether, the repeated misuse of these features can weaken the distinct identity of the physical fabric. Technology represents a response to human necessities: as the proverb says, "necessity is the mother of invention". The development of new technology is one of the factors directly affecting both the social and physical fabric of the old town. Different types of technology, such as cars, electricity, phones, etc., have changed the urban fabric. The Burra charter makes clear:

"Change may be necessary to retain cultural significance, but is undesirable where it reduces cultural significance. The amount of change to a place and its use should be guided by the cultural significance of the place and its appropriate interpretation". (Article 15.1)

"Changes which reduce cultural significance should be reversible, and be reversed when circumstances permit".¹⁸¹ (Article 15.2)

However, what is happening on the ground in Najaf is completely different. The change is degrading the core of the old town. Arc4 argued that the decision makers managing and planning heritage are unprofessional and incompetent figures, which leads to the destruction of heritage on the ground.¹⁸² Sometimes political influence allows unqualified people to achieve powerful positions with or without qualifications.¹⁸³ In terms of the local communities, Sta1 argued that, up to the present, they had not participated in the decision-making process.¹⁸⁴ As a result, local communities and heritage authorities do not have any clear perception and understanding of the process of cultural heritage. Some interviewees (Arc4, Arc5,

¹⁷⁹ Sta9, 'Interview'.

¹⁸⁰ Dm2, 'Interview'.

¹⁸¹ Australia Icomos, 'The Burra Charter: The Australia Icomos Charter for Places of Cultural Significance', (Burwood, Australia: Australia ICOMOS, 2013).

¹⁸² Arc4, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

¹⁸³ Arc6, 'Interview'.

¹⁸⁴ Sta1, 'Interview'.

Arc7, LR1, LR3, Sta1, Sta2, and Sta8) argued that a community-based group would make better decisions. However, up to the present no community group is involved with protecting heritage on the ground.¹⁸⁵

There is clear example of what has happened in practice. Since 2003, *al-Waqf al-Sheai*¹⁸⁶ has begun to improve the condition of all the mosques of the old town, except the *Al-Hindi* and the *Kashif al-Gitta* mosques.¹⁸⁷ The process has led to the demolition and subsequent rebuilding of all the significant mosques, and losses in the historical and cultural values of these buildings. Sta1 argued that there was a lack of heritage management at the *al-Tosi* mosque, which is one of the most significant mosques in the old town.¹⁸⁸ It was the house of *Sheikh Mouhammad Al-Tosi*, one of the most renowned religious Shia scholars, and through the terms of his will it became a mosque after his death in 1076.¹⁸⁹ As an underground structure, it was neglected, so the directorate of the *al-Waqf al-Sheai* in Najaf rebuilt it to enable it to host religious activities. Sta1 asked the authority and the local government to protect the original mosque and build a new one over it to protect the historical mosque, while visitors would still be able to see it by going to the upper floor for prayers and other religious activities. Unfortunately, the authorities did not listen, and, as a result, it was completely demolished and a new mosque built.¹⁹⁰ In particular, Orbasli stated that the recognition of the cultural heritage values and urban conservation in practices in the Middle East are relatively recent comparing to the European. In addition, conservation in Western Europe protect everything, which may be difficult to do that in another context. Moreover, the understanding heritage is different for each country or community.¹⁹¹ Therefore, I can state that Western understanding of heritage conservation values is not entirely compatible with Iraqi culture because each community should have different criteria and level of understanding heritage.

¹⁸⁵ Lr1, 'Interview'.

¹⁸⁶ An institution related to the central government deals with Shia religious affairs.

¹⁸⁷ Sta4, 'Interview'.

¹⁸⁸ Sta1, 'Interview'.

¹⁸⁹ Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine'.

¹⁹⁰ Sta1, 'Interview'.

¹⁹¹ Aylin Orbasli, 'The Islamic City and Tourism: Managing Conservation and Tourism in Traditional Neighbourhoods', in Rami F. Daher (ed.), *Tourism in the Middle East: Continuity, Change and Transformation* (Clevedon: Channel View Publications, 2007), 161 - 87 at 167-68.

To summarise, the interviewees' comments establish how well experts and officials understood heritage, in order to explain what the local communities understand and value preserving of the physical and social fabric of Najaf old town. The interviews with local decision makers showed that they understood heritage as an inanimate monument. In terms of the *al-Houaish* neighbourhood, decision makers think more about how to modernise the area and accommodate the huge number of pilgrims than protecting the heritage. However, the local communities pay attention to protecting their heritage more than decision makers and local government, but are not invited to participate in decision making. Some local NGOs and communities have begun to call for protection of the local heritage through some initiatives, such as the Najaf Charter and the local initiative to protect the shrine and the identity of the old town. Moreover, there are some weekly local forums and lectures which help to increase understanding of heritage. These forums and lectures still need government support to protect these historical and cultural areas, because up to the present only heritage elites and a few local residents have attended these meetings. In particular, LR1 said that local heritage supporters are still a minority compared those who support the demolition of the old town. Change is happening very quickly, therefore it needs a major effort to face it,¹⁹² otherwise modern life will threaten all Iraqi heritage sites and monuments.

In terms of the Dewan proposal, the types of change in design are substantial, as it proposes to extend the *suq al-Houaish* and cover a large area of the neighbourhood, giving evidence that the historic value of the urban block is not valued by developers. This chapter has also shown that local people who own older properties want to change their function to hotels or for other commercial uses. Overall, central and local governments should work together to increase the local communities' understanding of the need to protect both the physical and social fabric through adopting a clear regulation system. These should require the use of similar original materials to the original types, in order to protect local identity, as well as using traditional techniques during the restoration or rehabilitation process. The regulations should also cover building density, and protect the skyline of the old town. In fact, there is no clear conservation action plan to help different authorities and local communities to work together in order to achieve a single, shared objective.

¹⁹² Lr1, 'Interview'.

Conclusion

This chapter has looked at the social and physical urban fabric of the *al-Houaish* neighbourhood in Najaf, an historic Islamic pilgrimage city in Iraq (Figure 3.36). It outlines threats to both, due to a lack of cultural heritage inventories and tools to protect this heritage. The first part of the chapter outlines a brief history of the old town, and focuses on changes in its social fabric, pushed by its inability to meet the residential needs of an emerging middle class, the *Baath* regime's recent repression, and the current lack of regulation, which is encouraging more changes. It was found that local citizens are moving out of the old town because it does not meet their needs. The second part focuses on the selected area, to explain why it is significant in terms of local and national heritage. In this section, I found that local communities understand the significance of some particular properties, but the wave of change and destruction of heritage overwhelms their desire to protect it. The third part focuses in the physical changes to the district, from residential and traditional use to commercial ones, the abandonment of many houses, and the lack of infrastructure. The new developments rarely take into account the historical context. This section has shown that the selected area is in very poor condition, and local communities do not value the preservation of its physical fabric. I can argue it is a well-known trick for authorities to gain ownership of heritage sites and deliberately neglect them, until the costs of rehabilitation are supposedly too high, so that they, or their commercial friends, can then demolish them and build modern monstrosities.

The political conflict, commercial modernism and pilgrimage issues are creating huge pressures on local heritage. Ideally, the local community and key players should have a clear understanding of what is being managed. This implies information about its history, typology, etc. and also about its state of conservation and how to establish a renewal, repair and maintenance strategy. The legislation and protection laws should also be looked at. Overall, it is possible to say that cultural heritage protection and management is a shared responsibility. John Stubbs divided the participants into individuals, the local public, the wider general public, and the world community.¹⁹³ Possibly, in this case, we can add the government as a main participant in terms of architectural conservation, because it is the main power in

¹⁹³ Stubbs, *Time Honored: A Global View of Architectural Conservation* at 149.

terms of developing, managing and protecting the cultural heritage. To sum up, it can be stated that local communities and decision makers do not clearly understand and value the preservation of the physical and social fabric of Najaf old town.

At this stage, much work needs to be done prior to a consideration for World Heritage listing.¹⁹⁴ In fact, the old town is empty and decaying; there is no longer a functional rationale. At its best, cultural heritage protection on the ground needs the government and local citizens' attention to be able to stand and survive; otherwise Najaf's old town will lose most of its priceless heritage and identity. overall, figure (3.36) shows the process of the first case study.

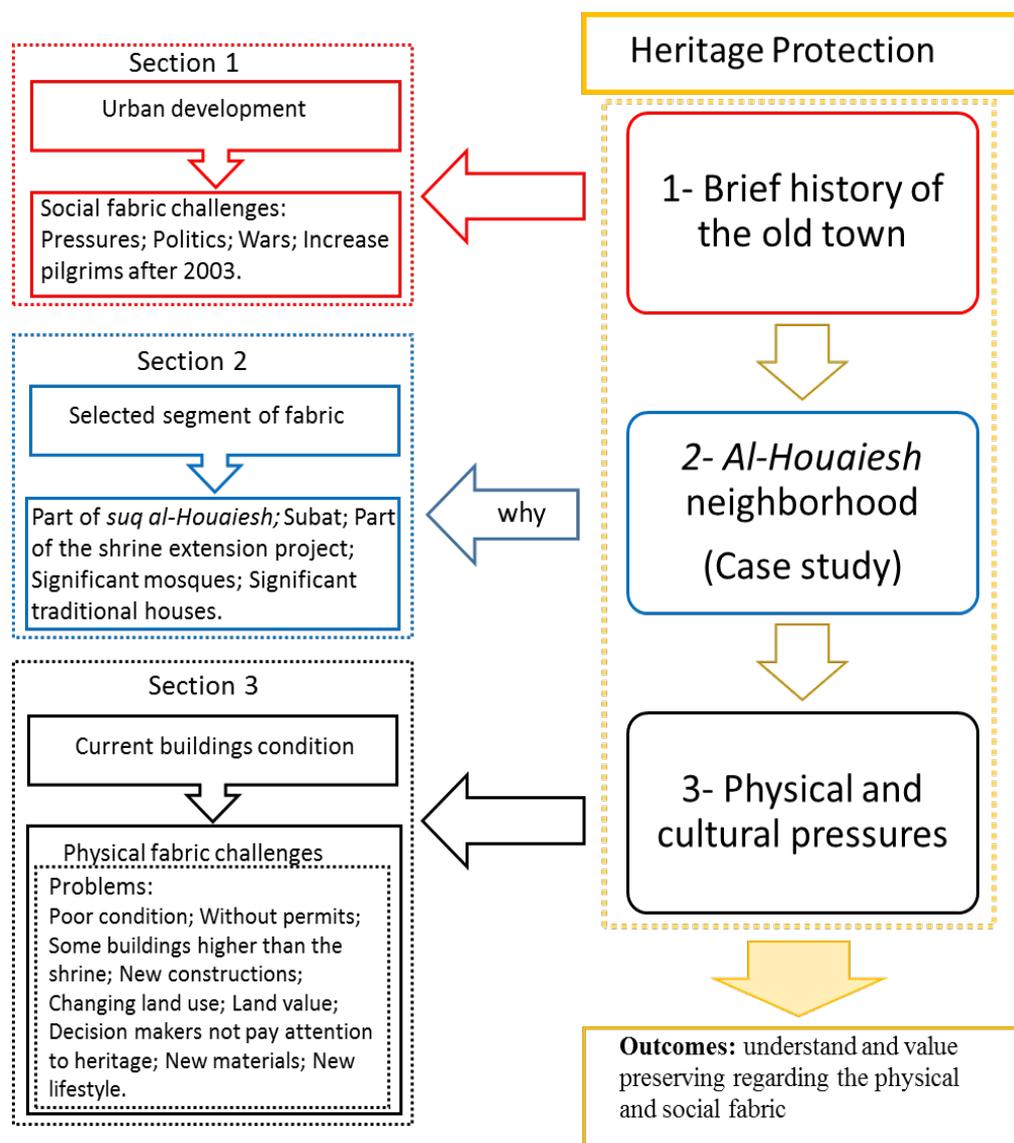


Figure 3.36 The diagram show the process of the 1st case study.

¹⁹⁴ Sta3, 'Interview'.

The Imam Ali Shrine, institution and cultural monument: the implications of cultural significance and its impact on local conservation management

Introduction

The Imam Ali Shrine is located in the heart of Najaf old town. It is one of the great icons of Islamic architecture, especially for the Shi'a, and is regarded by many as the finest masterpiece of Iraqi heritage.¹ The shrine has been gradually developed and extended from a small room to cover more than 60000 m². This case study, therefore, focuses specifically on the shrine, whose construction led directly to the establishment of the surrounding historic city. It explains how the local and national authorities perceived the shrine as a historical building during the period before and after 2003 in terms of its protection, management and development work. It discusses what people might do politically in the way they operate the building. This is linked to the research question and to the relevant sub-questions in order to enable an understanding of the extent to which conservation values are understood in the context of contemporary Iraq. Accordingly, it is going to explain how the key decision makers and stakeholders understand values when controlling development at a local level, considering throughout how the shrine works, what has happened to it over time and why, who the key players are, and what conservation values mean in the Najafi context.

¹ Most Iraqi architects as well as local citizens see the holy shrine as a city logo, see: *Najaf: the architectural and urban heritage of Iraq's holiest city* by Falah Al-Kubaisy.

It is important to explain the historical stages of the emergence of the shrine, the events which have taken place within it, and its management. Recently local decision makers have prioritised how to accommodate and receive pilgrims to the holy shrine, more than protecting its cultural heritage and local identity.² Gradually, this has led to the demolition of many significant historical features inside the shrine, as well as the buildings surrounding it.³ However, it remains a key landmark and is religiously significant for Islamic cities in general.

As previously outlined Najaf's buildings in general and the shrine in particular, are under threat in terms of safeguarding cultural heritage. It is therefore relevant to focus here on the extension projects of the shrine, after understanding the original establishment of it, to understand the building morphology and how these projects are related to controlling built heritage development.

Najaf's role in modern Iraq builds on its significance as a centre of Shi'a religious doctrine. The tomb of Imam Ali has positioned Najaf as one of the major centres of Islam with a sphere of influence far beyond that of an average town of similar size. The result for Najaf is that it is a region of influence, extending much further than its immediate economic and geographic region and indeed even beyond Iraq. Stemming from its religious significance, Najaf has become a centre for culture and learning, politics and symbolism, commerce and religion-based tourism. It is founded on religious symbolism and, therefore, does not perform the same role as similar-sized Iraqi cities.⁴ In modern Iraqi history, until 2003 the central government in Baghdad was key to all decisions related to this management. Indeed, the *Baath* regime prevented any expansion of traditional religious schools, and demolished numerous historical sites and buildings in this area.⁵ Competing political and religious interests have led to ill-considered decisions that have had a continuing effect on the architectural continuity of the city's historic core.

This case study is divided into two main chapters in order to cover all the issues from its establishment to the present. This chapter attempts to shed light on the Imam Ali

² Sta2, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

³ Sta1, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

⁴ Llewelyn Davies Yeang and ADEC (Architectural designer for Engineering Consultancy), 'Holy City of Najaf: Master Planning', (Iraq: Republic of Iraq, Ministry of Municipalities and Public Work, 2009), (p. 6).Report NO.2

⁵ LR5, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

Shrine from its establishment until 2006, when the biggest extension of it was undertaken. The next chapter will focus on the extension projects since 2006, which target the surrounding area. This chapter is organised around two main sections, the first addresses the historical and cultural context of the shrine in terms of its historical development and significance. It considers the shrine's organization and evolution as well as investigating the relationship between the shrine and the town in terms of what is distinct, why it is important, and what impact it has. The second section focuses on the national and local forces that have acted on the shrine as a building. It details specific projects to discover their remit and impact on the shrine's historic fabric. In terms of conservation approaches, it discusses how and why the shrine has been changed over time. It can be stated that there is an integrated relationship between the shrine and its surrounding area. And so any development project targeting one affects the other; therefore, the research will focus on this synergic relationship.

Section 1 Cultural and historic context of the shrine

Significance of shrine

In 599 Imam Ali was born in the Sacred House, the focus of daily prayers within the Islamic tradition (Ka'ba) in Mecca. In his relationship to the prophet Mohammed, whose daughter he married, and as a successor as Caliph in his own right, Imam Ali is an important figure in Islamic history and he continues to be venerated by Muslims.⁶ Historically, Najaf was to become one of the most important cities in the Islamic World, when Imam Ali chose Kufa (now a suburb of Najaf) as the Islamic capital in 656. More than a half century after his death in 661, the Imam Ali tomb was founded, and as a result a new district developed around it. In the following two centuries, the shrine location grew in size and status as a distinct urban district, managed by the adjacent city of Kufa for most of its administrative affairs.⁷ It also contains the tombs of Adam and Noah, as Shi'as believe, in addition to a number of graves of prominent clerics.⁸ Up to the present, the Imam Ali Shrine is a focus for contemporary devout Muslims. Pilgrimage to the site dates from 800, when Najaf simultaneously became the urban focus of early scientific study. This movement was subject to restrictions during the era of *Abbasid Caliph Al-Mutawakkil* 846-861 CE, who demolished the original construction of the shrine.⁹ But after 1258, it became the central interest of kings and rulers; and visitor numbers have increased ever since.¹⁰

In general, pilgrimage to the shrine is not organised in the same way as the pilgrimage to Mecca, which has always been an annual event, at a specific time of the year. Visitors to the Imam Ali Shrine come in different numbers throughout the year, according to a programme of events and activities; the table below shows the main Shi'a events which take place in Najaf.

⁶ Mohammed A. Raouf, *Najaf: Past and Present* (Baghdad: Al-Mamoon house for translation and publishing, 2013), pp. 29 - 30.

⁷ Hasan Al-Hakim, *Detailed of the History of Najaf: The History of Imam Ali Shrine*, (Qom: Al-Haydaria Library, 2006), pp. 29 - 31.

⁸ Imam Ali Shrine Foundation, 'Official Web Page of the Shrine Foundation', (2015), p. website:<http://www.imamali.net/?part=1>.

⁹ Al-Hakim, *Detailed of the History of Najaf: The History of Imam Ali Shrine*, p. 36.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 40-43.

| | Hijri calendar | Shi'a Religious events |
|----|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1- | 20 th of Safar | Memory of 40 days after Imam Husain ¹¹ death, mostly pilgrims go to Karbala |
| 2- | 28 th of Safar | Memory of the Prophet Muhammad's death |
| 3- | 12 th Rabi I | Memory of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday |
| 4- | 13 th Rajab | Memory of the Imam Ali's birthday |
| 5- | 27 th Rajab | Memory of Esraa and Al-Merag |
| 6- | 21 th Ramadan | Memory of Imam Ali's death |
| 7- | 1 st -3 rd Shawwal | Eid Al-Fitter |
| 8- | 10 th -13 th Dhul Hijjah | Eid Al-Adha |
| 9- | 18 th Dhul Hijjah | Memory of Eid Al-Ghadir |

Table 4.1 The main Shi'a religious events

Since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003, the number of pilgrims has been increasing and the city's ability to host an increased number of pilgrims has been at the expense of protecting the city's heritage (Figure 4.1).¹² According to the Ministry of Planning and recent development documents, pilgrim statistics are approximately: 12,000 daily visitors to the old town, 100,000 visitors on Fridays and Saturdays (the weekend), and 1-2 million visitors on special occasions. Of these visitors, the majority are domestic (83%), with 17% of pilgrims coming from outside Iraq (from Iran, Pakistan, Bahrain and other countries). Around 40% stay in hotels, 25% in private houses, and 34% in open spaces and squares,¹³ while 1% stay with relatives.¹⁴ The growth in pilgrim numbers has led to the removal of historic buildings to make way for pilgrims through the creation of large open spaces outside the central space of the shrine to manage crowds, and herein lies the great challenge to balancing the needs and requirements of pilgrims while protecting Najaf's heritage.¹⁵

Najaf airport, established after 2003, now receives increasing numbers of pilgrims from outside Iraq. Given that religious tourism is now one of the main economic activities at the local level, it is evident that these huge visitor numbers will continue to place the city's cultural heritage under threat unless central and local government,

¹¹ Imam Husain is Imam Ali's son; his great shrine in Karbala is about 50 miles from Najaf.

¹² Sta4, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

¹³ Many visitors stay around the shrine when the weather is nice, as well as booking into other accommodation. In fact, this is one of the main challenges in terms of protecting Najaf's cultural heritage.

¹⁴ 'Iraq Living Conditions Survey', (Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation, and the United Nation, 2004).

¹⁵ Sta2, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

and the local community and Non-government agencies, constructs a sustainable management policy.¹⁶

Figure 4.1 Shrine visitors; (source: Imam Ali Shrine, 'Official Web Page of the Shrine Foundation').

It is clear from the interviews with (DM2, Arc3, Arc5, Arc7, LR1, LR2, LR3, LR5, Sta1, Sta2, Sta4, and Sta5)¹⁷ that the huge numbers of pilgrims after 2003 have had a negative impact on Najaf's cultural heritage. This situation is normal for any pilgrimage site or historical city. However, the main problem is the absence of clear regulations dealing with historical areas on the ground; therefore, building owners can change land use with or without permission.¹⁸ In fact, pilgrims are the main income source for some heritage sites, and can exert a negative or a positive impact. In Najaf, the previous government's intention was to generate income, without paying sufficient attention to the local heritage by removing significant historical fabric and threatening the city's historic identity.¹⁹ Up to the present, there has been no determination or management of the number of pilgrims, particularly those who come from Iran.²⁰ Altogether, this puts pressure on the core of Najaf's old town, and the authorities have not proposed any solution to control this. Religious authorities as well as central and local government are in the process of thinking how to

¹⁶ DM1, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

¹⁷ These interviews are most valuable as sources because they are respectively: a member of the Shrine Secretaries, an architect and politician, an architect working in a small local practice and university lecturer, historian and local resident, consultant which has been worked shrine secretary advisor, local historian, and historian and local resident.

¹⁸ Sta4, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

¹⁹ LR5, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

²⁰ LR1, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

accommodate the huge numbers, rather than protecting the heritage. For example, the shrine authorities have previously said to Sta2 who is a lecturer and researcher in Najaf, “*It is shrine, not a museum which needs protecting*”.²¹ Indeed, DM1 stated that “*The shrine is a historical building, but it has a function at the same time; therefore, it should be developed and extended in order to be able to carry out its function*”.²² In fact this statement reflect the tension between commodification and purposefulness on the ground. According to RS1 (one of the Shi’a religious scholars, a “*grand ayatollah*”), there are two main points of view in terms of the way of managing Najaf’s heritage on the ground: the first calls for protection of all historical sites within it; the second thinks Najaf is significant not because of its buildings but as a result of its contents and their spiritual value.²³ This level of understanding heritage has led to some projects being undertaken to develop the shrine without conservation rules being a priority, which has had a significant impact on the value of the place.

The shrine’s architectural significance comes from its visual qualities, in addition to its external and internal design elements. Although it has functioned as a pilgrimage site for twelve centuries, architecturally it dates from the 17th century, and the contemporary shrine complex is made up of a number of historically distinct elements, of which just one third are original (as it constructed).²⁴ The religious significance of the shrine is central to Najaf’s wider significance as the location of one of the biggest Islamic cemeteries in the world at *Wadi Al-Salam* (Peace Valley). The cemetery is situated to the north of the shrine, beyond the historic walls, and includes the remains of millions of Muslims and dozens of Islamic scientists, scholars and guardians, and graves of the prophets Ehud and Saleh.²⁵ Up to the present, there has been a major discussion regarding whether to inscribe *Wadi Al-Salam* as a world heritage site, in terms of its dimensions, what it should cover, and whether the shrine and the old town is part of it or not. All of these questions have been discussed by the UNESCO mission to Iraq and the Iraqi heritage authority, which is represented by the national committee.²⁶ The main debate is that the shrine

²¹ Sta2, 'Interview'. ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

²² DM1, 'Interview'. ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

²³ RS1, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

²⁴ Shaikh Abbas Borhany Qazi, 'Mashhad Ali Amir Al Muminin, an Najaf Al Ashraf, Iraq: A Review on the Phases of Destruction and Restoration.', *Daily News Pakistan*, (2011).

²⁵ Yasser Tabbaa and Sabrina Mervin, *Najaf the Gate of Wisdom: History, Heritage and Significance of the Holy City of the Shi'a*, (Paris. Amman.: UNESCO, 2014).

²⁶ Sta2, 'Interview'.

is older than the cemetery and the old town, and is thus the main reason for establishing both. Some decision makers have told the UNESCO commission that the religious scholars in Najaf and the government disagree about whether to list the shrine in the World Heritage List (WHL). Some of the national committee asked the Al-Sistani²⁷ office in Najaf about this issue, which stated that historical old towns such as Najaf, Karbala and Kadhimiya should be protected because they have heritage buildings and alleyways. However, if there is a need to develop and extend these towns, it should not be at the expense of its heritage. Finally, he stated that, if it is in very bad condition, the process should be to restore, not demolish, a historic building.²⁸ This statement encouraged the heritage elites and some architects to protect the Iraqi heritage, through organising some workshops and activities on the ground, particularly as it came from one of the key contemporary leaders in Iraq.²⁹ Accordingly, in 2014 the Ministry of Culture in Iraq, supported by Al-Sistani as the head of Shia religious scholars, asked the UNESCO mission in Iraq to list the shrine in the WHL. The UNESCO mission visited the site in 2014 and explained the significance of the shrine, old town and the cemetery which are listed together in the WHL. Thus, the UNESCO report stated that the current condition of local heritage and the system of managing the cultural heritage do not meet the criteria of the WHL. In addition, the current urban development contradicts the criteria for world heritage because it threatens the originality of the structures.³⁰ As a result, any initiative to get recognition of the WHL must satisfy three main points: support from public institutions, raising awareness of heritage values and how best to protect it, and developing local capacity to protect heritage.³¹ Overall, the UNESCO mission summarised how the heritage has been designated, protected and managed on the ground. This shows the importance of adopting a clear control development system to conduct and monitor works within established conservation processes.

²⁷ Ali Al-Sistani is one of the religious scholars in Iraq. He is described as the spiritual leader of Shia Muslims. After 2003 he played a significant role in the Iraqi political life.

²⁸ Ali Al-Sistani, 'Friday Prayer Sermon', (Karbala, 2010).

²⁹ Sta2, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

³⁰ UNESCO expert mission to Najaf, 'The Results and Recommendations of Unesco Expert Mission to Najaf for Preparation of the World Heritage Nomination File of Wadi Al-Salam Cemetery in Najaf', (Manamah, 2014).

³¹ Ibid.



Figure 4.2 Relationship between shrine and great cemetery; (source: Google map).

Shrine organization and evolution

To understand the significance of cultural heritage sites in terms of protection policies and management, heritage practitioners normally appraise the historical development of any site, documenting the history of changes in its form and fabric.³² The shrine has a long history, dating from 786, when the first building was constructed as a small room and a dome made from clay, with four small portals. Later, in the last two decades of the 9th century, perimeter walls were added around the tomb of Imam Ali, containing rooms used for studying and for rest.³³ Since 900 CE the shrine has been periodically rebuilt, and the largest building was constructed in 979. This building remained for over five centuries before being completely destroyed in a fire.³⁴ The current design dates from the Safavid era, when Al-Shaekh Al-Bahae proposed a new design in 1621. It was built in 1630, with the dome reconstructed and the shrine building extended. Local materials from the area surrounding Najaf were used, with the work taking three years.³⁵ The building style reflected Persian architecture because the Persian state in this period played a significant role in most Shi'a holy cities.³⁶ Since the middle of the 16th century to the present, the shrine has been a focal point in the old town.

In 1805 a Dr. Griffiths visited the Imam Ali shrine and wrote:

“On approaching the portal of the mosque, I observed that all good Mussulmans, at each side of the entrance, were in the same drowsy disposition. Stimulated by an irresistible, but unpardonable curiosity, I hastily walked into the first court. An elegant fountain, ornamented with coloured tiles, and a profusion of Arabic sentences, was constructed in the centre; and corridors around the area afforded a shady walk to that part of the building, where two handsome doors led to the interior of the mosque. The dome is very handsome, but by no means so large as that of St. Paul’s, as Colonel Capper judged it to be from a distance. The

³² *Management of Historic Centres*, (London and New York: Spon Press, 2001), p. 4.

³³ Jaffar Baqir Mahboba, *Najaf's Past and Present* □□□□ □□□□□ □ □□□□□□, (Sidon, Lebanon: Al-erffan, 1934), pp. 30-36.

³⁴ Al-Hakim, *Detailed of the History of Najaf: The History of Imam Ali Shrine*, (Qom: Al-Haydaria Library, 2006), p. 39.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 121.

³⁶ Suaad Maher, *Imam Ali Shrine in Najaf and Its Gifts and Antiques* □□□□ □□□□□□ □□□ □□ □□□□□ □□□□□□, (Egypt: Dar Al-Maaref, 1969), p. 170.

*mosque is richly ornamented with balls of ivory, glass, ostriches, eggs and a prodigious number of lamps, not only in the centre, but on every side”.*³⁷

The current plan of the shrine is a large square with double walls which surround three sides; a smaller square, which in turn encloses a smaller enclosure, with a golden dome over the tomb at its centre (Figures 4.3 and 4.4). This layout is typical of most shrine buildings in Iraq.³⁸ The shrine is characterized by its grandeur, accuracy of construction and craftsmanship. It consists of a golden dome, open courtyard, main halls, portal gates, golden minarets and a tomb,³⁹ whose hierarchical organisation give the complex its sense of dominance, identity and clarity. It consists of two main floors, with an overall area of about 5000m², defined by an external brick wall.⁴⁰ This perimeter wall height is 13m in height; 77m in length from south to north 77m and 72m long from east to west. The second wall within the courtyard has the same height, but its length from the north to the south is 31.5m, and 30m from east to west, and it has three portals. The third wall within the shrine's interior is square in shape and forms the perimeter to the great tomb of Imam Ali.⁴¹ Although the main purpose of the walls is unclear, they would have had a number of significant functions, defining the sacred territory and providing extra protection to the shrine from any external forces.⁴² The shrine in the inner courtyard is surrounded by a wall on three sides, but the fourth side at the west linked to the *Al-Rass* Mosque (now the *Sahan Abu Talib* extension). The inner shrine's forms are simple and well defined: a massive cube topped by a golden dome, and flanked by two golden minarets.⁴³

³⁷ John Griffiths, *Travels in Europe, Asia Minor, and Arabi*, (London: T. Cadell ; and W. Davies, and Peter Hill, 1805), pp. 370-71.

³⁸ Tabbaa and Mervin, *Najaf the Gate of Wisdom: History, Heritage and Significance of the Holy City of the Shi'a*, (Paris. Amman.: UNESCO, 2014), pp. 87-88.

³⁹ Qazi, 'Mashhad Ali Amir Al Muminin, an Najaf Al Ashraf, Iraq: A Review on the Phases of Destruction and Restoration.'

⁴⁰ *Najaf Heritage at Risk*, (Najaf: International Energy and Environmental Foundation, 2013), pp. 8-9.

⁴¹ Mahboba, *Najaf's Past and Present* ماضي النجف و حاضرها (Sidon, Lebanon: Al-erffan, 1934), pp. 37-40.

⁴² James W. Allan, *The Art and Architecture of Twelver Shi'ism: Iraq, Iran and Indian Sub-Continent*, (London: Azimuth Editions, 2012), p. 27.

⁴³ Tabbaa and Mervin, *Najaf the Gate of Wisdom: History, Heritage and Significance of the Holy City of the Shi'a*, p. 91.

Figure 4.3 Ground floor plan of shrine in 1969; (source: Maher, Imam Ali Shrine in Najaf and Its Gifts and Antiques مشهد الامام علي في النجف وما به من الهدايا والتحف Photo 4).

Figure 4.4 Current plan and section of shrine (2-2), (source: Imam Ali Shrine archive).

The external wall has approximately 100 rooms (about 50 rooms on each floor). In the past, some of these ground floor rooms were used for burials, because of their close proximity to the holy shrine.⁴⁴ These housed the tombs of significant religious

⁴⁴ Mahboba, *Najaf's Past and Present* ماضي النجف و حاضرها (Sidon, Lebanon: Al-erffan, 1934), pp. 37-40.

scholars and local citizens (Figure 4.5).⁴⁵ In 2006, the Shrine Secretariat prevented further burials, other than in exceptional cases.⁴⁶ The remaining rooms support offices for shrine staff and a health clinic and public Islamic library.⁴⁷ Moreover, the outer wall has two main mosques (*Imran bin Shahin* and *Al-Khadra*), both of which have recently been refurbished (Figure 4.6). The ground floor contains some small *Iwans*,⁴⁸ which the pilgrims use to sit inside to take a rest or to watch the golden dome and pray.⁴⁹

Figure 4.5 External wall of shrine; (source the plan: Imam Ali Shrine, 'Official Web Page of the Shrine Foundation').

⁴⁵ Imam Ali Shrine Foundation, 'Official Web Page of the Shrine Foundation'.

⁴⁶ Kamil Salman Al-Jibory, 'Management of Imam Ali Shrine in Najaf', in *Afaaq Najafia*, (Najaf, 2011), pp. 70 - 147.

⁴⁷ DM1, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

⁴⁸ *Iwan* (Arabic) an important item in a Shia shrines is the large vaulted hall, open at one end, of variable depth.

⁴⁹ Imam Ali Shrine Foundation, 'Official Web Page of the Shrine Foundation'.



Figure 4.6 Masjid *Imran bin Shaheen* inside shrine wall

The shrine is extremely well built, with tiled walls, which is a part of Shi'a rituals.⁵⁰ Normally, there is a particular movement, which every pilgrim should follow. Once a pilgrim enters the shrine through one of the main portals, they usually kiss the portal in respect and obedience to the shrine. There are five gates in the external wall and other small doors to enter the corridors of the shrine, and five doors inside three entrances to the tomb.⁵¹

1. The great portal is located at the eastern side of the wall, in front of Najaf market (*sug*), so it is considered the main gate. This contains the shrine clock, its height 14 feet, and width 11 feet, made from wood, with many decorations (Figure 4.7).
2. *The Muslim bin Aqeel* portal is also on the eastern side of the wall, to the right of the main portal.
3. *The Al-Toosi* portal is located on the northern side of the shrine, and leads to the great cemetery. It should be noted that this portal has more depth than the others because of the width of the outer wall.
4. *The Al-Qibla* portal is on the southern side of the wall, facing Mecca.

⁵⁰ Tabbaa and Mervin, *Najaf the Gate of Wisdom: History, Heritage and Significance of the Holy City of the Shi'a*, (Paris. Amman.: UNESCO, 2014), p. 78.

⁵¹ *Najaf Heritage at Risk*, (Najaf: International Energy and Environmental Foundation, 2013), p. 10.

5. *Al-Farag* portal, also called the *Al-Imara* portal, is the newest one, built in 1836, located on the western side of the wall.⁵²



Figure 4.7 External portal (the great portal).

In 1863 the Ottoman sultan *Abdul Aziz* rebuilt the tower of the clock on the main portal of the shrine, which faces east.⁵³ The shrine clock is a unique piece: its top takes the form of a gold dome-shaped container inside three huge bells, from which you hear the ticking each quarter of an hour and the small dome stands on gilded pillars to form eight curved *Iwan*-like structures themselves. The total height of the clock tower, from the surface of the second floor of the brick fence to the writing of the name of Allah that is placed at the top of the golden dome of the clock, is 14.75 m (Figure 4.8).⁵⁴

⁵² Maher, *Imam Ali Shrine in Najaf and Its Gifts and Antiques* مشهد الامام علي في النجف وما به من الهدايا والتحف, (Egypt: Dar Al-Maaref, 1969), pp. 142-47.

⁵³ Tabbaa and Mervin, *Najaf the Gate of Wisdom: History, Heritage and Significance of the Holy City of the Shi'a*, (Paris. Amman.: UNESCO, 2014), p. 81.

⁵⁴ Imam Ali Shrine Foundation, 'Official Web Page of the Shrine Foundation'.



Figure 4.8 Shrine clock and portal

These portals lead to the courtyard space.⁵⁵ The courtyard level is lower than the street level by around 60cm; therefore, there are steps inside the portals.⁵⁶ This difference is a result of the gradual development of the surrounding area, particularly paving and tiling roadworks.⁵⁷ The courtyard has a great spiritual significance, also expressed in the relationship between the golden dome and the sky. The courtyard is normally multifunctional. For instance, it is used for prayer, social and ritualistic activities, and for rest.⁵⁸ Most pilgrims like to sit in it and watch the golden dome and the minarets. As a result of the hot weather in summer, the General Secretariat of the shrine contracted with the SL-Rasch Company from Germany to design retractable shading umbrellas, each one of 20x20 m (Figure 4.9)⁵⁹, instead of the piece of fabric used since 2003 (Figure 4.10). In fact, the concept of roofing the space comes from the Imam Hussain Shrine in Karbala, when the courtyard was covered in 2010

⁵⁵ Locally it is called the *Sahan*.

⁵⁶ Tabbaa and Mervin, *Najaf the Gate of Wisdom: History, Heritage and Significance of the Holy City of the Shi'a*, (Paris. Amman.: UNESCO, 2014), p. 87.

⁵⁷ LR5, 'Interview'. ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

⁵⁸ DM2, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

⁵⁹ Ibid.

(Figure 4.11). Most researchers (for instance Kamona, Al-Hakim, Al-Qaissi and Al-Tai) disagree with this innovation at Karbala, because it prevents pilgrims from watching the golden dome and the sky, especially when they pray; therefore, the Imam Ali Shrine selected a transparent retractable roof.⁶⁰ In fact, the Shrine Secretary selected the same shape and properties of the *Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi* in Al-Medina.⁶¹



Figure 4.9 New retractable umbrella shades; (source: Imam Ali Shrine Foundation, 'Official Web Page of the Shrine Foundation').



Figure 4.10 Fabric roof of shrine.

⁶⁰ Sta2, 'Interview'. ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

⁶¹ DM2, 'Interview'. ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

Figure 4.11 Courtyard of Imam Hussain Shrine after retractable roof project; (source: Imam Hussain Shrine institution Web Page).

Historically, the courtyard pavement was renovated several times during the Ottoman Empire era, in 1897, and in 1934 during the period of the Iraqi Kingdom.⁶² The most significant renovation took place in 1950, when the stone floor was replaced with marble; and in 1981 the Iraqi government replaced it with Italian marble.⁶³ The total area of the u-shaped courtyard is around 8000 m², which surrounds the inner building proper, and its design is reminiscent of the Safavid era.⁶⁴

The pilgrims congregate inside the courtyard ready to enter the tomb. There is a unique feature standing at the main entrance called the golden *Iwan* (Figure 4.12). It is a large vaulted hall that is covered in gold. Some researchers have determined that it originates from Persian architecture; based on the statement that gold was widely used at the main entrances of Iranian mosques from the 11th century onwards.⁶⁵ In general, the golden *Iwan* has come to define the entrance of most Shia shrines in Iraq.

⁶² Maher, *Imam Ali Shrine in Najaf and Its Gifts and Antiques* مشهد الامام علي في النجف وما به من الهدايا والتحف (Egypt: Dar Al-Maaref, 1969), p. 159.

⁶³ Tabbaa and Mervin, *Najaf the Gate of Wisdom: History, Heritage and Significance of the Holy City of the Shi'a*, (Paris. Amman.: UNESCO, 2014), p. 82.

⁶⁴ Al-Hakim, *Detailed of the History of Najaf: The History of Imam Ali Shrine*, (Qom: Al-Haydaria Library, 2006), p. 117.

⁶⁵ Allan, *The Art and Architecture of Twelver Shi'ism: Iraq, Iran and Indian Sub-Continent*, (London: Azimuth Editions, 2012), p. 18.



Figure 4.12 Golden *Iwan* of shrine

The golden dome, which stands in the middle of the shrine over the tomb, is now the key feature of the building. Certainly, the dome has become the heart of every Shi'a Shrine.⁶⁶ Throughout the ages, the golden dome has glistened from a considerable distance, and this adds more importance to the shrine as well as the golden dome. It extends 42 meters in height, with a perimeter of 50 meters and a diameter of about 16 meters. It has twelve windows, which are decorated from the inside with mosaic (Figure 4.13).⁶⁷ The dome has been periodically rebuilt and significantly enlarged over time. The first clay dome was built during Haroon Al-Rasheed's reign,⁶⁸ and its volume was small compared to the current golden dome. The second dome was built in 893 and replaced again in 982 with one bigger than the last, which remained until the mid-fifteenth century (1453).⁶⁹ The increasing scale of the shrine building reflects its growing importance architecturally and historically as a landmark.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 16.

⁶⁷ Qazi, 'Mashhad Ali Amir Al Muminin, an Najaf Al Ashraf, Iraq: A Review on the Phases of Destruction and Restoration.'

⁶⁸ He was the fifth Abbasid Caliph (17 March 763 or February 766-24 March 809).

⁶⁹ Al-Hakim, *Detailed of the History of Najaf: The History of Imam Ali Shrine*, (Qom: Al-Haydaria Library, 2006), pp. 84-102.

⁷⁰ DM1, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

Figure 4.13 External and internal shape of dome, and golden *minarets*. (source: Imam Ali Shrine Foundation, 'Official Web Page of the Shrine Foundation').

The external shape of the golden dome is unique, and there is no mosque or shrine dome in the world that matches it.⁷¹ With its cylindrical base, the dome achieves greater elevation, increasing its prominence as a landmark. It is considered to be one of the most technically accurate and architecturally coordinated domes and is spectacular in its internal decoration and external finish.⁷² The German traveller Niebuhr, who visited Najaf in 1765, said: “*There is not any building in the world more precious than this ceiling cap*”.⁷³ Niebuhr was one of the first of the travellers who documented in maps and drawings the external appearance of the shrine and Najaf old town (Figure 4.14).⁷⁴ Historically, the outside of the dome was covered with ceramic tiles until they were removed in the reign of Nadir Shah 1743, who visited Najaf and ordered their replacement with gold plate.⁷⁵ One significant characteristic is that the dome is higher than the Minarets by about 1.5m, unlike any other Shi’a shrine.⁷⁶ In summary, the dome as it stands today is the product of a number of reconstructions, and bears no relationship to the form of the first dome, but it still

⁷¹ Imam Ali Shrine Foundation, 'Official Web Page of the Shrine Foundation'.

⁷² Maher, *Imam Ali Shrine in Najaf and Its Gifts and Antiques* مشهد الامام علي في النجف وما به من الهدايا والتحف, (Egypt: Dar Al-Maaref, 1969), pp. 160-61.

⁷³ Allan, *The Art and Architecture of Twelver Shi'ism: Iraq, Iran and Indian Sub-Continent*, (London: Azimuth Editions, 2012), p. 7.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Imam Ali Shrine Foundation, 'Official Web Page of the Shrine Foundation'.

⁷⁶ Haidar A Kamona, 'The Impact of Heritage in the Development of Najaf's Architecture', in *Turath Al-Najaf*, (Najaf: Al-Najaf cultural and religious heritage foundation, 2013), p. 118.

highly significant architecturally and historically. It is an important element in Najaf old town, and now embodies the city's identity.

Figure 4.14 Imam Ali Shrine, and Najaf, as drawn by Niebuhr 1765; (source: Allan, *The Art and Architecture of Twelver Shi'ism: Iraq, Iran and Indian Sub-Continent*, p. 8).

The two golden minarets are located on the main entrance of the shrine, on both sides of the golden *Iwan*, within the area of the courtyard of the shrine. Generally, the minaret function, in addition to providing a visual cue to the Muslim community, is to provide a vantage point from which the call to prayers can be made (*Adhan*).⁷⁷ The minaret height is 29 metres, which is in the form of a tapered cylinder. The top third of the minaret is surrounded with a golden plate inscribed with verses from the holy Quran in blue enamel. Above this are engraved golden shapes and the *Adhan* balcony.⁷⁸ The date of construction of the minarets is uncertain, but they are of Persian style and likely go back to the reign of Shah Abbas.⁷⁹ They are part of the original construction of the 17th century, subsequently renovated by order of Sultan Nadir Shah in year 1743, as mentioned previously. In terms of maintaining the

⁷⁷ Mahboba, *Najaf's Past and Present* ماضي النجف و حاضرها (Sidon, Lebanon: Al-erffan, 1934), pp. 50-51.

⁷⁸ Imam Ali Shrine Foundation, 'Official Web Page of the Shrine Foundation'.

⁷⁹ Maher, *Imam Ali Shrine in Najaf and Its Gifts and Antiques* مشهد الامام علي في النجف وما به من الهدايا والتحف (Egypt: Dar Al-Maaref, 1969), p. 170.

minarets, there have been several attempts to refurbish and rebuild them. The first was in 1820, due to erosion and the collapse of the golden sheets. The southern minaret was repaired again in 1933 by demolishing the upper part and reconstructing it, done at the expense of the Directorate of *Awqaf*, while the repair of the Northern one was again by the *Awqaf*, also in 1946.⁸⁰ The demolition and rebuilding of the upper parts were based on reports of structural engineers, and specialists who had visited Najaf for this purpose.⁸¹ The golden minarets with the dome are considered the most significant and beautiful parts of the architecture in the Imam Ali Shrine. The significance comes from its architectural shape, as well as its religious and historical aspects.

The grave of Imam Ali is accessed by thirteen entrances (eight from the courtyard, and five from the *Al-Rass* mosque). It should be noted that, in 2005, the Shrine Secretary decided to separate female and male pilgrims. These entrances lead to a corridor space (its width between 5 to 7.5 m), which makes a connection between the outside and the tomb (*hadra*) (Figure 4.15). The corridor walls are covered by a mosaic mirror. This technique originally comes from Persian architecture, and is used in most Shi'a shrines.⁸² The interior of the shrine is architecturally significant with most of the internal walls, as well as the ceilings, covered with small coloured mirrors of splendid geometric shapes, reflecting the bright light coming from chandeliers above (Figure 4.16). The chandeliers are a contemporary electric kind designed to add to the dignity of the setting. There are also other intricate patterns, geometric and floral, which run across the shrine, along with continuous lines on which Koranic verses are inscribed.⁸³ In fact this normally adds an atmosphere of spirituality to the shrine, and visitors feel the greatness of the place. Finally, there are three doors between the grave of Imam Ali and the corridor. The grave is located in the centre of the shrine, surrounded by cubical windows made of gold and silver (Figure 4.17). It is decorated with Islamic inscriptions and magnificent shapes of plants inscribed in pure gold.⁸⁴ The dimensions of the grave are around 4m in height,

⁸⁰ Al-Hakim, *Detailed of the History of Najaf: The History of Imam Ali Shrine*, pp. 107-11.

⁸¹ Imam Ali Shrine Foundation, 'Official Web Page of the Shrine Foundation'.

⁸² Tabbaa and Mervin, *Najaf the Gate of Wisdom: History, Heritage and Significance of the Holy City of the Shi'a*, (Paris. Amman.: UNESCO, 2014), pp. 91-95.

⁸³ Raouf, *Najaf: Past and Present*, (Baghdad: Al-Mamoon house for translation and publishing, 2013), p. 43.

⁸⁴ Imam Ali Shrine Foundation, 'Official Web Page of the Shrine Foundation'.

6.35m long and 5.10m wide. It can be divided into two main parts: the silver window and the golden crown. The silver window consists of 13 windows; it has silver balls joined by a short bar, which enables the visitors and worshippers to look out from inside of the tomb. The golden crown is directly above the silver window; it is composed of the first structure of gold on which verses from the holy Quran were written, nested and in bold lines. It is surmounted by a structure of gold containing prominent inscriptions of plants and decorations (Figure 4.18), and followed by a flat golden structure inscribed with the saying of the Prophet in praise of Imam Ali.⁸⁵ The decorations and inscriptions in the shrine are a constant fount of interest for architects in the city aiming to restore the tradition in other buildings and houses.⁸⁶ In sum, although quite unknown as such on the world heritage list, the architecture of the shrine occupies a prominent position in Iraqi memory and Shi'a culture.



Figure 4.15 Shrine corridor.

⁸⁵ I. leef Heritage Group, *Najaf Heritage at Risk*, (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013), pp. 11-12.

⁸⁶ Haidar A Kamona, 'The Historical Impact of Demolish Al-Sobat', *Almada newspaper*, 1378 (2008), p. 16.



Figure 4.16 Chandeliers inside shrine.



Figure 4.17 Grave of Imam Ali and doors.



Figure 4.18 Details of tile work on northern inner wall, representing a formal garden underneath a flowering grove.

Relationship between Shrine and Najaf old town

The shrine complex is located in a large paved pedestrian square, covering a great area. There are commercial frontages on the perimeter and some secondary religious sites beyond the security fence.⁸⁷ Despite the fact that demolitions have weakened the relationship between the shrine and its surroundings, it still stands as a jewel in the core of the town (Figures 4.19 and 4.20).⁸⁸ As such, the shrine's tangible and intangible heritage impacts on the old town, and many details, proportions and scales are imported from the shrine to other buildings in the old town.⁸⁹ But this does not prevent continuing malpractice, which tarnishes the cityscape. It should be noted that until the 1970s the shrine open space was used for many activities, such as a traditional school and for social activities, because it was the biggest open space inside the town.⁹⁰ At this point, it was normal to watch groups of religious students sit here to study. Indeed, the first traditional school in Najaf was inside the shrine, until it outgrew its accommodation.⁹¹ From 1968 to 2003 the *Baath* regime prevented most of these activities, which thus impacted on the relationship between the shrine and the old town.⁹²

Approaching Najaf old town from all directions, the golden dome was the main landmark, therefore any person could view it while moving toward the heart of the city.⁹³ In 1932 the American orientalist Matson took photographs that gave a general view of the city, showing a distant view of the great mosque at its centre, with its golden dome dominating the skyline (Figures 4.21, 4.22).

⁸⁷ Dewan Architects and Engineers, 'Urban renewal of the City center of Holy Najaf', (Iraq: Republic Iraq, Ministry of Municipalities and Public Work, General directorate of physical planning, 2012), p. 43. Part 6.

⁸⁸ Arc2, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

⁸⁹ Ali Naji Attia, *The Holy Shrines Buildings*, (Najaf: Imam Ali Shrine institution, 2008).

⁹⁰ LR3, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

⁹¹ Haidar A Kamona, 'The Planning and Design Issues in the Najaf Old Town: Processors and Solutions', *Afaq Najafia*, 9 (2008), p. 40.

⁹² LR1, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

⁹³ Haidar A Kamona, 'Architectural and Schematic Harmony between the Imam Ali Shrine and the Old City', ed. by Publishing Society Forum / Najaf and النشر منتدى جمعية (Najaf: Publishing Society Forum / Najaf 2009).

Figure 4.19 Aerial view of Najaf showing shrine in 1918; (source: Gertrude Bell, 'Photographs', in Gertrude Bell Archive., Newcastle: Newcastle University, 1918).

Figure 4.20 Shrine's dominance of old town; (source: Imam Ali Shrine Foundation, 'Official Web Page of the Shrine Foundation').

Figure 4.21 Distant view of the desert city; (source: Edith Matson and G. Eric, 'Photograph Collection', Library of Congress, 1932).

Figure 4.22 General view of city showing great mosque in distance; (source: Edith Matson and G. Eric, 'Photograph Collection', Library of Congress, 1932).

Section 2: External and internal forces acting on shrine cultural heritage

External forces: interventions from central government up to 2006

As stated before, in modern Iraqi history, until 2003 the Iraqi central government was the key to all decisions in terms of managing and protecting cultural heritage at any site. Generally, central government interventions had a catastrophic impact in terms of heritage protection on the ground. The urban planners and the government have contributed to the destruction of Najaf's urban form. Kamona illustrates this point clearly: "*The shrine suffered from neglect continuously, and the development process was hasty*".⁹⁴ In fact, many factors have had a considerable impact in terms of the development of the shrine. These include direct and indirect factors, which have either negative or positive impacts on the historic character.⁹⁵ Inappropriate shrine development projects could be catastrophic in terms of heritage protection. The key interventions took place in 1949, 1986, and then during the 1990s.

As we already seen in the previous chapter, before 1949 Najaf old town had an organic form in the shape of a ring with the shrine in the centre, surrounded by four neighbourhoods, and the urban fabric surrounding the shrine was organic and coherent (Figure 4.23).⁹⁶ The town shape may be likened to a solid block, closely interconnected with the adjacent urban fabric. This reflects the fact that the shrine evolved over time as a single unit, complemented by that of the community.⁹⁷ The demolition of the historical area around it in 1949 in order to facilitate the movement of vehicles and visitors created a buffer zone between the shrine and its surrounding (Figures 4.24 and 4.25).⁹⁸ Consequently, the exterior walls became isolated from the surrounding buildings; therefore, a new skin wall was built, using Islamic engravings and arches to articulate it (Figure 4.26).⁹⁹ Its materials (bricks) mark a return to the Sumerian civilization, and its decoration evokes Islamic civilization.¹⁰⁰ However, Kamona's main concern was the interfaces of outer walls as sculptures, using

⁹⁴ Haidar A. Kamona, 'The Urban Structure of the Najaf Old Town: Problems and Solutions.', in *Afaaq Najafiya*, (2008), p. 41.

⁹⁵ LR5, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

⁹⁶ Kamona, 'The Planning and Design Issues in the Najaf Old Town: Processors and Solutions', *Afaaq Najafia*, 9 (2008), p. 30.

⁹⁷ Kamona, 'The Urban Structure of the Najaf Old Town: Problems and Solutions.', p. 42.

⁹⁸ Faculty of Architecture and Urban development Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of the Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine.', (Najaf, 2015), p. 213.

⁹⁹ LR1, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

Western concepts. He argued that the original outer wall was solid, and connected with the urban fabric, while churches in Western culture, for example, usually stand in the middle, and their walls have many decorations.¹⁰¹ What is interesting in this situation is that the external walls of the shrine have become significant architectural elements, and more recently local heritage experts have called for its protection, and to prevent changes to any part of it.

Figure 4.23 Najaf 1940 plan; (source: Iraqi land and property registry, 'Najf's Old Town Master Plan', Najaf: Municipality of Najaf, 1940).

¹⁰¹ Haidar A. Kamona, Perception in the Reconstruction of the City of Najaf as a Capital of Islamic Culture 2012, (Najaf: Association forum posting in Najaf, 2010), p. 62.

Figure 4.24 Shrine before and after opening of streets; (source: Imam Ali Shrine Foundation, 'Official Web Page of the Shrine Foundation').

Figure 4.25 Aerial view of Imam Ali Shrine shows removal of buildings around it. (source: Llewelyn Yeang and Consultancy, 'Holy City of Najaf: Master Planning', p. 33. Chapter 3).

Figure 4.26 Outer wall before and after demolition of surrounding buildings; (source: Imam Ali Shrine Foundation, 'Official Web Page of the Shrine Foundation').

In 1998 the central government proposed to create a city of pilgrims next to the shrine, with the area cleared in 1986. The plan further proposed developing and expanding the shrine in four directions, in an expansion area of around 80,000 m².¹⁰² The designer proposed “renovation” work that included the demolition of the old “irregular-type” buildings, and their replacement with modern forms.¹⁰³ However, this led to the destruction of many of the historic heritage sites during the renovation process.¹⁰⁴ The designer proposed two strips of hotels with big open spaces in the middle (Figure 4.27).¹⁰⁵ There was a major argument about this project; on the one hand, the government’s intention was to improve and develop the shrine and its surrounding area. On the other hand, they removed one of the most significant areas, which had many historical features and values, and left it for more than a decade as a vacant site. These policies were usually used among decision makers; it will take time and considerable effort to overcome this long period of mistreatment of the shrine and its surroundings.¹⁰⁶ To reiterate, the government perspective continues to include the same negative aspects in terms of heritage protection, although the place and source of decision-making has changed.

¹⁰² Urban Planning Authority- Iraqi government, 'Development Plan for the Najaf Old Town', ed. by Urban Planning Authority (Baghdad, 1986).

¹⁰³ Maysaa Mohammed and Ehsan Hadi, 'The Best Way to Deal with the Centre of Najaf Old Town', in *Development and Planning*, (Baghdad: University of Baghdad, 2011), p. 11.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ 'The Report of the Specialised Committee on the Extention Project of the Shrine', (Najaf, 2005).

¹⁰⁶ Sta1, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

Figure 4.27 Proposal for city of pilgrims; (source: Kamona, Perception in the Reconstruction of the City of Najaf as a Capital of Islamic Culture 2012, p. 137).

Interestingly, both these interventions have affected the area surrounding the shrine, but not the shrine building itself. The interventions inside the shrine only involved basic maintenance. It was an institution related to the central government through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and most of the regulations and decisions in terms of the shrine came from the Ministry.¹⁰⁷ In fact, far too little attention was paid to managing and protecting the cultural heritage of the shrine and other historical buildings at this time. Moreover, little money was spent on protecting, developing and managing it, and it is hard to see and understand what was done.¹⁰⁸ In a broader view, it has been recognised that pilgrims' donations went toward the central regime without them being used to improve the shrine and/or the old town. According to LR3, because of the dictatorial regime, nobody could complain or ask questions about this situation.¹⁰⁹ After 2003, central government influence receded in decision making in relation to the shrine and the old town. In addition, the central government has become an advisory body when needed but often the new key powers do not turn to them during the decision-making process.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ 'The Law of the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs', (Baghdad: The official gazette, 1981).

¹⁰⁸ LR3, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Al-Jibory, 'Management of Imam Ali Shrine in Najaf', in Afaaq Najafia, (Najaf, 2011), pp. 70 - 147.

Internal forces: local decisions makers

The current millennium has seen a rapid growth in many aspects of developing and managing the shrine and its surrounding area; with the new political role, many forces have appeared as new key powers in decision-making. Since 2003 the religious scholars, Najaf local government and the General Secretariat of the shrine have been the key players in terms of developing and managing the shrine and its surrounding area.¹¹¹ After these considerable changes, the first project inside the shrine building was carried out in 2005. The main reason was to expand and develop the space around Imam Ali's tomb to cope with the increasing numbers of pilgrims.¹¹² To achieve this, the *Al-Rass* mosque was chosen because it was the biggest mosque inside the shrine building.¹¹³ Historically, it was a very wide space with many cylindrical spaces lying to the west of the main building of the Holy Shrine. It is called the Mosque of the *Al-Rass* (i.e. the Head) because it lies in the direction of the head of the holy tomb of the Imam Ali.¹¹⁴ Judging from materials used for the walls, its architectural form and style, Mahboba believes that it was built at the same time as the shrine.¹¹⁵

Many events took place in this mosque; indeed, one of the most significant was the signing of the Najaf peace treaty between the Shi'a and Sunni communities in 1743.¹¹⁶ As such, the *Al-Rass* mosque has value due to its position beside the tomb (religious) and its long history, in addition to its architectural style.

As stated before, the Shrine Secretary has tried to accommodate the huge number of pilgrims safely. Accordingly, the 2005 project demolished the *Al-Rass* mosque and removed many important details and features, such as the *Al-Subat*, in order to create a new large space inside the shrine, close to the tomb (Figure 4.28).¹¹⁷ Historically, the *Al-Subat* acted as a natural ventilation system for the shrine, especially in summer when Najaf is very hot, because there were many wind catchers in it.¹¹⁸

¹¹¹ Sta2, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

¹¹² LR3, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

¹¹³ *Al-Rass* in Arabic mean the head, so its name refers to the burial place of the Imam Ali's head.

¹¹⁴ Maher, *Imam Ali Shrine in Najaf and Its Gifts and Antiques* مشهد الامام علي في النجف وما به من الهدايا والتهنئة والتحف, pp. 153-54.

¹¹⁵ Mahboba, *Najaf's Past and Present* ماضي النجف وحاضرها (Sidon, Lebanon: Al-erffan, 1934), p. 71.

¹¹⁶ LR1, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

¹¹⁷ Kamona, 'The Impact of Heritage in the Development of Najaf's Architecture', p. 127.

¹¹⁸ Kamona, 'Architectural and Schematic Harmony between the Imam Ali Shrine and the Old City'.

Therefore, the *Al-Subat* had worked to circulate the air and make the area more comfortable than other places. It is important to note that this type of ventilation existed only in the Imam Ali Shrine; the other shrines in Iraq did not have this feature.¹¹⁹ There was a strong conflict among decision makers, architects and heritage elites in terms of demolishing the mosque. Consequently, Sta2 stated that *Al-Rass* mosque had many closed spaces, such as small cemeteries and storage rooms; therefore, pilgrims could not effectively reach the mosque. In addition, the *Baath* regime made alterations step-by-step affecting its historic value. As a result, during the construction of the project it was found that some parts had been built using concrete and modern decorations, which were in a very bad condition.¹²⁰ This was used as evidence that it was not a part of the original shrine. Moreover, the mosque was higher than the shrine level, meaning that it was very difficult to open the existing structure toward the shrine as one space, so the Shrine General Secretary chose to extend the shrine.¹²¹ All of these points supported the Shrine Secretary's decision to choose the *Al-Rass* mosque to extend the shrine (*haram*), opening a new era in terms of developing, controlling and managing the building.

Figure 4.28 Detailed plan of *Al-Rass* mosque and *Al-Subat* area before and after reconstruction;
(source: Kamona, 'The Impact of Heritage in the Development of Najaf's Architecture', p. 127).

¹¹⁹ Kamona, 'The Historical Impact of Demolish Al-Sobat', *Almada* newspaper, 1378 (2008).

¹²⁰ Sta2, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

Kamona argues that the old plan clearly shows unity of form and a relationship with the shrine spaces, in addition to the proportions between the open and closed spaces; and the shapes of the spaces. This new extension project damaged the physical composition by destroying the systematic order of the space.¹²² As a result, the new space appears strange and lacks a sense of order because a new architectural and construction style was employed. Indeed, Sta4 stated that the main weakness of this project was the failure to address the issues of how to strike a balance between heritage protection, development control and pilgrims' needs.¹²³

Perhaps one of the most serious defects of the present management of the shrine is the fact that the decision-makers see conservation heritage as a secondary concern.¹²⁴ As a reaction, a committee group was formed to evaluate the project before its implementation, under the guidance of the religious scholars. The committee was detached from the shrine institution, and consisted of some architects and specialists in the architectural field. They felt that the shrine institution should stop working with this project because the committee recognized its cultural, historical and architectural significance.¹²⁵ However, Sta8 explained that they offered no solutions; therefore, the shrine administration decided to speed up the work and demolished *Al-Subat* and *Al-Rass* mosques.¹²⁶

Clearly there was a conflict between those calling for protection of local heritage and those who believed that accommodating the pilgrims should be a priority.¹²⁷ Before the project, pilgrims did not have enough space to stay in or pray close to the tomb of the Imam Ali. Therefore, the main aim of the designer was to offer them enough space.¹²⁸ The designer also had a discussion regarding the difference between the architectural drawings and the practice on the ground. He intended to design the project to simulate the old design of the shrine in terms of using architectural elements such as arches and columns, but with a new architectural vision throughout, using new materials and technology. He also tried to keep the vitality and spirituality

¹²² Kamona, 'Architectural and Schematic Harmony between the Imam Ali Shrine and the Old City', ed. by Publishing Society Forum / Najaf and جمعية منتدى النشر (Najaf: Publishing Society Forum / Najaf 2009).

¹²³ Sta4, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

¹²⁴ Arc4, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

¹²⁵ 'The Report of the Specialised Committee on the Extension Project of the Shrine'.

¹²⁶ Sta8, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

¹²⁷ RS1, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

¹²⁸ Arc2, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

of the old space, through retaining some sections. However, the executors of the project changed many of the architectural details without reference to him.¹²⁹ The main reason for this is that the construction company could not build the same design due to a lack of competence, as well as to the cost. For example, two types of columns and arches, large and small, were part of the design. The large columns and arches refer to the *qiblah* (Figure 4.29). However, they were built to the same size. As a result, the built project is different from the original design scheme.¹³⁰ This is not an isolated case. What happened in the case of *Al-Rass* mosque has happened at most Iraqi heritage sites, especially in the holy cities. In fact, since 2003, many projects have focused on developing and extending the Shia shrines in Iraq, particularly in Karbala, Najaf and Kadhimiya. Therefore, the loss of most of the traditional areas of pilgrim cities has become the main concern of Iraqi architects and historians.¹³¹

Figure 4.29 Design of *Al-Rass* mosque; (source: The Imam Ali Shrine archive).

The replacement extension project¹³² of *Al-Rass* mosque (as design and built) has 14 small domes, and this number comes from the Shi'a beliefs.¹³³ It is designed to accommodate 2000 people (Figures 4.30, and 4.31). The interior design reflects how

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Arc4, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

¹³² According to the whole shrine it is replacement, and according to the *Haram* it is extension.

¹³³ The Shi'a has 14 Imams, Imam Ali and his wife Fatima, as well as 12 other Imams. Imam Ali was the first Imam, and, in the Twelver's view, the rightful successor to Muhammad, followed by male descendants of Muhammad through his daughter Fatimah.

important the shrine is in Shi'a culture, and uses glazing and Islamic decoration to simulate the original shrine (Figure 4.32).¹³⁴ It can be stated that the new project uses the same colour and decorative shapes as the original to achieve continuity between the old building and the extension. However, Arc3 is critical of this point; he thinks using additional glazing in abundance reflects the weakness of the design. In other words, Arc3 thinks the design is too simple, therefore the designer proposed glazing the decorations to cover the design problems.¹³⁵ In addition, the connection between the extension and the tomb was not enough, because it was made only through two doors (2m width, 2,80m height), one for each gender. In his position as advisor of the Shrine Secretary, he asked for the dimensions to be changed to become (4m x 4,20m).¹³⁶ After four months they were changed, and the communication improved.

Figure 4.30 Imam Ali Shrine plan of new development project; (source: The Imam Ali Shrine archive).

¹³⁴ Imam Ali Shrine Foundation, 'Official Web Page of the Shrine Foundation'.

¹³⁵ Arc3, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

¹³⁶ Ibid.

Figure 4.31 Plan and section of *Al-Rass* mosque development project; (source: The Imam Ali Shrine archive).

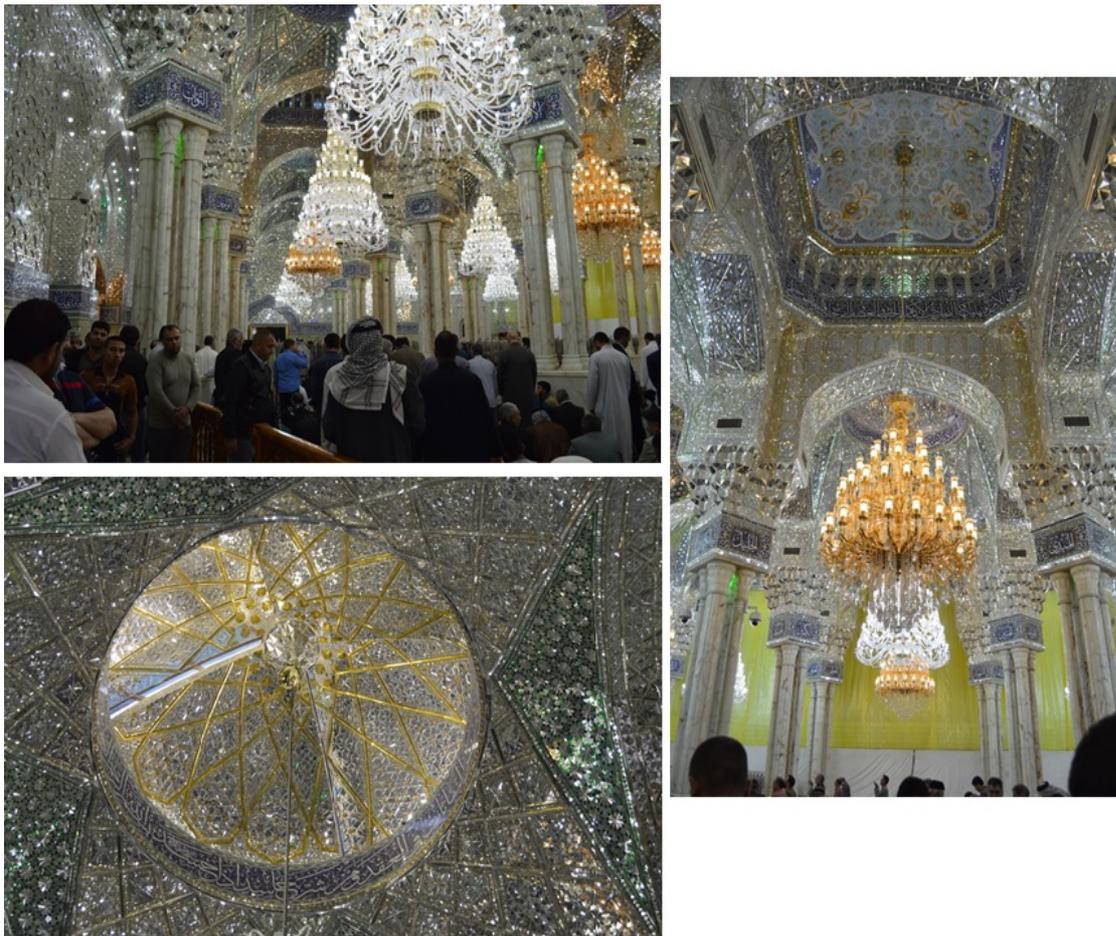


Figure 4.32 Interior of new extension

To sum up, the extension project has damaged the physical composition by destroying the systematic order of the space and it fails to consider values projected by the existing mosque; for example, the exterior design of the project has 14 small domes (Figure 4.33), which change the original shape. The old plan clearly shows the proportion between the open and closed space, and the overall volume. As a result, the new space appears strange, and lacks a sense of order due to the use of a new architectural and construction style. Indeed, the main weakness of this project was the failure to address the issues of how to balance heritage protection, conservation and visitors' needs. In contrast, it should be stated that most pilgrims that were asked about this, as well as some local citizens, stated that it is functionally acceptable. It offers a large, suitable space in which they can undertake their religious activities. Moreover, as DM2 explained, it is important to make a connection between the shrine and the new extension project of *Sahan Fatima* (see next chapter for details).¹³⁷

Figure 4.33 Exterior design of new project with 14 new domes; (source: Imam Ali Shrine Foundation, 'Official Web Page of the Shrine Foundation').

¹³⁷ DM2, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

Conclusion

The Imam Ali Shrine is the most important contributor to the development of the city, so it would be wrong to dismiss its impact when considering any future regulations or development of the old town. Otherwise, the shrine, as with many other parts of Iraq, has suffered from neglect and mismanagement resulting from the instability of political regimes in the country over the ages. Hitherto, the central and local government regard the accommodation of visitors to the shrine in a safe way as the priority, and forget the historical and cultural considerations. In sum, the shrine is not just a physical building, but carries tangible and intangible values, and it is associated with and bearer of local memory. Therefore, its effect is not only spatial, but extends temporally and spiritually, because the memory is the container of local awareness of the past. The significant thing that been discovered is the extent of the relationship between the shrine and its visitors, as well as how we create the relationships, principles and criteria to improve the city in order for it to be contemporary, without compromising its local identity.

In fact, it is hard to recognise and know the rate and the extent of loss of heritage in the shrine, and it is perhaps even more difficult to assess what cultural property has been lost in general. This is as a result of the weakness of conservation management processes on the ground, and the lack of documentation relating to most of the cultural heritage property. Simply put, the loss of cultural heritage property is irretrievable. Once a building or site of historic, religious or architectural significance is demolished, no replica can ever truly convey the same as the original.

In summary, despite the failure to implement most of the architectural regulations and policies on the ground, and the ineffectiveness of some of them in Najaf, the centrality of the shrine to the town is still fundamental. Yet this relationship is now threatened by the scale and extent of the proposed new works to the shrine, which will irrevocably alter the conservation setting and significance of the historic dome and its immediate surroundings. This is the subject of the next chapter.

Imam Ali Shrine: Development control of extension projects

Introduction

First of all, the main debate among heritage elites, decision makers, architects and local communities is how to extend the shrine and conserve the old town at the same time. As we have already seen in the last chapter, the old town has a long history, and has been developed instinctually, and the organic alleyways reflect this. The old town is more than 1000 years old, and holds many significant buildings, elements and spaces.¹ On the one hand, this supports the town protecting its long history and priceless buildings and shrines. On the other hand, it does not offer enough comfortable spaces and places to the huge number of pilgrims to the shrine. During this debate, a new, compromise approach has been put forward, calling for protection of heritage, and moderating the old town. The Shrine Secretary has tried to solve this debate, because all of its projects impact on the town. Accordingly, the Imam Ali Shrine Institution has tried to solicit opinions of architects, heritage elites, stakeholders, religious scholars and authorities, and then choose the appropriate solution.² Finally, they have based their response on Al-Sistani's point of view of the need to protect the significant alleyways and buildings of the old town, as well as extending the shrine itself, but within specific criteria, in order to conserve some

¹ Abdul Sahib K. ShirAli, 'Whimper Alleys الاذفة : An Overview of the Current Condition of the Shrine and Its Future', ed. by Imam Ali Shrine Institution (Najaf: Dar AL-Kafeel, 2014), pp. 14-15.

² Ibid. pp. 17-18.

significant features.³ It should be mentioned that Al-Sistani expressed his admiration for the conservation practices in London during a therapeutic trip in 2007, and he has asked Iraqi architects and specialists to use similar techniques to protect Najaf and other historical cities.⁴

This significant problem is related to the level of understanding of heritage at both local community and decision maker level. The employees of the Shrine Institution, for example, do not know or understand the significance of the shrine building. DM2 said that some of the employees asked him to change or maintain some places in the shrine, but he told them “*We cannot change anything; you do not understand the value of the shrine*”. Thus, his position was contrary to the employees, so he worked to increase employees’ awareness toward heritage.⁵ The problem is that other members of the Shrine Secretariat argued that the shrine is a religious place not a museum. This point is reflecting the conflict between the Western understanding of heritage conservation, and the Iraqi/ Islamic culture. What has happened has been the result of a form of self-interest by some members; because there is no clear heritage protection approach and it can change anything by changing its members.⁶ In addition, up to the present, the Institution has not had sufficient architects or experts to deal with heritage issues. They only have junior or non-specialist architects in conservation; consequently, they did not have enough background to discuss the project with the designers.⁷ However, some local residents have enough awareness regarding the need to protect heritage, but are few compared to the majority.⁸ In fact, in LR5’s view, most pilgrims to the shrine prefer comfortable places and spaces rather than protected heritage.⁹

The question here is therefore more about how to achieve a balance between heritage protection and pilgrim’s needs. DM1 (a member of the shrine secretary) explained that the building has a religious function, and its significance comes from that. The huge number of visitors should take part in any development decisions. As a result,

³ Abdul Sahib K. Shirali, 'Najaf Old Town or Capital of Islamin Culture', *Alsabaah newspaper*, 1849 (2009).

⁴ ShirAli, 'Whimper Alleys الاذقة : An Overview of the Current Condition of the Shrine and Its Future', (Najaf: Dar AL-Kafeel, 2014).

⁵ DM2, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Arc7, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

⁸ Sta8, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

⁹ LR5, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

the Shrine Secretary's objectives and strategies are to cover all pilgrim services, not only in relation to the shrine itself, but also for the whole old town.¹⁰ Generally, there is a need for more cooperation among decision makers, specialists and the local community in terms of development planning aspects, and specifically for maintaining and developing historic buildings there needs to be a clear regulation and control system.

This part shows that, since 2006, projects have continued to focus on accommodating visitors rather than protecting heritage. These practices have had a detrimental impact on the shrine, failing to balance heritage protection and visitors' needs. In a clear sense, conservation management of built heritage should be at the heart of a proactive management by decision makers concerning heritage sites, rather than being a reactive provision.

This chapter is split into two main sections. Section one sets out the main projects of the shrine since 2006: The *Sahan Fatima* Project and the 90 m extension project, in addition to the two proposals by Al-Ansari and Dewan. Section two analyses how the shrine is perceived in principle and treated in practice.

¹⁰ DM1, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

Section 1: The main design projects since 2006

Al-Ansari proposal

Al-Ansari worked as a specialist with Llewelyn Davies and ADEC in the study of master planning of the holy city of Najaf.¹¹ He designated some problems relating to insufficient accommodation spaces for pilgrims, but neglected the urban fabric, in the relationship between the shrine and its surrounding area, and wanted to solve these.¹² The proposal therefore tried to enhance and develop the old town as well as the shrine. Theoretically, the main idea of the design was to conserve most of the traditional buildings in the town and show the integration and connection between the historical buildings and the new design. Arc6 illustrated the importance of the traditional schools, religious offices, cultural centres, and traditional market.¹³ One of the major problems faces the city's development was the removal of many buildings and urban fabric under the pretext of redevelopment, though in fact being a product of the politics of the previous regime.¹⁴ Al-Ansari tried to accommodate the increasing number of pilgrims through creating two new open spaces (courtyards) surrounding the shrine in the area that the previous regime had demolished, as seen in chapter 3. In addition, it was proposed that the great *suq* be demolished and a large courtyard rebuilt in the middle with two strips of shops located at each edge (Figure 5.1).¹⁵ However, the main weakness of this proposal was the failure to consider the identity and coherence of the old town. In addition, it would weaken the dominance of the historic shrine in relation to the spatial configuration of the town.¹⁶ In fact, we can see differences between the theoretical approach to protecting the old town and the design proposal, which proposed to demolish one of the oldest urban fabrics in Iraq. According to Sta1, Najaf old town is now the only surviving integrated urban fabric with a walled historical city in Iraq, since other cities have been fully demolished, such as Mosul and Basra.¹⁷ The design also divided the old town into two sections, and this could threaten the old town's continuity. Moreover, it did not

¹¹ Llewelyn Davies Yeang and ADEC, 'Holy City of Najaf: Masterplanning', (Baghdad: Republic of Iraq: Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works, 2006).

¹² Arc6, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

¹³ Jamal Haidar, 'Interview with Dr. Rauf Al-Ansari', *Alesbuyia*, 117 (2010).

¹⁴ RS1, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

¹⁵ Raouf Al-Ansari, 'Proposed Project Development Najaf's City Center and Expanding the Imam Ali Shrine', *Al-Mahjer*, 2007.

¹⁶ Arc7, 'Interview'.

¹⁷ Sta1, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

respond to the high temperatures experienced during the day, and how to avoid its effects. Large open spaces are usually very hot and unpleasant, and the proposed fountains would have been insufficient to meet the pilgrims' needs. As we have already seen in chapter 4, the courtyards of most shrines in Iraq have been covered to protect people from the high temperatures. In the event, the authority did not accept this proposal for the following reasons. Firstly, most of the land is private; and the Shrine Institution did not have enough money to buy it, as well as most private individuals not wishing to sell their shops and buildings.¹⁸ Secondly, it did not cover all the criteria for protecting heritage, since the design proposed to demolish many parts of the urban fabric.¹⁹ Kamona argued that the proposal could weaken the shrine as the main landmark in the old town, and threaten the continuity of the urban fabric. In addition, there is a paradox, in that the designer mentioned more about the historical significance of the great *sūq*, while the same time proposing to replace it by modern market.²⁰ It can be stated that the predominance of visitor services in this plan would have a negative impact on the old residential neighbourhoods of Najaf.

¹⁸ Arc6, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

¹⁹ Arc7, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

²⁰ Hassan H Kamona, 'Ecosystem Changes in the Decisions of the Traditional of Contemporary Urban Fabric', (Baghdad, 2008), pp. 115-17.

Figure 5.1 Aerial view showing proposed open space; (source: Al-Ansari, 'Proposed Project Development Najaf's City Centre and Expanding the Imam Ali Shrine').

Dewan proposal

As detailed in the early chapters, Dewan architects set out the urban renewal plan for the old town, and the shrine and its surrounding area is part of the proposal. Accordingly, at Stage 4, they propose to develop the shrine and the surrounding area, using the cleared area that the previous regime demolished. The main aims of this design proposal are to absorb 600,000 pilgrims into the main area, as well as conserving the urban fabric of the old town.²¹ Even with the extensive cleared area and areas threatened by demolition, the fact is that Najaf is not an empty ground waiting for a new urban system to be developed on it. It thus imposes constraints on development as a significant historic town and holy site that has established its particular identity over centuries. Accordingly, the planning alternatives presented are explorations within a common structural framework that is conditioned by the overall vision and proposal: renewal and revival the old town of culture and preservation of its urban religious identity. This overall vision represents a synthesis of three major components that can be defined and analysed each in their own right: the old town for religious pilgrims, as a centre of learning and studying religious and cultural traditions, and finally as a vibrant residential town.²²

The first alternative is a town for pilgrims (Figure 5.2), which focuses on the massive increase in the number of pilgrims travelling to the shrine and provision of corresponding accommodation and services inside and outside the old town. Also, it proposes a continuous monorail around the city, to serve various nodes on the periphery of the old town, from where pedestrian access to the town is provided. Moreover, it involves converting large portions of the residential area, particularly around the shrine, to guesthouses and apartments used by visitors.²³ A variant of this alternative is based on extending the shrine from all sides, and extending the great *suq* to allow pilgrims to watch the golden dome. While it caters for a large increase in pilgrims, this alternative does so in a relatively crude way, without much consideration of the historic urban fabric, its scale and its cultural values. In fact, it is

²¹ Dewan Architects and Engineers, 'Urban renewal of the City center of Holy Najaf', (Iraq: Republic Iraq, Ministry of Municipalities and Public Work, General directorate of physical planning, 2012), p. 25. Stage 4.

²² Dewan Architects and Engineers, 'Urban Renewal of the City Centre of the Holy Najaf - Sage Three', (Najaf, Baghdad: Republic of Iraq, Ministry of Municipalities and public Works General directorate of physical planning, 2011).

²³ Ibid. pp. 11-12.

impossible to focus on pilgrims as the only priority and not to pay attention to the other aspects. As a result, decision makers did not accept this alternative.

Figure 5.2 First alternative: a town for pilgrims; (source: Dewan; 'Urban Renewal of the City Centre of the Holy Najaf - Sage Three', 2011; P.11).

The second alternative is using the old town for culture and knowledge (Figure 5.3) as a result of its huge number of traditional religious schools. This alternative is characterized by focusing on learning, educational activities and the preservation of religious and cultural heritage in an urban setting. It would use the existing traditional religious schools as focal points for cultural development and expand their remit to include support activities, student accommodation within the old town, lecture halls, etc. In addition, it would conserve and enhance traditional

characteristics of the traditional alleyways, significant houses and covered markets. Furthermore, it would prevent commercial activities from spilling into residential neighbourhoods.²⁴ It should be noted that this alternative is most concerned with the spiritual experience and cultural heritage preservation of Najaf. It looks at quality rather than quantity and sets a limit on the carrying capacity of the existing urban framework as a constraint to future development. However, the local decision makers (Najaf Municipality and Directorate of Urban Planning in Najaf) also refused this proposed design because it did not cover all of the client's (The Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works) criteria.²⁵

Figure 5.3 Second alternative for old town (for culture and knowledge); (source: Dewan , 'Urban Renewal of the City Centre of the Holy Najaf - Sage Three', 2011, p.14).

The third alternative is using the old town for residents (Figure 5.4), which focuses on improving and maintaining the living conditions in the four historical neighbourhoods, in order to maintain current residents and to attract local citizens to move back to the old town, as permanent or part-time residents. We have already seen in the first case study how the physical and social fabric has been changed on

²⁴ Ibid. pp. 13-15.

²⁵ Arc7, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

the ground, and how most local residents have moved outside the old town. Improving community facilities and services in the town and strengthening the identity of local neighbourhoods around traditional open spaces are included in this proposal.²⁶ In its attempt to re-establish old Najaf as a living residential community that to some extent accommodates the inevitable flow of visitors, but not become overwhelmed by it, this alternative may go too far. The decision makers (Najaf Municipality and Directorate of Urban Planning in Najaf) argue that it is not good enough to focus on only one theme. The local decision makers are looking for a comprehensive design to cover all three alternatives, so they did not accept this plan.²⁷

Figure 5.4 Third alternative for old town (for residents); (source: Dewan, 'Urban Renewal of the City Centre of the Holy Najaf - Sage Three', 2011, p.16).

²⁶ Dewan, 'Urban Renewal of the City Centre of the Holy Najaf - Sage Three', (2011), pp. 16-18.

²⁷ Arc7, 'Interview'. ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

After discussion of these three alternatives with the decision makers at both national and local level, Dewan offered to consolidate the alternatives to set out a final alternative: 'the old town for all' (Figure 5.5).²⁸ This alternative is characterised by the following main features: it focuses on balancing the three principal agendas, i.e., services rendered to pilgrimage, preservation of spiritual and cultural assets and sustainable residential functions. Accommodating pilgrims takes the form of a reduced version of Western development, complementing the development of the Bahr-side²⁹ with hotels in the new eastern commercial area, and including small guesthouses within the traditional urban fabric near the Imam Ali Shrine.³⁰

Figure 5.5 Final proposal (the old town for all); (source: Dewan; 'Urban Renewal of the City Centre of the Holy Najaf - Sage Three', 2011, p.19).

Step-by-step, the proposal has developed after discussions between designers, and national and local authorities. The Stage 4 proposal is based on the pilgrims' movements toward the shrine, proposing four major and four minor entrances, based on a field survey and observation. The main idea of these gates is to create a buffer

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ 'Bahar' means 'sea': Bahar Al-Najaf is a wetland depression area located to the west of the shrine.

³⁰ Dewan, 'Urban Renewal of the City Centre of the Holy Najaf - Sage Three', (2011), pp. 19-21.

zone between the shrine and its urban area. The proportions and size of these entrances are different in terms of the major and minor gates, according to the number of pilgrims that enter and leave each of them, according to estimates of the target year (2030) (Figures 5.6 and 5.7).³¹

The design team has also thought about the urban edge of the extension of the shrine by creating corridors for pilgrims' movements which are shaded for standardizing the language of the urban buffer between religious area and other parts of the old town (Figure 5.8).³² These corridors also offer pathways for pilgrims and local citizens who intend to cross from side to side of the old town, without passing by the holy shrine area. It has been linked directly to the urban fabric in some places, while providing an interface between the two spaces in other places, in order to maintain communication and the cohesion of the urban fabric in relation to these corridors. Thus communication and the cohesion of the urban fabric in relation to these corridors has been enhanced to provide some urban shops and events that promote social cohesion, as well as serving pilgrims to the shrine.³³ One major criticism of Dewan's Stage 4 proposal is that it ignores the design of the *Sahan Fatima* project by the University of Shahid Beheshti, outlined in the section below. In addition, there is a significant gap between the aims and objectives and the proposal's design.³⁴ Arc6 stated that this design is suitable for modern cities, but not for historical pilgrimage cities because there are specific criteria in these specific sites, and the proposal did not reach them. He argued that creating new and big open spaces, and using new materials, such as concrete, are not suitable with the criteria of protecting historical cities. For instance, at local level, there is a regulation that any building inside the old town must be no higher than the outer wall of the shrine, and Dewan proposed some parts to become up to 5 floors.³⁵ In fact, the proposal has damaged the relationship between the shrine and its urban fabric, replacing this idea with symbolic buildings. In other words, it means monument building stands in the middle, surrounded by big

³¹ Dewan Architects and Engineers, 'Urban Renewal of the City Center of Holy Najaf: Comprehensive Master Plan of the City Center of Holy Najaf', (Najaf: Republic Iraq, Ministry of Municipalities and Public Work, General directorate of physical planning, 2015), p. 21.

³² Ibid. pp. 21 - 22. Stage 5.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Faculty of Architecture and Urban development Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of the Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine.', (Najaf, 2015), pp. 74-75.

³⁵ Arc6, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

open spaces used by visitors, and then a commercial zone.³⁶ Moreover, it is also proposed to demolish the great *Suq* and its surrounding traditional urban fabric. The proposal does not otherwise mention the original shrine itself.

Figure 5.6 Extention proposal by Dewan; (source: Dewan at stage 4; 'Urban renewal of the city center of Najaf', p. 38).

³⁶ Arc2, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

Figure 5.7 Major and minor entrances to shrine; (source: Dewan, 'Urban renewal of the City center of Holy Najaf', p. 31. Stage 4).

Figure 5.8 Edge of extension; (source: Dewan, 'Urban renewal of the city centre of Najaf', p. 33. Stage 4).

After approving the revised stage 4 report, the stage 5 report included the development of a master plan for the old town, based on comments from the client team. The report explained that one of the aims proposed by the client were developing and enlarging the areas surrounding the Imam Ali shrine to be able to provide the necessary spaces and areas to receive and serve the processions of crowds.³⁷ The Dewan designers think that pilgrims need a big open space to host their activities during religious events. They propose clearing all the area surrounding the shrine to achieve this. The problem is that they have not paid attention to the protection of the significant heritage, despite stating an aim to conserve some significant buildings.³⁸ It should be noted that there is already a clear zone round all four sides of the shrine. However, this zone is about 30m on each side, and Dewan proposed to extend these to become 90m³⁹ on each side, and function as a visitor's area.⁴⁰ In fact, some highly significant historical fabric, as opposed to characteristic vernacular, would be lost in this scheme as an additional area around the shrine, in addition to the boundary of the area already cleared, such as the

³⁷ Dewan Architects and Engineers, 'Urban Renewal of the City Center of Holy Najaf: Comprehensive Master Plan of the City Center of Holy Najaf', (Najaf: Republic Iraq, Ministry of Municipalities and Public Work, General directorate of physical planning, 2015), p. 4. Stage 5.

³⁸ Arc7, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

³⁹ They proposed that into 2 stages: 60m in 2020, and 90m up to 2030.

⁴⁰ Dewan Architects and Engineers, 'Urban Renewal of the City Center of Holy Najaf: Comprehensive Master Plan of the City Center of Holy Najaf', p. 8. Stage 5.

entrance of the *suq al-houaiesh* and the great *suq, al-Brujerdy* school, *al-Qazweeni* school, *al-Jawad* school and adjacent mosque, and *al-Baghdadi* mosque. Sta2 illustrated that Dewan proposed the idea to make the shrine stand in the middle as a monument, and have most activities surround it for all three sites, namely Karbala, Kadhimiya and Najaf.⁴¹ It could therefore be argued that Dewan has ignored the historical value of the place, and thought more about accommodating pilgrims. Due to the contract between the shrine Secretariat and the University of Shahid Beheshti, the last version of the Dewan proposal (Stage 5) involved leaving the area of the western phase empty; and designing only the surrounding area as well as the old town (Figure 5.9). The designers proposed conserving the significant buildings in this area, such as the *Al-Shahid Al-Sadr* library (Figure 5.10).⁴²

It is easy to see how this proposal has changed from an organic shape in Stage 4 (Figures 5.6 and 5.8) to straight open spaces supported by large retractable umbrellas. In fact, the original shrine is completely protected, and the scheme deals with the surrounding area only. In my opinion, they selected the easiest way to get an area to accommodate the huge number of pilgrims. The main debate on this issue is that there are no more than 20 specific days per year when specific religious events take place, so the design should think more about how this space will work for the other 345 days. The proposal will weaken the relationship between shrine and fabric during the normal/everyday situation that prevails for the vast majority of the year, when the 'normal' occupancy / use of the area is by local citizens rather than pilgrims.

⁴¹ Sta2, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

⁴² Dewan, 'Urban Renewal of the City Center of Holy Najaf: Comprehensive Master Plan of the City Center of Holy Najaf', (Najaf: Republic Iraq, Ministry of Municipalities and Public Work, General directorate of physical planning, 2015), p. 77.

Figure 5.9 Aerial perspective of central area, (source: Dewan, 'Urban Renewal of the City Centre of Holy Najaf: Comprehensive Master Plan of the City Centre of Holy Najaf', p. 27).

Figure 5.10 Illustrative map of central area by Dewan, and how it changed; (source: Dewan, 'Urban Renewal of the City Centre of Holy Najaf: Comprehensive Master Plan of the City Centre of Holy Najaf', p. 26).

The UNESCO mission to Iraq has made some comments on these proposals because they could threaten the cultural heritage of Najaf. The report mentions that Dewan should leave this area to be protected as a world heritage site. It is clear from the designs that they are geared toward renewal, and focus more on accommodating pilgrims and offering services to them, such as ablution units, as well as to develop the commercial activities more than to protect heritage. Thus, the approach to treat cultural artefacts and practices as items for consumption, and manage them for profit, is one of the forces that threaten to overwhelm attempts to conserve this historic area. Overall, the proposal does not take into consideration the protection of Najaf's heritage, and is inconsistent with the requirements of conserving and rehabilitating the shrine, cemetery and old town as historical sites nominated for listing in the WHL.⁴³

In fact, there is a major argument between the land owners and the decision makers of the old town. The powers of the Shrine Secretary Authority are only limited to the shrine; the other areas are under the control of the local government authority. However, the Shrine Institution has been buying the 90m wide space surrounding the shrine, and it is now in their ownership. As a result, the Shrine Secretary has stated that they will consider the Dewan proposal design,⁴⁴ but that they are not obliged to adopt it.⁴⁵ In total, this reflects the authorities' struggle on the ground, and a lack of cooperation between them. Practically, the proposal has become obsolete, and the Shrine Secretary is instead considering another option, which is presented below.

⁴³ UNESCO expert mission to Najaf, 'The Results and Recommendations of Unesco Expert Mission to Najaf for Preparation of the World Heritage Nomination File of Wadi Al-Salam Cemetery in Najaf', (Manamah, 2014).

⁴⁴ It should be explained that the Dewan contracted with The Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works; therefore, the Najaf municipalities and the Najaf urban planning were the main driven of the scheme.

⁴⁵ DM2, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

Sahan Fatima Project

The *Sahan Fatima*⁴⁶ project represents the biggest extension project of the shrine. In 2012 the Shrine Institution started to expand the shrine to the west, over the area of ground that the previous regime had cleared during the 1980s-90s, as stated before. Before this, there had been different views about the extension project. Some of the decision makers considered asking specific architects to design the area, and others wanted an international design competition. This group thought that the shrine was not for local pilgrims but for the Islamic world, and therefore an international competition could support the town to become a contemporary city.⁴⁷ The design process took a long time for several reasons, such as financial issues, and the role of multiple decision makers and authorities.⁴⁸ The new development project plans to expand the western face to a total area of 60000 m² (400m length, 150m width), therefore its total area will be three times the original size of the shrine's area, and it should accommodate around 200,000 pilgrims.⁴⁹

The designer group (School of Architecture, Shahid Beheshti University) said that they have designed it in accordance with the historic and religious significance of the place. They explained that the concept of the design is to simulate the historical movement of Imam Ali Zain Al-Abideen⁵⁰, from the place of convoy to his grandfather Imam Ali's tomb. Therefore, the designers focused on the axis of movement, and the spaces on either side of this axis. The following figures (5.11 and 5.12) show the access of movement, and the relationship between the new project and the shrine.⁵¹ The design also focuses on enhancing the visual relationship between pilgrims and the shrine, and its height does not exceed the height of the wall of the shrine. As a result, it keeps the golden dome as the highest feature in Najaf old town (Figure 5.13).⁵² The shrine authority contracted with the *Al-Kawthar* Company from Iran to construct the project, but some mistakes led to them constructing the

⁴⁶ Fatima was a daughter of the Islamic prophet Muhammad, wife of Imam Ali and the mother of Imam Hasan and Hussein.

⁴⁷ Arc7, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

⁴⁸ DM2, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

⁴⁹ Imam Ali Shrine Foundation, 'Official Web Page of the Shrine Foundation', (2015), p. website:<http://www.imamali.net/?part=1>.

⁵⁰ 'The Extension Project of Imam Ali Shrine and Its Surrounding Area', (Najaf: Imam Ali Shrine Institution, 2014).

⁵¹ Imam Ali Shrine Foundation, 'Sahan Fatema Project', (Najaf, 2012).

⁵² Ibid.

new extension 2m higher than the Shrine walls.⁵³ The UNESCO mission to Najaf also mentioned this point in their report, and criticised it.⁵⁴ The main concern is that this problem has weakened the position of heritage supporters since the shrine itself has not abided by the regulations, and this means that the Secretary cannot call for the land authorities not to build new buildings higher than the shrine wall.⁵⁵ It should be mentioned that the design group studied the pilgrims' movements toward the shrine, and found that most pilgrims come from the ring road (western phase), and this supports the design.⁵⁶ However, the main concern is that this extension project might encourage pilgrims to visit the shrine and return to the car parks without entering the old town. Hence, it will have a side effect in terms of the economic situation and the life of the old town.⁵⁷

Figure 5.11 Relationship between shrine and extension project; (source: Imam Ali Shrine Foundation, 'Sahan Fatima Project', Najaf, 2012).

⁵³ Arc5, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2016).

⁵⁴ Sta2, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Arc7, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

⁵⁷ LR5, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

Figure 5.12 Axis of movement and relationship between shrine and new project; (source: Imam Ali Shrine Foundation, '*Sahan Fatima* Project', Najaf, 2012).

Figure 5.13 Model of ongoing project for shrine's expansion; (source: Imam Ali Shrine Foundation, '*Sahan Fatima* Project', Najaf, 2012).

According to the contract between the Shrine Secretary and University of Beheshti design group, the project was to be on two floors plus the basement level, as well as a further cemetery floor below.⁵⁸ However, Arc5 disagreed about the cemetery, and the authority agreed to change the function from a cemetery to worship activities.⁵⁹ It is possible to state that the design concept comes from simulating the existing Shrine. Particularly, the designer copied the present shape and added two new minarets. The design specification of the project consists of three main zones A, B, and C (Figure 5.14). The religion and worship zone (A) is close to the shrine, and is supported by security and control offices. This section consists of 3 main levels: the underground and ground floor can accommodate 40,000 people per level, and the first floor 20,000 people.⁶⁰ The other zone (B) in the middle contains some support services, such as the library, museum and administration offices. The last zone (C) contains car parking and other services, such as toilets and ablution units.⁶¹

There has been some debate about the scheme; Sta1 argued that some services, such as the library, the museum and the administration offices could be moved outside the town because currently they take up a large part of the project area.⁶² Sta4 also stated the same idea, “pilgrims need the space, so other activities can move toward the *bahr Al-Najaf*”.⁶³ Some local citizens that I interviewed proposed to build a wall around the clearance area and add them to the shrine as a big courtyard. They think this will accommodate pilgrims and allow the dome to still dominate the skyline, which was the priority for most interviewees. In particular, RS2 stated that the dome is the banner of Imam Ali, so it should be the highest point in the town, and all pilgrims should watch it.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ 'Meeting Record: The Contract of the Shrine Extension Project', ed. by Imam Ali Shrine Institution (Najaf: Imam Ali Shrine Institution, 2008).

⁵⁹ Arc5, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2016).

⁶⁰ Imam Ali Shrine Foundation, 'Sahan Fatema Project', (Najaf, 2012).

⁶¹ 'Meeting Record: The Contract of the Shrine Extension Project'.

⁶² Sta1, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

⁶³ Sta4, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

⁶⁴ RS2, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

Figure 5.14 Plans of the extension; (source: 'Meeting Record: The Contract of the Shrine Extension Project', pp. 31-33).

According to the ground floor plan (Figure 5.15), the new extension has four new entrances to the shrine, besides the main entrances at the beginning of the project, to go directly to the last extension project of the *Al-Rass* mosque. Figure 5.16 explains the connection between the new extension and the original building through the area of the *Al-Rass* mosque. In fact, this allows pilgrims to enter the shrine through two entrances, not directly to the grave. This represents the Shia belief that it is not recommended to enter the tomb directly at its head.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Sta2, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

Figure 5.15 Ground floor entrances; (source: Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of the Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine').

Figure 5.16 Connection between new extension and original shrine; (source: Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of the Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine.').

It should be noted that in 2010 Mohamed al-Assam, the head of Dewan Architects, sent a review report to the Shrine Secretary, about the first design draft of the *Sahan Fatima* by Beheshti. The report consisted of 3 main areas:

- Comments related to the function and circulation of the scheme (42 points);
- Comments on the coordination of plans, sections and elevations (135 points);
- General comments and comments on missing information (100 points).⁶⁶

In fact, these (277) comments were more about the scheme's detail than the design of it. For instance, the review report mentioned the following:

Point (1.4) providing two means of escape via staircases has to be considered in the first basement floor plan / Administration and Public Affairs Building; point (1.9) providing controlled entry to the VIP lifts area in the library; and point (1.18) emergency exits must have clear directions and signage in the pilgrimage section.⁶⁷ This is the official report; however, they reported to the Shrine Secretary that they totally disagreed about the Beheshti scheme, and could create a design better than this proposal. In fact, Sta2 stated that there was no subsequent contact or collaboration between Dewan and Beheshti.⁶⁸

Other problems with this design include the number of columns (1600) and the shape of the new *minarets*, which were changed later to become similar to the original *minarets* of the shrine.⁶⁹ In fact, there are two points of view of the project. The first group supports the project because it uses the area already cleared by the previous regime. Besides, most of the architectural elements and forms come from the architecture of the old town, and will offer good services to pilgrims.⁷⁰ The other group think it will hurt the urban fabric and reduce the dominance of the shrine, and could interrupt the physical and visual communication between the four neighbourhoods.⁷¹ In total, it is a realistic design because they have used the areas in the best way, particularly the underground levels, but it could have covered the town

⁶⁶ Dewan Architects and Engineers, 'The Holy Shrine Development Project (*Sahan Fatime*) Review', (Najaf, 2010).

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Sta2, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

⁶⁹ DM2, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

⁷⁰ Sta4, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

⁷¹ Arc6, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

and the shrine better.⁷² It should be mentioned that no direct alterations to the shrine building is involved in this project, except for at the connection points.

Al-Ansari (the designer of the Al-Ansari scheme) participated in numerous meetings to develop and improve the shrine with different decision makers and designers. He found the new design failed to address the relationship between pilgrims and the shrine's space. In a broader picture, the movement of pilgrims in this new expansion is located in the basement floors of the expansion, and he thought that this was out of keeping with the shrine's buildings.⁷³ Arc5 stated that he disagreed about the size of the new courtyards (*sahan*), which he thought should be less than the area of the original courtyard. In addition, he said that the new masses should be smaller than the current design. However, because he worked within the design team, he could not change these aspects.⁷⁴ Arc2 also stated that the new open spaces would dilute the dominance of the original *sahan*.⁷⁵

The other concern is that local communities and pilgrims might be unable to watch the golden dome as well as other architectural features clearly.⁷⁶ However, over time the project will be used, and will become a part of the pilgrims and local citizens' memory.⁷⁷ DM2 explained this issue further, explaining that local citizens' were concerned about not being able to see the golden dome because this area had remained empty for long periods, so they were used to this particular vista. He stated that they also did not watch it before the demolition of the *Al-Imarah* neighbourhood.⁷⁸ This argument cannot end, because each group's ideas are based on some evidence and facts. Arc5 specified that the new project had some problems which divided the urban fabric, but that some factors justified the design, such as the Shrine Secretary's design requirements and the site shape and area.⁷⁹

The Shrine Secretariat was unclear about future extensions and projects and some political and social factors. The main significant issue was that the Shrine Secretariat

⁷² Sta7, '2015', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

⁷³ Raoof Al-Ansari, 'Criticism of the Proposal Design of the Imam Ali Shrine by University of Beheshti', (London, 2013).

⁷⁴ Arc5, 'Interview'.

⁷⁵ Arc2, 'Interview'.

⁷⁶ LR2, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

⁷⁷ Sta8, 'Interview'.

⁷⁸ DM2, 'Interview'.

⁷⁹ Arc5, 'Interview'.

did not have a clear implementation strategy, and their objective changed according to its members' wishes. Moreover, decision makers, pilgrims, as well as local citizens do not have enough understanding of what heritage is and the significance of the place.⁸⁰ This demonstrates the importance of setting out clear implementation strategies, development controls and processes at local level to conduct and monitor any project. Dewan also criticised the design, emphasising that the development of pilgrims' facilities and services on the western side of the town goes against the traditional custom of entering the holy city from the east, through the historic *sug*, a tendency which is reinforced by the excessively monumental style of the proposal that overshadows the shrine as the central feature of the holy city.⁸¹

In total, Sta3 summarised what has happened on the ground: historically, the shrine was the main and dominant feature of the holy town, but with such a massive extension it is becoming a small element in proportion to the whole complex. It would perhaps have been preferable to have the site as it was, a small jewel, and to have built the enormous development project somewhere else.⁸² However, it should be noted that most of the pilgrims have welcomed the new development project. In fact, this is normal, because any pilgrim needs a wide and comfortable place, as well as easy access, without consideration of the place's significance.⁸³ Some local citizens also favour the current project, because it is only using the clearance area, and the design uses local elements. In addition, most of the open spaces are covered, and that would be helpful in summer.⁸⁴ In summary, the construction of the project is now nearly finished, and up to now no specific alteration to the shrine structure has been made (Figure 5.17). Sta7 summarised the argument, stating that the project itself is attractive and has high functionality; it is better than those in other similar pilgrimage cities, such as Mecca, Medina and Mashhad (Figure 5.18).⁸⁵ It uses the areas in the best way, and is much better than the current random style of buildings and hotels surrounding the project. However, it will reduce the shrine's dominance, and could impact on the old town.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Dewan, 'Urban Renewal of the City Centre of the Holy Najaf - Sage Three', (2011), p. 10.

⁸² Sta3, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

⁸³ LR5, 'Interview'.

⁸⁴ Sta8, 'Interview'.

⁸⁵ Sta7, 'Interview'.

Figure 5.17 Construction steps of *Sahan Fatima* project; (source: Imam Ali Shrine Foundation, '*Sahan Fatima* Project').

Figure 5.18 Computer generated aerial perspective; (source: Shahid Beheshti University and Presented by: Ali Attia, 'Lecture in the Shrine: The Extension Project of the Imam Ali Shrine', Najaf: Imam Ali Shrine Institution, 2015).

The 90m extension project

Since beginning to construct the *Sahan Fatima* project, the Shrine Secretary has been thinking about developing the area surrounding the shrine from the other three sides. The huge number of pilgrims to the shrine, and the poor condition of the current buildings and fabric, has encouraged decision makers to develop it. The first step the decision makers addressed is a zone of 70m on each side, which was extended to become 90m, and for which the future ambition is 190m.⁸⁶ The shrine, as a religious institution, began to consider that its function and responsibilities should extend to cover some new activities, not only worship and religious functions, but cultural and social activities, which need extra spaces; therefore, the Secretariat wants to develop the shrine to be able to host a range of activities.⁸⁷ Furthermore, the ambition of the Shrine Institution is to develop the shrine and old town to become a contemporary city, and a good example of blending heritage protection and modernity.⁸⁸

Accordingly, the Shrine Secretary contracted with the University of Beheshti / Department of Architecture to set out the new extension design. The main objectives of the projects are to protect all types of values, to conserve the current original building and not to change it, and to extend the *Sahan* through adding extra open spaces to achieve the functional requirements. Moreover, it offers new spaces and places to the pilgrims close to the shrine, new places for religious studies, and the opportunity to establish new buildings to host cultural activities.⁸⁹ To achieve these objectives, the designer group determined the current problems, as well as the values of the place. In terms of the problems, these were designated as follows: functional problems, which come from the inefficiency of the infrastructure; and structural problems, which appear as a result of the proliferation of new buildings next to the historical buildings (Figure 5.19).⁹⁰ The other significant problem is environmental; for example, up to the present no sewage system has existed in the old town. Economic problems encouraged land authorities to sell their properties, and these have led to socio-cultural problems, as a result of demographic changes, which have

⁸⁶ DM1, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

⁸⁷ DM2, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

⁸⁸ LR3, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

⁸⁹ ShirAli, 'Whimper Alleys نسيج الازقة : An Overview of the Current Condition of the Shrine and Its Future', (Najaf: Dar AL-Kafeel, 2014), pp. 12-13.

⁹⁰ Department of Architecture. Shahid Beheshti University and Presented by: Ali Attia, 'Lecture in the Shrine: The Extension Project of the Imam Ali Shrine', (Najaf: Imam Ali Shrine Institution, 2015).

weakened the relationship between the new generations and the historical fabric of the old town.⁹¹ In terms of value, the place has different types, and the designer has classified these as follows: religious, cultural, historical, architectural, social-cultural, and economic.⁹² These, collectively, have shaped the physical and social fabric of the area, and the designers have tried to reach compromises.⁹³

Figure 5.19 New and modern buildings next to historical buildings

The first decision by the designers was to change the project boundary from a square to an organic form (Figure 5.20) appropriate to the neighbourhood, as some significant buildings, for example *Al-Hindi* mosque and some cemeteries, prevent a direct line being drawn for the project boundary.⁹⁴ The justification for this is to be in harmony with the organic context and to avoid demolishing some buildings in the surrounding area.⁹⁵ Accordingly, the new shape is flexible, and offers a good opportunity for integration between the project and the historical fabric.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of the Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine.', (Najaf, 2015), pp. 35-37.

⁹³ Shahid Beheshti University and Attia, 'Lecture in the Shrine: The Extension Project of the Imam Ali Shrine', (Najaf: Imam Ali Shrine Institution, 2015).

⁹⁴ Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of the Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine.', p. 29.

⁹⁵ Sta2, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

Figure 5.20 Proposed area of the 90m-extension project; (source: Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of the Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine.').

The design of the project has tried to make a balance between open and closed spaces, pilgrims and local citizen's needs. It is divided into different activities. The worship activities take the main area of the project. The project offers 15500 m² of three *Sahans* (courtyards), the main *Sahan* is called *Sahan Imam Hussain* (84 x 75m), and the others (*Sahan Al-Rasol*, and *Sahan Al-Hassan*) are (78 x 40m). The main function of these is worship activities. There are also connecting pathways leading to the shrine, covering 7800 m², which are used for worship activities as well. The total area of the entrances is 23500 m², which is used for some services. For instance, check points and luggage rooms. There are also different types of *fadwa* which covered 80000m². The main function of these *fadwa* is for selling books and other commercial uses. Because the project is focused on worship activities, the toilets and ablution facilities (*al-widoo'*) cover 12000 m². Moreover, the designers have thought more about commercial use, proposing some shops close to the great *suq*.⁹⁶ The designs do not balance accommodating pilgrims and other daily activities because the former is clearly a priority. The assumed capacity for the extension project is 2600000 persons/hour and this, along with the original shrine (24000) and the *Sahan Fatima* project (176000), will bring a total of 460000 persons/hour.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Shahid Beheshti University and Attia, 'Lecture in the Shrine: The Extension Project of the Imam Ali Shrine', (Najaf: Imam Ali Shrine Institution, 2015).

⁹⁷ Ibid.

The significant issue is that the designer group has evaluated the buildings' conditions, and divided them into five main groups. Firstly, there are buildings with historical value which are able to present the local identity of the town. This group is divided into three main sub-groups: good condition buildings; abandoned buildings; and partially or fully demolished buildings. Secondly, the buildings, with their structural elements, design and space, are original vernacular architecture. Thirdly, there are buildings without local identity, which have been built without attention to the local architecture. Fourthly, there are buildings that do not have the ability to rehabilitate, redevelop or be reused. Finally, there are the demolished buildings.⁹⁸ This division supported the designer team to designate and explain why they have made a decision to protect or demolish particular buildings.⁹⁹ In fact, it is good to think more about the site before making any decisions, as this would support and justify the decisions. However, a specific authority should do the building evaluation under a clear control system, and land owners should follow it.

The other significant problem is the local identity of the shrine and its relationship to the skyline: in other words, building height. According to the Beheshti survey of the selected areas, some buildings are higher than the outer wall of the shrine, and some have between 6 and 11 floors (Figures 5.21 and 5.22).¹⁰⁰ The main concern is an increase in tall buildings inside the old town, as explained in Chapter 3. Therefore, the Shrine Secretary wanted to stop this, and support the dominance of the golden dome.¹⁰¹ The point of major concern of UNESCO is to join the shrine with the *Wadi Al-Salam* cemetery in the World Heritage List.¹⁰² The designer has tried to divide the building heights of the extension project into two main parts: the first is between 3-7 m and the second between 6-10 m, while the shrine wall is 12m high (Figure 5.23).¹⁰³ In fact, this would support the shrine in becoming the highest point in the area, as it was. However, there are some hurdles facing designers, the first being the lack of legislation as well as a lack of understanding of heritage value. The other

⁹⁸ Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of the Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine.', (Najaf, 2015), pp. 289-90.

⁹⁹ Arc5, 'Interview'.

¹⁰⁰ Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of the Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine.'.

¹⁰¹ DM1, 'Interview'.

¹⁰² Sta2, 'Interview'.

¹⁰³ Shahid Beheshti University and Attia, 'Lecture in the Shrine: The Extension Project of the Imam Ali Shrine', (Najaf: Imam Ali Shrine Institution, 2015).

significant problem is changes in the membership of the Shrine Secretary every three years, which leads to changes in their position in terms of building height, because the current Secretariat want to build some hotels inside the old town to accommodate pilgrims.¹⁰⁴

Figure 5.21 Number of floors in selected areas; (source: Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of the Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine.').

¹⁰⁴ Sta2, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

Figure 5.22 Skyline of old town; (source: Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of the Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine.').

Figure 5.23 Building height proposal; (source: Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of the Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine.').

In terms of the design shape, because it will become an extension of the shrine, the designers employed the proportions of the original shrine building to simulate it with the new extension (Figure 5.24). They found the proportion between the solid and void was 7 to 1 (Figure 5.25).¹⁰⁵

Figure 5.24 Geometrical proportions of the shrine; (source: Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of the Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine.').

Figure 5.25 Solid and void of extension project; (source: Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of the Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine.').

¹⁰⁵ Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of the Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine.', pp. 302-04.

The new extension design seeks to emulate the historical fabric and its architectural elements through a metaphor of the forms and details from the old town. Figure (5.26) shows how the new design is based on historical photos from the past. Sta2 a Consultant which has been worked shrine secretary advisor, and member of Najaf committee to list Wadi Al-Salam in WHL argued that the designers did not use any strange or unfamiliar shape or detail, and this mean there design plans supported the physical fabric of the old town.¹⁰⁶ For example, the new design uses some of the *Al-subat* architectural elements, as well as adopting solar lighting. Moreover, the design offers a clear solution in terms of the connection area between the new entrances and the old fabric; and the design of the new open spaces.¹⁰⁷ According to Arc5 (an architect and one of the shrine extension design team), the new design is an active space, and can accommodate the huge number of pilgrims during the specific events.¹⁰⁸ This feature has helped to achieve acceptance from local communities and stakeholders. LR5 said even the shape comes from the vernacular architecture, but this development could change the continuity of the organic fabric of the town through demolishing and replacing the current fabric.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, Sta7 argued that this project is more beautiful if it is built in the desert, or in a city which does not have a great urban fabric, because it could affect the continuity of the urban fabric.¹¹⁰ Accordingly, Sta1 (a historian which has been overlooked for documenting Najaf) said that the reason why most historical cities such as Paris, Algeris and others are protected is due to their alleways and urban fabric, whereas Najaf is systematically demolishing them over time.¹¹¹ Overall, it can be stated that what will be built is likely to be a nasty pastiche, and the designers and decision makers should think more about protecting and rehabilitating the urban fabric of the old town.

Figure (5.27) shows the final shape of the design, which is based on conserving the importance of the three main entrances to the shrine (eastern, southern, and northern). The main idea is to establish new three courtyards to connect them all to the original courtyard. The eastern courtyard is bigger than the others, because it corresponds to

¹⁰⁶ Sta2, 'Interview'.

¹⁰⁷ Shahid Beheshti University and Attia, 'Lecture in the Shrine: The Extension Project of the Imam Ali Shrine', (Najaf: Imam Ali Shrine Institution, 2015).

¹⁰⁸ Arc5, 'Interview'.

¹⁰⁹ LR5, 'Interview'.

¹¹⁰ Sta7, '2015'.

¹¹¹ Sta1, 'Interview'.

the golden *Iwan* (the main entrance to the building).¹¹² There are three requirements of the extension: protecting the old town; finding a replacement for shops that will be removed; and reinforcing the dominance of the shrine over the old town.¹¹³ In fact, these requirements existed in theory, but in practice the final outcome was based on extension as a priority rather than other aspects.

Figure 5.26 Simulation of past in present; (source: Shahid Beheshti University and Attia, 'Lecture in the Shrine: The Extension Project of the Imam Ali Shrine').

Figure 5.27 Final design shape of 90m-extension project; (source: Shahid Beheshti University and Attia, 'Lecture in the Shrine: The Extension Project of the Imam Ali Shrine').

¹¹² Shahid Beheshti University and Attia, 'Lecture in the Shrine: The Extension Project of the Imam Ali Shrine'.

¹¹³ DM2, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

Sta2 explained that the project offers a typical solution because it restores something of the traditional heritage, in terms of a town that surrounds a shrine. He thinks the new courtyards will be a part of the shrine, so the connection between them and the town is similar to the past. There are no open spaces between the shrine and the urban fabric of the old town.¹¹⁴

There are however, several critical points about this extension project. Arc2 explained his concern as being more about the dominance of the shrine disappearing, as the most important building in the old town. In the past, it was the only geometrical shape standing in the middle of the town, and these extension projects (*Sahan Fatima* and the 90m project) have reduced its presence. Huge concrete masses have replaced the unique buildings and spaces. In total, Arc2 suggested that some religious scholars do not listen to the heritage specialists and some benefit from decision makers' control decisions.¹¹⁵ Sta1 also complained about this project because it will demolish a large part of the traditional *Suq* without paying attention to the long history and value of the place. He thinks it should be stopped at 60m in order to protect the historical fabric of the town.¹¹⁶ In fact, most the shop owners and land owners also do not want to sell their properties in order to establish the project, because it might affect their businesses. However, the design offers some alternatives for them.¹¹⁷ The main concern is more about how the new extension will connect with the other historical parts of the old town, particularly the neglected alleyways. The relationship between the edges of the project and the urban fabric is still unclear. Up to the present, it is really difficult to walk inside traditional alleyways, which have poor conditions, being dark and neglected, then suddenly jump to a unique and developing area. The old town and the shrine should be treated more as one project, in order to conduct and monitor the quality of the work. The other significant issue is the outer wall of the shrine, which will change during the extension project. Figure (5.28) demonstrates how this will happen through the addition of some *Iwans* to become the internal wall of the new *Sahan*.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Sta2, 'Interview'.

¹¹⁵ Arc2, 'Interview'.

¹¹⁶ Sta1, 'Interview'.

¹¹⁷ DM2, 'Interview'.

¹¹⁸ Department of Architecture. Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Proposal Design of 90m Project of the Imam Ali Shrine', (2015).

Figure 5.28 Original external wall of shrine; (source: Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Proposal Design of 90m Project of the Imam Ali Shrine', Najaf, 2015).

In summary, as we have already seen, there are different ideas and approaches in terms of developing the shrine and the old town. Therefore, the design group of the Shahid Beheshti have tried to combine both approaches, to protect the value of the place and made the place contemporary. The best thing is that most of the details and elements of the design come from the vernacular architecture of Najaf, and this could alleviate the sense of alienation from the project.¹¹⁹ However, there are still some criticisms and debate about the project. For example, Arc2 said that the project will have a negative impact on the shrine and the old town. He argued that the project will demolish a major part of the significant urban fabric.¹²⁰ Nevertheless, the designers have explained that most of the buildings in the selected area are unvalued buildings (Figure 5.29).¹²¹ Furthermore, Arc6 argued the scheme proposed using some architectural details originally, not from the vernacular architecture. Moreover, the new scheme could threaten the current commercial activities, which most local

¹¹⁹ Shahid Beheshti University and Attia, 'Lecture in the Shrine: The Extension Project of the Imam Ali Shrine', (Najaf: Imam Ali Shrine Institution, 2015).

¹²⁰ Arc2, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

¹²¹ Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of the Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine.', (2015), p. 494.

income is based on it.¹²² In fact, this point was the main concern of the shops owners, and they discussed it further with the designers and the shrine authority during the induction lecture 2015. Accordingly, the shrine authority reassured the shops owners that the project will offer new shops for them.¹²³ Overall, the shops owners are still concerned about the project, but DM2 and Sta2 considered the project to be the best solution for the area¹²⁴, and that it will support the local identity.¹²⁵

Figure 5.29 Current conditions of buildings; (source: Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of the Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine.', p. 494).

¹²² Arc6, 'Interview'.

¹²³ Shahid Beheshti University and Attia, 'Lecture in the Shrine: The Extension Project of the Imam Ali Shrine', (Najaf: Imam Ali Shrine Institution, 2015).

¹²⁴ DM2, 'Interview'.

¹²⁵ Sta2, 'Interview'.

In fact, the design team have been trying to cover the whole old town through selecting nine groups of buildings there to conserve.¹²⁶ Proposal groups will support the conservation practices on the ground and encourage decision makers and authorities to conserve significant properties. The main reasons for rehabilitating these nine groups is to rehabilitate the traditional interdependence between the shrine and the old town; to reduce the demolition of the traditional fabric of the old town; to conserve Najaf's values; and to protect significant historical buildings.¹²⁷ Moreover, they have proposed re-designing the great *suq*, and maintaining some significant buildings, such as the *Al-Hindi* mosque. However, decision makers have not yet responded to these suggestions.¹²⁸

Overall, the project has opened a new phase of dealing with the shrine and the old town, and it needs each contribution to protect the significant heritage. The project is targeting the shrine and its surrounding area, so it requires integration between different authorities and decision makers through clear policies, politics and regulation. It should be stated that there is no connection between different stakeholders and decision makers. the extension designers and Dewan designers for instance worked separately, and do not speak to each other's. as a result, the decisions are independently, particularly between authorities. In the following section, I will focus more about the critical analysis to explain how the shrine is perceived in principle and treated in practice.

¹²⁶ Shahid Beheshti University, 'The Project of the Extension and Development the Surrounding Area of the Imam Ali Shrine.', (Najaf, 2015), p. 339. Appendix B-4.

¹²⁷ Ibid. pp. 339-41.

¹²⁸ Arc5, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2016).

Section 2: A critical review: how the Shrine is perceived in principle and treated in practice

Cultural heritage sites face many challenges in terms of management and protection, despite having national significance, and these difficulties are very similar from one site to another, such as defining what is significant and determining what is weak and what requires observant protection.¹²⁹ The question here is therefore more about what drives management and the development of the shrine in terms of protecting its character as a separate establishment. Also it is important to establish who the key players are, in order to realise how the key decision makers and stakeholders understand values when controlling the development at local level; and, if there might be some negative impacts, how to prevent them.

Many decisions have been taken which have led to damage and weakened the shrine's heritage. Yet, much money has been spent on developing and managing the shrine, so that it is difficult now to understand and demonstrate local identity effectively. It marks the culmination of the struggle between different policies where non-specialists have been managing the Shrine Institution and its cultural heritage.

The development projects of the shrine and its surrounding area should be under state control, and set out clear outcomes. As we have already seen in Chapter 2, the development control system can issue permits for development areas and land use.¹³⁰ However, what is happening on the ground is a result of not adopting clear regulations for these development projects. The current control tools at the central and local governorate level contradict or ignore antiquities and heritage law.¹³¹ According to the ProCare report, the decision makers have allowed or tolerated the distortion or removal of heritage sites or individual buildings, which are demolished without going to the antiquities authorities, and are usually replaced with random commercial buildings or hotels that distort the heritage environment and lack quality.¹³² This is exactly what has happened in Najaf old town, and the extension

¹²⁹ Marta De la Torre, *Heritage Values in Site Management : Four Case Studies*, (Los Angeles, Calif. : Garsington: Los Angeles, Calif. : Getty ; Garsington : Windsor distributor., 2005), p. 18.

¹³⁰ Keith Thomas, *Development Control : Principles and Practice*, (London: Rutledge: Taylor and Francis Group, 1997), p. 1.

¹³¹ Sta10, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

¹³² ProCare consulting Services, 'Assisting the Government of Iraq to Develop a National tourism Strategy', (Baghdad: UNESCO office for Iraq, 2013), p. 65.

projects have tried to solve this problem, but according to the Secretariat's objectives. The absence of clear regulations on the one hand, and the huge increase in the number of pilgrims on the other, has encouraged the Shrine Secretariat to extend it. Moreover, Arc7 explained that most local architects do not have enough background to be able to protect the old town, or at least to discuss these proposals with the designers. Therefore, most of the discussions have been superficial and simple,¹³³ and this reflects the importance of prioritising understanding conservation at a local level amongst local professionals.

One problem is that decision makers and the Shrine Secretariat Members can change any part of the building, without paying attention to its value, and without listening to heritage specialists.¹³⁴ Therefore, it should adopt a clear listed building system, as well as implementing development control procedures. Moreover, the multiple decision makers confuse the issues, as well as wasting money and time.¹³⁵ For example, the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Work contracted with Dewan to set out the Urban Renewal of the city centre of holy Najaf, and the shrine's surrounding area was a part of this project. Then the Shrine Secretary contracted with the University of Shahid Beheshti to design the same area. If a new organisation was established which was responsible for protecting, developing and managing heritage sites or buildings, this situation could be eased. Regardless, decision makers should collaborate to protect the local historic heritage, through formal procedures and structures.

In fact, collaboration between several institutions and local communities depends on the levels of understanding of heritage value because without this it would be difficult to achieve the objectives of protecting the heritage. Therefore, it would be better to focus on increasing understanding of heritage on the ground. Key success factors in delivering conservation objectives are suggested as follows: national and local heritage development strategies are developed; more heritage and conservation specialists need to be created through training courses; and heritage sites should be developed and monitored according to clear monitoring policies and regulations.

¹³³ Arc7, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

¹³⁴ Sta1, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

¹³⁵ Sta8, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

Up to the present, at the international level, architectural conservation policies and legislation have called for the documentation, investigation, monitoring and managing of heritage sites or buildings. A national legal framework is recommended by international organisations to identify what is protected, to control development work and to implement clear sanctions against offenders.¹³⁶ However, at national and local level, there is no clear legal framework. This situation has encouraged the Shrine Secretariat to develop the shrine and its surrounding area without developing a control system to monitor the work.¹³⁷ Naturally the process of developing is not unique to the shrine, in fact, what took place here is evident throughout the whole town. Accordingly, Sta3 explains that the shrine development projects should be under implementation, monitoring and controlled legal requirements and building regulations.¹³⁸

Overall, it is imperative to undertake systematic, coherent national and local scale strategic heritage management, based on in-depth analysis and a synthesis of the options available, in order to rule on available options for adopting clear and unified official institutional strategy and policy directives to protect, manage and control cultural heritage sites and buildings.

¹³⁶ John H. Stubbs, *Time Honored: A Global View of Architectural Conservation*, (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2009), p. 134.

¹³⁷ Sta4, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

¹³⁸ Sta3, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2014).

Conclusion

Historically, the Imam Ali Shrine was the main and dominant feature of the holy city of Najaf, but with such a massive extension it is becoming a small element in proportion to the whole complex. These extension projects accommodate the huge number of pilgrims now travelling to Najaf old town. The importance of the shrine is related to many factors, like building architecture and its religious significance. Political considerations appear when the building is involved in historical or political events, which give it additional importance. Najaf was the capital of the Islamic state and the city was the centre of political and historical events in the past.

These extension projects have changed the operation of the buildings, as well as the shape of the old town. In terms of the buildings, these have been extended without paying attention to protecting its heritage. As a result, the shrine has arguably lost some of its significant historical and architectural value. In terms of the old town, the extension project of *Sahan Fatima*, now built, has also affected the continuity of the urban fabric and demolished many significant parts of the old town. The main concern of conservation and heritage experts that I found during my research was that there are no clear implementation guidelines, and most decisions are made by individuals, according to their own wishes. On the other hand, there are different key players on the ground, such as the Shrine Secretariat, central and local government, city governor and religious scholars. The conflict between these decision makers is clear in the process of contracting with different companies to design the same area, the government with Dewan, and the shrine with the University of Shahid Beheshti.

According to Orbasli, understanding is the first step of any conservation or development work of historic built heritage.¹³⁹ After a long discussion, I agreed with the UNESCO report on Najaf that there is significant decrease in the level of understanding of heritage value on the ground.¹⁴⁰ In conclusion, I can state that key decision makers and stakeholders do not have enough understanding of heritage values for different reasons. For instance, they do not have a definition or conception of heritage value, they do not understand the impact of what they are doing on

¹³⁹ Aylin Orbasli, *Architectural Conservation: Principles and Practice*, (Blackwell Science Ltd, 2008), p. 91.

¹⁴⁰ Najaf, 'The Results and Recommendations of Unesco Expert Mission to Najaf for Preparation of the World Heritage Nomination File of Wadi Al-Salam Cemetery in Najaf', (Manamah, 2014).

cultural heritage value, as well as they do not care about protecting heritage; and that could have a negative impact when they control development. Moreover, I find that the designers of the shrine extension projects also do not prioritise protecting heritage values when they outline the design of the area. In fact, the shrine should be protected through adopting clear implementation strategies, and establishing collaboration between these decision makers. The decision makers should think more about the entire set of issues, not only accommodating pilgrims, which would help to achieve the principle of complementarity between the shrine and the old town. As a result, establishing and adopting a clear developing control system would protect the shrine, and shape the relationship with the old town. Accordingly, neither the Shrine Secretariat nor the local or central government can protect the shrine as a historical building without a clear collaboration and developing control system. Overall, the figure (5.30) shows the process of the second case study.

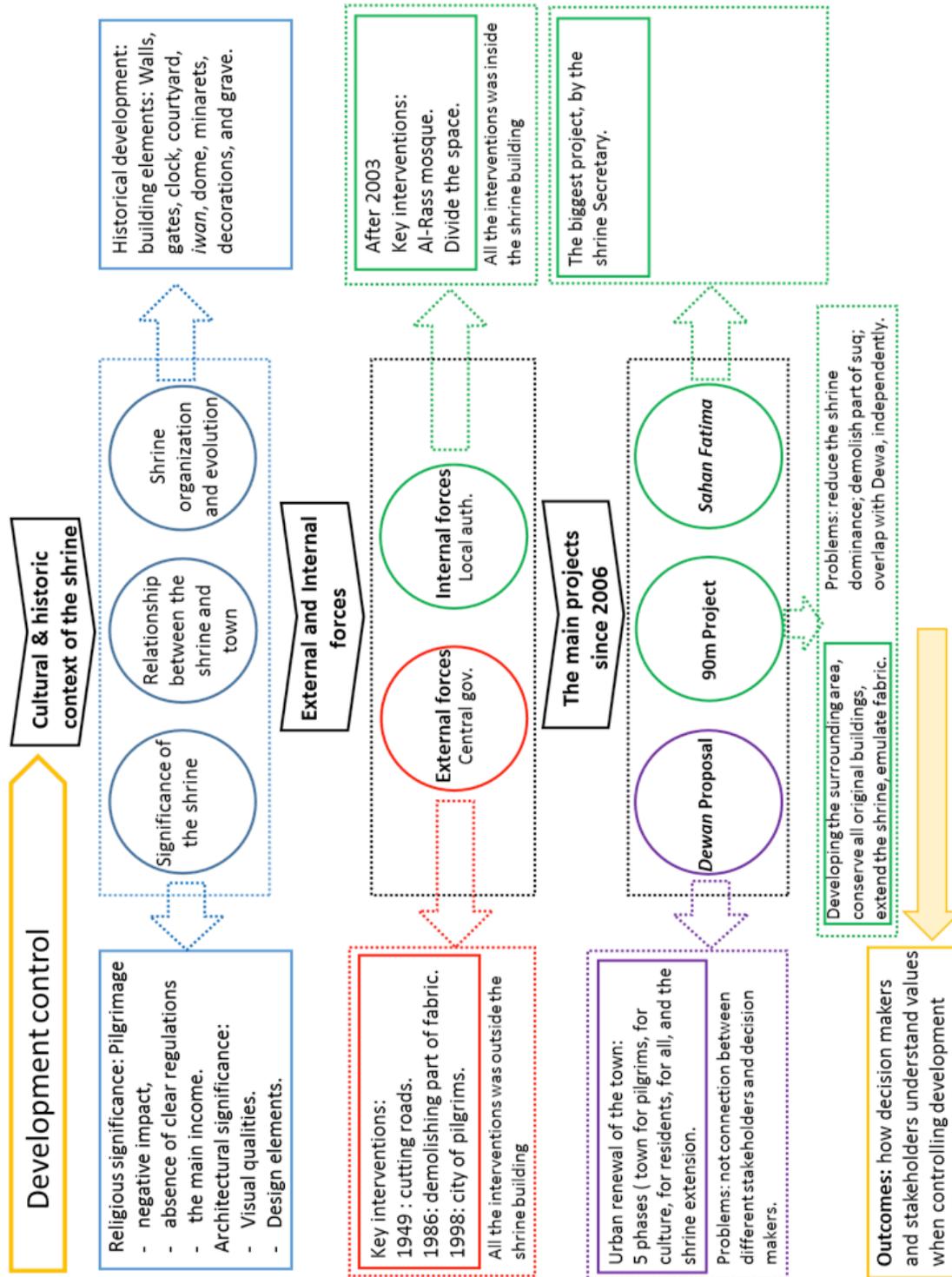


Figure 5.30 The process of the Second case study.

The *Khan Al-Shilan*: Appraising and synthesising cultural heritage significance and its impact on conservation management practices

Introduction:

The holy city of Najaf has many historical buildings, yet, as this thesis has discussed, many are under threat as a result of unclear conservation practices on the ground. Najaf is losing many buildings that are priceless for a number of reasons. Most of these buildings have a particular function associated with pilgrimage and host many significant events, such as religious schools, houses of significant religious scholars, or are commercial social buildings, known as *khans* in Iraq, due to the religious significance of Najaf old town. Consequently, it is significant to look at these buildings in terms of their typology, function, and design before they are lost forever.

This chapter examines conservation practices within the city through addressing one of the significant buildings in the holy city of Najaf, the *Khan Al-Shilan*, in terms of its historical, cultural, economic and political value. This building is one of the best examples to understand how secular heritage has been designated, protected, and managed in the pilgrimage city of Najaf. It is of particular interest because its function has changed over time, while its structure has been preserved, even during periods of neglect. The *Khan Al-Shilan* has passed through several ownerships with these functions, and suffered damage and neglect, but, through historical association, it acts as a physical means for sharing stories about the Iraqi people's struggle against occupying powers and it is worth investigating in depth.

The chapter is in three parts, in order to answer questions about the current conservation practices, namely how these affect the existing historic fabric. Section 1 outlines the historical purpose of *khans* and their cultural significance in Iraq; Section 2 examines the historical and architectural significance of the *Khan Al-Shilan* in Najaf; and Section 3 analyses the conservation management practices of the building as an approach to safeguarding heritage.

Section 1: Historical purpose of khans

The history of *khans* in Iraqi cultural heritage

Khans or caravanserais are commercial social buildings chiefly intended historically to accommodate and receive visitors and merchants from distant places, their properties and goods.¹ Offering lodging and storage for merchandise until such time as it can be disposed of, *khans* have become of vital importance for regional trade networks.² *Khans* are believed by some historians to have developed as a trading typology from the Roman agora, although there is little tangible evidence of this.³ In general, it can be stated that most *khans* consist of an open central courtyard, storage rooms on the ground floor, and lodgings on the first floor, a single (often grand) entrance gate and a row of shops on the external perimeter. However, Fethi illustrated that there are several variants in types and forms, depending on the period of establishment and location.⁴

As well as providing lodgings and secure storage, *khans* historically also provide a space for merchants and travellers to sell and exchange goods and they are therefore an important venue for local trade.⁵ Specialised *khans* selling farmed produce, such as grain and vegetables, were situated around the town market (*Suq*).⁶ *Khans* evolved

¹ Falah Al-Kubaisy, *Najaf: The Architectural and Urban Heritage of Iraqi's Holiest City*, (BookSurge.com, part of Amazon group., 2009), p. 66.

² Saher M. Al-Kaissi, 'The Influence of Natural and Cultural Environment on the Fabric of the City, with Special Reference to Iraq', (The University of Sheffield, 1983), p. 305.

³ Ihsan. Fethi, 'Urban Conservation in Iraq : The Case for Protecting the Cultural Heritage of Iraq with Special Reference to Baghdad Including a Comprehensive Inventory of Its Areas and Buildings of Historic or Architectural Interest.', (The University of Sheffield, 1977), p. 414.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Mohsen Al-Modafar, *City of Najaf: Genius Meanings and the Sanctity of the Place.*, (Baghdad: House of cultural affairs, 2011), p. 524.

⁶ Tahseen Imara, 'Originality in Khans', in *Al-Assala*, (Najaf, 2014).

inside and around the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala as a result of the huge number of pilgrims visiting during the year. They were one of the main sources of income of the Najaf local community, as well as a cornerstone of developing religious tourism. By the 1960s there were over 30 *khans* in Najaf old town, mostly located in the heart of the town, close to the Shrine and the central market. Over the last two decades of the twentieth century, the functional importance of the *khan* has declined, with many becoming shops, hotels, commercial buildings or merchandise stores, and others being demolished or converted.⁷

Architecturally, *khans* closely resemble domestic buildings, possibly for the reason that they are also used for residential purposes. Although very few medieval khans still exist, their layout is consistent, with upper floor galleries giving access to small rooms, each of approximately the same size, with windows and chimneys if the climate requires these. Regional differences dictate innumerable variations in roofing and details, but the courtyard, containing a well, is almost always open to the sky and along the inside walls of the enclosure are ranged a number of identical stalls, bays, niches or chambers intended to accommodate merchants and their servants, animals and merchandise, with basements optionally ranged underneath.⁸ These *khans* were normally decorated, with delicately carved floral or geometrical designs above, below or around the windows, slender sculpted engaged columns, two-tone masonry and imposing gateways. Windows provide ventilation and lighting.⁹ As Moya et al describe, almost all Islamic caravanserai presented to the traveller a square or rectangular walled exterior, fortress-like, with a single portal wide enough to permit large or heavily laden beasts, such as camels, to enter; rural caravansaries contained a complex of buildings inside, with a mosque and fountain. Such complexes were an expression of the Muslim duty of charity toward visitors and travellers, and some allowed travellers to stay there for three days without paying.¹⁰ In this way they provided a network of trade and hospitality, connecting principal cities and providing host communities with enhanced commercial opportunities.

⁷ Hameed M Al-Daraji, *The Heritage Buildings in Najaf: characteristic between Past and Present*, (Baghdad: Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2014), p. 197.

⁸ Al-Kaissi, 'The Influence of Natural and Cultural Environment on the Fabric of the City, with Special Reference to Iraq', p. 306.

⁹ Robert Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function, Meaning*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), p. 359.

¹⁰ Moya Cary and others, *An Illustrated History of Islamic Architecture*, (Leicestershire: Southwater, 2012), p. 60.

The rural Khan buildings

Rural *khans* or caravansaries, built outside cities as a public service to travellers and merchants, were located on headwater streams and rivers, or provided drilled water, and were spaced at intervals of a one-day march, approximately 25-30 km.¹¹ Built as defensible structures, these khans had high walls and observation towers. Water was always provided in some way, for washing and for ritual ablutions, and some later *khans* have elaborate baths. Animals and the stables were separated from the lodgings for travellers.¹² Later and larger caravansaries might have special rooms or suites in the entrance block for important guests, and a resident staff of caretakers might be permanently housed in small rooms in the portal block. Shops for travellers to replenish their supplies and for merchants to dispose of some of their wares are common from the fourteenth century onwards, and some of the later caravansaries were so well provided for, with mills, bakeries and tea shops, that they came to resemble small villages.¹³ Their position and security facilitated pilgrimage routes between the holy cities¹⁴ and, by the early twentieth century, the caravansaries between the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala¹⁵ had evolved and developed to accommodate huge number of visitors. They were consequently an important feature of Islamic culture until many were made obsolete by the construction of modern highways.

Rural *khans* were targeted by the *Baath* regime, which reduced the number of caravansaries between the holy cities for religious and political reasons. For example, in 1977 the central government used military force to quell an uprising against the regime that started from *khan Al-Nus*.¹⁶ It should be noted that before 1977 the *Shia* promoted the importance of walking from Najaf to Karbala for the commemoration of the martyrdom of the Imam Husain.¹⁷ The closure of *khan Al-Nus* and other rural caravansaries prevented people from walking between the holy cities and altered many phases of *Shia* pilgrimage in the last two decades of the 20th century. Visitors

¹¹ Imara, 'Originality in Khans'.

¹² Al-Kaissi, 'The Influence of Natural and Cultural Environment on the Fabric of the City, with Special Reference to Iraq', pp. 307-08.

¹³ Ibid. p. 308.

¹⁴ Al-Modafar, *City of Najaf: Genius Meanings and the Sanctity of the Place.*, p. 438.

¹⁵ Karbala is also one of the holiest Islamic cities especially for Shia, hosting the shrines of Imam Husain and Imam Al-Abbas, the sons of Imam Ali.

¹⁶ 'From the Memory of the Saffar Insurrection 1977', Al-muraqeb al-Iraqi, (2015).

¹⁷ Imam Hussain is the son of Imam Ali who was killed in Karbala.

making the pilgrimage have become used to travelling by motor vehicle, reducing the need for caravansaries, while the Iraq-Iran War contributed to a decline in national and foreign visitor numbers. Since 2003 new types of accommodation for visitors to the holy cities have appeared and replaced the rural caravansaries. Called *Mawkib* or *Hussienieh*, these are mobile or fixed, being either small tents or large structures, which offer the same function of accommodating and feeding visitors free of charge (Figure 6.1).¹⁸



Figure 6.1 New *mawkib* between the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala in Iraq.

There used to be four *khans* in the Najaf rural area on the pilgrimage route between the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala: the *Al-Musalla*, the *Al-Nuss* the *Al-Nukhaila*, and the *Jadaan*.¹⁹ The *Al-Musalla*, also called the *khan Al-Rubee* (at a quarter distances between the holy cities) was located in the North of the holy city of Najaf. It was constructed during the Ottoman era in 1888, and lies about 20 km from the centre of Najaf old town.²⁰ The main function of this khan was to accommodate pilgrimage visitors and was perpetually endowed to *Awqaf*, the official organisation that administers the property bequeathed by Muslims for charity. Unfortunately, since the 1970s, *Al-Musalla* has suffered from neglect and was then fully closed, with many parts being demolished during this period. Moreover, after the 1991 insurgency against the central government, a unit of the Iraqi army stayed close to

¹⁸ LR5, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

¹⁹ Sta5, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

²⁰ I. Ieef Heritage Group, *Najaf Heritage at Risk*, (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013), p. 47.

the *khan Al-Musalla*, and used its bricks to build their own camp, with no regard to its historical value.²¹

Architecturally, the *khan Al-Musalla* consists of two *khans* separated by a wide door (Figure 6.2), and a large kitchen. In 1890, the traveller, John Peters, visited the *Al-Musalla* and described it as rectangular in shape (144.15 x 187 m) surrounded by high walls (6.30 m), the walls supported by half-cylindrical towers for monitoring on the North, South and West side.²² The *Al-Musalla* has a big courtyard (80 x 59 m) surrounded by 64 *Iwans*; most of these are nearly square in shape. However, recently it is in very bad condition comparing between the Miss Bell photos in 1911, and the photos taken in 2005 (Figures 6.3, 6.4 and 6.5).²³ In general, the significance of the rural khans in Iraq is their remarkably high building quality, and the *khan Al-Musalla* is no exception.

Figure 6.2 *khan Al-Musalla* plan; (source: Moamel S Merzah, 'Heritage Buildings in Najaf: The Religious Architecture and Service Architecture', University of Baghdad, 2006, pp. 50-75).

²¹ Haidar Al-Jid, 'Visitors Accommodations: Khans between Najaf and karbala', in Yanabee Alhikmeh, (Najaf: Alhikmeh foundation for Islamic cultural, 2006), pp. 50-75.

²² John P Peters, *Nippur : Or, Explorations and Adventures on the Euphrates*, (Putnam's sons, 1897), p. 329.

²³ Moamel S Merzah, 'Heritage Buildings in Najaf: The Religious Architecture and Service Architecture', (University of Baghdad, 2006), pp. 50-75.

Figure 6.3 The outer and inner court of the *khan Al-Musalla* ; (source: Gertrude Bell, 'Photographs', in Gertrude Bell Archive., Newcastle: Newcastle University, 1918, p. March 1911).

Figure 6.4 *khan Al-Musalla* in 2005, (source: Al-Jid, 'Visitors Accommodations: Khans between Najaf and karbala').

Figure 6.5 The main entrance portal, and the *Riwaq* (portico) of *khan Al-Musalla*. (source: Muammal S. Merzah, 'Heritage Buildings in Najaf', University of Baghdad, 2008).

*Khan Al-Hammad*²⁴ is one of the oldest khans surviving in Iraq. It was erected in 1744 during the Ottoman era to accommodate visitors who travelled between the holy cities. Architecturally, it is the biggest and oldest *khan* in the rural area of Najaf, and consists of five courtyards. Each courtyard has a well and many rooms for lodgings. Its outer wall is also supported by half-cylindrical towers.²⁵ Despite its full restoration recently by the current government (Figure 6.6), it is still closed.²⁶

Figure 6.6 *Khan Al-Hammad*. (source: A Y, 'Heritage Elites and Archaeologists Calling for Investing the Khan Al-Nus', ed. by B K; Baghdad: Al-Mada Press, 2015).

²⁴ It is also called the *khan Al-Nuss*, which translates as "half distance between the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala".

²⁵ Al-Jid, 'Visitors Accommodations: Khans between Najaf and karbala', pp. 68-70).

²⁶ A Y, 'Heritage Elites and Archaeologists Calling for Invisting the Khan Al-Nus', ed. by B K (Baghdad: Al-Mada Press, 2015).

Urban Khans

National level

The clear distinction between urban and rural *khans* is that urban khans traditionally served a greater variety of functions than the rural *khans*' primary function of lodging and protection, in particular providing commercial space connected to exchange, storage or production of goods. Urban *khans* were often built as commercial ventures in which wealthy individuals invested their money.²⁷ Moreover, some urban *khans* were built for supporting poor visitors as part of Islamic religious dogma. Urban *khans* provided the main income source for the local community in terms of economic activities, offering accommodation and trade to visitors.²⁸

Nationwide, there were many *khans* of significant value in terms of historical, social, political, economic and cultural significance. Unfortunately, most are now fully demolished or have been reused gradually as a result of developing and extending Iraq's cities. A good example is *khan Marjan*²⁹ in the heart of Baghdad which was erected by *Ameen Al-deen Marjan* in 1358 for the benefit of *Al-Marjan* school. Architecturally, it is a rectangular building (30.25 x 11.4 m), built in brick, the courtyard being three times as long as it is wide.³⁰ The architectural significance of the *Marjan* is that its courtyard is covered by eight long and high vaults, which allow natural lighting through windows placed in spaces made between these intersecting tunnel vaults.³¹ The ground floor has 22 rooms, while the 1st floor has 26 rooms, 23 to accommodate visitors, and the other 3 for storage (Figure 6.7).³² The main function of *khan Marjan* was as an inn as well as a trading place; but it later changed function to accommodate the students of the *Marjan* School, while some rooms were used for storage.³³ In 1937 it became a museum of Baghdad's cultural heritage and in the 1970s, until the late of 1990s, a traditional restaurant (Figure 6.8). It was then

²⁷ Al-Daraji, *The Heritage Buildings in Najaf: characteristic between Past and Present*, p. 202.

²⁸ Imara, 'Originality in Khans'.

²⁹ Khan Marjan was earlier known as Urtma Khan, Urtma in Turkish meaning covered.

³⁰ Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function, Meaning*, pp. 362-64.

³¹ Ghada M Al-Siliq, *City of Stories*, Second edn (Baghdad: Iraqi cultural support association, 2013), p. 83.

³² Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function, Meaning*, pp. 364-65.

³³ Adil Al-Ardawey, 'Khan Marjan', in *Archivists: Khan Marjan*, ed. by Mohamad Habeeb (Baghdad: Honna Baghdad Channel, 2014).

fully closed, up to the present.³⁴ Overall, these gradual changes to the *khan*'s function over time without attention to the values of the building had a negative impact on the building as a historical artefact. However, *khan Marjan* still stands in the local memory as one of the historical buildings of Baghdad.

Figure 6.7 *Khan Mirjan*, Baghdad; (source: Hillenbrand, *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function, Meaning*, pp. 362 – 63).

Figure 6.8 *Khan Marjan* hall (restaurant)

³⁴ Al-Siliq, *City of Stories*, p. 83.

A significant lost urban *khan* is *khan Bab Al-Saif* in Baghdad. It was located on the banks of the Tigris in *Bab al-Saif neighbourhood* in *Al-Karkh*. It was probably erected around 1700 and the main function of it was to grind the grain that comes from the North of Iraq. At approximately 100 x 100 metres, it was one of the largest *khans* in Baghdad; probably the largest. As with most of the *khans* in Iraq, it consisted of two floors built around an open courtyard.³⁵ It was demolished in 1960 by the *Amanat Baghdad*,³⁶ in order to make way for a new car park and governmental buildings. Unfortunately, it was not recorded or photographed before its demolition, and this situation is endemic in Iraq.³⁷

Overall, khans in Iraq are under threat and their numbers have gradually decreased. In this particular, the head of the Public Board of Heritage and Antiquities stated the increased number of demolitions of Iraqi historical buildings is as a result of the lack of clear urban planning, regulations and legislation.³⁸ In Baghdad, for example, there were more than 550 khans until the 19th century. However, currently they are less than 20, and most now function as storage buildings.³⁹

³⁵ Fethi, 'Urban Conservation in Iraq : The Case for Protecting the Cultural Heritage of Iraq with Special Reference to Baghdad Including a Comprehensive Inventory of Its Areas and Buildings of Historic or Architectural Interest.', p. 179.

³⁶ Amanat Baghdad is a government institution which deals with municipalities, so it works as the city council of Baghdad.

³⁷ Fethi, 'Urban Conservation in Iraq : The Case for Protecting the Cultural Heritage of Iraq with Special Reference to Baghdad Including a Comprehensive Inventory of Its Areas and Buildings of Historic or Architectural Interest.'

³⁸ Fawzia Al-Maliki, 'Najaf Heritage Buildings under Threat', (www.noon14.net/31480: Noon, 2011).

³⁹ Al-Ardawey, 'Khan Marjan'.

Local level

At a local level, Najaf's urban *khans* have suffered a similar fate to those nationally. Historically, the holy city of Najaf had over 30 khans until the 1970s. Table 6.1 presents a summary of the chronology of Najaf Khans, but unfortunately, most of them have been fully or partially demolished.

Table 6.1 *Historical khan's* of the holy city of Najaf⁴⁰

⁴⁰ It should be noted that there is no clear documentation, plans or written materials showing sufficient information about these historical khans, therefore I have tried to gather any relevant data and carry out some interviews with heritage elites and local citizens to establish this table.

The first example is the *khan Dar Al-Shifaa*; which was one of the oldest khans in Najaf, located in the corner of the Imam Ali Shrine. The Arabian traveller, Ibn Batota, described it when he visited the holy city in 1326. It hosted travellers to the shrine, and was fully demolished in 1982.⁴¹ The second example is the *khan Al-Hinood* (the Indians' khan) dated from the late 19th century. This was one of the significant *khans* to accommodate Indians visitors to the *Imam Ali Shrine*. It was located close to *Khan Al-Shilan* in the *Al-Buraq* neighbourhood (Figure 6.9), having a typical form, with two storeys of accommodation surrounding a courtyard (8 x 7 m), the first floor was designed for visitor's lodgings and two cellars were used to store goods. In the 1990s it was fully demolished by the municipality of Najaf and replaced by modern commercial building.⁴²

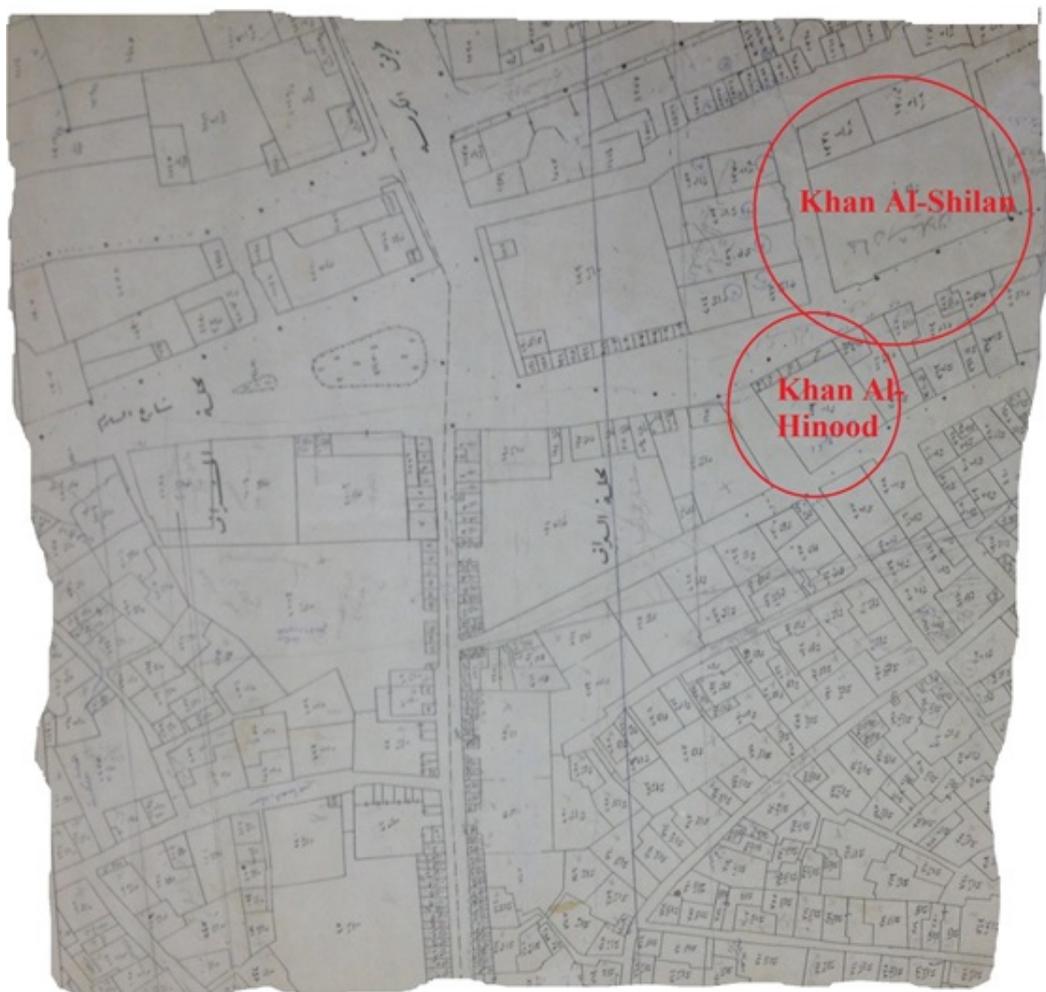


Figure 6.9 *Khan Al-Shilan* and *Khan Al-Hinood* in 1940; (source: Najaf master plan 1940, Najaf Municipality archive).

⁴¹ LR5, 'Interview'.

⁴² Al-Daraji, *The Heritage Buildings in Najaf: characteristic between Past and Present*, p. 215.

Another example is the *khan Attiyah*, which was built in 1867 outside the wall of the town to accommodate visitors who were unable to enter the wall toward the Imam Ali Shrine.⁴³ In 1917, the British army changed its function to become its official office and then a police station. In 1918 it was the focus of Najaf revolutionaries who killed the commander of the British forces in the city, after which the Iraqi kingdom continued to use it as a police station. The photo below was taken in 1946, showing a local policeman standing at the main gate of the *khan* after it became the Najaf police station (Figure 6.10). It was also fully demolished in 1982 and replaced by another commercial building, and it was not recorded or photographed before demolition.⁴⁴

Figure 6.10 Entrance to *khan Attiyah*. (source: Nori Al-Falluji, 'Encyclopedia Al-Falluji Photography', Najaf: Al-Falluji Photography).

The last example is *khan Al-Yazdi*, one of the most significant *khans* in the holy city of Najaf in terms of its design and decoration. It was built in the late 19th century, also as a rectangle with central courtyard (4x5m), surrounded by two storeys and with a large cellar. It was characterized by intricate decorations made of brick, of a type very common in most local buildings. It was fully demolished.⁴⁵

⁴³ The main gates of the old town were closed at specific times.

⁴⁴ Mohsen. Al-Modafar, 'The Morphological Developemtn of Al-Midan Sq in Najaf During 200 Years', (Baghdad: Al-Noor foundation for culture and media, 2012).

⁴⁵ Al-Daraji, *The Heritage Buildings in Najaf: characteristic between Past and Present*, pp. 216-17.

Other Najaf *khans*, for instance, the *khan Al-Assam*, the *Sayid Chaloob*, the *Merzah*, the *Abu Ruqaeba*, and the *Al-Sadawi* have been fully demolished. This constitutes a significant diminishing of Najaf old town's architectural identity and both central and local governments through many municipal authorities have adopted demolition of historic khans without paying attention to their architectural and cultural values.⁴⁶ The demolition of these historical buildings is a common type of loss that is often sudden, ruthless and final. Although there are no official statistics or records documenting the demolition of historical buildings in Iraq, with particular reference to the holy city of Najaf, it can be safely stated that official demolition has been greater than private demolition, which often includes the clearance of large areas of the old town.⁴⁷ The figures below (Figures 6.11, 6.12 and 6.13) document the Najaf *khans* through time, illustrating their position, density and demise. As stated before, there is no clear documentation system in Najaf, and the locations of these *khans* have had to be approximated, according to the interview and documentary investigation. There were an extensive number of *khans* around the *Imam Ali Shrine* and the great market (*Suq*), as well as some *khans* outside the wall to accommodate visitors arriving outside of the opening times of the main gate of the old town. The 1960s showed the biggest intensity of khans, with over 30 *khans*, followed by a massive reduction during the 1980s, and now only the *Khan Al-Shilan* still stands in the old town.⁴⁸ Al-Maliki stated that the destruction of the Najaf heritage is the worst in Iraq.⁴⁹ If this situation continues without any protection, other urban building types in Najaf will be threatened. Local conservation processes continue to miss the main step of understanding the significance of historic buildings and sites.

⁴⁶ LR5, 'Interview'.

⁴⁷ Sta1, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

⁴⁸ Sta4, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

⁴⁹ Al-Maliki, 'Najaf Heritage Buildings under Threat'.

Figure 6.11 Najaf's *Khans* in 1900

Figure 6.12-Najaf's *khans* in 1960

Figure 6.13 Najaf's *khans* in 2010

Section 2- Historical and architectural significance of *Khan Al-Shilan* in the holy city of Najaf

This section focuses on *Khan Al-Shilan* as a historical building to give an in-depth analysis of why it is important to Iraqi heritage in general, with particular reference to the holy city of Najaf. The *Al-Shilan* is important typologically, but has evolved over time functionally; and I also argue that its heritage value lies particularly in the record of changes that have been marked its history. In this sense, as well as describing the current physical form of the *Khan*, understanding how significant events and functional changes have affected its shape is important in determining its significance in heritage terms and for assessing the approach to its recent restoration and reuse. This critical appraisal starts with understanding the building or site. Initially, this involves understanding a number of cultural, social, economic and political issues related to the external environment. Letellier stated that the conservation professionals of built heritage are not the only contributors to and beneficiaries of good heritage information practices; a much broader segment of all those who hold a stake in a heritage place are also included.⁵⁰

The *Khan Al-Shilan* could be considered to be one of the most significant social and commercial buildings in Iraq, as it is one of the national symbols for the holy city of Najaf, standing against Ottoman and British colonialism.⁵¹ As the only extant *khan* of over 30 *khans* in the old town it also has evidential value, despite its relatively late construction in 1899. It was built to accommodate visitors to the Imam Ali Shrine by the head of Najaf's merchants (*Moeen Al-Tujar*). It was the biggest and highest building in the old town at that time, except for the shrine, marking it out physically both as a landmark of the old town and a site that enabled its occupants to control the surrounding area.⁵² The exemplary nature of its shape and proportions as the biggest building in the town has made its architectural value. However, the splendour and excellence of its construction placed *Khan Al-Shilan* under threat, due to it being commandeered as a strategic location by foreign powers. The Ottoman local government controlled the building and made *Al-Shilan* its headquarters,⁵³ making it

⁵⁰ Robin Letellier, *Recording, Documentation, and Information Management for the Conservation of Heritage Places* (Los Angeles, USA: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2007), p. 11.

⁵¹ Jeef Heritage Group, (Create Space Independent Publishing Platform, 2013), p. 46.

⁵² Sta4, 'Interview'.

⁵³ 'Historic Iraqi Building Gets New Lease on Life as Museum', *the Daily News*, (2013).

a target for rebels who tried to occupy it. In 1915 it became the seat of the Najaf local government after a local insurgency.⁵⁴ The Najaf local government was short-lived, and the years 1915 to 1917 witnessed many disorders. In 1917, the British army occupied Najaf town and the *Al-Shilan* again became a headquarters (for the local British governor), and then the local training camp for the British army. As with the Ottoman occupation, there were again a series of local revolts against the British occupation forces between 1917-1920 and the British forces changed the function of the *Al-Shilan* to become a detention centre for local rebels and revolutionaries.⁵⁵ Through this it became a symbol for revolutionaries and freedom fighters, recorded for posterity in a famous proverb in Najaf “*their lives are a loss, those who have never been to the Khan Al-Shilan*”.

The next significant event that changed the history of the *Khan Al-Shilan* was the 1920 revolution against the British forces, when the *Al-Shilan* was taken by the revolutionaries and instead hosted 167 British prisoners (Figure 6.14). *Al-Hakim* described that, on 28th of July 1920, a statement was issued which explained that there were 144 prisoners from the British army, 80 from Great Britain and 64 from India. The prisoners finally settled in the *Al-Shilan* around 4 months later.⁵⁶ A special association was established to take care of prisoners under a religious scholar’s supervision, providing essential food such as bread, dates and sugar, and allowing them to contact their families by mail.⁵⁷ This predated the third Geneva Convention on the treatment of prisoners of war. This particular event supports the protection of the building for its political value. Political values, like all other heritage values, play a role in national and local contexts. It can be understood as a political tool used to enforce national culture, imperialism, post-colonialism, and so on. As such, political values can be manifested symbolically, or an understanding of what has happened and why can be a central function of heritage buildings.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Sta5, 'Interview'.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Hassan Al-Hakim, *Khan Al-Shilan and Najaf Al-Ashraf Wall Tell the Story of British Occupation* (Najaf: Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2013), pp. 12-15.

⁵⁷ Ibid. pp 20-21.

⁵⁸ Randall Mason, 'Assesing Values in Conservation Planning: Methodoligical Issues and Choices', in *Assessing the Values of Cultural Heritage: Research Report*, ed. by Marta. De la Torre (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute., 2002), (p. 11).

Figure 6.14 British prisoners in the *Khan Al-Shilan* 1920; (source: The museum of *Khan Al-Shilan*).

The prisoners spent around 4 months in *Al-Shilan* and, during this time, they graffitied the walls, the remnants of which are now considered to add historic value to the building. It should be noted that the prisoners spent a long time in the building, and they did not have any idea about their fate. This graffiti includes, “You will find life”, “I study your language remember” or “Patience is a virtue”. In addition, some dates are given, “British enter Kufa 20/10”, names “Bromley”, and “Brandel”, as well as numbers “1283.M.OIE.WEISH”, “24.C.F.A.R”, and “W.P.Hillpol.4810”. In addition, some city names are present, including “Liverpool”, “Sheffield”, and “Manchester”, and some other places in the UK, together with names such as “Chester, F. Lawrence”, and “War London School, G. Brown”. Moreover, there are some drawings, including of a woman, a building, and a horse. Finally, there is a letter from a British soldier to his fiancée: “*with all the wishes to return home I cease the opportunity with my friends and amongst the monster of death from the smaller room I send wishes to my best groom*” (Figures 6.15 and 6.16).⁵⁹ This is a sample of the extensive historic graffiti, which needs special care, in order to discover, protect and understand it. Sta1 stated that all the graffiti on the first floor is original.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Hassan. Al-Hakim, 'The British Prisoners and Their Memories on Khan Al-Shilan Walls in Najaf', in *Afaq Arabia*, (Baghdad: Dar Afaq Arabia, 1984).

⁶⁰ Sta1, 'Interview'.

Figure 6.15 Examples of historic graffiti of prisoners in *Al-Shilan* before rehabilitation; (source: The Public Board of Heritage and Antiquities, '*Khan Al-Shilan* Archive', Baghdad: The Public Board of Heritage and Antiquities).



Figure 6.16 Examples of historic graffiti of prisoners in *Al-Shilan*

Since the early twentieth century Iraqi revolution against British occupation, the function of the *Khan* has continued to change. In 1925 the Ministry of Public Works gave permission to the owner to install the first electric generator inside the *Al-Shilan*

courtyard to supply the old town as well as the shrine with electrical power.⁶¹ Then it became a mill for a long time, and then an ice factory until the end of the 1990s, when the ground floor became shops.⁶² In 1974 the Najaf governor decided to put the *Al-Shilan* under the administration of the school of *Fiqh* / the University of *Kufa*.⁶³ During the Baath rule, it was the practice to confiscate properties, with or without paying any financial compensation. In 1991 economic sanctions began, and the school became unable to manage the Khan and the central government did not pay attention to Najaf's heritage. Therefore, the Khan came under the control of the Ministry of Culture, which changed its function through renting it out.⁶⁴ The ground floor became shops which opened toward the street, and the new tenants painted the walls. This erased all historic graffiti from the ground floor, while part of the *Khan's* courtyard became a rubbish dump and gradually lost many of its architectural elements.⁶⁵

The mismanagement and decay continued until 2010, when the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities cooperated with the Najaf local government in changing its function to become the cultural heritage museum for Najaf, as a part of the Al-Najaf: a capital of Islamic culture 2012 event.⁶⁶ As a result, since 2010 the *Al-Shilan* has become one of the biggest museums in Iraq, consisting of two main wings. The ground floor of the museum presents the cultural heritage of Najaf, and the 1st floor is focused on the twentieth century revolution and the British prisoners (Figure 6.17).⁶⁷

Architecturally, as with most *khans* in Iraq, the building is rectangular in shape, the outer wall 12m high, surrounded from the south by the *Al-Khawarnaq* school and by some traditional houses from the east. It contains 3 cellars to overcome the high temperatures in summer; also it has great decorations reflecting the high architectural level at this time.⁶⁸ Its form consists of two above ground levels; the main entrance portal is located in the western outer wall, close to the northeast corner of the

⁶¹ Al-Daraji, *The Heritage Buildings in Najaf: characteristic between Past and Present*, p. 163.

⁶² H Al-Khalidy, 'Khan Al-Shilan : The Museum of Najaf Heritage and the Twentieth Revolution', ed. by F Al-Maliki (Baghdad: Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2014).

⁶³ Sta1, 'Interview'.

⁶⁴ Sta4, 'Interview'.

⁶⁵ Sta5, 'Interview'.

⁶⁶ Hassan. Al-Hakim, *Khan Al-Shilan and Najaf Al-Ashraf Wall Tell the Story of British Occupation*, (Najaf: Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2013), pp. 35-36.

⁶⁷ Al-Khalidy, 'Khan Al-Shilan : The Museum of Najaf Heritage and the Twentieth Revolution'.

⁶⁸ Al-Daraji, *The Heritage Buildings in Najaf: characteristic between Past and Present*.

building. The *Khan Al-Shilan* is symmetrical. It consists of two wings in the east and west, each mediated with a large *Iwan* 9.5m high (Figure 6.18). Under each *Iwan*, there is a cellar. The first floor of the *Al-Shilan* has rooms on three sides. Al-Daraji explained that the special character of the rooms is their openness to each other, which makes it easy to move from one room to another. This phenomenon was found in most buildings erected during the Ottoman era.⁶⁹ The building was constructed from local materials - traditional bricks (*farshi*), and *Al-siboss*, an organic material used in Najaf, which comes from the remnants of ground rice.⁷⁰



Figure 6.17 Exhibits in Najaf cultural heritage museum (*Al-Shilan*)

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 207.

⁷⁰ Sta4, 'Interview'.

Figure 6.18 Ground and 1st floor plan of *Khan Al-Shilan*; (source: Salih H. Khleef, 'Plans of the *Khan Al-Shilan* / Holy Najaf', Baghdad: Institution of Heritage and Antiquities, 2010).

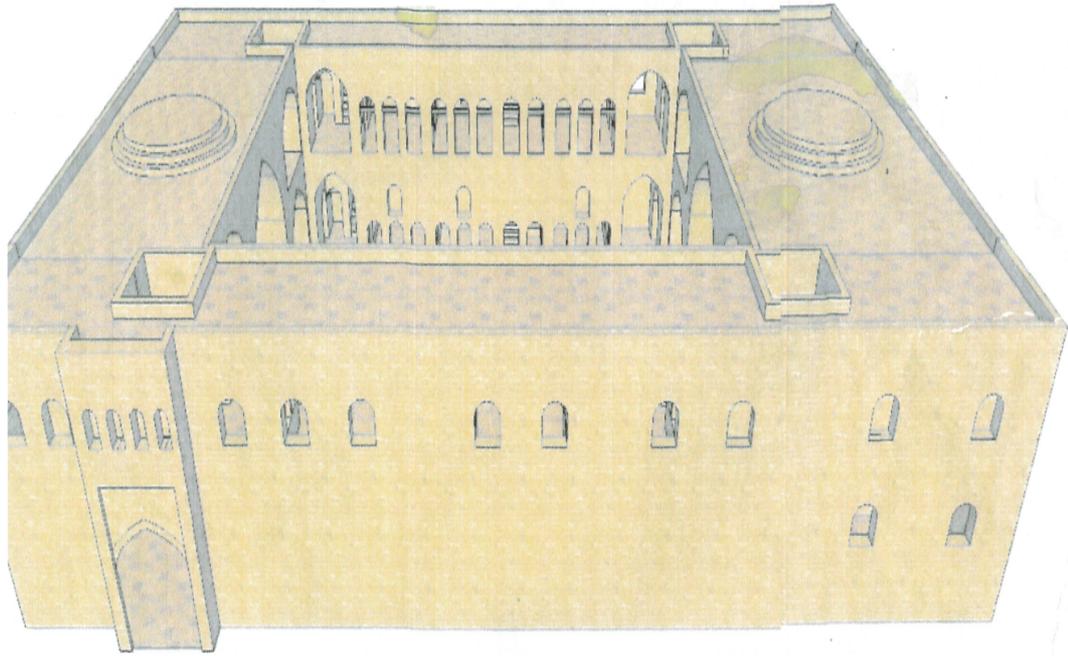


Figure 6.19 Perspective of *Khan Al-Shilan*; (source: The *Khan Al-Shilan* museum archive).

Overall, the *Khan Al-Shilan* is significant in Iraqi heritage; however, there are some critical points on the practice of managing heritage which are relevant to it. It has suffered from a lack of attention since the departure of the British occupation until the last few years.⁷¹ Up to the present, there have been no clear documentary processes recording its characteristics. Those employed in heritage management suffer from serious limitations in understanding and managing heritage, as outlined below.

⁷¹ 'Historic Iraqi Building Gets New Lease on Life as Museum'.

Section 3 - Analysing conservation management as an approach to safeguarding secular heritage

This section analyses why the *khans* in general, with particular reference to the *Khan Al-Shilan*, are perceived in principle and treated in practice as evidence of what drives management and development, and how widespread conservation practice is. It focuses on the external and internal forces that are present on the ground and the conservation processes involved in practice. It aims to investigate more about the physical strategies that have been used in *Al-Shilan* to understand why different approaches have been taken in reconstructing, repairing and restoring the building.

The interventions at *Khan Al-Shilan*

Most the Iraqi *khans* are private buildings, so building authorities are the key players in terms of managing, protecting and developing them. As a result of the lack of conservation legislation, there is an inconsistency between cultural heritage and the building authority in practice. As stated earlier in this chapter, the *Al-Shilan* is the only *khan* building which has survived in the holy town of Najaf. This situation has encouraged the Najaf's local government to protect it through changing its functioning to become the museum of the Najaf cultural heritage. This project was a part of Najaf the capital of Islamic cultural 2012, when Najaf was chosen by the ISESCO.⁷²

In the 1990s, the authorities leased heritage buildings due to economic sanctions. The *Khan* leaseholder was supposed to carry through a plan approved by the Public Board of Heritage and Antiquities to convert the ground floor into shops (Figure 6.20).⁷³ In fact, the plan proposed to change the elevation of the building, as well as its function. The main approach at that time was related to how the authority could earn money, and not to the management of heritage and its procedures.⁷⁴ The scheme enacted by the leaseholder was different and was not approved by the Public Board. This situation led to the removal of many historical elements and graffiti, and meant that some shops deteriorated badly.⁷⁵ The leaseholder changed the function of the *Khan* through subletting 13 small shops on the ground floor, as well as making the

⁷² ISESCO (Islamic Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization).

⁷³ Sta4, 'Interview'.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Sta5, 'Interview'.

courtyard into a restaurant, and sub-letting the first floor rooms for storage (Figure 6.21).⁷⁶ As a result, the *Khan Al-Shilan* was in very bad condition and destruction prevalent throughout the building. Moreover, no sanctions were applied and enforced when the unapproved scheme was carried out by the leaseholder.



Figure 6.20 Condition of front elevation of *Al-Shilan* before rehabilitation; (source: The *Khan Al-Shilan* museum).

After 2003 the stated central government intention was to support local heritage; so the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in Iraq started to document the archaeological, heritage and tourist sites in Iraq. In 2010, the Ministry contracted with the University of Baghdad/ the Consulting and Planning Bureau of the Centre of Urban and Regional Planning to document significant historical buildings. The project was divided into 2 stages, the first dealt with 10 governorates, and the second with 3 governorates (Najaf, Karbala and Basra).⁷⁷ The Consulting Bureau tried to document the *Khan Al-Shilan* as a historical building in the old town, and outlined a conservation plan.⁷⁸ According to the plan, they proposed to create a new portal on the front elevation, as well as closing the original portal and building a new brick skin inside and outside the building (Figure 6.22). From this it seems that the designers did not base their approach on the process of conservation and managing heritage: they predominantly thought about the function and shape of the building.

⁷⁶ LR6, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

⁷⁷ Baghdad University Central of Urban and Regional Planning, 'Www.lurq.Uobadhdad.Edu.Iq', p. web page.

⁷⁸ Arc4, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

Sta6 explained that this proposed design was refused by the Public Board of Heritage and Antiquities, and that the rehabilitation process on the ground did not pay attention to the proposal.⁷⁹ Seemingly, the Bureau did not have enough experience to deal with this heritage site; therefore, the outcomes did not match the criteria of the best conservation practice.

Figure 6.21 Proposal for front and side elevation of the *Khan Al-Shilan* showing the new small shops;
(source: The Public Board of Heritage and Antiquities, '*Khan Al-Shilan* Archive').

⁷⁹ Sta6, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

Figure 6.22 Proposal to protect *Khan Al-Shilan*. (source: The Public Board of Heritage and Antiquities, 'Khan Al-Shilan Archive').

The heritage elites and local community of the old town wanted to create a new secular heritage zone close to the *khan Al-Shilan* because it was the only surviving heritage area in the old town.⁸⁰ This concept was adopted in 2011 during the new urban renewal of the holy city of Najaf, and the local community's plan almost became a reality. Respectively, the new urban renewal of the holy city of Najaf by Dewan proposed the area around the *Al-Shilan* as an integrated development project,

⁸⁰ Sta1, 'Interview'.

and the report evaluated the *Al-Shilan* as belonging in category (A), which means a site which needs preserving and maintaining (Figure 6.23).⁸¹ Type (A) in this report specifies a building with high value that should be preserved at the same location, retaining its original style and showing its value by making a space between it and the surrounding buildings. Accordingly, this is controversial point, particularly if it was originally built as part of an urban block. Plots located in this area are subject to design guidelines shown in the main old city master plan. The report shows that land use is limited to cultural/educational projects, with the revived parts of the Najaf old wall. Some regulations, such as building height, were included, composed of 2 basements, ground floor, and 3 typical floors, with a total height 14.6 m, including a podium (ground + 1st floor) (6m) and a typical height (3.25m) for all skeleton structures, roof structures and parapets (1.2 m). In addition, heritage buildings and sites located in this area were to be subjected to urban and architectural conservation regulations.⁸² It should be mentioned that the Dewan proposal only evaluated the *Khan Al-Shilan*; however, the report offered no explanation regarding the preservation of this historical building. The conservation plan was therefore an issue, particularly given the lack of active and clear conservation regulations on the ground. Moreover, Dewan recommended regulations for a new development of the area, without specifying a clear process. In addition, at this point there was more than one decision maker dealing with the old town without any collaboration among them, namely the central and local governments, and the Shrine Secretariat.

Figure 6.23-Heritage, Historical, Religious building Evaluations and types of Intervention; (source: Dewan, 'Urban Renewal of the City Centre of Holy Najaf', p. 78).

⁸¹ Dewan Architects and Engineers Dewan, 'Urban Renewal of the City Center of Holy Najaf: Comprehensive Master Plan of the City Center of Holy Najaf', (Najaf: Republic Iraq, Ministry of Municipalities and Public Work, General directorate of physical planning, 2015), (p. 78).

⁸² Ibid. pp. 71 - 75.

In the years preceding 2010 many parts of the *Khan Al-Shilan* were fully or partially demolished (Figure 6.24). According to Sta5, the local government commissioned a foreign company from Turkey⁸³ to conserve it, but they allegedly proposed to demolish and rebuild a new building with the same plans because of the existing condition of the building.⁸⁴ Instead, Iraqi archaeologists working at the Public Board of Heritage and Antiquities agreed to rehabilitate it in the best way possible.⁸⁵



Figure 6.24 *Khan Al-Shilan* in 2010 before rehabilitation work; (source: The *Khan Al-Shilan* museum).

The most recent rehabilitation procedure of the *Khan Al-Shilan* started in 2010 when the Public Board of Heritage and Antiquities, in collaboration with the Al-Najaf Reconstruction Commission, started to rehabilitate the *Al-Shilan* as a part of the Najaf the capital of Islamic cultural 2012. According to Stubbs, the best conservation practices should have a clear rationale and action plan, as well as a commitment to quality.⁸⁶ In this particular, *Sta6* said that the first step of the rehabilitation procedure was recording, documenting and evaluating the building condition to designate the

⁸³ I attempted to collect information about the Turkish company, but this was not forthcoming for a number of reasons. Firstly, the local government did not respond to requests for an interview or give me permission for access to their archive. Secondly, there was no clear recording system, and it was very difficult to get any governmental document, particularly financial contracts. Finally, some of the interviewees believed that there might be no such company.

⁸⁴ Sta5, 'Interview'.

⁸⁵ Sta6, 'Interview'.

⁸⁶ John H. Stubbs, *Time Honored: A Global View of Architectural Conservation*, (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2009), pp. 145-46.

added and original parts, as well as the structural conditions.⁸⁷ The building itself was the primary sources of information, but it still needed extra information from national or local archives, photographs, etc.⁸⁸ After considerable discussion with the rehabilitation team, it was clear that the team assessment was based on visual clues. They did not use other intervention techniques. The data collection from local and central authorities and interviews reveal no original architectural plans, sections or elevations of the *Khan Al-Shilan*, so the rehabilitation procedures depended on completing the demolition parts by protecting as much as possible of the original shape, size, materials and decorations.⁸⁹ In some specific cases, decisions were based on the personal experiences of the team members rather than specific best practice.⁹⁰

From interviews, a full building survey was not made before the rehabilitation procedure, only an evaluation of the building's condition based on visual information and very basic survey methods. Usually, the building survey can help develop understanding in terms of the relative significance of specific elements and components, which enables the adoption of an appropriate strategy, as well as ensuring that the structure and site are safe before starting on site, thus mitigating risk. The building subsequently lost many significant elements and parts as a result of the absence of a clear management plan. The first decision was that the rehabilitation team started to remove all recent parts added by either the leaseholder or others. The team removed all the external concrete from in front of the shops on the northern and western elevations, and closed them, as well as supporting the outer walls, particularly during the south-side phase.⁹¹ Orbasli stated that concrete is regularly used in most construction works (replacing, repair, and rebuilding).⁹² The challenge was choosing the materials to use during the rehabilitation. The compatibility between original and new materials is a key issue for any conservation work in terms of its lifespan, chemical properties, etc.⁹³ The team attempted to use

⁸⁷ Sta6, 'Interview'.

⁸⁸ Barry Bridgwood and Lindsay Lennie, *History, Performance and Conservation*, (London, New York: Taylor & Francis, 2013), p. 300.

⁸⁹ Sta6, 'Interview'.

⁹⁰ Sta4, 'Interview'.

⁹¹ Sta6, 'Interview'.

⁹² Aylin Orbasli, 'Training Conservation Professionals in the Middle East', *Built Environment (1978-)*, 33 (2007), 310.

⁹³ Aylin Orbasli, *Architectural Conservation: Principles and Practice*, (Blackwell Science Ltd, 2008), p. 137.

mechanical bricks instead of the original materials (*farshi*), matching the size, shape, and colour, because reclaimed or new *farshi* wasn't available.⁹⁴

The team did not use any type of cement⁹⁵ in the work, using gypsum plaster instead.⁹⁶ In addition, they used an organic material made from resin (instead of iron) and plaster to fill in the cracks in the walls - a traditional technique. Moreover, they retained some of the timber trusses which supported the roofs of some of the rooms (Figure 6.25).⁹⁷ In this way, the rehabilitation team did pay attention to the original materials, but it still involved an unclear process.



Figure 6.25 Wooden trusses at *Khan Al-Shiln*.

The main portal of the *Khan Al-Shilan* and its decorations were reinstated to its original form (Figures 6.26 and 6.27).⁹⁸ The builder intended using the same size of local brick to protect the shape of the portal. However, the main difficulty was how to import the construction materials into the old town. The security situation and people building without permission led the team to ask the local government for extra support to allow them to introduce the materials.⁹⁹ In terms of the security

⁹⁴ Sta9, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

⁹⁵ It is recently very common using it at local and national level.

⁹⁶ Sta6, 'Interview'.

⁹⁷ Sta9, 'Interview'.

⁹⁸ Sta6, 'Interview'.

⁹⁹ Sta9, 'Interview'.

situation and the war, nobody can help the team, because, for example, the old town is closed during the Shia religious events. In terms of introducing the construction materials, the government provided the team support letters for allowing them to introduce the materials to the old town. However, because there are multiple key players in the old town (the Governor, the Provincial Council, the Municipal Council, and the police), the team still need support from time to time.¹⁰⁰ Sta9 explained his surprise that, even though they were working on a public site, it was difficult to introduce the materials, while some private schemes were able to introduce the materials easily.¹⁰¹

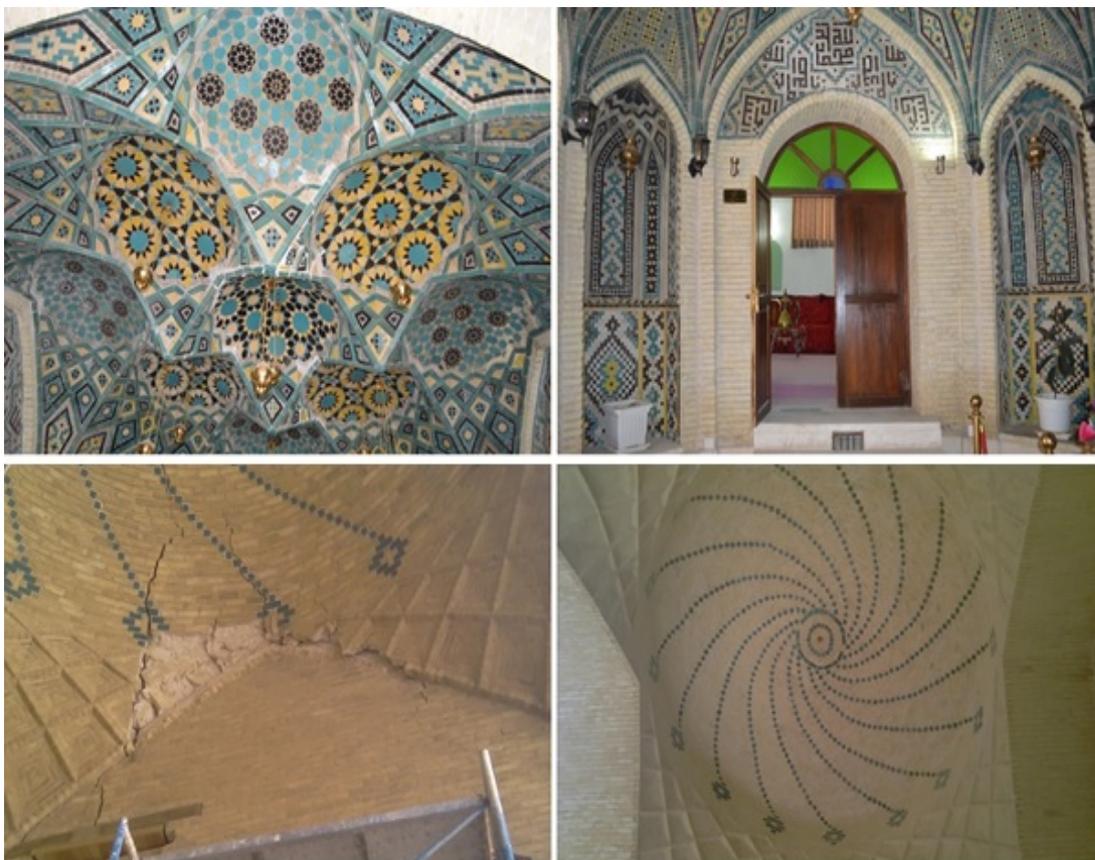


Figure 6.26 Example of interior decorations and tile work at *Al-Shilan* main portal.

¹⁰⁰ Sta6, 'Interview'.

¹⁰¹ Sta9, 'Interview'.



Figure 6.27 Main portal of *Khan Al-Shilan*.

The courtyard is the most significant part of the building. The team consolidated the old wall with a new skin because it was in very bad condition, then they proposed building a new brick skin (Figure 6.28). Al-Najaf Reconstruction Commission refused the new skin because they did not wish to see any new elements added to the structure of the building. However, finally they accepted it and a new brick wall skin was built. According to Sta10, the Reconstruction Commission accepted a new brick wall because they did not have enough background on protecting heritage.¹⁰² The team's justification was based on the new function of the building. They assumed the museum would appear to be unique and beautiful as a result.¹⁰³ This point is totally support Pieri statement that Iraqi communities' feeling "*the new is more valuable than the old*".¹⁰⁴ Again, this point explains the conflict between the Western and national understanding of heritage conservation. At national and local level, the unclear understanding of what heritage conservation mean, led to change, demolish or replace some significant parts of historical buildings. However, in the Western

¹⁰² Sta10, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).

¹⁰³ Sta6, 'Interview'.

¹⁰⁴ Caecilia Pieri, 'Of Modernity as Heritage, of Heritage as Future', in "*Preservation and Rehabilitation of Iraqi City Centers*", (Baghdad: Mayoralty of Baghdad, 2010).

Europe, Orbalsi explained: “*conservation can become an exaggerated concern to keep everything as it is*”.¹⁰⁵ The courtyard floor was covered by external concrete panels, locally called “*shtaiger*”, and this material was added by the leaseholder. It was replaced by the local brick “*farshi*” (Figure 6.29), and a special type of brick made in Iran was used for the floor of the inside rooms.¹⁰⁶ The team also decided to re-open the walls between the rooms as was the case originally before the leaseholder had filled them in. This decision supported the new museum function, allowing people to move between the rooms (Figure 6.30).¹⁰⁷ It should be noted that all the doors and windows were new, because the building either did not have these before in the specific locations, or they were in a very bad condition. The rehabilitation team tried to use the same shape of doors and windows used during the era in which it was erected.¹⁰⁸ Overall, it would have been much better if the rehabilitation process had been based on original photos and drawings of the building itself, because the current version does not fully reflect the traditional buildings of Najaf. For instance, outdoor air-conditioning units are spread across the courtyard, as well as new materials having been used. In sum, it can be stated that the understanding of heritage value of those undertaking the project was limited.

¹⁰⁵ Aylin Orbalsi, 'The Islamic City and Tourism: Managing Conservation and Tourism in Traditional Neighbourhoods', in *Tourism in the Middle East: Continuity, Change and Transformation*, ed. by Rami F. Daher (Clevedon: Channel View Publications, 2007), pp. 161 - 87 (p. 168).

¹⁰⁶ Sta5, 'Interview'.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Sta6, 'Interview'.



Figure 6.28 New brick wall skin in courtyard; (source: The *Khan Al-Shilan* museum).



Figure 6.29 Aerial view showing use of *farshi* to cover courtyard; (source: The *Khan Al-Shilan* museum).



Figure 6.30 Connections between rooms in *Khan Al-Shilan*.

The *Iwan* in Islamic architecture is usually a large vaulted hall, walled on three sides and open at one end.¹⁰⁹ The new function of the *Al-Shilan* as a museum encouraged the authority to close all the *Iwans*, in order to use them as showrooms.¹¹⁰ As a result, big timber and glass frames have been used. It would seem from the interviews that decision makers thought museums should be closed spaces, while they did not have enough skills or background about managing historical sites (Figure 6.31).¹¹¹ In particular, DM2 illustrated that the head of the Public Board of Heritage and Antiquities proposed roofing the courtyard of the *Al-Shilan* to deal with environmental conditions, without paying attention to its historical and original shape.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ James W. Allan, *The Art and Architecture of Twelver Shi'ism: Iraq, Iran and Indian Sub-Continent*, (London: Azimuth Editions, 2012), p. 18.

¹¹⁰ Sta5, 'Interview'.

¹¹¹ Sta9, 'Interview'.

¹¹² DM2, 'Interview', ed. by Sadiq Abid (2015).



Figure 6.31 Rehabilitation work on *Khan Al-Shilan*; (source: The *Khan Al-Shilan* museum).

The leaseholder had built new toilets in the north of the building, and the waste storage was under the northern *Iwan*, which was the main reason for demolishing a large part of this area. During the rehabilitation procedures they removed these toilets and the waste storage, and rebuilt the *Iwan*. By doing so, the team decided to prevent the building of any toilets inside the *Al-Shilan* because it could hurt the structural condition of the building in the future through rising damp.¹¹³ In terms of the three cellars, they started to take out the rubble from the cellars, and then rebuilt the

¹¹³ Sta6, 'Interview'.

demolished elements with the same materials and sizes.¹¹⁴ However, it should be noted that these cellars are still closed and abandoned, and the designers did not think about how best to use them.¹¹⁵ They could for example use them to imagine the life of prisoners or other Najafi historical events.

The carbon used to create the graffiti on the first floor was very difficult to protect, so the rehabilitation team asked specialists from the laboratory of the Iraqi National Museum to paint them with special paint. After this they decided to cover all the graffiti with glass boxes to preserve them for as long as possible (Figures 6.32 and 6.33).¹¹⁶ The previous government's awareness of the historic and political value of the graffiti could be considered to be based on very little cultural heritage knowledge. Some of these graffiti have been cleared, due to a lack of assessment procedures, particularly those on the ground floor.¹¹⁷ One problem now is that these graffiti are not visible enough; therefore, the museum has decided to put a copy of each single graffiti close to the original one.¹¹⁸ It may be advisable to look at other countries' preservation and display techniques as a comparative check.

The first floor of the *Al-Shilan* has four uncovered rooms at each corner (for lighting and ventilation); the problem is that exposure to rain and higher humidity levels have caused damage. The solution for the biggest room, which is close to the graffiti room, was to cover it with a vaulted transparent cover; and the brick decorations on the wall are still in their original state (Figure 6.34).¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Sta5, 'Interview'.

¹¹⁶ Sta6, 'Interview'.

¹¹⁷ Sta4, 'Interview'.

¹¹⁸ Sta1, 'Interview'.

¹¹⁹ Sta6, 'Interview'.

Figure No 6.32 Rehabilitation work on 1st floor of *Al-Shilan*; (source: The Public Board of Heritage and Antiquities, '*Khan Al-Shilan Archive*').



Figure 6.33 Graffiti covered by glasses boxes



Figure 6.34 Transparent roof cover

The outer walls of the building were also in very bad condition, especially the south wall, which was bombed by a missile from a US helicopter during the armed protests in 2007. The rehabilitation work aimed to protect and support the structural condition of the outer walls that suffered from many cracks (Figure 6.35). The builders used stitching techniques called locally “*kheata*”, which involve putting resin materials and bricks inside the cracks and rebuilding them,¹²⁰ in addition to closing all the shops added by the leaseholders and returning them to the original phase.¹²¹ The team fixed lanterns on the main elevation of the building to simulate the historical life of Najaf because in the past these lanterns were the main source of lighting for city streets and alleys.¹²² This work was intended to protect the original characteristics of the outer wall without adding any new skin, as was done in the courtyard.

¹²⁰ Sta9, 'Interview'.

¹²¹ Sta6, 'Interview'.

¹²² Sta9, 'Interview'.



Figure 6.35 External wall condition before and after rehabilitation of *Khan Al-Shilan*

The previous rehabilitation procedures for *Al-Shilan* took around 3 years, between 2010 and 2013. Every month the team sent a progress report both to central and the local government. However, the Al-Najaf Reconstruction Commission does not have any records of these monthly reports,¹²³ which means that there are only very simple documents at the archive of the Public Board relevant to this refurbishment. On 26th of June 2013 the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities as well as local government opened the *Khan Al-Shilan* as a museum of the Al-Najaf cultural heritage.¹²⁴

After considerable discussion with the rehabilitation team and heritage elites, the conclusion was that, while the conservation of the building is generally good, the team employed basic knowledge and previous experiences to rehabilitate the building and select the materials. They did not have a basic background in managing heritage sites.¹²⁵ One of the builders said during the interview that his previous experience in house-building in old towns enabled him to deal with historical sites. He thought that his experience allowed him to know the restoration and rehabilitation process on the ground; and he trained other builders on the site in his techniques.¹²⁶ Theoretically, the best conservation practice should be undertaken by specialists, or

¹²³ Sta10, 'Interview'.

¹²⁴ 'Opining Khan Al-Shilan in Najaf', (Najaf: Al-Gharee News Agency, 2013).

¹²⁵ Council of Europe, 'Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe', ed. by Council of Europe (Granada, 1985).

¹²⁶ Sta9, 'Interview'.

the techniques proposed should be reviewed for their appropriateness and quality.¹²⁷ However, what has happened on the ground was completely different. Sta6 stated that, at the end of the maintenance work at *Al-Shilan*, the new builders had become experts and could deal with heritage sites in the future.¹²⁸

The evidence also suggests that the documentation of work carried out at heritage sites (with particular reference to the *Khan Al-Shilan*) is still not enough. In the absence of a clear recording system, work management often relies on the discretion of the administration and the transfer of accumulated experiences from veteran staff by succession, which is mostly based on oral communications or internal correspondence and memos. In all cases, there must be close work with other organizations and authorities, such as the Ministry of Higher Education and pertinent partners, in order to develop the qualifications of heritage protection and management workers, architects and archaeologists within a serious, credited and internationally recognized national framework of qualifications. Moreover, organizing training courses, workshops, seminars, conferences or other methods to assist in the development of heritage management and documentation skills is an important part of developing such skills. The *ProCare* report diagnosed that there was a lack of management skills on the ground, which necessitates specialized training programs at a middle management level, especially since most are newly hired and lack administrative skills, previous experience and knowledge of governmental work protocols.¹²⁹

The new phase of the *Khan Al-Shilan* as a museum might be supported and encourage local and central government and building authorities to protect the built heritage. In this particular, after considerable interviews it was concluded that community awareness toward heritage also needs to increase in order to strengthen belonging and local identity. DM2 explained that the local community as well as decision makers do not have a clear awareness of heritage.¹³⁰ In fact, Iraq is behind in the conservation about built heritage compared to other countries.¹³¹ The resulting work on the *Khan*, while having its faults, is better than nothing, if we compare *Al-*

¹²⁷ Orbasli, *Architectural Conservation: Principles and Practice*, p. 183.

¹²⁸ Sta6, 'Interview'.

¹²⁹ ProCare consulting Services, 'Assisting the Government of Iraq to Develop a National tourism Strategy', (Baghdad: UNESCO office for Iraq, 2013), (p. 91).

¹³⁰ DM2, 'Interview'.

¹³¹ Sta4, 'Interview'.

Shilan to the over 30 *khans* which used to be in the old town. Meanwhile the *Najaf is my identity* project outlines some points in order to protect the identity of the city. One of these points is safeguarding all historical cultural heritage sites, including all architectural and heritage types, and maintaining them, based on international regulations and standards.¹³²

It is clear from the interviews taken from a heritage manager, historian, project manager and builder that there is a lack of clarity and consistency in terms of determining what constitutes historic values and what would be an appropriate approach to them, in terms of making new decorative windows for the west facade of the *Al-Shilan*, for instance. The lack of an effective conservation management process, as well as clear policies and politics both at local and national level determine whether the significance of a building in secular cultural heritage sites such as this one has been affected permanently.

One question that needs to be asked, however, is whether any guidelines or regulations to restore and rehabilitate the historic buildings in Iraq should be generated, or whether it should depend on the diligence of the project manager or builders. According to what happened to the *Khan Al-Shilan*, it seems to be that there is no conservation management on the ground.

¹³² 'Najaf Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Historic Towns, Urban Areas, Monuments, and Sites', (Najaf: International Energy and Environment Foundation, 2013), (p. 1).

Conclusion

As indicated earlier, the Iraqi central government was, until 2003, the key player in most decisions in terms of managing and protecting the built heritage. In order to understand the conservation and restoration process, it would be worth starting at the national level to analyse the government's intentions during this period. From the study of the *Khan Al-Shilan*, it can be said that the conservation management of a built heritage environment is dependent on a difficult balance between change and preservation in historic buildings in terms of shape and function. Moreover, as I stated in the chapter 1, there is a significant misunderstanding between the two different approaches of traditionalism and modernism. The basic process of conservation management should identify the significance of a site or building through clear regulations and policies. Orbasli showed that there are three steps to conservation management processes: understanding the historic place; identifying threats to its significance; and finally an action plan for evaluation and implementation of the historic place.¹³³ Any local or national intervention in a historic place/building requires a good knowledge of the original construction, how it works, what has happened there, and how it has been used and maintained.¹³⁴

Naturally, it can be stated that the local authorities and external and internal forces have lately recognized the importance of the current cultural heritage sites, although its awareness is still weak and needs more effectiveness. It should be mentioned that the central government spent much more money developing the streets and infrastructure of the city, but it did not pay attention to local heritage. In fact, a billion and half Iraqi dinars¹³⁵ was spent maintaining the *Al-Shilan*, so it is now easy to see what was done.

As regards the *Khan Al-Shilan*, it can be said that it is the starting point of protecting the built heritage of the holy city of Najaf. It stands as an architectural landmark that marks the culmination of the long history the old town. The future of Najaf depends on these decisions, so the question here is more about whether the motivation exists to achieve this. Arguably a conservation approach should respect the characteristics of a place's identity to achieve the required balance between the processes of urban

¹³³ Orbasli, *Architectural Conservation: Principles and Practice*, p. 98.

¹³⁴ Ibid. p. 135.

¹³⁵ It is about \$1,250,000.

development and conservation. In order to increase the communities' awareness toward protecting heritage, the conservation processes should cover the distinctive characteristics of these urban sites or buildings in relation to different techniques and methodologies, instead of focusing on the specific value of a building or site.¹³⁶ Re-use of the heritage buildings in the Najaf old town can contribute positively to the protection of the heritage value of these buildings, provided that these processes take place in the framework of respect for the landmarks of the town.

In conclusion, there are challenges to the Iraq cultural heritage in general, with particular reference to the secular heritage, so a very wide range of steps are required to protect its cultural heritage value. The heritage sites are a great wealth, so we have an obligation to the next generations to protect and manage them in the best way. To sum up, the main issue this case study highlights is that there is a motivation and growing awareness toward conservation but a lack of local governance. Therefore, the current conservation practices have had a negative impact on the existing historic fabric of the old town. Overall, I can state whether changes are reversible or whether the significance of the building has been affected permanently. The case study is more effective in demonstrating that there is a local motivation for conservation, and some awareness of the processes that need to be established to manage change effectively. The figure (6.36) below shows the process of the 3rd case study.

¹³⁶ M. I. Elbelkasy, J. M. AlSalafi, and M. F. Mahmoud, 'Re-Use of Historical Buildings in the Holy City of Makkah: Case Study Selection Guidelines', in *Structural Studies, Repairs and Maintenance of Heritage Architecture XIV*, ed. by C.A. Brebbia and S. Hernandez (A Coruna, Spain: WIT Press, 2015), pp. 63 - 74.

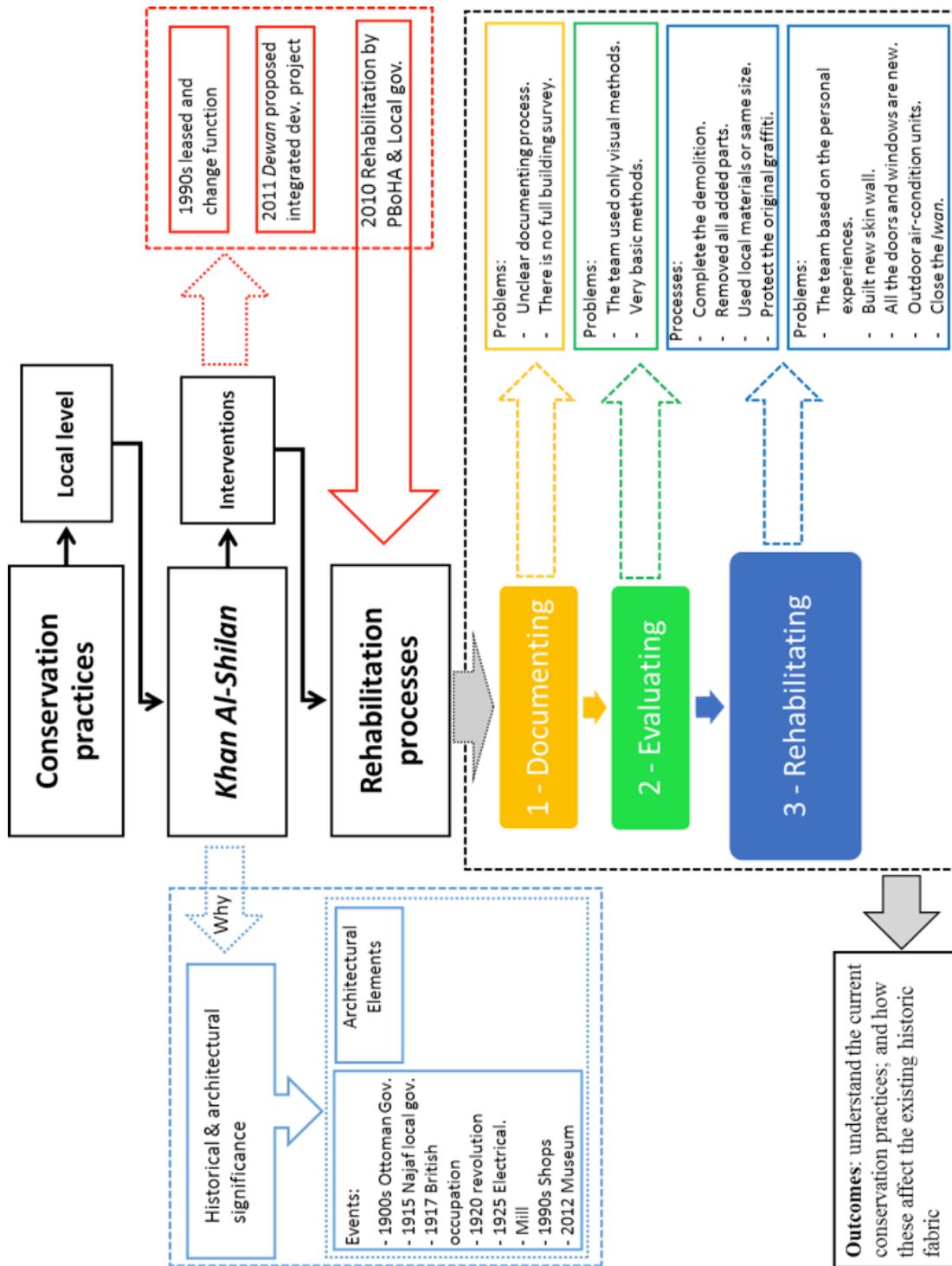


Figure 6.36 The process of the 3rd case study

A critical review of Iraqi heritage infrastructure

Introduction

After explaining Najaf's conservation practices through three case studies, I am going to summarise and diagnose the degree of knowledge and understanding of values, processes and practices of conservation management. According to the first case study of the small segment of the *al-Houaish* neighbourhood, an unclear understanding of heritage has led to huge pressure on the physical and social fabric of the old town. In terms of the social fabric, it has been found that the old town does not satisfy the basic social requirements, and is gradually becoming redundant, with most of the original families having moved out. As stated in Chapter 3; periods of neglect by successive governments and authorities have led to a lack of facilities for residents and requirements for modern life, such as car parks, playgrounds, schools, gardens, etc., which has encouraged local citizens to move to the outskirts of the town.

In terms of the physical fabric, the rapid changes in land use inside the old town is the main challenge currently faced by those seeking the conservation of its built heritage. Indeed, heritage destruction is continuing in the old town, on one hand because there is no clear heritage protection system in practice; on the other because the local communities and authorities do not understand the need to preserve physical and social fabric of Najaf old town. In particular, the heritage authorities

have no clear process to explain which buildings should be listed, protected, managed, etc. Adopting protection heritage system could help communities to understand and value local and national heritage. Overall, it has been found that local communities understand the significance of some particular properties, but the wave of change and destruction of heritage overwhelms these desires. However, the physical condition of the selected area is very poor, and local communities do not value the preservation of its physical fabric. To sum up, local communities need further support to enable them to understand and value the preservation of the physical and social fabric of the old town.

The second case study of the Imam Ali Shrine outlined the development control system in practice. In this case study, the local and national authorities perceived the shrine as a historical building in terms of its protection, management and development work. The priority of the decision makers and Shrine Secretaries, particularly after 2003, was to accommodate the huge number of visitors rather than to protect or understand heritage value when controlling development. Therefore, some of the shrine extension projects have been completed, and others will be carried out within the next few years, all of which target developing the shrine's surrounding area. In fact, these extension projects have changed the operation of the shrine as a building, as well as the phase of the old town. The main issue is that there is no clear cooperation between authorities, namely the Shrine Secretariat, local government, and the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works. The clearest example is the shrine surrounding area project, when the Ministry of Municipalities contracted with Llewelyn Davies, then Dewan, to set out an urban plan of the old town. However, few years later, the Shrine Secretary contracted with the Shahid Beheshti University to design the same area. To conclude, it has been found that no clear implementation strategies have been adopted, nor any type of collaboration between these decision makers established, therefore decision makers and stakeholders do not understand heritage values when controlling development. In other words, there is a significant degree of overlap in managing heritage; however, the final decision makers usually act independently, and do not speak to each other.

The last case study focused more on the *Khan Al-Shilan* as a historical building to understand the current conservation practices and how they affect the existing historic fabric. It was found that the conservation management of a built heritage

environment is dependent on a difficult balance between change and preservation in historic buildings in terms of both shape and function. The process of conservation here is not based on clear action plans, and this reflects the poor knowledge of understanding of the practices of conservation management. Stakeholders, (builders, architects and decision makers) did not have enough background in restoring historical buildings to work in this area. For instance, builders and architects did not take any courses or workshops to improve their skill in protecting heritage buildings. Overall, the current conservation practices were found to jeopardise the value of significant properties. There is a growing awareness of the value of conservation but a lack of local governance. The other significant issue found in this case study is that multiple decision makers with different agendas, lacking clear cooperative structures, have a negative impact in terms of understanding conservation values in contemporary Iraq.

To sum up, the degree of knowledge and understanding of values, processes and practices of conservation management is very low and needs further work on the ground, and efforts should be directed at preventing further destruction of local heritage at this location. It is concluded that a local motivation for conservation heritage does exist, along with some awareness of the processes that need to be established to manage change effectively. The main problem of reducing the level of understanding values is related to the Iraqi infrastructure, which this chapter will go on to explain in depth, in order to discuss how conservation management is shaped or impeded by the infrastructure that exists for its delivery, development and communication.

After explaining Najaf's conservation practices through three case studies, this chapter looks at the existing cultural heritage machinery in greater depth as a critical review of local networks and infrastructure. Understanding, conserving and managing cultural heritage sites or properties is essentially a multidisciplinary activity. There are different institutional frameworks in Iraq dealing with conservation management of cultural heritage, including government institutions and NGOs. This chapter discusses the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities, The Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works, Religious Endowments and the Educational framework. The aim is to highlight specific loopholes that weaken the process of heritage protection. It then considers the NGOs, religious authorities and

decentralization and local democratisation of heritage aspects. The main objectives of the chapter are to synthesise some issues from case studies and critical reviews of the systematic approach of Institutional framework, and to propose recommendations to strengthen the capacities of relevant government institutions, in particular of the conservation management of Iraqi cultural heritage.

The Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities

The Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities (MoCTA) takes care of heritage and archaeological sites, as well as museums in Iraq. Before the government amendment of 2015, the structure of the Ministry consisted of two main boards, the Tourism Board and the Public Board of Heritage and Antiquities (PBoHA), in addition to the supportive directorates, including legal, finance and the information and communication directorate.¹ In 2015, as part of political reform, the Iraqi Prime Minister decided to merge the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities with the Ministry of Culture to become the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities.² Since this time, the Committee of Tourism and Antiquities on the Iraqi council of representatives has been calling for a reconsideration of this decision, due to a perceived threat to the Iraqi cultural heritage as a result of the dilution of the focus on heritage protection. Hence, the Minister of Culture has become the Minister of the MoCTA, with responsibility for the remit of both former ministries (Figure 7.1).

As we have already seen in Chapter 2, from the national government Act 45 in 2000, the Public Board of Heritage and Antiquities (PBoHA) is responsible for protecting, conserving and documenting the Iraqi heritage buildings and its neighbourhoods.³ Historically, in 1922 the first foundation was established which dealt with heritage and antiquities, and then the Iraqi national museum was opened in 1923 by Miss Gertrude Bell.⁴ She was also involved in the drawing up of the first national law of antiquities of 1924.⁵ In addition, some archaeological research was published under her supervision in Iraq, addressing different archaeological aspects.⁶

¹ Anonymous, 'The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities Web Page', <<http://www.tourism.gov.iq/>>2015.

² Anonymous, 'Government Reform Package: No. 312', (Baghdad: General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers - Iraq, 2015b).

³ Presidency of Iraq Republic, 'Law No.55 of 2002 for the Antiquities and Heritage of Iraq', (Baghdad: Official Gazette, 2002), 566 - 72 at 132.

⁴ Gertrude Bell was a British writer, archaeologist and political officer best known for helping to establish modern Iraq after World War I. She contributed to the construction of the Iraqi state in 1921, as well as the National Museum of Iraq. Bell died in Baghdad on July 12, 1926.

⁵ Biography.Com Editors, 'Gertrude Bell Biography', <<http://www.biography.com/people/gertrude-bell-21149695>>, accessed 16th February 2016.

⁶ Abbas Al-Hussainy and Roger Matthews, 'The Archaeological Heritage of Iraq in Historical Perspective', *Public Archaeology*, 7/2 (2008), 91-100 at 92.

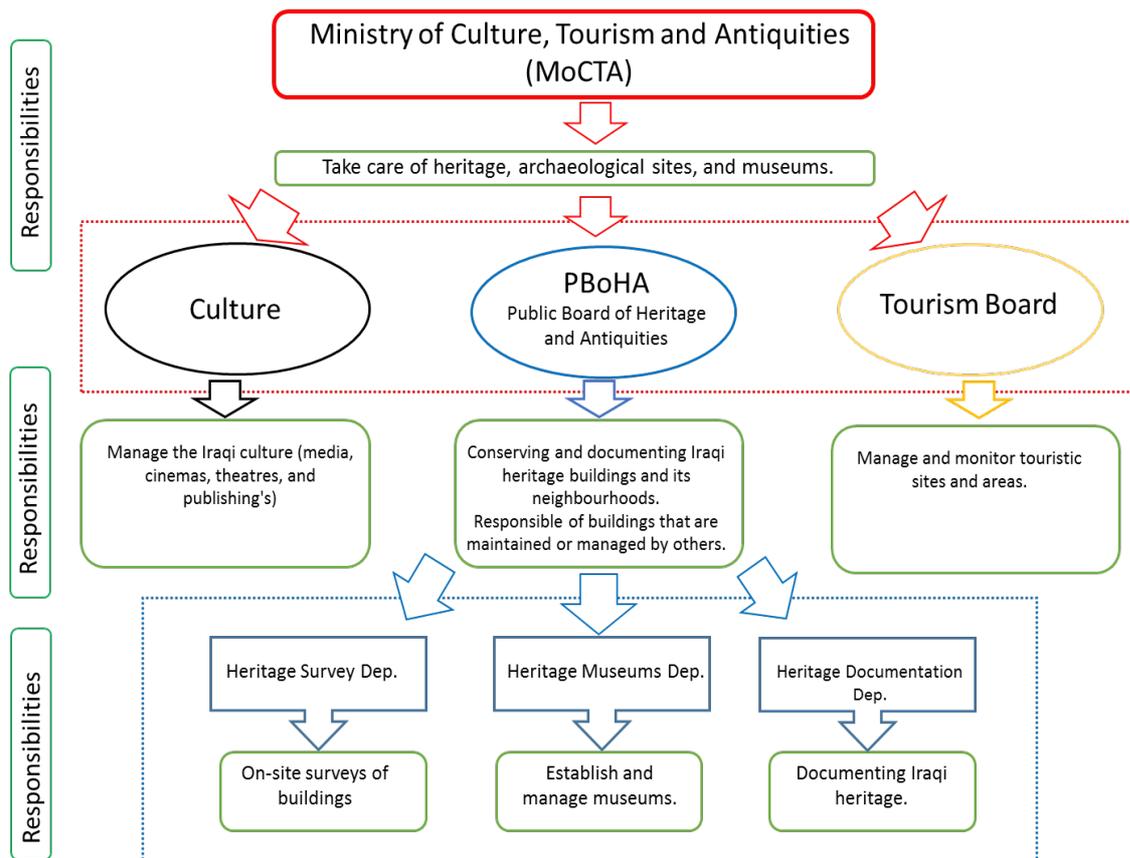


Figure 7.1 The structure of the Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Antiquities

Since 1922, the Public Board of Culture and Antiquities has expanded sequentially. In terms of administration, the Public Board was founded by the Ministry of Information, transferred to the Ministry of Culture, and then to the General Authority of Tourism and Antiquities, and is currently under the jurisdiction of the MoCTA. Arc4 suggests that the changes in the structure of the foundation have led to it appearing weak, and have not allowed it to grow and extend to cover all cities.⁷ While part of the Ministry of Information, it had nine main departments: research and protection of antiquities; museums; maintenance; library services; photography and publicity; technical laboratory; supplies; a finance department; and the administrative department. Law No 40 and its amendment (1958) specified that the Public Board Authority was to deal with archaeological sites and monuments.⁸ However, the law did not cover protecting or managing significant heritage, architectural or historical buildings or sites, as these were distinct from designated archaeological sites and monuments.

⁷ Arc4, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

⁸ Presidency of Iraq Republic, 'The Law for General Institution of Archaeology No.40.', (Baghdad, 1958).

Fethi illustrates the main problems which faced the Public Board of Heritage and Antiquities, including excessive bureaucracy and a general lack of building authority. He demonstrates that the national legal framework within which it is permitted to operate is hardly adequate to overcome the general lack of authority and bureaucracy difficulties.⁹ At this time, Salman also stated different problems the directorate faced, such as the lack specialists and experienced staff and the lack of funds to conduct maintenance to the sites, which led to the neglect of most of the sites. Finally, there were insufficient facilities for documenting antiquities and carrying out any heritage or historical research in depth.¹⁰ In fact, the lack of specialist staff led to a lack of knowledge and experience in protecting heritage, and that has led to incorrect decisions being made, as we have already seen in the conservation process of the *Khan Al-Shilan*, for example. These issues have grown in importance in the light of the recent limited mapping and poor documentation of the historic, cultural and architectural values of many valuable assets and prospective visitor sites.

The Public Board of Heritage and Antiquities (PBoHA) has been divided according to their responsibility into three main parts: The Heritage Survey, the Heritage Documentation, and the Heritage Museum Department. The Heritage Survey Department is an important section, which performs on-site surveys and property statements of heritage buildings in all neighbourhoods of the provinces. The Heritage Documentation Department is responsible for the documentation of heritage buildings.¹¹ However, Sta2 a consultant which has been worked shrine secretary advisor, and member of Najaf committee to list *Wadi Al-Salam* in WHL argued that there is no clear documentation of heritage properties at local level.¹² The Heritage Museum Department also has a section working to establish heritage museums in Baghdad and the provinces, including all the traditional artefacts owned by the Public Board (PBoHA). In addition, the PBoHA has other tasks to carry out, such as preparing plans for the maintenance of heritage buildings with the maintenance department.¹³

⁹ Ihsan. Fethi, 'Urban Conservation in Iraq : The Case for Protecting the Cultural Heritage of Iraq with Special Reference to Baghdad Including a Comprehensive Inventory of Its Areas and Buildings of Historic or Architectural Interest.', (The University of Sheffield, 1977) at 186.

¹⁰ Issa. Salman, 'Progress Report', *Sumer*, 30 (1974).

¹¹ Anonymous, 'The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities Web Page',

¹² Sta2, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2014).

¹³ Anonymous, 'The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities Web Page',

The PBoHA is also responsible for heritage buildings that are maintained or managed by others, but there is an overlap with the Provincial Councils for the protection of heritage. In each council, there is committee responsible for the renovation and maintenance of local heritage and for opening and maintaining museums within the provincial development plan. In fact, Law No 21 of 2008 and its amendments sets out the Provincial Councils in each region and governorate not incorporated into a region, granting them broad powers to manage their areas.¹⁴ However, this law has led to some problems between the central and local government. Sta10 said that there is no clear relationship between local and central authorities, and up to the present there are different views to explain powers on the ground.¹⁵ Moreover, the PBoHA participates with the departments and the relevant ministries in the preparation of studies and conferences related to heritage.¹⁶ Additionally, it forms joint committees with the Municipality of Baghdad and designated departments to decide on granting leave for building restoration and maintenance of heritage buildings, and determines demolition decisions according to the provisions of Antiquities and Heritage Act No. 55 of 2002.¹⁷

There is some criticism regarding the work of the PBoHA. Sta4 argued that there are some gaps in its organisation. For instance, the local department in Najaf does not have enough qualified employers, and is not able to cover all heritage properties.¹⁸ In terms of the documentation system, this does not cover all national heritage buildings or sites. As we have already seen with the case study of the restoration process of the *Khan Al-Shialn*, there is an absence of professional staff and technicians, as well as a misunderstanding of cultural heritage. In 1977, Fethi stated that, in Iraq, the restoration process is usually done without adequate historical bases as evidence, sometimes using new materials and techniques that make them look newly built.¹⁹

¹⁴ Anonymous, 'The Law of Governorates Not Incorporated into a Region No 21 of 2008 and Its Amandements', in The Iraqi Representatives Council (ed.), (No. 21; Baghdad: Iraqi official gazette, 2008).

¹⁵ Sta10, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

¹⁶ Lr6, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

¹⁷

www.tourismiq.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=104&Itemid=231

¹⁸ Sta4, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

¹⁹ Fethi, 'Urban Conservation in Iraq : The Case for Protecting the Cultural Heritage of Iraq with Special Reference to Baghdad Including a Comprehensive Inventory of Its Areas and Buildings of Historic or Architectural Interest.', (

Forty years on, the same problems remain, and there are no clear directives to solve this. In particular, Sta3 stated that it seems that there is still no official inventory of Iraq's cultural heritage, so it is vital to make this a first priority.²⁰

In fact, from time to time some heritage elites and specialists have called for the listing of significant national monuments, buildings and sites.²¹ In particular, LR6 illustrated that government agencies spend lots of money and time rehabilitating some heritage sites for special events, and after these activities neglect these sites.²² Sta4 also complained about the situation. Some archaeological sites in Najaf were selected for excavation, as a part of the Najaf Capital of Islamic culture 2012, but they have been left to disappear under the soil because no agency or authority manages the sites.²³ The lack of understanding of conservation values threatens heritage, so authorities and communities should work together to increase heritage awareness among agencies and people. It is not enough to spend money on conservation projects, without a clear conservation plan. In addition, heritage authorities should adopt clear conservation criteria for selecting sites, as well as choosing the most appropriate employers to protect and manage them.

Until the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the PBoHA approved different projects dealing with historical and archaeological sites. In particular, many specialists of different nationalities have worked in Iraq from places such as Britain, Italy, France, Japan and the USA, as well as Iraqi nationals. Most Iraqi senior staff that monitored the projects had graduated in the UK. However, this generation are now retired or deceased.²⁴ In recent years, following the US-led invasion of 2003, widespread looting has decimated many of Iraq's heritage sites. Decades of war and sanctions have isolated the country, leaving the cultural legacy of Iraq in the hands of a severely depleted antiquities department, hampered by inadequate expertise and funding.²⁵ Numerous examples can be cited relating to archaeological and more recent heritage throughout the country. Historic city centres such as Baghdad, Najaf, Karbala, Mosul and Basra also lack proper protection measures and are rapidly being

²⁰ Sta3, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2014).

²¹ Arc8, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2016).

²² Lr6, 'Interview'.

²³ Sta4, 'Interview'.

²⁴ Al-Hussainy and Matthews, 'The Archaeological Heritage of Iraq in Historical Perspective', (at 93.

²⁵ Jeff Spurr, 'Iraqi Libraries and Archives in Peril', in Peter G Stone and Joanne F Bajjaly (eds.), *The Destruction of Cultural Heritage in Iraq* (Woodbridge,: The Boydell Press, 2008) at 275-76.

destroyed by modern developments, although they have great tourism potential. The same goes for vernacular architecture in rural areas, which is not valued or respected. All these examples indicate the immense challenges that need to be faced to protect and restore the Iraqi cultural heritage to an adequate level that will attract tourism and fulfil its potential in Iraq.²⁶ In fact, this reflects the lack of value that Iraqis place on their own historic environment. The conflict and security situation, as well as ISIS terrorist attacks, continue to threaten many heritage sites in the north and west of Iraq. This conflict has also encouraged some groups to loot significant artefacts and smuggle them outside Iraq.²⁷ A summary provided by the previous Chairman of the PBoHA stated “*It is fair to say that, despite good intentions and often actions on the part of many people in and out of Iraq, the desperate situation of Iraq’s cultural framework has not significantly improved in the years since the fall of Saddam Hussein*”.²⁸ Thus, conflict creates instability, regardless of the nationalities or beliefs of the perpetrators. Instability damages civic order and the rule of law. Property (cultural, material, and intellectual) is threatened. Sta2 argued that the current conflict is threatening the legislative structures relating to cultural heritage. Government intention is more about protecting Iraqi cities from these attacks, which is a logical response to the political situation.²⁹

The Tourism Board is the other main section of the Ministry. It was also transformed during the same time period, from the Ministry of Culture and Art in the 1970s to the Ministry of Culture and Information in the 1980s. According to legislation No 14 of 1996, it then became a separate Board, executing tourism facilities management. Administratively, it was linked to the council of Iraqi Ministers, and then it became a part of the MoCTA. The aims of this board are to manage and monitor touristic sites and areas, to encourage and support tourism activity, as well as to further develop these sites.³⁰ According to LR6, most management lacks awareness and knowledge of the composition, complexities and consequences of the legislative and legal environment governing tourism and antiquities in Iraq. This explains the lack of a unified vision and clear positions regarding the overlaps, contradictions and

²⁶ Arc2, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

²⁷ Lr5, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

²⁸ Al-Hussainy and Matthews, 'The Archaeological Heritage of Iraq in Historical Perspective', (at 93).

²⁹ Sta2, 'Interview'.

³⁰ Anonymous, 'The Tourism Legislation, No 14', in The Tourism Organisation (ed.), (14; Baghdad, 1996).

problems arising from accumulating a large number of legislative tools that are still effective by virtue of law, although de facto inactivated in whole or in part.³¹ In particular, the ProCare report explained that there was also no realization of the consequences of the fact that the Tourism Public Establishment still exists, according to its amended Law No. 49/1977, which remains effective, since it was never replaced or cancelled, despite the dissolving of the Establishment through the creation of the Tourism Board in 1990.³²

According to the ProCare report commissioned by the Iraqi government and issued in 2013, there is an opportunity to develop sites of national cultural heritage for their tourism potential, and the influx of visitors can be used to help in the protection or enhancement of these heritage sites.³³ However, up to the present the central and local governments have not considered heritage tourism as a new source of national income. According to the Iraqi general budget law of 2016, most income is based on the export of petrol and natural sources, without mentioning heritage or religious tourism.³⁴ In particular, with Najaf, even though there are huge numbers of pilgrims, the authorities do not consider the income factor to be a priority. The pilgrimage to the Imam Ali Shrine and other Shia shrines in Iraq can become a good source of income. Conversely, what has happened on the ground is completely different. Some decision makers think that the shrines are for all Muslims; therefore, pilgrims should be accommodated free of charge.³⁵ The Shrine Secretariat would like to manage particularly international pilgrims to be able to generate a good income to extend their projects and services.³⁶ Local hotel authorities complain about the monopoly by some companies over accommodating international pilgrims, which are contracted with specific hotels. They think it is part of a corrupt system.³⁷ Overall, this situation is still not solved, and there is no clear agency responsible for pilgrimage tourism. From the legislation, it is notable that the main concern of the Tourism Board is developing, accommodating and supporting tourists in Iraqi, without attention to

³¹ Lr6, 'Interview'.

³² Procure Consulting Services, 'Assisting the Government of Iraq to Develop a National tourism Strategy', (Part 2/4; Baghdad: UNESCO office for Iraq, 2013) at 57.

³³ Ibid., at 22.

³⁴ Presidency of Iraq Republic, 'Iraqi General Budget Law', (Baghdad: Official Gazette, 2016), 1 - 43 at 27.

³⁵ Lr6, 'Interview'.

³⁶ Dm1, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

³⁷ Lr2, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2014).

protecting, managing or supporting national cultural heritage. After 2003, it was amended to become a part of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. However, tourism in Iraq until 2003 was a small activity as a result of the wars and political issues.³⁸ While the political and security conflicts have continued since 2003, the main heritage sites being visited relate to Shiite Muslims, and are visited for their spiritual significance.³⁹ As we have already seen, the religious Shia cities in Iraq accommodate millions of visitors every year.

The “National Strategic Report” diagnosed some structural and organisations issues related to knowledge dissemination. For instance, in the absence of a work documentation system, work management often relies on the discretion of the administrations and the transfer of accumulated experiences from veteran staff by succession, which is mostly based on oral communications or internal correspondence and memos.⁴⁰ In addition, the discussion revealed that the MoCTA and its two boards suffer from an ongoing shortage in allocations and financial resources, such that they started covering shortages in their annual budgets from Ministry of Finance allocations. In terms of human resources, there was an increase in the number of employees after 2003, especially with the hiring of many persons unqualified for the jobs they were appointed to. For example, the report illustrated that the current number of employees at the National Museum is 138, while in the past there were only 32. In addition, there is a concern that the existing cadre for antiquities is weak and not trained. It used to include 37 holders of higher degrees (Masters and PhDs), of whom only 7 remain, which can be mostly attributed to low salaries and poor security and employment conditions.⁴¹ National and local authorities need to develop their staff, as well as connecting to communities, in order to further conservation values.

The other significant point is that there are different legislative instruments related to national cultural heritage, including law, regulations and instructions, many of which are very old and not suitable for the present.⁴² This results in the accumulation of intertwined legislative and legal issues that must be studied and resolved. In addition,

³⁸ Sta10, 'Interview'.

³⁹ Arc7, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

⁴⁰ ProCare Services, 'Assisting the Government of Iraq to Develop a National tourism Strategy'.

⁴¹ Ibid., at 83-89.

⁴² Ibid., at 121.

the effective role, powers and authorities of the MoCTA are diminishing or being undermined by the rapidly evolving roles of local government and community leadership in the governorates.⁴³ Power struggles between local and central authorities impede the prospects of partnership and/or the creation of a status quo if local authorities have to take over and fill gaps when they cannot wait for the MoCTA and its boards to organise themselves, given their huge strategizing and restructuring agendas. In particular, the final report on the national strategic framework states that there are currently no quality control systems nor any quality assurance standards and mechanisms. It also states the rapid loss of local pride in and awareness of heritage values needed to ensure the protection and conservation of cultural assets and the distinctiveness of the social fabric. Currently, a significant rapid loss of the traditional urban fabric, vernacular styles and architecturally distinctive buildings is taking place, with inappropriate high rise development in heritage areas.⁴⁴

This appraisal of the structure of the Ministry implies that the government should consider national heritage through supporting the Ministry in different ways: for instance, financially. Politically, the government and the Council of Iraqi Representatives could focus on managing and protecting national and local heritage through supporting a clear ministry deal with them. The last amendment in 2015 made the Ministry a small part of the Ministry of Culture. Up to the present, the Ministry of Culture has not updated its website to communicate that it has become the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities. Moreover, the Ministry of Culture focuses on art more than other aspects, and so it is likely that the merging of the two ministries will result in a weakening of heritage protection.

To sum up, there appears to be no clear evidence of a coherent process or philosophy of heritage protection at national level because there is no clear organisational and regulatory structure or process on the ground. Up to the present, the multiple decision makers and institutions contribute to reducing the levels of understanding of heritage. The Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities, The Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works, The Religious Endowments, and local governments share

⁴³ Lr6, 'Interview'.

⁴⁴ ProCare Services, 'Assisting the Government of Iraq to Develop a National tourism Strategy', at 121.

responsibility for heritage protection. In terms of the Public Board of Heritage and Antiquities, it still needs government efforts to be able to protect national heritage. A key issue is changing the criteria for selecting the head of the board, from a political background to technical qualifications. According to the interview transcripts with some heritage elites and stakeholders, the criteria for the selection of the head of the Boards and the Minister are based on their political background rather than their experience. A second issue is the attention paid to supporting the staff through qualifications to develop, improve and protect national heritage, through training courses, workshops, and research activities. The Ministry overall needs clear plans, aims and objectives to outline the best future for Iraqi heritage, including a strategy to manage cultural heritage and tourism, so that it becomes a source of national income.

The Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works

The Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works (MMPW) is responsible for offering all the municipalities work, excluding electricity and communications. It holds the main responsibility for land use, town planning and developing cities and improving the environment. The structure of the Ministry consists of seven general directorates; two of these directly deal with cultural heritage: the General Directorate of Urban Planning, and the General Directorate of Municipalities (figure 7.2).⁴⁵

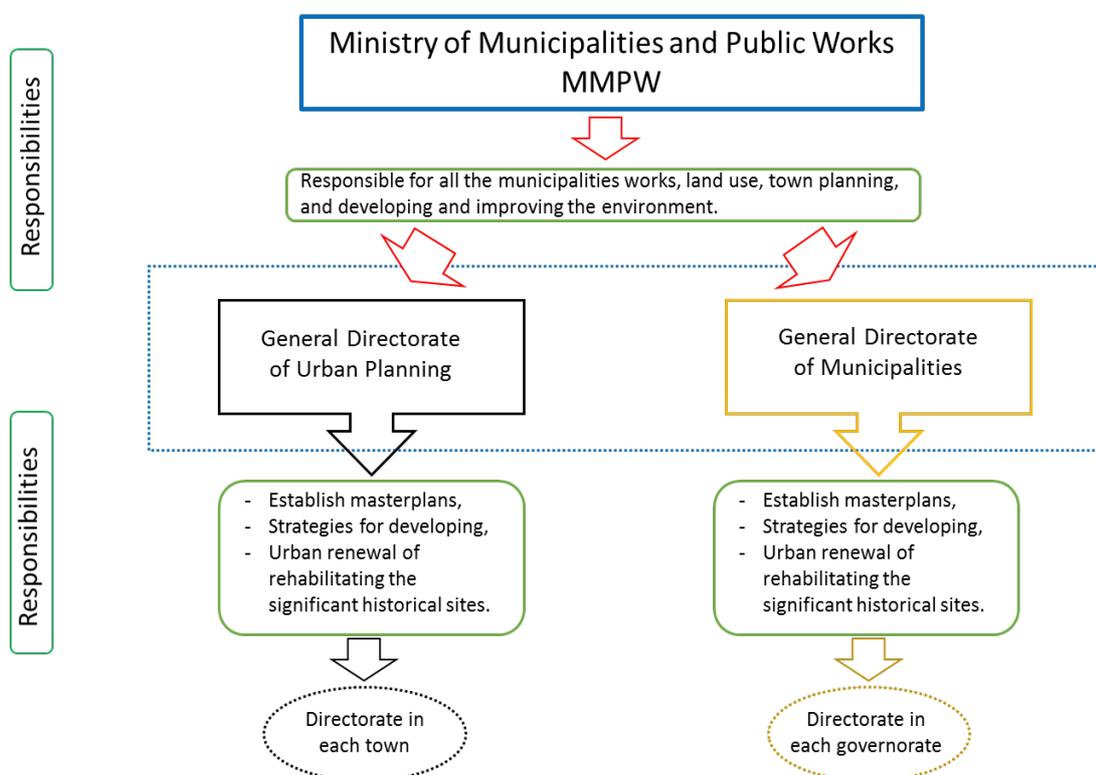


Figure 7.2 The structure and responsibilities of parts of the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works

The General Directorate of Urban Planning deals with all rural and urban cities in Iraq (excluding Kurdistan), through a directorate of urban planning in each governorate. Their main responsibilities are to establish master plans of cities, and to

⁴⁵ Anonymous, 'The Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works Web Page', <<http://www.mmpw.gov.iq/>>, accessed 17th of February 2016.

set out strategies and research projects for developing and enhancing Iraqi cities. In addition, it has a focus on urban renewal in terms of rehabilitating the significant historical, functional and aesthetic sites and conserving the significant historical and environment values of sites.⁴⁶ As we have already seen in the previous chapters, the possession of a master plan usually supersedes national or local regulations or policies. Therefore, the Directorate of Urban Planning has gained the additional power to grant permissions to any new project to establish and monitor any construction, and to participate in decision-making. In particular, the master plan at local level is the key component of developing, managing and monitoring urban areas, and a significant way of solving and improving their urban environment.⁴⁷ However, most of the master planning in the urban areas, with particular reference to Najaf, is still unsatisfactory, and cannot play a significant role in protecting and improving the built heritage.⁴⁸ In particular, Fethi stated that the Masters Plans in general had different problems at national level, such as a lack of planning standards, the absence of detailed statistical records, and a lack of policies and legislation.⁴⁹

The other main directorate of the ministry is the General Directorate of Municipalities, which covers all the Iraqi cities through the directorates of municipalities in each governorate, and has departments in each city or town. Their main functions are to offer public facilities and services, such as street cleaning and maintenance, and the implementation of master planning.⁵⁰ Accordingly, it is responsible for permissions for any new construction, maintenance, demolition or rebuilding of any property or site through a system called “building permits”. The process of getting building permits passes through different organisations, such as the directorate of town planning, the directorate of communication, and the directorate of general commissions.⁵¹ However, the current problems are building and construction without permits, resulting in development, such as the building of structures higher than the shrine, discussed in Chapter 3. DM1 stated that the regulations prevent any new construction inside the old town, only maintained

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Sta10, 'Interview'.

⁴⁸ Arc7, 'Interview'.

⁴⁹ Fethi, 'Urban Conservation in Iraq : The Case for Protecting the Cultural Heritage of Iraq with Special Reference to Baghdad Including a Comprehensive Inventory of Its Areas and Buildings of Historic or Architectural Interest.', (at 194 - 96).

⁵⁰ Anonymous, 'The Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works Web Page',

⁵¹ Ibid.

buildings permits are allowed, but what has happened in practice is completely different.⁵² In this sense, DM2 stated that the city governor is responsible, because he and his local government are the first representatives of the law on the ground, and they encouraged properties owners to continue building and developing the old town, based on examples such as Mecca and its clock tower (Figure 7.3).⁵³



Figure 7.3 Mecca clock tower overlooking Grand Mosque and Kaaba; (source: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/picture/2011/nov/10/mecca-hajj-grand-mosque-eyewitness>).

To summarise, government authorities seem unable to stop the destruction of heritage sites, or at least to control the new construction inside the cores of historical towns.⁵⁴ It needs real collaboration among all the national and local institutions to control all new development projects, particularly in the historical cities. Reactivating or setting out new legislation which encourages heritage protection is important and it would be erroneous to dismiss the power of the Ministry from the conservation framework, because it is responsible for giving permissions for any new construction or maintenance work.

⁵² Dm1, 'Interview'.

⁵³ Dm2, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

⁵⁴ Arc4, 'Interview'.

Religious Endowments

Until 2003, there was a Ministry of Endowments (*Awqaf*), which organised shrines, mosques, churches, religious schools and libraries and other religious buildings. Historically, the British authority established the first Iraqi endowments foundation during the early twentieth-century occupation and the Iraqi government established the first Ministry of 1920. Like other ministries, there have been numerous administrative and structural changes over time. After 2003, the Ministry was annulled and divided into three main organisations: *Al-Waqaf Al-Sunni* divan, *Al-Waqaf Al-Sheai* divan, and the Christian endowments, *Ezidian* and *Sabian* religious divans (Figure 7.4). In 2012, the Iraqi Council of Representatives set out Laws 56, 57, and 58 outlining these three organisations.⁵⁵ These three laws, like previous legislation, do not mention in any way the protection of significant religious buildings. It is notable that the religious endowments have many significant buildings, mosques and shrines. Ideally these organisations should protect them, or build bridges with the MoCTA to protect them in the best way.

As stated in the Chapter 2, the Article 10 of Law No.55 of 2002 for The Antiquities and Heritage of Iraq gives the permission to develop religious properties:

*“Mosques, Masjids, Holy Shrines, Monasteries, Convents, Tombs, Takaya, Churches, Inns and other ancient buildings, owned or constituted in Waqf, in the occupation of persons de facto or de jure whether they own or run such buildings, to be used for the purpose for which they have been built, taking into consideration development and expansion works in accordance with contemporary demands”.*⁵⁶

However, what has happened on the ground is that the religious endowment has demolished many significant mosques in Najaf old town under the pretext of development.⁵⁷ There are various reasons for the mismanagement of significant religious heritage. The first is that heritage protection is not the priority of the divans, whose attention is mainly on how to accommodate huge numbers of pilgrims.⁵⁸ In particular, the *Al-Waqaf Al-Sheai* tried to demolish and rebuild many mosques after 2003 and spent large sums on these specific projects. They thought the repression by

⁵⁵ Anonymous, 'Religious Divans Laws', *Iraqi Legislations*, 2012.

⁵⁶ Presidency of Iraqi Republic, 'Law No.55 of 2002 for the Antiquities and Heritage of Iraq'.

⁵⁷ Sta4, 'Interview'.

⁵⁸ Arc4, 'Interview'.

Saddam’s government was the main cause of the neglect of these historical mosques, and that they should redevelop them. However, the final outcomes are new buildings without any significant heritage value. Heritage elites and researchers raised concerns about the destruction of significant ancient mosques, saying this should cease.⁵⁹ Sta1 stated that the directorate of the *Al-Waqaf Al-Sheai* in Najaf did not take care most of Najaf’s heritage. The first case study demonstrated how the directorate demolished and rebuilt the *Al-Tosi* mosque without offering any opportunity to protect it.⁶⁰

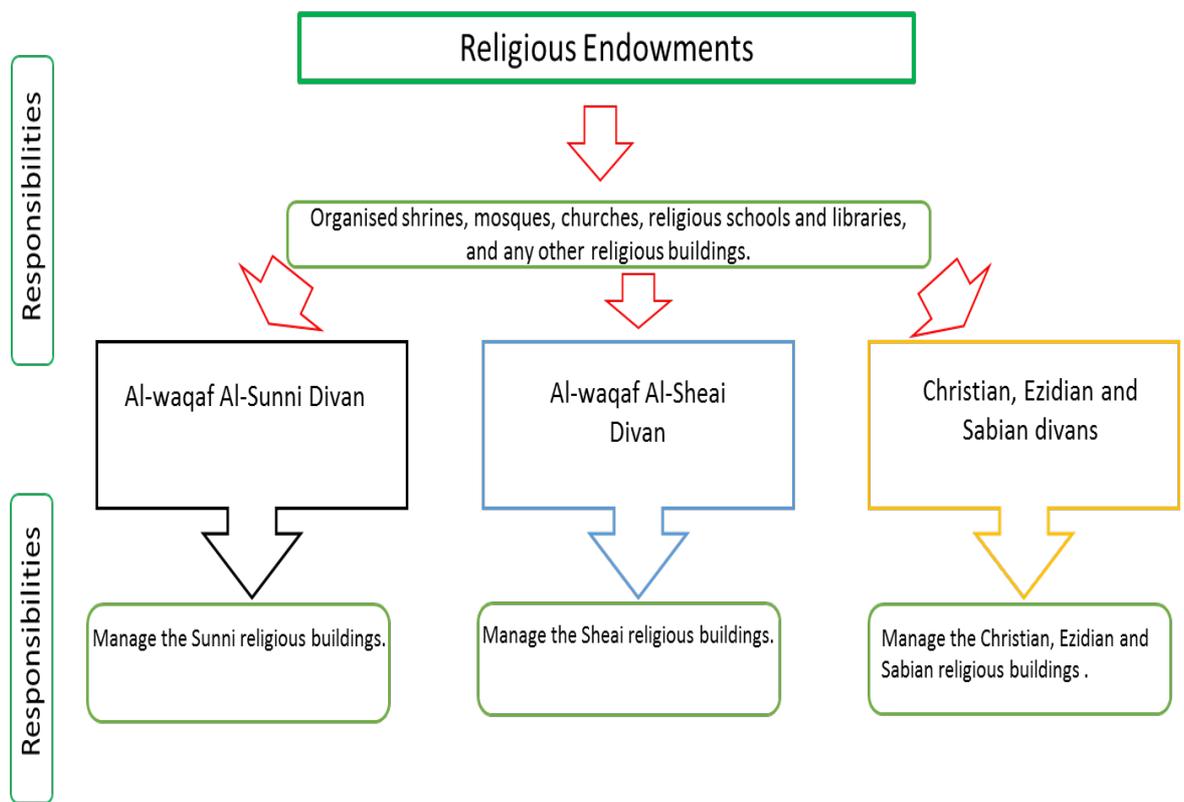


Figure 7.4 The structure of the Religious Endowments

There seems to be some evidence to indicate how heritage is understood at an institutional level. Sta7 stated that, during his journey to Najaf, he collected a piece of tile about 20 X 20 cm that had been dumped in the street, after the demolition of

⁵⁹ Sta8, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2014).

⁶⁰ Sta1, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

historical religious buildings.⁶¹ This means the understanding of heritage is unacceptably low, and developers, workers and building authorities do not understand what heritage is, and how to protect or manage it. Conservation workers and architects need specialist training in order to learn conservation principles.

According to Sta8, some of the decision makers in Najaf, for example, wanted to demolish the entire old town, except for the shrine, and then rebuild it in a modern style.⁶² RS1 emphasised that we need to enhance the Najaf old town, ensuring visitor accommodation, but ensuring that it does not begin to resemble Dubai.⁶³ Debate continues about who is responsible for the lack of heritage awareness on the ground. Arc8 confirmed that builders, workers or local residences solely responsible for redevelopments are led and controlled by decision makers and authorities, such as national and local governments.⁶⁴ Arc7 stated that the education system, with particular reference to architecture, is the main cause of low levels of awareness in respect of protecting the built heritage.⁶⁵ In reality it would appear that both governments and local communities play a key part in heritage destruction, but to varying degrees.

The administration of holy sites and noble shrines is covered by Law No.19 of 2005, specifically in relation to organisations whose main aim is to manage and administrate the Shia holy sites and noble shrines, and to expand the shrines and sites to be able to accommodate the huge number of visitors.⁶⁶ Most of the general secretariat council members are clerics, without any knowledge or background in heritage planning or management.⁶⁷ Therefore, Iraqi heritage in general, with particular reference to religious sites, is suffering from many decisions which may hurt local and national identity through a lack of attention to local and national heritage. Sta2 stated that religious scholars within Al-Sistani with an interest in cultural heritage were a minority.⁶⁸ However, during the Friday prayer sermon on the 24th of December 2010, Al-Sistani, through his assistant, Abdul Mahdi Al-Karbaliee,

⁶¹ Sta7, '2015', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

⁶² Sta8, 'Interview'.

⁶³ Rs1, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

⁶⁴ Arc8, 'Interview'.

⁶⁵ Arc7, 'Interview'.

⁶⁶ Iraqi National Assembly, 'Act of Administration for the Holy Sites and Shrines Shiite / No19', 19 (Baghdad, 2005).

⁶⁷ Arc8, 'Interview'.

⁶⁸ Sta2, 'Interview'.

called for the protection of the heritage of religious cities in Iraq. He mentioned that it should develop and extend the shrines, but not be based on the demolition of the city's heritage. Religious cities such as Najaf, Karbala and Al-Kadhimiya have many heritage buildings, as well as a traditional fabric, therefore these should be protected. Finally, he stated that it is not acceptable to demolish any historical buildings because they suffered from neglect, but each should be protected for its architectural heritage.⁶⁹ In fact, this discourse marks the culmination of the protection of Iraqi heritage in general, with particular reference to religious cities. According to Sta2, the dominant tendency of the period was that religious scholars, with particular reference to Al-Sistani, did not agree to nominate the Imam Ali Shrine in the world heritage list. This sermon emerged in response to this debate, and shows that he adopted and supported protection heritage.⁷⁰

In conclusion, religious endowments are a significant player in terms of protecting national and local heritage. They need to be aware of its significant cultural heritage, and they also need to build strong relationships with other government organisations to share experiences and cooperate effectively to safeguard priceless religious heritage.

⁶⁹ Ali Al-Sistani Representative, 'Friday Prayer Sermon', (Karbala, 2010).

⁷⁰ Sta2, 'Interview'.

Educational System Framework

The educational system is one of the key factors in terms of understanding, designating and protecting cultural heritage at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. This research focuses on architectural, town planning and urban planning studies. The structure of the education system in Iraq is divided into two ministries, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry Higher Education and Scientific Research. Architectural Studies is one of the main areas that deal with understanding, conserving and managing cultural heritage. Until 2003 there were only four architectural departments offering undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in Iraq: at Baghdad, Al-Mosul, the Technology and Al-Nahrain Universities. According to the student guide for central admissions to Iraqi universities 2015/2016, there are 11 architectural departments, excluding the Kurdistan region: in Baghdad, Al-Mustansiriyah, Basra, Mosul, Technology, Babylon, Al-Nahrain, Kerbala, Wasit, Al-Muthana, and Samara University. In addition, two private departments were established in 2014: Al-Farabi and Uruk University College.⁷¹ To understand architectural education in depth, I selected the oldest two departments in Iraq, on which most other department syllabuses are based.

Undergraduate architectural studies take five academic years, each year consisting of two terms, and this is the same at all other architectural schools and departments in Iraq. In 1959, the oldest architectural department in Iraq was established at the College of Engineering, the University of Baghdad.⁷² Postgraduate studies were introduced, with an award of an M.Sc. degree in Architecture for two academic years at the end of the 1970s, in three specializations: the environment and technology of architecture; the theory of architecture and Islamic architecture, and housing and urban design. Similarly, a Ph.D. in Architecture was introduced in the 1980s. The Ph.D. curriculum period is a minimum of three academic years and includes philosophy, history, the sciences, theories of architecture and Islamic architecture, besides technological sciences, city development, urban development and housing.⁷³

According to the department's syllabus, there are two modules at undergraduate level

⁷¹ Anonymous, 'The Student's Guide for Central Admission to the Iraqi Universities 2015/2016', in *Planning and Follow-up Department Studies* (ed.), (Baghdad: Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2015a).

⁷² Anonymous, 'Department of Architectural Engineering / the University of Baghdad', <<http://www.coeng.uobaghdad.edu.iq/default.aspx>>, accessed 22nd of February 2016.

⁷³ Ibid.

focusing on conservation and local architecture: Arc 310 Methods of Conservation for year 3 and Arc 507 Contemporary Iraqi Architecture. It should be noted that both are 2 hours per week for 1 semester,⁷⁴ and that the first module is 2 units of 39 units, and the second 2 of 36 units at undergraduate level. It is notable that, according to the syllabus, there is a module Arc 616 Conservation and Application Design.⁷⁵ However, two of the staff members confirmed that there is no postgraduate conservation module. Arc8 stated that, up to the present, conservation studies are self-study courses, and there is no cooperation between the Arc 310 module leader and the staff of the design module: students are not obliged to use conservation principles and strategies during the design module. On the other hand, most students are focused on design because the units receive higher credits than others. Also, they are required to pass the design module at the first attempt, but other modules allow a second attempt, and sometimes the exam or department board moderate lower marks to ensure cohort success.⁷⁶

The Department of Architecture at the University of Technology in Baghdad was established in 1977. Postgraduate studies in its two branches of architectural and urban design are distinguished by their high academic standards, achieved through MScs and PhD thesis qualifications, which cover environmental, social and rehabilitation aspects.⁷⁷ The department does not offer a specific module dealing with the conservation of built heritage. There is a “Domestic Iraqi Architecture” module BAE 407 for the fourth year. Again, it is only 2 hours per week for only 1 semester, and only 2 units out of a total 38, so it cannot cover all the vernacular architecture aspects.⁷⁸ My own experience as an architect who graduated from this department was that I did not take any module about conservation in depth, either in Bachelor’s or Master’s studies. My Master’s dissertation focused on the conservation of the townscape of historical streets in Baghdad, but it was an independent study with my tutor.

⁷⁴ The semester in Iraq is usually 10 weeks.

⁷⁵ Anonymous, 'The Syllabus of the Architectural Department', (Department of Architecture; Baghdad: The Collage of Engineering / The University of Baghdad, 2016c).

⁷⁶ Arc8, 'Interview'.

⁷⁷ Anonymous, 'Department of Architectural Engineering', <<http://www.uotechnology.edu.iq/dep-architecture/>>, accessed 23 February 2016.

⁷⁸ Please find the appendices.

Additionally, there is the Centre of Urban and Regional Planning for postgraduate studies at the University of Baghdad. This centre was established in 1971, following an increasing appreciation of the spatial dimension of socio-economic development. According to Law No. 116 of 1971, the Centre of Urban and Regional Planning should provide the central government with specialists qualified by a common planning language to support urban and regional master plans in order to control the spatial dimension to achieve greater socio-economic efficiency. To achieve that, the centre approved a study program that corresponded with specialised requirements.⁷⁹ At the Master's level, the syllabus has no clear module dealing with conservation or cultural heritage. There is only one module in Semester 3 that deals with the management of land use planning, which focuses on the concept of land-use planning at national, regional and city levels, along with the spatial environment and the capabilities and limitations affecting the identification of functional uses. The value of it is 1 unit per 36 units, so the coverage of the understanding of heritage values is extremely limited. The PhD studies of the centre offer an optional module, "conservation and urban renewal". According to the syllabus, it contains urban heritage renewal techniques and their application in Iraqi cities and the Arabic Islamic countries.⁸⁰ However, firstly it is an optional module and therefore take up could be limited; and secondly it only comprises 2 units and 2 hours per week study for one semester, and it thus cannot cover all conservation and renewal aspects.

The efforts of the University of Kufa culminated in 2011 in the establishment of the Town Planning College, which has three main departments: urban, environmental, and regional planning. The Department of Urban Planning offers two modules dealing with heritage protection and management in year four; urban restoration and progress in Semester 1; and urban management in Semester 2.⁸¹ However, there are various debates about this college. The main concern is more about the description of the college graduates, because the planner is not a familiar role in Iraq, where the government does not offer a clear description of the profession. As a result, students prefer to study at other colleges, for instance in engineering. Hence, the Ministry of

⁷⁹ Anonymous, 'Centre of Urban and Regional Planning for Post Graduate Studies', <<http://www.iurp.uobaghdad.edu.iq/PageViewer.aspx?id=2>>, accessed 23 of February 2016.

⁸⁰ Anonymous, 'Post Graduate Syllabus', (Baghdad: Centre of Urban and Regional Planning for post graduate studies / the University of Baghdad, 2016d).

⁸¹ Anonymous, 'The College Timetable', (The department of Urban Plnning; Kufa / Najaf: The College of the town plannig, 2016e).

Higher Education needs to rethink this issue, in order to encourage students to study there. On the other hand, the college could revisit its curricula to ensure that they are suitable for community and government needs, covering all cultural heritage aspects, vernacular architecture, and conservation management processes, to create a graduate generation able to face heritage and urban challenges. In conclusion, it would seem that successive consultations have revealed that school students do not generally pursue planning in education, due to a lack of higher education opportunities.

Overall, there is a lack of conservation and heritage competencies in Iraqi universities. The first wave of conservation specialists studied in the UK and returned to Iraq at the end of the 1970s. The Baath party at that time was the only power at any level, and nobody could change the roles to acknowledge or accommodate this new expertise. As a result, they gradually left the country.⁸² Currently, conservation specialists do not have enough capacity to build a strong resource of architectural conservation education; they study outside of Iraq and have tried to self-transfer experiences from their perspective. Conversely, compared to other countries in the region, these countries have been dependent on experts from the UK, USA and France to build up a strong conservation system.⁸³ Up to the present, the Iraqi government is eager to encourage its postgraduate students to study abroad through the reactivation of a scholarship system, but cultural heritage studies is not a priority. For example, the Higher Committee for Education Development (HCED) in Iraq gave 5 extra points to students who wanted to study landscape architecture.⁸⁴ Conservation and restoration of the built heritage does not take up a large part of teaching in all these departments, and sometimes the curriculum and syllabus does not include cultural heritage or conservation as a module.

⁸² Arc8, 'Interview'.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ HCED Iraq official web page: http://www.hcediraq.org/HCED_Official_website/home.html

Non-Government Organisations and Professional Societies

The movement of NGOs in Iraq which deals with cultural heritage began in the early part of the nineteenth century. Different NGOs deal with understanding and protecting heritage at national and local level. Before 2003, the central government controlled all decisions and NGOs were closely related to the government. However, after 2003 decentralization encouraged NGOs to take part at local level; nevertheless, they are still without clear powers.

The Iraqi Engineers Society is one of the biggest and oldest professional societies in Iraq involved in public and social life. It was established in 1938, and in 1959 the Iraqi Engineers Union was established. The first board consisted of the chair and co-chair, as well as the heads of the five departments (civil, mechanical, electrical, architectural, and chemical). According to union documents, up to the present 6166 architects and more than 160000 engineers have been registered, along with 323 consultant architect offices. The architects in the Engineers Union do not have much authority, probably because they are a small group compared to other departments. The Iraqi Engineers Union, as with other NGOs, does not have an impact on decision making, which comes from the government. Before 2003, supporters of the Baath party controlled the whole decision-making processes, and as a result unions had no voice.⁸⁵ However, since 2003 the Iraqi Engineers Union has been trying to participate in different aspects of governance, though it is not able to do this as much as it would like.⁸⁶ It should be noted that stopping heritage destruction was discussed at the first annual symposium of the union in 2016, and one of the recommendations was a demonstration of solidarity to support Iraqi heritage in the historical core of Baghdad, and to protest and lobby, but the response from officials was limited. Consequently, the union cannot do more than protest, and most of the time nobody responds, although more than half of the current ministers, as well as the Prime Minister, are engineers.⁸⁷

Since 2003, some NGOs and forums have been dealing with the protection of cultural heritage at local levels. These include “the Association Publishers Forum”, “the Najaf’s Writers Union”, “the Monday Forum”, and “the International Energy

⁸⁵ Arc10, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2016).

⁸⁶ Arc4, 'Interview'.

⁸⁷ Arc10, 'Interview'.

and Environment Foundation”. Most of these groups organise regular weekly meetings with participation from heritage elites and local citizens. Gradually, these forums have been building bases of understanding of cultural heritage. One of the best outcomes of the NGOs is the “Najaf Charter”, alongside an initiative to save and protect the Imam Ali Shrine and urban identity of Najaf old town.⁸⁸ Despite this, these outcomes still cannot stop heritage destruction in practice. These forums and organisations do not have authority and are not able to participate in decision-making or the enforcement of existing regulations.

In fact, conservation and protection work in Iraq needs the power of the government to succeed, and one question that therefore needs to be asked is whether both governments, local and central, can support the Najaf charter or not. Naturally, the process of protecting Najaf’s heritage is not unique to NGOs or governments; in fact, the process needs a real collaboration among local and central governments, NGOs, local communities and heritage specialists. Sta1 stated that, when local communities do not have power, nobody listens to them. Thus, NGOs have no voice in heritage decisions.⁸⁹

Ideally the local community should be able to participate in the process of decision making, and the government should therefore encourage them to take part in it. There are different ways to encourage this: for instance, selecting representatives to make connections with other parties. Locally, putting on workshops and seminars to discuss and present specific issues to build bridges between decision makers and communities would raise awareness and enable wider voices to be heard, but this is ultimately a question of democratic practices in Iraq. In terms of Najaf old town, the Shrine Secretary hosted a lecture inside the shrine to present the 90m extension project, and asked the heritage elites and local communities to attend and discuss the project with the designers.⁹⁰ This was a good start in public relations, but it needs further steps. In particular, Sta5, for instance, complained that no one invited him to attend the lecture.⁹¹ The most significant issue is that local forums in Najaf have

⁸⁸ Anonymous, 'Najaf Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Historic Towns, Urban Areas, Monuments, and Sites', (Najaf My Identity 2013; Najaf: International Energy and Environment Foundation, 2013).

⁸⁹ Sta1, 'Interview'.

⁹⁰ Department of Architecture. Shahid Beheshti University and Presented By: Ali Attia, 'Lecture in the Shrine: The Extension Project of the Imam Ali Shrine', (Najaf: Imam Ali Shrine Institution, 2015).

⁹¹ Sta5, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

continued to support local heritage, and have set out some initiatives for this reason. Generally, NGOs can play a significant role in increasing people's awareness about protecting heritage values, and in particular they can contribute to training at national and local level and, in some specific cases, take over the protection of significant sites or buildings.

Religious Authorities

Before 2003, Saddam Hussein's regime tried to reduce religious power, and most decisions came direct from Baghdad. However, as was indicated earlier in this chapter, religious scholars have been key players in managing religious cities, especially since 2003.

Religious scholars have two viewpoints in Najaf. The first group feel that architects and designers do not know the size of the current problem: that the old town cannot provide adequate services for pilgrimages and visitors. These people believe the old town should be demolished and some parts redeveloped to accommodate the huge visitor numbers, reconstructing the historic centre as a modern city, such as Mecca, Medina or Mashhad. The second group (with Al-Sistani) feel that historic environment decisions should be left to the experts and specialists in architecture. However, Arc7 argued that, at national and local levels, there are not enough architects, or those that exist do not have sufficient competence to play a significant role in protecting the heritage.⁹² Sta2 also added that the second group, representing the Al-Sistani office, wanted two main outcomes: Najaf old town should appear as a sacred city, and the religious schools must stay inside the old town. They believe that other processes should be managed by specialists, architects, and planners.⁹³ Finally, a small group supports an intermediate position. For instance, RS1 stated that the old town needed to be developed, and its significant heritage protected, and that therefore there should be a balance between these two approaches.⁹⁴

At the local level, the Shrine Secretariat has played a significant role in terms of decision-making regarding the old town. However, the main concern is that some of the Secretariat members do not understand the full heritage value of the shrine and its urban context, and therefore it cannot be managed optimally.⁹⁵ As a result, decisions continue to threaten the historical fabric of the town because its protection is not their first priority. It should be stated that the General Secretariat has spoken of the shrine's intention is to manage the whole of the Najaf old town, in addition to the

⁹² Arc7, 'Interview'.

⁹³ Sta2, 'Interview'.

⁹⁴ Rs1, 'Interview'.

⁹⁵ Sta1, 'Interview'.

shrine.⁹⁶ Consequently, the Shrine Secretary and other religious scholars do not have sufficient regard to other private properties (and ownerships) in the old town, only some specific properties, such as significant religious schools, dwellings and mosques.⁹⁷ Moreover, DM2 argued that there is no clear approach for protecting Najaf's heritage from the Secretariat, and any positive actions that have been taken has been due to the efforts of some individual members.⁹⁸ As previously outlined, most of the administration thinks the shrine is a sacred place for worship, and not a museum, so the priority should offer enough spaces, places and services to pilgrims. A clear example of the Shrine Secretariat's intention was the *Al-Rass* mosque, when the head ignored the objection of architectural elites and decided to demolish the original building.⁹⁹

Given that Al-Sistani emphasised that the ramshackle condition of buildings and dwellings in the old town are not an excuse for demolishing them, and that they should be restored or rehabilitated to look like world heritage cities,¹⁰⁰ there is an opportunity that architectural and heritage elites can now act in order to preserve what is left of Najaf's heritage. However, DM2 stated that the bulldozers continue to demolish Najaf old town, expressing the view that heritage elites can only reduce the speed of such changes, but not stop them.¹⁰¹ In summary, it can be said that religious authorities are one of the main key players in decision making: architects, planners and decision makers cannot avoid them, but they should put forward proposals based on Al-Sistani's edict to protect heritage, to safeguard Najaf's cultural heritage. They should also offer solutions which can increase capacity while protecting heritage buildings.

⁹⁶ Dm1, 'Interview'.

⁹⁷ Arc7, 'Interview'.

⁹⁸ Dm2, 'Interview'.

⁹⁹ Sta2, 'Interview'.

¹⁰⁰ Ali Al-Sistani, 'Friday Prayer Sermon', (Karbala, 2010).

¹⁰¹ Dm2, 'Interview'.

Decentralization and Local Democracy

Before 2003, Governorates and local communities stated that they did not participate effectively or influentially in central decisions concerning their respective areas. At that time, all authority was conferred in the office of the President, and in some cases the Ministry of the Interior. The local councils and governors were controlled from above and therefore had little real power in decision-making. As a result, urban planners, designers and heritage authorities had neither collaboration or interaction with local communities nor much control over implementation of development. Consequently, their work was limited only to the technical issues of spatial urban planning, such as infrastructure rehabilitation, employment generation and private sector development, with no economic or social components.¹⁰² In 2006, the new Iraqi Constitution was adopted, with a hierarchy under central government control, including local government institutions and authorities. In 2008 the Council of Iraqi representatives issued Law 21, which explained the powers of the provinces. According to this law, a new approach to decentralization meant that the provincial council become the highest legislative authority in the province, with the ability to manage the Governorate according to the decentralised system. The power has now been shared between local and central government, but there remain sticking points.¹⁰³ National and local democracy has grown; 8.5 million Iraqi people participated in the first elected national and local governments in 2005. In the same year, more than 10 million Iraqis voted for the new Iraqi Constitution, and it should be noted that the Iraqi system adopted gender quotas to ensure women's representation of no less than 25 percent of the Iraqi Representatives Council.¹⁰⁴

In terms of the building and construction field, the main concern is the selection of designers or contractors based on individual relationships. Arc9 stated that some projects for the Najaf capital of Islamic culture 2012 were contracted because there was a relationship between decision-makers and investors or designers. As a result, a hotel design was selected that paid no attention to the local architecture, mirroring

¹⁰² Planning United Nations Human Settlements Programme in Collaboration with School of Architecture, Landscape, Newcastle University 'The State of Iraq Cities Report 2006 / 2007', (Newcastle: UN- HABITATS and Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works, 2007) at 54.

¹⁰³ Anonymous, 'The Law of Governorates Not Incorporated into a Region No 21 of 2008 and Its Amendments'.

¹⁰⁴ United Nations Human Settlements Programme in Collaboration with School of Architecture, 'The State of Iraq Cities Report 2006 / 2007', at 60.

Dubai-style architecture.¹⁰⁵ In this particular, the report on the national strategy framework stated that the local controls and executive tools at the governorate level ignore or contradict Antiquities and Heritage Law. They allow or tolerate the distortion or removal of heritage buildings, which are demolished without going back to the heritage authorities, and are usually replaced with buildings that damage the heritage environment and lack quality.¹⁰⁶ In addition, the UN-HABITAT report diagnosed the weakness of urban governance in Iraq in three main points: a lack of institutional capacity and quality; non-participatory planning and implementation of development interventions; and no mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the performance of local government.¹⁰⁷ Overall, the decentralization of government has weakened the effort to protect valuable heritage assets, because most decision-makers still do not understand the concept of heritage value. Consequently, there is a need for structured support for local governments through workshops and training courses that can help to develop better local knowledge and engagement.

¹⁰⁵ Arc9, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2016).

¹⁰⁶ ProCare Services, 'Assisting the Government of Iraq to Develop a National tourism Strategy', at 65.

¹⁰⁷ United Nations Human Settlements Programme in Collaboration with School of Architecture, 'The State of Iraq Cities Report 2006 / 2007', at 159 - 60.

Conclusion

Based on the above, there is a need to address the overlaps, contradictions and problems arising from a large number of accumulated legislative tools and institutions that are still effective by virtue of law. The roles of government departments and authorities require inter-agency consultation, including with local communities and NGOs, because without clear structures for collaboration, cultural heritage will continue to be lost. In fact, most administrations seem confused in their attempts to understand the legal interpretations that govern their structure, organization and relations.

The biggest dilemma in the current attempt to restructure may lie in the tendency for issues to be decided on the basis of the convictions of particular individuals and groups, without any systematic adoption of clear and standard evaluation criteria. A clear heritage documentation system and robust qualifications and training courses/programs for the cadres of other ministries and establishments are essential, wherever their operations correspond to tourism and antiquities. To conclude, it is imperative that there is a close working relationship with the Ministry of Higher Education and other pertinent partners to develop knowledge, skills and qualifications in tourism and antiquities, as well as raising people's awareness of heritage. This needs to be in accordance with the contemporary international criteria of UNESCO and ICOMOS.

I would argue that there is a significant lack of specialists and experienced staff to understand and protect national and local heritage. In this particular, Fethi stated that restoration of significant buildings on the ground often means simply demolishing the building and then rebuilding it with a new modern and entirely different one.¹⁰⁸ Although much money has been spent on developing and managing significant Islamic architecture, the process does not reflect local identities or other local priorities. Non-specialists are managing and making decisions on historical mosques and other buildings, with the decision makers unable to understand the cultural heritage and conservation matters and unable to implement them. In fact, the lack of understanding of heritage, architectural learning and conservation regulations, as

¹⁰⁸ Fethi, 'Urban Conservation in Iraq : The Case for Protecting the Cultural Heritage of Iraq with Special Reference to Baghdad Including a Comprehensive Inventory of Its Areas and Buildings of Historic or Architectural Interest.', (at 212.

well as the absence of clear architectural types, which can represent the local or national architecture, are the main problems regarding protecting and managing heritage on the ground, in particular, the lack of educational curriculums that deal with conservation management of built heritage. The architectural schools or departments, as well as other related departments, should be encouraged to adopt clear modules on the conservation management of Iraqi heritage, with particular funds or scholarships from other institutions, such as the *Awqaf*. Students should be encouraged to think more about vernacular architectural elements, particularly in the context of their designs. Accordingly, new teaching methods could be adopted with modules that combine theoretical approaches and designs. Otherwise, if the graduation projects of architecture departments still focus on “Tamayouz Excellence Award”¹⁰⁹ without paying attention to local challenges,¹¹⁰ Iraqi heritage will gradually lose its local identity.

Additionally, there is ambiguity in terms of the limits to the powers of a number of entities whose roles and work intersect with tourism and antiquities, including, for example, the Tourism and Antiquities Committees in Governorate Councils, the Heritage Section at Baghdad Municipality and the Shiite and Sunni Endowments (*Awqaf*), with their apparatuses in different governorates. Hence, the solution includes reactivating existing policies and establishing new policies, and politics and regulations to protect, manage and rehabilitate the national heritage new institutional deals related to listing, managing, monitoring and protecting significant buildings and monuments. I will cover this in more detail in the recommendations chapter. There is an urgent need to strengthen the institutional capacity necessary to implement the instructions and take stringent action against offenders and perpetrators of violations because the weakness currently lies in implementation rather than in the regulations per se.

According to the explanation and analyses of the current understanding of conservation values in the Iraqi context, with particular reference to the three case studies in Najaf, there are significant findings which will be explained here. First of all, there is a significant overlap between multiple decision makers as shown in figures 7.5, and 7.6.

¹⁰⁹ Anonymous, 'Tamayouz Excellence Award', <<http://www.tamayouz-award.com/about.html>>

¹¹⁰ Arc8, 'Interview'.

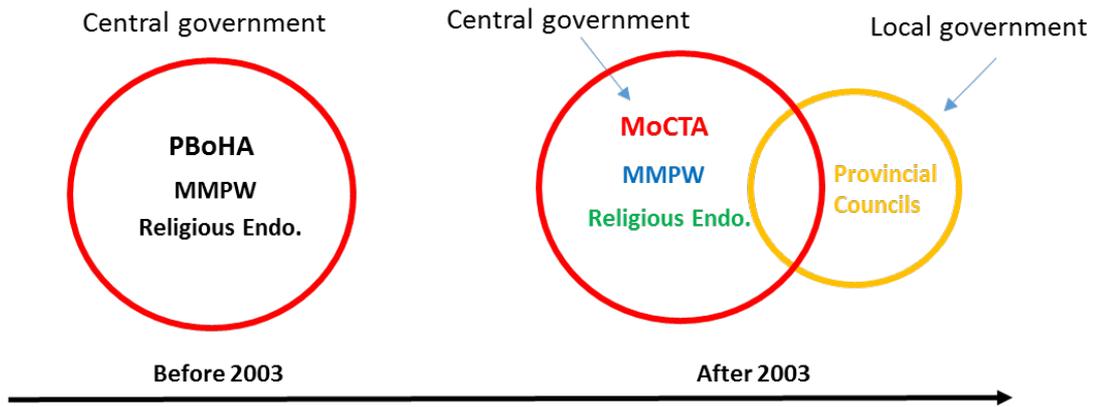


Figure 7.5 The degree of overlap during making decisions (before and after 2003)

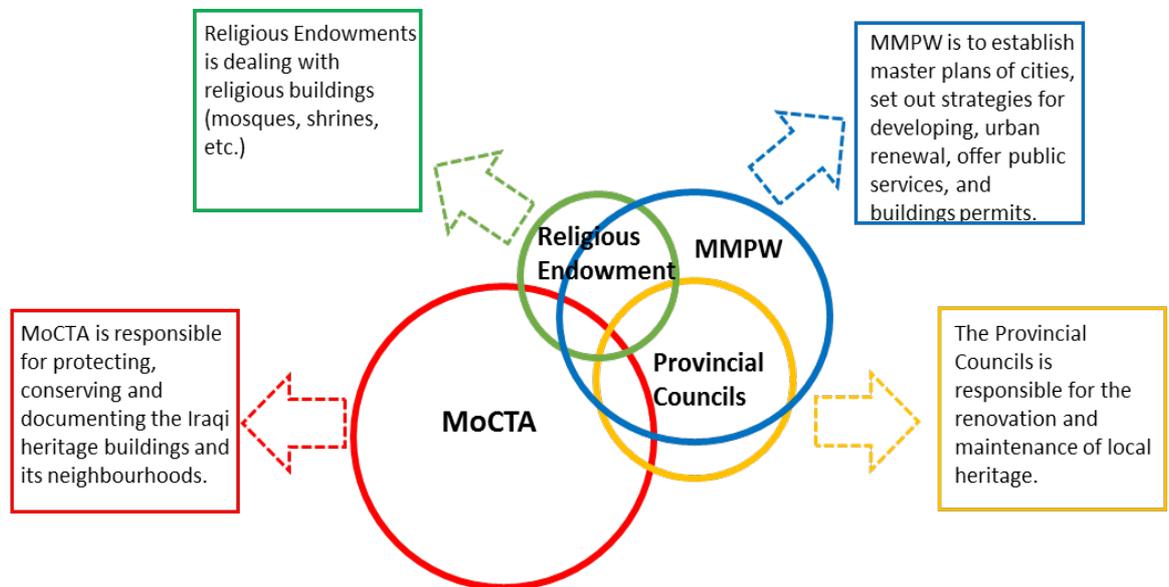


Figure 7.6 Current Heritage responsibilities

The main problem is that in some cases the decisions come independently and decision makers do not speak to each other; for instance, during the extension projects of the Imam Ali Shrine. Figure (7.5) shows that local government after 2003 appeared as a new key player in managing and developing historical areas on the ground. As we have already seen in Chapter 2, there is an unclear relationship between the central and local government in terms of managing heritage, and each part is based on different legislation or policy. Through the 3 case studies, I can state that local government responsibility, for example, is not clear, and takes a different form from case to case. The first case study of the urban fabric shows that local

government do not take the responsibility of protecting and managing heritage, as the main power on the ground. All their attention is on demolishing the historical fabric and constructing new buildings, in order for Najaf to become a contemporary city. The shrine case study explained that local government supported the central government contracted with Llewelyn Davies and Dewan, but the shrine institution ignored them and contracted with the Beheshti to design the extension projects. Furthermore, the *Khan Al-Shilan* rehabilitation process shows there is a kind of collaboration between the central government and the PBoHA. Overall, these types of overlap and sharing of responsibilities usually do not involve a clear legal framework, weakening national and local heritage and the level of understanding. It should be noted that the central government also do not have a clear overview of managing national and local heritage. For example, Figure (7.7) shows how the heritage organisations have changed their structure and responsibilities during the last century. This overlap is not only limited to the sharing of management responsibilities, but has been extended to cover historical surveying, central and local listing, religious buildings, and development control, among others (Figures 7.8, 7.9, 7.10, 7.11, and 7.12).

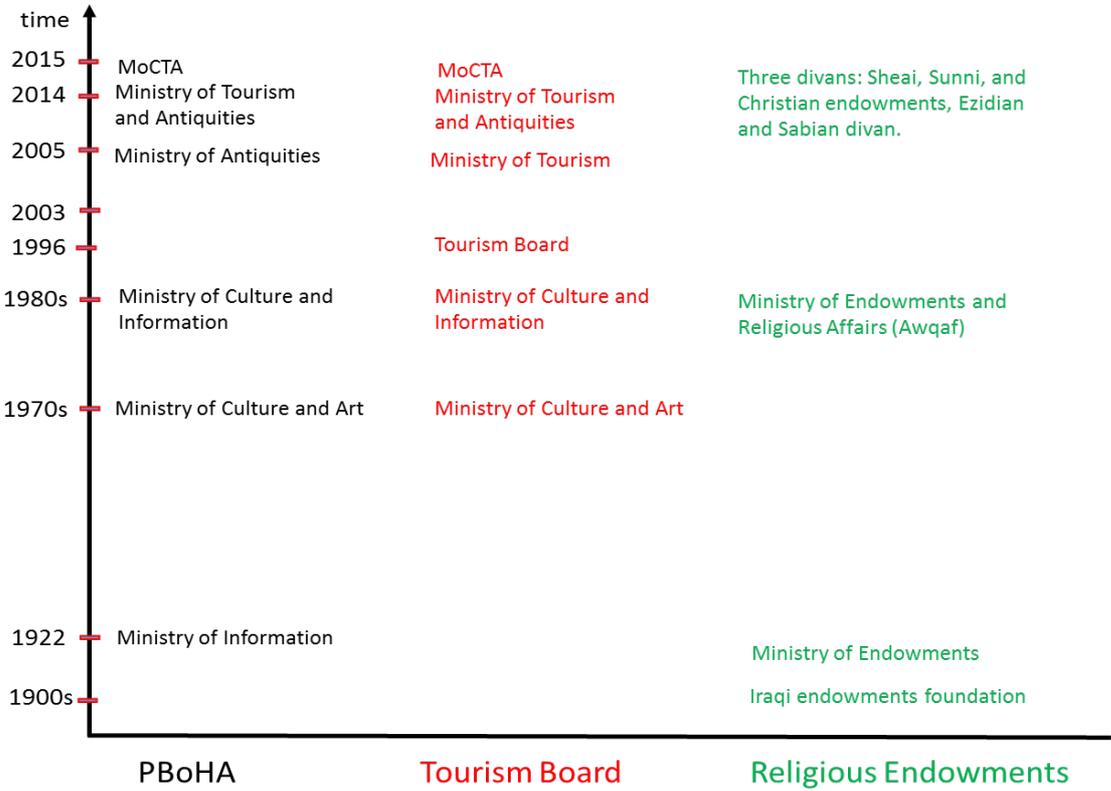


Figure 7.7 Developing Heritage management organisations during last century

Figure (7.8) shows the overlap in responsibilities for historical surveying from the MoCTA, which is responsible for documenting all historical sites via the PBoHA. However, other institutions are dealing with historical surveying, such as MMPW through the master plans of cities, as shown through Dewan reports. Land owners also take part in historical surveying, the clearest example being the Imam Ali Shrine Institution.

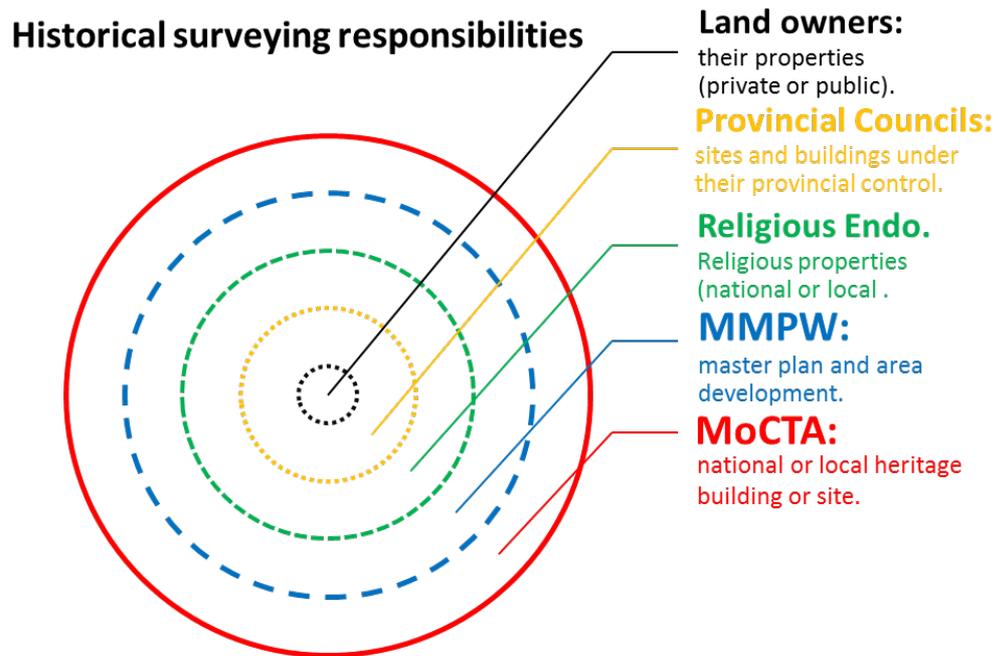


Figure 7.8 Historical surveying responsibilities

The listing responsibilities also differ from case to case, and Figures (7.9, and 7.10) show the MoCTA as the main organisation responsible of listing heritage sites or buildings. It should be noted that local government appeared as the second listing power at local level. In terms of religious buildings or sites, the study found that religious endowments are the main responsible organisation (Figure 7.11). The absence of clear legislation on the ground has allowed the religious endowment to demolish many significant mosques and religious buildings in Najaf, as explained in the Chapter 3. Figure (7.12) shows that development control is also shared between different organisations. For instance, the MoCTA is responsible for all national heritage, while the MMPW is responsible for masterplans and building permits. However, from the shrine case study, it can be stated that the building owner (the Shrine Institution) is also the main power, in practice.

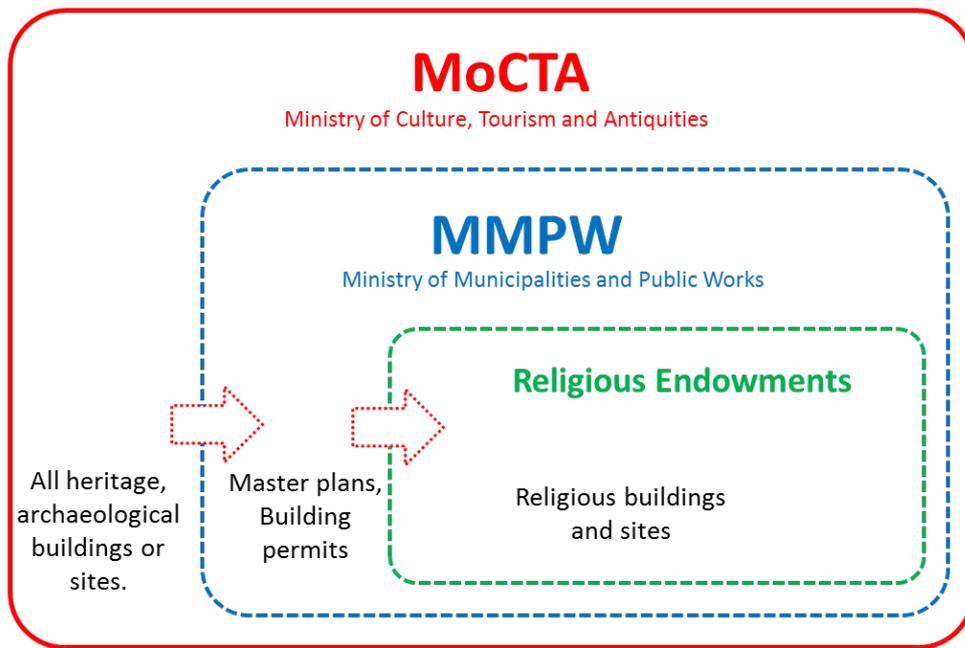


Figure 7.9 Central listing responsibilities

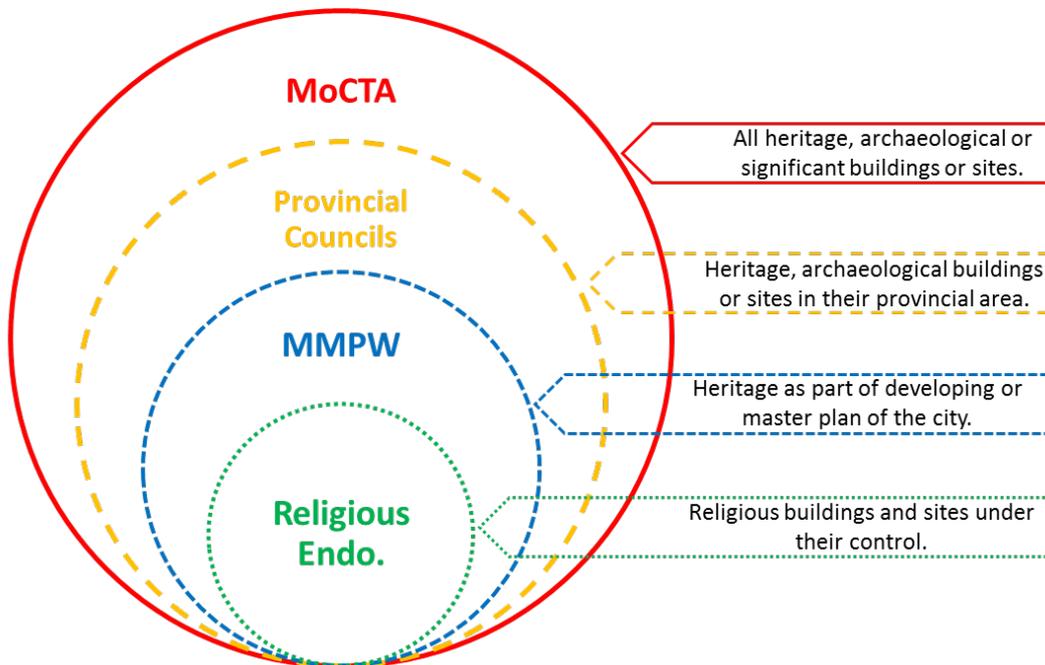


Figure 7.10 Local listing responsibilities

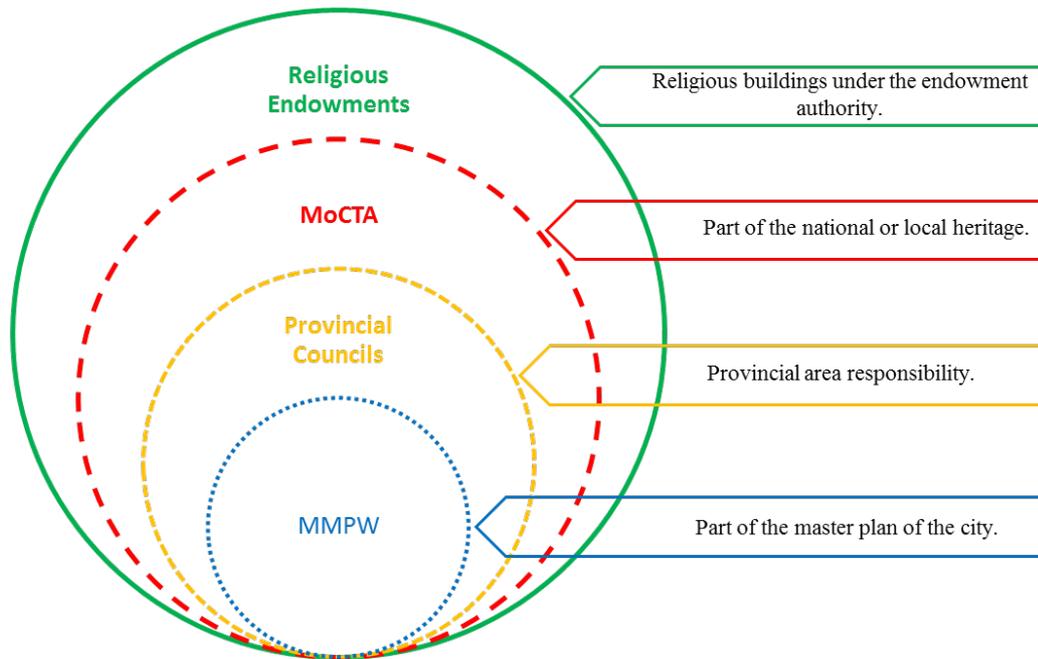


Figure 7.11 Religious buildings responsibilities

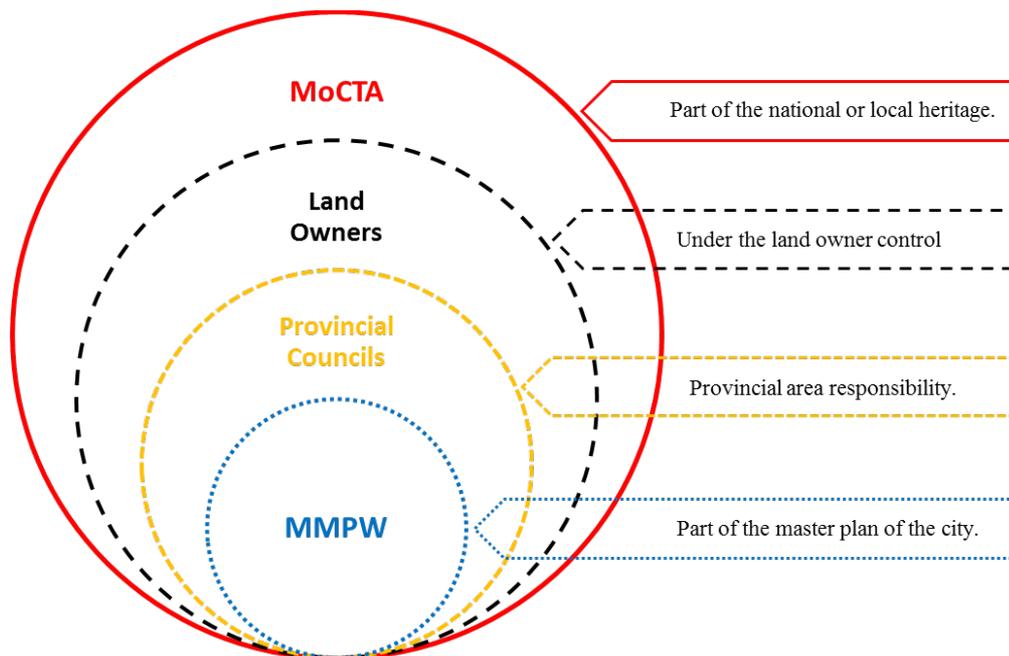


Figure 7.12 Development control of heritage buildings

To sum up, Figure 7.13 shows how these three case studies link with the broad discussion and analysis of the operation of Iraqi infrastructure. These case studies, as well as the critical analysis of the Iraqi organisations and legislations, support the conclusions and recommendations which are given in detail in the next chapter.

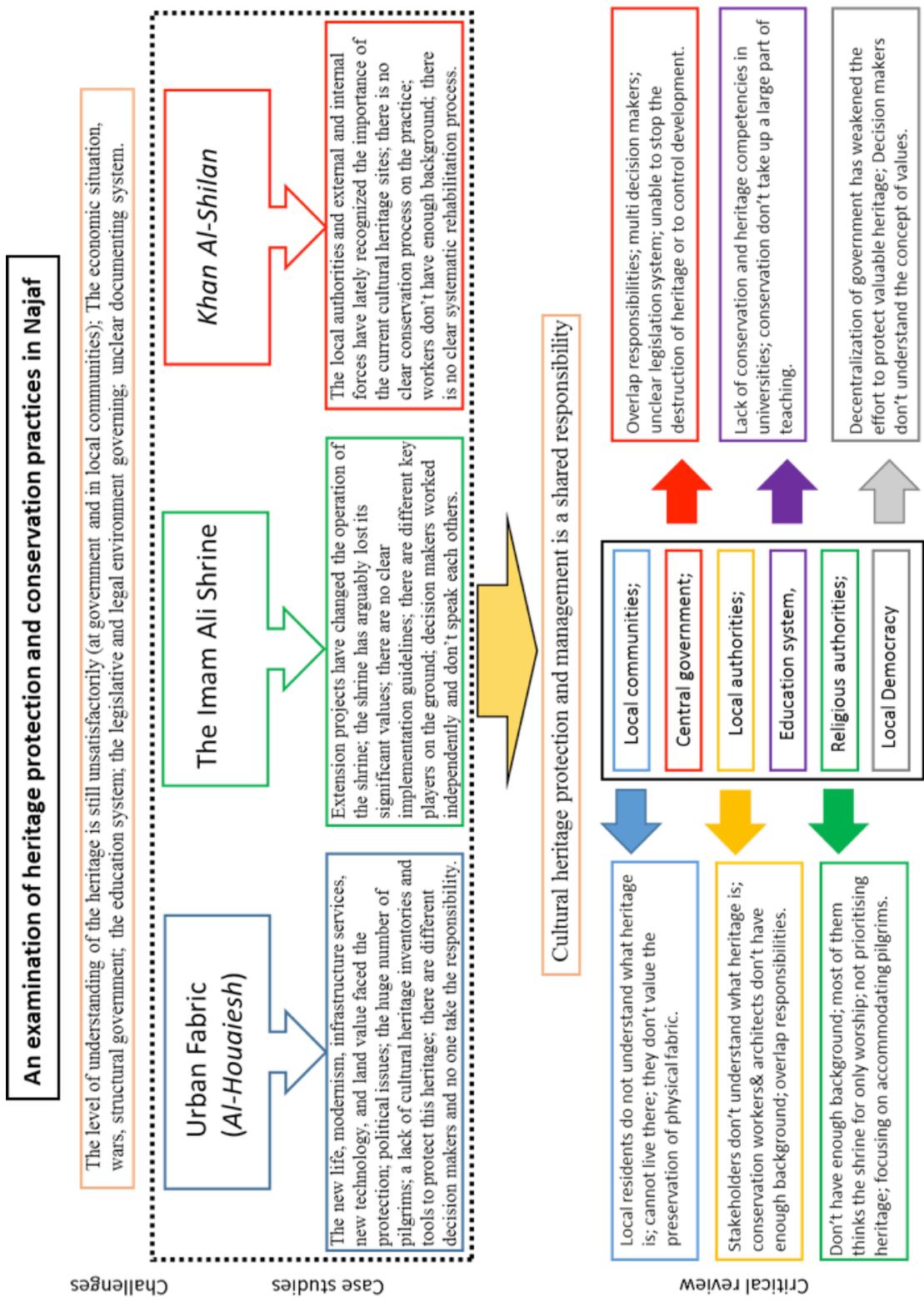


Figure 7.13 Diagram showing links between the three case studies.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overview of study

This thesis has focused on the examination of conservation heritage in Najaf old town through documentary investigation, interviews and case study analysis, to investigate what is understood locally about heritage in terms of its designation, protection and management. In order to fulfil the aims of the study, three case studies were selected (a fragment of the urban fabric, the Imam Ali Shrine, and *Khan Al-Shilan*), in addition to conducting a critical policy review and critical review of the network of Iraqi infrastructure. The final chapter of this thesis discusses the problems, conclusions, contribution and recommendations for the future this thesis has generated.

From the first case study of the urban fabric, I found that local communities wanted to protect their local heritage more than the decision makers. However, local communities still needed extra support to reach a good level of understanding of conservation because it became clear through the interviews that this was often not the case. For example, some local residents thought that any building with arches, *Shanashil* or a courtyard was a heritage building, even if it had little heritage significance. The first case study considered the extent to which Najafi communities recognise and understand their own heritage, and evaluated whether or not the policies and regulations are strong in comparison to international standards. At

present, the case study indicates that this is not the case and that more attention is needed from government and local citizens, in order for the local heritage to stand and survive. The understanding of conservation values has a strong correlation with individual's education level. Through the interviews it became apparent that only certain types of interviewee had specific knowledge and understanding and valued the preservation of the social and physical fabric of the old town. In total, without a clear understanding of what is valued, people cannot identify what should or should not be protected. As a result, most local residents have moved outside the town, and many significant buildings in the old town have been demolished, or developed, in a manner distinct from conservation processes. The second case study of the Imam Ali Shrine found that there is no clear policy and development control in practice. Instead, key decision makers have prioritised the accommodation of pilgrims and developing the old town into a contemporary city, rather than protecting its local heritage. The last case study of the *Khan Al-Shilan* outlines current conservation management practices. It was found that the rehabilitation procedure at the *Al-Shilan* still needed some support, due to a lack of conservation plans, and the use of unqualified workers.

Overall, the findings of these three case studies encouraged me to outline some conclusions from various perspectives, as follows: knowledge and understanding, developing policy and control, conservation management practice processes, and partnership and engagement.

Knowledge and understanding of conservation values

This research first examined the levels of understanding of the conservation of the physical and social fabric at local level. Pieri previously found that “*In Iraq there is a general feeling that the new is more valuable than the old*”.¹ She also stated that, in Iraq up to the present, there has been a significant gap of “non-awareness” toward heritage, as well as between what is listed in the World Heritage List (WHL) and what is not.² I partially disagree with her first statement because there are some debates about a range of conservation heritage issues among communities, particularly on social media platforms.³ However, in exploring these platforms, the majority of decision makers and stakeholders highlight Dubai as the best example of how to develop cities to become contemporary. I think that it should fill the gap between contemporary and historical architecture, because some of the good contemporary architecture will be a part of future monuments. As this thesis has shown, some projects and proposals in the Najaf old town have demolished or cleared the historical urban fabric and traditional buildings, in order to develop the old town. In fact, I also agree that there is a significant lack of awareness of heritage, and a lack of recorded information regarding what has been protected, listed, demolished, etc. Moreover, this study finds that there is a significant gap between the application and relevance of Western conservation theory and practices (and their associated charters) and the Iraqi context. Even though there have been some attempts based on the international charters to protect local heritage, such as the Najaf charter, these are till unsatisfactory. The international organizations and charters outline the principles and processes of conservation; but a clear process and support at national and local levels is needed to validate and adopt relevant principles and processes. Up to the present, there is a lack of comprehensive guidance on conservation practices in Iraq with particular reference to Najaf. It can be stated that there is still clear conflict between commodification of sacred buildings and their religious purpose, at both national and local level. Compared to the Western understanding of heritage conservation for example, it is culturally unacceptable to reuse these sacred buildings in Najaf for non-religious purposes as is done in some

¹ Caecilia Pieri, 'Of Modernity as Heritage, of Heritage as Future', " *Preservation and Rehabilitation of Iraqi City Centers*" (Baghdad: Mayoralty of Baghdad, 2010).

² Ibid.

³ At local level, there are some forums: for instance: The Association Publishing Forum and Najaf's Writers Union.

Western countries like the UK for instance. According to Bianca, the conservation of historic areas in Europe to protect cultural heritage began over two centuries ago, compared with only a few decades in many contemporary Islamic cities, and a significant clash in cultural attitudes to the value and retention of historic buildings is unsurprisingly evident in Najaf.⁴ Conservation in Iraq needs real and hard steps in practice rather than the current situation of random and unclear work.

Through the three case studies in Najaf it has become clear that the majority of local communities do not participate in the process of making decisions, as their focus is on developing the town as a contemporary city. From a series of interviews with local residents, only a few understood what heritage means and how significant buildings can be protected. LR5 indicated that decision-makers and agencies do not ask local communities and stakeholders about any new design projects or developments in their neighbourhoods.⁵ I would argue that this situation prevents the development of an understanding of heritage conservation values, because they are not aware of the processes in place for the development of their neighbourhoods. It should be noted that the only time that decision makers shared and discussed a development project was in relation to the 90m extension project of the Imam Ali Shrine and its surrounding area in 2015. This was a good start to sharing and discussing development projects, and getting feedback from different levels of stakeholders and it would be beneficial to encourage all developers, agencies and designers to follow this, in order to reach good collaboration between them and the public. A good practice recommendation is that national and local authorities build bridges with local communities, in order to enable them to participate in the process of making decisions. This could be done through selecting a local representative committee in order to link authority and local residents. This type of collaboration would lead to better decisions being made, in terms of legislation and its implementation in practice.

As we have already seen, as a city of knowledge, Najaf has several local forums. There are opportunities for these to work more closely with specialists in cultural heritage, conservation, architecture and history to promote ideas for protecting

⁴ Stefano Bianca, *Urban Form in the Arab World: Past and Present* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 2000) at 176.

⁵ LR5, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

heritage. Most of the participants in these forums would like to protect their town, and are working together to stop heritage destruction. Personally, I found these forums to be very useful for building a strong base of understanding for protecting heritage in the future. The main concern is that these local forums do not have enough government support, and decision makers and agencies do not listen to them. As we have already seen, “Najaf is my identity”, “Najaf Charter”, and the initiative to save and protect the Imam Ali Shrine and urban identity of Najaf old town are organised by the NGOs at local level. In order to increase people awareness toward understanding value, decision makers and stakeholders should support these local cultural forums and NGOs financially and practically. Financially, the central and local government should offer at least basic support, such as suitable locations to accommodate their activities and should allow them to participate in civic meetings. Establishing local awards for architects on the best heritage conservation practice would be another move.

Finally, social media platforms can play a significant role in terms of understanding and supporting conservation values. Iraqi national and local communities use the social media networks widely, with Facebook, Twitter, Viper and other apps playing a crucial role in championing some social and heritage issues. The clearest example is the local campaign by Facebook to support the listing of the Iraqi marshes in the WHL. In a few days, many Facebook pages and groups were established, and many followers from different categories supported this cause.⁶ The Social Media networks are free of charge and everybody can use them, so it can easily be oriented towards increasing understanding of conservation heritage, if used appropriately. It is good to share some ideas and information about national and local heritage. The most important aspect is that young people of both genders are discussing and supporting the listing of Iraqi heritage sites in the WHL. From a personal viewpoint, my own video clips of some heritage activists, along with photographs and transcripts hosted on social media, have enhanced awareness of different Iraqi heritage sites. In my opinion, a social media platform is the easiest and fastest way to increase people’s awareness of the value of conservation heritage in the Iraqi context. On the other

⁶ For more details, please visit Facebook pages for instance:
<https://www.facebook.com/alahoar/?fref=ts>
<https://www.facebook.com/Rescue.the.Iraqi.culture/?fref=ts>
<https://www.facebook.com/162339334171210> حملة حماية وتعزيز التراث الثقافي العراقي
<https://www.facebook.com/www.ahwar.iq/?fref=ts>

hand, bodies which want to promote 'development' can also use these platforms to disseminate their own messages.

Developing policy and control

The historic built environment is usually affected by the policies, regulations and guidance relating to any type of development.⁷ However, as we have already seen, at both national and local levels in Iraq there are no clear policies, or legislation for controlling development or conserving built heritage. The other significant problem is that, up to the present, no clear listed building system at either national or local level has been put in place, and this has led to the change of use, demolition and re-functioning of many historical buildings, without attention to their potential value. For example, the Shrine Secretary is looking to buy any available property in the old town without any clear future plan.⁸ Indeed, the Shrine Secretary thinks that they can protect the heritage of the old town better than individual land owners.⁹ However, the second case study illustrated that the Shrine Secretariat does not have clear implementation strategies, and their objectives change, according to their membership turnover. The successive secretariat members think only about how to extend the shrine, with a significant non-awareness of the need to protect heritage. It can be stated that the Shrine Secretariat and government are focussed on developing the shrine, and this can lead to neglect of other parts of the old town. This situation has led to the creation of a buffer zone between the shrine and the old town. The findings of this study indicate that the whole town needs to be protected, not just the shrine. Overall, the national and local heritage has suffered from the lack of a clear development control system, which has led building owners to make decisions based solely on their own financial interests. I recommend that all the development projects (public or individual) should be under a clear development control system. Conservation management is nothing without a clear policy for its step-by-step management. Thus, central government should be the key player in terms of establishing effective policies and legislation.

⁷ Kenneth Williamson, *Development and Design of Heritage Sensitive Sites: Strategies for Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas* (Routledge, 2010) at 1.

⁸ Sta4, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

⁹ Dm2, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2015).

As shown in Chapter 3, there are great pressures on the physical and social fabric of the old town in its four main neighbourhood, and successive governments' priorities have not safeguarded them. New buildings, materials and styles have been built as a result of the absence of clear conservation policies and regulation. My recommendations are to rehabilitate the significant buildings and the alleyways of the old town. Many significant buildings in the old town, such as historical mosques, traditional dwellings, significant libraries, *khans* and religious schools, should be protected, either by property owners or by the government.

The other significant issue is that there is still no listing procedure or criteria, although it is easy to see different proposals for listing buildings in Najaf: for example, by Llewelyn and Dewan. Pickard states that the listing of buildings involves describing the building by criteria which include building type, designer, date of construction, plans, sections, elevations, building materials, and any extra information about the building or site.¹⁰ The case studies here illustrate how a lack of identification has led to a reduction in levels of understanding of heritage value among communities. To remedy this, the authorities should work to increase awareness and introduce controlled development through adopting both a listed building system, and using systematic criteria and introducing regulations, which should be published and available in government departments and online. Also, this proposed list should be updated regularly, because it is an active list. The listed building system will support many significant monuments, buildings and sites in the old town to be listed in the World Heritage List. More broadly, it is recommended that the listed building system be divided into national and local levels, both of which should work under a clear policy system, and the authorities should work to protect all the listed buildings, classifying these properties into categories, according to their significance.

In England, for example, the listed building system is divided into three categories: "*Grade I buildings are of exceptional interest, Grade II* buildings are particularly important buildings of more than special interest; and Grade II buildings are of special interest*".¹¹ Accordingly, the national and local authorities in Iraq could adopt an

¹⁰ Rob Pickard, *Conservation in the Built Environment* (Harlow: Wesley Longman Limited., 1996) at 32.

¹¹ Anonymous, 'Historic England', <<https://www.historicengland.org.uk/>>, accessed April, 25th, 2016 2016.

approach similar to this system to protect heritage on the ground. The government should financially support high significance properties, listing them as grade I and II*, such as the *Al-Subat*, and traditional religious schools and mosques as a first and quick step to protect heritage. Then, higher status buildings might compete for resources from government and elsewhere as happens in a western context. The category could contain traditional houses, which are in a dire condition, and support should be given, where tenable, to assist owners in conserving their properties through incentives such as tax concessions, access to a best practice manual for conserving properties, grants for certain types of work, long term and interest-free loans, and reduced prices of building materials. In fact, there are different ways of funding this project, such as charging pilgrims a fee to enter the old town. In return for this, property owners should be required to conserve their properties according to government regulations, and at the same time they should open their properties to tourists and pilgrims at specific times.¹² This point can help building authorities, agencies and local communities and enable visitors to understand traditional life in this historical pilgrimage town.

In addition, the significance of a building should be measured in terms of previous religious or political events which occurred there, or significant occupants of them, and they should be considered for use as museums. Many religious scholars, politicians, writers, poets and leaders were born or lived in the old town, so the buildings associated with them should be protected. The town authorities could build partnerships through the development of a tourism strategy, identifying possible sites of interest and discussing with owners the viability of their purchase or lease, etc. In terms of the costs associated with schemes like these, the government should provide sufficient funds for such projects. In fact, the authorities can nominate investors to manage these sites.

According to Thomas, conservation means protecting, preserving, enhancing and actively using significant inherited buildings or sites. Therefore, any change or development should be harnessed to protect the asset itself.¹³ These case studies have

¹² There are some countries adopting this system for instance Historic England grants require properties to open to the public once a year; the HLF restricts the resale of property i.e. profiting from grant aid, with forfeiture if a sale takes place before the restrictive period.

¹³ Keith Thomas, *Development Control : Principles and Practice*, ed. Michael J. Bruton (The Natural and Built Environment Series; London: Rutledge: Taylor and Francis Group, 1997) at 177.

demonstrated that what has been happening in practice at local level is completely different, where development projects have led to the demolition of many significant buildings or elements in the old town. Also, the central and local authorities cannot prevent or stop these projects, predominantly because of the absence of clear regulations. On the other hand, some political issues (for example, regime change after 2003, wars, and conflict) have weakened the local authority's control of construction inside the town. Many buildings have been built without permission in the old town, leading to a reduction in the shrine's dominance, as we have already seen. This study suggests that heritage authorities in Iraq do not have a clear conservation process plan to designate, protect and manage significant sites and buildings. There is a major problem specific to Najaf in terms of referencing cultural heritage as a planning concern. Therefore, the Iraqi system needs to initiate national dialogue on the future of conserving national and local heritage to bring about consensus and formally endorse a clear strategy and policy directives. Thus, a systematic, coherent legislative review is needed to address the overlaps, reticulations, contradictions and problems arising from accumulating a large number of legislative tools that are still effective by virtue of law. In fact, this point is the most significant challenge facing any development control approach on the ground.

Moreover, the study finds that up to the present, there has been no clear regulation or guidance on material choice and construction details for conservation of historic buildings in Iraq with particular reference to Najaf; and a lack of training in specialist skills. As a result, the land owners, builders, designers and project managers can change any detail, land use or materials for their properties. The clear example is the rehabilitation of the *khan Al-Shilan*, when the rehabilitation team did pay attention to the original materials, but it still involved an unclear process. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the rehabilitation team of the *Al-Shilan* employed basic knowledge and previous experience to rehabilitate the building and select the materials. They did not have a background in managing heritage sites. In terms of skills, builders still think that their existing skills are sufficient to conduct restoration and rehabilitation processes on the ground, and that these can be passed on to the next generation without any courses or training. As a result, the significant lack of available guidance on conservation processes threatens Iraqi heritage as well as the understanding level of heritage values on the ground.

Sanctions are the other significant issue involved in dealing with conserving heritage. Even the Iraqi law and policies have different types of sanctions, such as law No 55 of 2002, though this is still inactive, mainly because the government agencies at national or local level do not pay attention to these laws. This situation encourages individual land authorities to do the same in the historical towns. The most obvious example is high buildings constructed inside Najaf old town without building permits, which the government agencies do not or cannot stop. In addition, some interviewees, such as Sta3 (a consultant working with the UNESCO mission to Najaf) said that corruption also threatens heritage value on the ground.¹⁴ Thus, proposed regulations and policies should contain clear sanctions, and set out the process of implementing them in an active way. In fact, building height in the old town is a significant issue in relation to protecting heritage and the UNESCO mission to Iraq also diagnosed it as one of the issues which prevent the shrine to be listed in the WHL.¹⁵ The main challenge is how to demolish these unpermitted buildings, or at least prevent them. The solution should come from the central government as the main power on the ground. The government can offer different alternatives to land owners, such as the purchase of land outside the old town for purchase at subsidised prices. However, as we have already seen in Chapter 2, Dewan proposed to change the building height in the old town from no more than 2 floors to up to 6 floors.¹⁶ This proposal, as well as some unauthorized building work hides the golden dome of the shrine, will become the highest point in the old town. Hence, local authorities should work to protect the skyline of the old town, in order that the golden dome continues to dominate it as a highest point. This issue needs explicit directions that any building constructed without building permission should be demolished. Overall, adopting clear and active sanctions can help protect the local heritage in Najaf and raise levels of understanding of the values of this heritage on the ground.

¹⁴ Sta3, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2014).

¹⁵ Unesco Expert Mission to Najaf, 'The Results and Recommendations of Unesco Expert Mission to Najaf for Preparation of the World Heritage Nomination File of Wadi Al-Salam Cemetery in Najaf', (Manamah, 2014).

¹⁶ Dewan Architects and Engineers, 'Urban Renewal of the City Center of Holy Najaf: Comprehensive Master Plan of the City Center of Holy Najaf', (Fifth edn.; Najaf: Republic Iraq, Ministry of Municipalities and Public Work, General directorate of physical planning, 2015) at 11.

Conservation management practice processes

The interviews and discussions revealed that most conservation management practices lacked awareness and knowledge of the composition and consequences of international best conservation practice. This explains the lack of a unified vision and clear positions regarding the overlaps, reticulations and problems arising from accumulating a large number of authorities, decision makers and legislative tools. International organisations such as ICOMOS have illustrated that conservation heritage works should only be entrusted to people competent in these professional areas. In particular, the 1993 ICOMOS guidelines explain that special education and training for heritage conservation can help people to understand monuments, building or sites, including their histories, building materials, and knowing all the issues related to the UNESCO conventions and its charters in order to work on these sites.¹⁷ Moreover, Orbasli stated that the shortage of training course opportunities is one of the challenges facing conservation in the Middle East.¹⁸ Accordingly, training courses and education for construction professionals are essential for improving workers' and professionals' skills, as discussed further below.

As we have already seen, there is a significant shortage of qualified manpower in the fields of conservation and rehabilitation. Most builders, for example, do not have formal training in the process of dealing with heritage sites. Consequently, builders usually operate based on their experience, as demonstrated in the case study of the *Khan Al-Shilan*. During the rehabilitation process, the building lost some of its historical, architectural and cultural value because the rehabilitation team changed or demolished some parts, which, in terms of conservation, should have been retained. According to Pickard, any development or rehabilitation on the ground should respect local identity, working to revive the identity and spirit of the building, as well as to adapt it to the contemporary context.¹⁹ To achieve this, builders and workers should be required to attend training sessions on how to rehabilitate historic buildings. A specific institution is needed which offers training courses to builders and workers, so that they can learn heritage conservation techniques with institutions

¹⁷ Icomos, 'Guidelines for Education and Training in Conservation of Monuments, Ensembles and Sites', (Colombo, Sri Lanka: ICOMOS, 1993).

¹⁸ Aylin Orbasli, 'Training Conservation Professionals in the Middle East', *Built Environment* (1978-), 33/3 (2007b), 307-22 at 308.

¹⁹ Robert Pickard, *Management of Historic Centres* (2: Taylor & Francis, 2001) at 277.

collaborating with the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions to ensure this. The conservation institutions can train and develop human resources, and this institution should be extended to cover all the major Iraqi cities. Accordingly, the Trade Union should prevent any worker who does not pass the training course from participating in projects involving heritage buildings. To sum up, a new generation of builders and workers is needed who can preserve the built environment by employing best practice.

At the local level, I suggest gathering all significant materials, such as maps, plans, photographs, letters and personal memoirs, and architectural drawings (plans, sections, site plans, elevations, etc.), to build a strong database. Then, further work needs to be done to scan the whole old town to build a strong, active and real database for future developments. Researchers and PGR students should be encouraged to focus more on Najaf, because it has a long history, and there is insufficient literature dealing with it. These researchers should cover different aspects, to help others to understand its inherited culture, as well as an historical investigation and gathering any available data to enable a fuller understanding of what is new, added and original. At this stage, different types of new technology can be introduced, such as GIS and 3D laser scanning techniques to scan the whole old town, which could then be extended to cover all Iraqi cities. This new technology could fill the gap in primary materials. Overall, it is very important to document the number of historical monuments and buildings, in case of damage or loss of the architectural heritage. The documents will provide the evidence of the values of the past. A powerful example is the priceless heritage of Mosul, documentation being the only remaining evidence of its history.

Orbasli stated in her research about managing conservation in Islamic traditional neighbourhoods that “*the culture is not a reminiscence of the past, but an essential part of human life within the city*”.²⁰ Overall, any historical cities usually change to meet the needs of communities. In this particular, all the interventions in the old town should respect its values and try to protect and support local identity. *Suq al-Houaish*, for instance, should be conserved, as one of the significant markets for

²⁰ Aylin Orbasli, 'The Islamic City and Tourism: Managing Conservation and Tourism in Traditional Neighbourhoods', in Rami F. Daher (ed.), *Tourism in the Middle East: Continuity, Change and Transformation* (Clevedon: Channel View Publications, 2007a), 161 - 87 at 184.

selling books, without having an impact on the social and physical fabric of the *al-Houaish* neighbourhood. In other words, the local authorities should stop changing the land use and manage *Suq al-Houaish* as a heritage site. Hotels and other high buildings can be built outside the old town, to protect the scale and skyline of the town.

However there is a significant conflict between the perception of Najaf as a place of religious symbolic importance (intangible values) and the tangible heritage values of the older shrine buildings and the fabric of the old city. This conflict divides communities and decision makers into two groups. The first group support Najaf as a pilgrimage city, which means that accommodating pilgrims is the priority, leading to significant contemporary development as in Mecca and Madina in Saudi Arabia. The second group are looking to protect its heritage as a historical town. They have based their response on Al-Sistani's point of view – the need to protect the significant alleyways and buildings of the old town for continuity of significant urban form. This conflict is affecting the attitude to conservation values on the ground.

Moreover, there is another significant conflict between heritage conservation and the perceived need for economic development. This conflict is exacerbated in the context of the political upheaval Iraq has experienced over the past few decades. The land value of religious cities in Iraq has risen greatly; especially in the areas close to the shrines. As a result, rocketing land values have encouraged this generation to sell their inherited properties, particularly where they are not living in them, and such a free market approach can only be tempered by developing and applying local conservation planning legislation. Overall, the study finds that political, social and economic factors have influenced the destruction of heritage values. However, there is a point of view that adopting a clear heritage protection system on the ground encourages pilgrims to visit historic local areas that can in turn support local income-generation. Gradually, this could make the old town busy, and support the economic situation as well as historical, cultural, and architectural heritage values. In conclusion, this conflict is continuing without any clear solution offered by the authorities at national or local level.

Partnership and engagement

This study has shown that one of the more significant problems for conservation processes and practices is that there is no clear specific ministry, organisation or department to manage Iraqi heritage. Different institutional frameworks deal with protecting heritage, without clear regulations regarding how to manage collaboration among them. The clearest example is the Iraq sites listed in the World Heritage List and the tentative list: the marshes site is administrated by the Ministry of Environment, while the *Wadi Al-Salam* cemetery is administrated by the Ministry of Culture.²¹ Furthermore, the Kurdistan local government administers Erbil citadel.

The present study has also gone some way towards enhancing a documentation system on the ground. As stated earlier in Chapter 1, there is a lack of primary materials and documents about national and local heritage buildings and sites. There is, therefore, a need to adopt a heritage documentation system at national and local level, to support researchers, stakeholders, decision makers and communities in protecting their heritage.

As stated earlier in Chapter 7, understanding heritage and conservation values in the context of contemporary Iraq is strongly related to the education system. After critically analysing the education on conservation values in Iraq through focusing on the modules and degrees of the different schools of architecture, it can be stated that conservation and cultural heritage are still minority subjects in these schools. In terms of the curriculums and modules, architectural departments should update their curriculums to include different aspects of conservation values. In addition, they should teach students about conservation approaches in other countries, such as the UK, Italy, Turkey and Iran. Moreover, continuing to send PGR students to significant international universities to get higher degrees in conservation will help to develop the higher education system in Iraq. Essentially, most postgraduate studies do not offer special courses or degrees in architectural conservation, and most postgraduate theses and dissertations are self-studies. It can be stated that these recommendations are not limited to architectural studies, but also include archaeology, town and regional planning, history and heritage studies.

²¹ Sta2, 'Interview', in Sadiq Abid (ed.), (2014).

In terms of the public interpretation of sites, the sites' significance should be communicated through different ways, such as publicity, signposts, maps and descriptions of the history of these buildings (date of construction, materials, function, events, etc.). Interactive maps should be established in different places to help visitors to understand the values of the place.²² In my opinion, this can increase people's awareness of heritage and nurture an understanding of its values. Indeed, tour-guiding skills should also be given more attention as part of formal pre-service travel and tourism training at specialized institutes. The program should include all the skills related to the requirements of specific areas. Guides must be fluent in different languages, such as English and Persian, in addition to Arabic.

Yet, the main challenge is the increase in the number of pilgrims to the Imam Ali Shrine, without current or future plans to manage this. Up to the present, no authority or institution can organise the number of local, national and international pilgrims, or their frequency and movement to and inside the town. In Saudi Arabia for instance, the Ministry of Haj and Umra is the only authority dealing with pilgrimage on the ground. Its main aims are to manage pilgrims, collaborate with other authorities to support the events, and develop the facilities and infrastructure at a national and local level.²³ In particular, Orbasli stated that the continuation of the conservation of any built heritage is largely dependent on successful tourism management.²⁴ Some interviewees explained that, without managing the numbers of pilgrims; nobody can manage the heritage of the town. As a result, it should create a new local authority looks like the Saudi Arabia to manage the old town with the shrine, or in collaboration with the Shrine Secretariat. The main aims of this new authority should be to set out a wide strategy and validation of planning proposals in the old town and to manage the life of the town, protecting the physical and social fabric and managing pilgrims' movements toward the shrine. It can be stated that it would be erroneous to bring pilgrims in at one point (western phase) because that leads to the death of the rest of the town. Therefore, the new authority should think more about activating all the entrances to the old town through aggregating pilgrims on the

²² Sta4, 'Interview'.

²³ Ministry of Haj and Umra / Saudi Arabia, 'Ministry of Haj and Umra Web Page', <<http://www.haj.gov.sa/arabic/about/Pages/Goals.aspx>>, accessed 14-3-2017 2017.

²⁴ Orbasli, 'The Islamic City and Tourism: Managing Conservation and Tourism in Traditional Neighbourhoods', at 185.

perimeter of the town wall (the ring road). In my view, this will activate all traditional alleyways.

The infrastructure should also be part of the conservation plans of the old town. As we have already seen, the lack of services and infrastructure have made the town redundant, and most local citizens have moved. Electric wires deform the townscape, and waste fills the alleyways (Figure 8.1). As a result, most pilgrims dislike walking in them. The ideal case is that these historical alleyways should be made clean and safe, in order to encourage pilgrims to walk in them, and local citizens to live there.



Figure 8.1 Types of visual pollution in the old town

Overall, this study promotes a conservation management approach. The contribution to knowledge that this thesis makes is in outlining how heritage has been understood, designated, protected and managed in Iraq with particular reference to Najaf, along with a critical analysis of current conservation infrastructure. The findings show that the Iraqi people and authorities have a limited understanding of conservation management and few clear policies or controls are currently being employed in practice. In Najaf, key decision makers prioritise accommodating pilgrims and modernisation of the city, rather than safeguarding heritage. This thesis argues that the heritage documentation system is inadequate and that there is a significant overlap in decision-making responsibilities. By viewing what has happened on the ground, and comparing it to the best conservation practice, key principles and actions which are relevant to supporting the protection of Najaf's heritage are recommended,

as follows: documenting the entire old town heritage; respecting and improving the condition of the local social fabric; supporting local forums and communities; respecting the local identity; adopting clear, active and suitable policy during any future implementation; selecting significant buildings and elements to represent the tangible heritage; encouraging the historical tourism to the old town, and organising pilgrimage to the shrine.

In conclusion, further research is needed to situate field studies from this region within literature relating to urban conservation as well as conservation management literature. This may help in the development of appropriate recommendations that are contextualised within the region.

From my own experience, I can state that the study has helped me to progress academically. In terms of the methodology, it can be stated that, in the Iraqi context, local citizens were generally unfamiliar with interview methods, and personally it is the first time I have employed this methodology. The series of interviews allowed me to discover, collect and reach some materials and information I could not find in the written sources. These materials opened new gates to contribute to the knowledge base. Indeed, in Iraq, the scope of architecture is understood to be a part of engineering, while in the UK it is more generally viewed as a part of social science, and this point allowed me to change my views as a social science researcher focusing more on social issues, not only the buildings themselves. During my PhD journey in the UK, I learned that history is not merely information contained in books and stories about the past; it is an active way to link between the past, present and future.

In the Iraqi context, most historians and writers mention that Mesopotamia was the first civilization in the World, and Kufa was the capital of the Islamic World. However, there is nothing on the ground supporting this long history, and the wave of modernity has demolished most of the significant built heritage. Studying in the UK has allowed me to understand how heritage can record the long history of nations. Conservation management is a significant part of managing change to protect values. It can be argued that the built heritage can play a significant role in helping communities to be proud of their history, and can open new doors to a better future. This research opens up some new research directions, such as investigating why traditional *khans* and courtyard houses do not exist today and nobody uses them. The

relationship between the shrine and its surrounding area and how a balance between pilgrims' needs and conservation management can be achieved, is central to this study. How to encourage local residents to understand conservation values and participate in making decisions; and why authorities do not support local community participation in the process, is another key issue addressed here. Moreover, this thesis has investigated the relationship between conflict and protecting heritage, and how heritage can support peace and stability on the ground, and methods of raising the awareness of local people and authorities regarding designating, protecting and managing heritage. Finally, this thesis has explored the relationship between pilgrims, conservation, sustainability and heritage tourism, which are an area that I would like to research in more depth in the future.

To summarise, Najaf old town is in very poor condition, and needs urgent support. Many parts of the old town are being demolished as I write. The majority of the local communities and decision makers do not understand heritage values, and this puts the local heritage under threat. Overall, there is a chance to increase people's awareness of the importance of protecting heritage, but this requires strong collaboration between authorities and communities.

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Interviews transcripts

DM1

What is your opinion about *Al-Rass* mosque extension project? There are debates about some projects before the construction, but after finishing the debates are changed. The *Al-Rass* mosque extension project is one of these projects, and now it is completely good decision. Now the connection between the shrine and the new extension project become easier. I can state that the extension projects allow as offering some extra services. These projects offer us some new spaces; therefore, the remaining rooms inside the external wall support offices for shrine staff and a health clinic and public Islamic library. The increasing scale of the shrine building reflects its growing importance architecturally and historically as a landmark, and current regulations now prevent any new buildings in the old town exceeding the height of the present dome.

What about *Sahan Fatima* extension project? It is one of the projects that individuals cannot understand it till finish it. The shrine has a religious function; and its significance comes from that. The huge number of visitors should take part at any development decisions. As a result, the Shrine Secretary objectives and strategies are to cover all of pilgrim's services, not only the shrine itself, but it should cover the whole old town. The huge number of pilgrims to the shrine, and the bad condition of the current buildings and fabric encouraged decision makers to develop it. The first step the decision makers think.

Multiple decision makers during the last 30 years, is that has impact on the administration of the Shrine? In terms of the shrine projects, until few years the idea of managing the shrine was limited on accommodating pilgrims and maintains the building. However, nowadays it is growth to cover the whole town. Our idea is the offering services to the town are part of accommodating pilgrims. In addition, the place is related with the Imam Ali, that's mean it should offer some cultural activities. Therefore, the shrine institution has been trying to support some activities such as publishing, printing, media, etc.

What is the shrine administration toward the shrine as historical building? The shrine is a historical building, but it has a function at the same time; therefore, it should be developed and extended in order to be able to carry out its function and accommodated the huge number of pilgrims. It is not a museum, but it is place of worship. Therefore, we are going to extend it.

Do you support the shrine to be list in the WHL? It is historical building, but scalable and develops.

Do you have any statistics about the pilgrim's number? Sure, daily there are 5000 pilgrims form outside Iraq, and 20000 from inside Iraq. In the holidays and weekend are 250000, and more than 1million in special events. Therefore, we are planning to accommodate 100000 – 200000 pilgrims per hour.

What is your point of view about the old town? This issue is related with the master plan of the town, which *Dewan* designed it. The shrine institution design the 190m and the residual area *Dewan* propose its design. They focused on the land use without pay attention to its historical and cultural values. They only stated there are historical buildings, without explain how to protect them.

What the impact of successful governments before and after 2003 on the shrine? Before 2003, some families administered the shrine, and the government interventions were taking Vows and grants, which provided by the pilgrims. In terms of the destruction, it was a part of the repression inflicted by Saddam's government against the local Shia religious scholars, which included demolishing many buildings and spaces within the historic fabric that hosted religious activities. A similar clearance of historic neighbourhoods also took place in Karbala old town in 1991. Since 2003, it is completely difference. The shrine become follows *Margea* (Shia religious authority) according to 2005 law. The shrine secretary and its departments are set out according to this law. However, it is administratively follow the Shiite endowment.

How is finance the shrine projects? The finance is come from three main sources: Shiite endowment, Vows and grants, and donors.

What is your position in terms of what has happening to the buildings height in the old town? Regardless of with or against the buildings heights; what has happening is not planned and not agreed. There is no legislation, policies or any regulators on the ground. The only thing is the Najaf municipality prevent any new construction inside the old town. In fact, the regulation prevents any new construction inside the old town, only maintain buildings permits are allowed, but what has happening on the practice is completely difference. However, the new buildings obscure views of the Shrine and they damage the urban fabric. The building and construction work in the old town usually takes place from midnight to 4:00 am, when the Najaf local government and the other institutions are obviously closed. In particular, local government support these changing of land use, even it is illegal. We wrote some official letters to the municipality, and their answer was very shy, they explained that their authority is until 3pm, and I have this official letter.

The problem is that there are no heritage specialists managing the city, and most of the decision makers do not care about heritage. Hence, the shrine has been starting to buy any available building inside the old town. There are three main reasons for acquisition, firstly to achieve the 190-meter area surrounding the shrine; secondly, to protect the historical and heritage buildings; and finally to prevent any misuse in the future by the land authority.

Is there any view about protecting Najaf heritage? There is no heritage on the ground; most historical buildings are fully damaged. *Al-imarah* neighbourhood was fully demolished, Najaf wall also fully removed. However, the town has some significant buildings such as *khan al-Shilan*, *al-khawarnaq* school, and *Al-Hindi* mosque. Few months ago the Shia endowment was demolished *al-Jawahiri* mosque, which is one of the significant traditional buildings in the town. I think these authorities should pay more attention toward protecting heritage. Therefore, the Shrine Secretary would like to manage this part, particularly international pilgrims to be able to offer good income to

extend their projects and services. Our aims and objectives as an institution are to accommodate the huge number of pilgrims and offer services to them. Therefore, our ambition is to cover the whole town, because there is an integrated relationship between the Shrine and the old town.

Can any one stop the destruction of heritage? I think the local government is a part of the problem; it does not care about protecting heritage. The old town and its heritage are linked to the work of the municipality, so if the municipality don't care about heritage, the local citizen cannot do anything. Accordingly, I expect Najaf will loss its entire heritage.

Why the *al-Imarah* neighbourhood had demolished? Certainly political issue, looks like the area between the shrines of Imam Hussein and Abbas in Karbala. If they got the opportunity, they will demolish the entire old town, but the God save it.

What is the *khan Al-Shilan* locally means? It is related with the local memory, because it is connected with the 1917 revolution. Its walls have many graffiti of British's prisoners. The problem is the municipality less it to become a coffee shop.

Is the decision makers think about Najaf's heritage as new source of income? Never, they are sons of the day and never think about the future.

Is the local community are participated in making decisions process? There were some attempts, and the local communities supported protect *khan Al-Shilan*. Since 2004 we have stated to set out some workshops and lectures to discuss the master plan of the town. Our pressure encouraged the government to contract with Llewelyn Davies Yeang. The problem before 2003 we cannot speak only listen; after 2003 we are speaking but nobody listens.

Can Najaf become contemporary city? It must, if it has good administration.

What do you think the reasons? There are no specialists; the decision makers do not understand its values. I most the time told the shrine employee that we work in special place. If we understand its value, we can reach it. Unfortunately, I do not show any decision maker understand Najaf's values.

What is the position of the religious authority (*Margiea*) from protecting heritage? They want, but they have lots of other issues. Therefore, it is not priority.

What is your vision about the future of Najaf? The future should be better. Najaf airport, established after 2003, now receives increasing numbers of pilgrims from outside Iraq. Given that religious tourism is now one of the main economic activities at the local level, it is evidence that these huge visitor numbers will continue to place the city's cultural heritage under threat unless central and local government, and the local community and Non-government agencies, construct a sustainable management policy. To reach our aims and objectives, we agreed to establish new municipality of the old town under the shrine administration. We want to protect the skyline of the old town; but you can see this building is higher than 10 floors close to the shrine. I think it is hard way, but we need each contribution to get it.

DM2

Al-Rass mosque extension project, what is the idea of it? I become a member in 2012, and the project before that.

As you are local citizen, what do you think? I cannot talk about it, because I did not see it before the development.

And the current situation? The *haram* need extra spaces, I think it is good. My main objection is about *Al-subat*, because we used it, so I would prefer if they can protect it instead of demolished. The connection between the extension and the shrine is good, and it becomes a new main entrance. Moreover, it is important to make a connection between the shrine and the new extension project of *Sahan Fatima* (see the next chapter for details).

Could you tell me about the *Sahan Fatima* project? I have many points about the project; however, there was an agreement to set out the project. The agreement was before our secretary member. In fact, the design process was taking long time for different reasons for instance finical issues, multiple decision makers, and authorities. The Shrine Secretary got the permission and the fund to establish it. Another problem with this design are the number of columns, which are 1600 columns; and the shape of new *minarets*, which changed later to become similar to the original *minarets* of the shrine. I think local citizens' concern about watching the golden dome because this area was remained empty for long periods; therefore, people are starting to feel the disappearance of this scene. They also did not watch it before demolishing *Al-Imarah* neighbourhood.

The shrine as a religious institution start thinking that its function and responsibilities should extend to cover some new activities, not only worship and religious function. These new activities for example cultural and social activities need extra spaces; therefore, the Secretary wants to develop the shrine to be able to host several activities. There are three requirements, the extension, protect the old town, and finding a replacement for shops that will be removed, as well as the dominance of the Shrine on the old town.

Do you think the new project has impact on the original shrine? In the top view yes; but overall I don't think so. The movement around the city, yes you can feel that. But the design comes from the vernacular architecture.

Do you think it will kill the city? No, it is only one entrance, but it will be the main. I think pilgrims will go to the *suq*. The area of the old town is too small, so they can walk through. The only issue is the cutting between the *Al-Houaesh* and *Al-Imarah* neighbourhoods, and there is link between them in the middle of the project.

What about the height of the project? I think the main concern of local citizens because the area was leave empty long time. Therefore, they become miss the view.

What are the main sources of the design? The philosophy of the design comes from imagining the step walks of Imam Zain Al-Abideen, from *maqam* Zain Al-Abideen to the shrine. He was walked straight. Therefore, the pilgrims walking is in the middle, and the buildings on both sides.

Do you think we can see another Mashhad? Never, the mental image in the most people about the old town is it neglected town. If there is real reject, I think it will change. Here is the same problem; people compare it with the other cities such as Mecca and Mashhad. The Iranian designers determine what has happened in Mashhad are awful; therefore, they wanted to avoid that in Najaf.

How conservation values understood at local level? The widespread conservation practices are still limited to some specific cases. This issue is related to other points: for instance, the education system, training courses, regulation, and the number of specialists available. They must work closely with universities and pertinent partners to develop qualifications in heritage management within a serious, accredited and internationally recognized national framework of qualifications. In addition, there is a dire need to develop the curriculum, because most elements of it are out-dated and do not align with the emerging trends of cultural heritage management. When I became member of the Shrine Secretary and responsible of maintenance and construction department, some of the employees asked me to change or maintain some places in the shrine, I told them “*we cannot change anything; you do not understand the value of the Shrine*”. This is also including the members of the Shrine Secretary, which they think it is religious place not a museum. As a result, what has happening is self-help by some members; therefore, there is no clear heritage protection approach and it can change anything by changing the members.

What is the impact of the multi decision makers in the old town? We talked with the successful prime ministers; there are ignorance and lack of interest in the place. It is unbelievable that 12 years of democracy rules, and Najaf still neglected. The bulldozers demolishing Najaf old town have been continuing, and heritage elites can only to reduce their speed, but not to stop them. The city Governor is responsible, because he and his local government are the first representative of the law on the ground, and they were encouraged of continuing building and developing the old town. They based on some examples such as Mecca and its clock tower. Overall, there is no clear approach for protecting Najaf’s heritage by the Secretary, and what been done is self-effort by some members. As a result, our ambition is to manage the town, also should establish scientific committee for that as Makia explained that in our meeting in London. I’ll give you the record of the meeting.

What do you think as secretary member about heritage? Unfortunately, most the secretary members don’t hold this vision. This is not limited only this secretary, but also all the successful secretaries. Most of them think the shrine is place of worship, not museum; they do not have enough skills or background about managing historical sites. Our main mission is to provide services to pilgrims, and if it is cross with other issues, the priority is for it. Accordingly, there is no clear approach for protecting Najaf’s heritage by the Secretary, and what been done is self-effort by some members.

So if the secretary members will change, every think will change? Yes, sure.

Is there any intention to cover the courtyard of the shrine? The courtyard has a great spiritual significance, also expressed in the relationship between the golden dome and the sky. The courtyard is normally multifunctional, for instance it is used for prayer, social and ritualistic activities, and for rest. Most pilgrims like to sit in it and watch the golden dome and the minarets. As a result of the hot weather in summer, the General Secretariat of the shrine contracted with SL-Rasch Company from Germany in order to design retractable shading umbrellas, each one of 20x20 m. In fact, the Shrine Secretary selected the same shape and properties of the *Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi* in Al-Medina.

What is your view about the old town? The Shrine Secretary is only limited on the shrine and the other areas is under the local government authority. However, the Shrine Institution has been buying the 90m surrounding the shrine, and it is become under their authority. As a result, the Shrine Secretary stated that they will check *Dewan* proposal design, but it is not obliged to adopt it. I think the local government is the main responsible. In particular, the head of the Public Board of Heritage and Antiquities for example proposed roofing the courtyard of the *Al-Shilan* to face the environmental conditions without paying attention to its historical and original shape.

What about Dewan proposal? *Dewan* proposed a design for the surrounding area of the shrine, but there is no obligation for the shrine secretary to adopt it. The secretary thinks it is a private area, so they can select the best-proposed design. The shrine secretary was also disappointed in the proposed design and regulations in terms of building height, because it would not work with the city context. As a result, the shrine institution showed its disappointment, and insisted that there was no obligation to follow these proposals because the shrine will choose the best design according to its priorities.

What about the 90m, are you going to stop or continue more than 90m? Currently, will stop to 90m.

Why the shrine institution is selling any available property in the town? The main aim is to maintain these properties, and reuse them for our departments. Our vision is that we can protect heritage of the town much better than other authorities. Therefore, if other authorities sell them and build high buildings and hotels will threat the heritage and skyline, as well as that will reduce the dominance of the shrine. Moreover, these properties will support us to start with the 90m project.

When you will start the project, and what its aims? The project will start as soon as possible, after finishing the expropriation. The main aims of this project are to extend the shrine from the other three sides, and protect the values of the old town.

RS1

What is your vision about protecting Najaf heritage? In fact, there are town main groups. The first group thought that high-rise buildings could be built anywhere, so that a significant amount of buildings and the fabric of the old town should be protected to conserve local identity and history. Recently, there have been some attempts to protect significant buildings in the old town: for instance, to rehabilitate the *Al-Khumaini* and *Al-Habobi* houses in the heart of the Najaf old town. In fact, there is potentially a conflict between those who call for protection of local heritage and those who believe that accommodating the pilgrims should be a priority.

What are the problems that faced the town? One of the most problems faces the city development was removed a lot of buildings and urban fabric pretext redevelopment, but in fact because of the politics of the previous regime. I think that have negative impact on the physical and social fabric of the town.

Why they removed them? The political issue was the main reason. Currently, there are two main groups managing Najaf's heritage on the ground: the first group calls for protection of all historical sites within it, and second group thinks Najaf is significant not because of its buildings but as a result of its contents and their spiritual value.

What is your opinion? I think authorities should balance between them. We need to develop Najaf, but not looks like Dubai, so we also want to protect our heritage. They should think about accommodating huge number of pilgrims as a priority. I prefer to protect some specific buildings and house, for example *Al-Habobi* house, or famous scholars' houses. The Iranian individuals conserve *Al-Khumaini* house in the old town, and make it a museum. I think this is good way to understand our long history and values.

What is your opinion about *Al-Rass* mosque project? We don't need prom with the past, also do not need to loss our heritage.

Where are Najaf heritage going? It is going to the chaos. The authorities for example the shrine of the *thi elkifil*, it is in very sad condition, and neglected. I think the historical building support our collective memory; therefore, we should work together to protect Najaf values.

RS2

What are the religious scholars think about the shrine extension projects; and other projects inside the town? I live in Najaf, so I know how the shrine is important in our life. In fact, these projects will hurt the urban fabric, and reduce the dominance of the shrine, and could interrupt the physical and visual communication between the four neighbourhoods. I think it should be linked between the old and modern in order to protect heritage and be modern. We not against the development, but we need the shrine still standing as focal point in the middle.

Where is the problem? My concern is that the *Sahan Fatima* is higher than the original wall, so it has side effect. I think the designer think about the personal benefits, without pay attention to other issues. In fact, the golden dome is the banner of Imam Ali, so it should be the highest points in the town, and any pilgrim should watch it. This related with intangible religious factors, pilgrims when watch it fell safe; therefore, hid the dome will reduce these issues.

I heard they proposed to build another dome to cover the origin.

This is completely wrong. *Masjid al-Kufa* is lost many of its values because the development works. I think the engineering can be balance between the heritage aspects and modernity. The *imam Ali* house also misses its values as a result of unprofessional rehabilitation work. They demolish all of the historical elements and replaced them by new elements. We should protect the local identity of the city.

Where is Najaf heritage going? It is going in the wrong direction. Hotels and high building inside the town is too wrong. They should be built them outside the town. In fact, the beauty of the town is coming from its alleyways, therefore, it should be protected. In terms of the houses, there are two approaches: the first approach to demolish these houses and rebuild the town to become contemporary city, and to extend the shrine to cover the whole area. The second approach is to protect them. However, I think it is really hard to protect heritage, because the wave of changing is coming strongly.

Arcl

What is the impact of demolishing the urban fabric around the shrine? It is possible to say that Najaf governor adopted strange decisions without paying attention or discussing with others, for instance demolished the 1920 revolution monument square to build new suspension junction. The heritage related with the resident memory, and now days' heritage become a global issue because it represents human evolution. Concerning the importance of Najaf heritage, it is a great religious centre has been built around the Shrine of Imam Ali, the 4th Caliph in Islamic history. As such, Imam Ali is the main important figure, and the city has a significant history. In addition, the old town take an urban shape acceptable for local environment. The old town is divided into 4 quarters, according to the tribes. The first local government founded in 1907 from all of these 4 neighbourhoods. It should be noted that until the mid of 1950s there were some parts of the outer wall which were removed later. The urban fabric is very important, and should protect it. What has happened in the past, in the early of 1950s Najaf old town was neglected, and the city grew outside the wall toward Kufa. In fact, this is lead to neglect Najaf cultural heritage to present. It should be noted that Iraqi central government (during Saddam period) started to alternate Najaf, especially in the 1990s. In fact, at the beginning the central government was take care of Najaf old town, then started to default it.

What the difference after 2003? Since 2003, new era started in terms of Najaf heritage management. Religious scholars also have been starting to neglect Najaf heritage. They say, "We should protect the stone or human?" Therefore, their focus become on pilgrimage and visitors more than heritage protection. And some people who are interested in trade support this. Unfortunately, the majority of local citizen does not think about heritage and conservation issues. In particular, the main reasons for destroying Najaf heritage are: the central government, religion- driven system, and local citizen. Also, visitors, and ignorance of the heritage have been leading to demolish Najaf heritage. As well as education curriculums is helped that, for instance in the past we studied the Epic of Gilgamesh, the Babylonian civilization, etc., and now not.

But Al-Sistani is support-protecting heritage? There is a big difference between Al-Sistani and religion- driven system.

What about local citizens? There is some local citizen think more about how can earn more money from the old town without paying attention to the local heritage.

What are the main problems on the ground? In fact, the old town has many problems, which should be solved but not in current way. The central and local government should adopt a policy and politics for conserving cultural heritage. The central government should have main objectives and strategies to protect cultural heritage in Iraq, and through it local governments should proceed to sub strategies for protecting heritage. They must conserve, protect and enhance the historical buildings as well as urban fabric. Some of these building have a great history according to the events that took place, or to the significant people who live in it. Overall, Najaf has problems, but the solutions should come without demolishing any part of the old town.

What is your opinion about the shrine extension projects? The best way to extend the Shrine is to extend toward the back, in order to protect the front elevation. Otherwise, the increase number of visitors should organise throughout manage timetables, and this is need strong will.

Why the central government demolished great part of Al-Imarah neighbourhood? Actually there was a strong need for building car parks and hotels, but the solution was very bad through demolishing this historical area. It should be noted that Saddam regime decisions depended on some consultants. But, after 1991 the punishment started.

What is your opinion about Al-Rass mosque project inside the Shrine? The only positive is that the extension on the back of the Shrine not in the front. However, there are overkill in decorating and glazing work.

What is your opinion about Sahan Fatima project? No idea. Recently, the Shrine institution has been trying to buy any houses or buildings to sell inside Najaf old town. I'm not quite sure if they have any plan about them, and might be put Najaf cultural heritage under threat. Generally, project management in Iraq is still weak, and decisions making normally random.

What are the impacts of Khans on Najaf social life? It is very difficult for me to be specific about these questions as I left Najaf in 1962 when I was very young. However, from memory, there were many Khans in the *Suq*, mainly for trading in grains. They were dealing with farmers from the Mid-Euphrates and beyond. I still remember the nomads from the desert with their camels in the middle of the *Suq* when we were out first thing in the morning to buy bread for breakfast. To my knowledge they would bring dates, animal skins, oil, etc. and take away grains and the like. They would disappear by the time the normal commercial life starts.

Why you and most the local citizen decided to move from the Najaf old town? The expansion of Najaf is a natural phenomenon and a necessity because of the expansion of the population in the fifties of the last century and the changes in the social structure and thus people's expectations and needs. The old town did not and could not satisfy these needs particularly the needs of the emerging middle class.

Why the space of the Najaf old town becomes redundant? The lack of vision and planning destroyed the old town. Neither the local population nor the central government appreciated the importance or the value of heritage. There was no plan to reinvigorate and revive the old town as historical and cultural asset.

Arc2

What is your opinion about what has happened to Iraqi heritage? All the international architects take care of their cities, scales, aesthetics, shapes, etc. are comes from their cities problems. The city is a one mass, with some spaces, and this completely difference in the Europe. Najaf was organic mass, and the shrine was the only significant building. Therefore, what happening now in the *sahan Fatima* project will kill these relations. The shrine space becomes smaller than before. I can solve the problem of the increase number of pilgrims, in addition to protect the old town. However, it is still standing as a jewel in the core of the town. Al- Kadhimiya also has the same problem. Decision makers want to destroy every thinks, because they do not have enough background. As a result, most Iraqi heritage cities with particular reference to religious cities are under threat.

Tell me about *Al-Rass* mosque? First of all, I can state that they damage my design during the implementation. Before the project, pilgrims did not have enough space to stay or pray close to the tomb of the Imam Ali. I went to the shrine, and I could not have enough space to pray, or sit. I think any pilgrim, particularly those who come from outside Iraq, prefer to stay long time close to the tomb to do their worship activities. Therefore, the main concept of the design was to offer them enough space. I tried to keep the vitality and spirituality of the old space, through retaining some sections. However, the executors of the project changed many of the architectural details without reference to me.

How and why? I designed two types of columns and arches; big and small. The big columns and arches refer to the *qiblah*. I moved outside Iraq because the security situation; however, they were built the columns in the same size. Later, they told me that the builders cannot do it. As a result, the project appears in a different way from the original concept derived from the shrine's heritage. The design also proposed to use the natural lighting through strips in the domes, and also they did not do them.

Where was the problem? I do not know. I do not take any fees for the design, I only asked them to give me letter of thanks, and they didn't.

What is your opinion about the 90m-extension project? I think the new several open spaces will dilute the dominance of the original *sahan*. In fact, some religious scholars does not leassons to the heritage specialists; and there is some benefiting makers control decisions. There was a seminar about the Al-Rass mosque project, and many specialists and architects attended. I explained that the space is more significant that other issues, because the pilgrims are the priority. Dr. Kamona told me it has long hisotry, and I told hime the pilgrims are more important. They only objected without offer any solutions. I think they want to protect their families' cemeteries which they in that area.

Where is the problem? The main issue is that we should have some architects they able to understand urban fabric. The problem is we don't have. Historic city centres such as Baghdad, Najaf, Karbala, Mosul and Basra also lack proper protection measures and are fast being destroyed by modern developments although they have a great tourism potential. The same goes for vernacular

architecture in rural areas, which is not valued and respected. All these examples indicate the immense challenges that need to be faced to protect and restore the Iraqi cultural heritage to an adequate state that will attract tourism and fulfil its potential in Iraq.

What is your opinion about the roofing the courtyard of the shrines? I think it is completely wrong. They did that in Karbala, and now they want to build new dome to cover the original one because it is disappeared. I think decision makers should think more about protecting the original shape and proportion of the design.

What is the difference before and after 2003? Theoretically, after 2003 should be much better, if they want to work hard and offer services. However, you should have enough engineers and workers understand values of the urban fabric, and unfortunately that's not found yet. I disappointed more about the projects on the ground.

Can Najaf old town have listed in the WHL? I do not think so, because our heritage walking toward the wrong way. The hotels killed the town. I think they should build outside the town.

How can increase understanding conservation values level? I think it need big plan, because the understanding conservation level is very decrease for different reasons. The universities do not offer enough researches, or modules to teach conservation. Moreover, local communities and authorities do not care about heritage.

Arc3

What is your experience about Najaf? I observed the shrine and the old town as well, between 11/2012 until 11/2013, as an architect and member of the advisory committee of the shrine secretary. Firstly, the co-chair of the shrine was asked us about all the architectural and development issues. But after 4 months, some secretary members disagreed about that situation; they think that they must be decided, without return to us. They think the power should still with them, and I didn't agree.

Do you agree or disagree about the *Al-Rass* mosque extension? First of all, it is positive, because there was no enough space for worship activities. Before the project, it was really hard to get enough space. I know they demolished a historical place with its significant elements, but they should. Now, pilgrims have enough space to worship activities, any can stay long time.

Do you totally agree with the project? In fact, I notice some critical points about the design. I think using additional glazing reflects the weakness of the design. In addition, the connection between the extension and the tomb was not enough, because it is only two doors (2m width, 2,80m height), one for each gender. In his position as advisor of the Shrine Secretary, he asked for the dimensions to be changed (4m x 4,20m). After four months they were changed, and the communication improved. The other significant problem is that the new extension is higher than the original shrine about 2m, and that not acceptable.

Why? I do not know. The shrine secretary does not listen to any advisor; they decide and work according to their desires. I think this is the main problem.

How can avoid that? It is not hard; they should discuss any proposal with the specialist as well as local communities to reach the aims.

Is it easy to do that? I don't think so.

Can any one stop the destruction of heritage? I think it is really hard, because the understanding level of heritage is in very low level. In addition, we do not have clear regulations. Moreover, the architectural education system is not acceptable. I had taught architecture at the University of Technology, and I think architectural student did not get enough information about heritage at that time. I fell now is the same.

Why? There are different reasons, but overall they were focusing on international approaches. The staff did care about vernacular architecture.

What is your opinion about the future of the town? The old town should conserve in the best way. Each single alleyway or property has different types of values. I think the problem is that people do not understand its values, on the other hand decision makers do not have enough knowledge to protect heritage.

Arc4

What is your opinion about managing Iraqi heritage? In fact, since 2003 many projects have focused on developing and extending the Shia shrines in Iraq, particularly in Karbala, Najaf and Kadhimiya. Therefore, the loss of most of the traditional areas of pilgrim cities has become the main concern of Iraqi architects and historians.

What about the government infrastructure? The General Directorate of Urban Planning and the General Directorate of Municipalities are still beset by different difficulties. One of the significant issues that it is still far away from protecting and conserving historical building, group of building, or sites. They cannot stop the destruction of heritage sites, or at least control the new construction inside the core of the historical towns, and they do not have clear policies, politics and legislation deal with historical built heritage. In terms of the problems; there are different reasons for the mismanagement of significant religious heritage on the ground. The first reason is that heritage protection is not the priority of the Divans. The majority of the divans attention is how can accommodate huge number of pilgrimages. Overall, I can state that most of the general secretary council members are clerics, without any knowledge or background in heritage planning or management.

What about the shrine administrations? There are five decision makers on the ground: the shrine secretary, the religious endowment, *Al-Atabat* institution that is NGO, the local government, and municipality and town-planning department. According to what has happened in the *Kadhimiya* shrine, I think the *Al-Atabat* institution is the most dangerous on protecting, managing, and developing shrines and their surrounding areas.

Can any one stop the heritage destruction? No, it is bigger than us, its need more supports from different categories. The other reason the Shia endowment is destroying significant mosques in order to rebuild them, without pay attention to the heritage and values.

How can solve these significant problems? The central government can do that, if they want; through establishing clear regulations, and support specialists to become decision makers and advisors instead of politicians. Otherwise, heritage will be destruction.

Arc5

Could you tell me the main challenges that facing Najaf old town? One of the biggest challenges in determining the heights of buildings is maintaining the urban fabric of the ancient city with the dominance of holy shrine on the overall spaces of the city. This situation has been refused by heritage elites, architects and local citizens because it will lead to a weakening of the fabric of the old town and its skyline, as well as hiding the dome of the shrine. I can state that high buildings in the old town threaten local identity.

I born in Najaf and I know its fabric clear. The current problem is that local communities and decision makers don't understand its values. There are two groups in terms of dealing with traditional houses. The first group adopt the idea of redeveloping the whole houses to reuse their function to be able for instance to accommodate pilgrims, local museums, and other activates. This approach is to support the main function of the old town as pilgrimage city. The other group is calling for conserving the significant houses to support the social life of the old town, and to encourage land authorities to protect their properties. We were proposed plan to protect 8 groups of houses, to become clear sample in the town.

What is your opinion about *Al-Rass* mosque extension project? Its design and construction are completely negative. The designer did not have any background about cultural heritage or Islamic architecture. The columns, domes, finishing, materials, and shapes do not belong to the shrine architecture. I think it is one of the erroneous decisions by the shrine secretary. They demolished one of the oldest parts of the shrine.

What about *Sahan Fatima* project? The designer idea was to repeat the shrine courtyard. the new design is an active, and the significant issues is that it is looks like the sponge, can accommodate the huge number of pilgrims during the specific events, and shrink in the remaining days. I disagreed about the size of the new courtyards (*sahan*) which it should be less than the area of the original courtyard. In addition, the new masses should be smaller than the current design. However, because I worked within team of design, I cannot change all of these issues.

Where was the problem? The problem is the shrine secretary members have moody, according to the power. The main problem was that The Shrine Authority contracted with the *Al-Kawthar* Company from Iran to construct the project; and there are some mistakes led to make the new extension is higher than the Shrine wall about 2m. In terms of other part, I proposed to re-design the great *suq*, and maintain some significant buildings for instance *Al-Hindi* mosque. However, decision makers do not respond for different reasons.

Why? There were some conflicts in the hidden. The secretary wanted to create the underground level as cemetery. My concern was they need the cemetery for different reasons; therefore, the authority agreed to change the function from cemetery to worship activities. specified that the new project have some problems which it divided the continuity of the town urban fabric, but there are some factors that justify the design: the requirements of the design specs by Shrine Secretary; the site shape and

area, which it demolished by the *Baath* regime; there was unclear idea by the Secretary about the future extensions and projects; and some political and social factors. The main significant issue was that the Shrine Secretary does not have clear implementations, and their objectives have been changing according to the Secretary members. Moreover, decision makers, pilgrims as well as local citizens do not have enough understanding what heritage is, and the significance of the place.

What were the main difficulties during the design process of the *Sahan Fatima*? I think the main challenge was how to increase people awareness toward heritage. In addition, to how can avoid the politics issues. The implementation problem is that the advisor and construction company did not ask up, so they did some mistakes.

What do you think the shrine secretary priority? The secretary mind has been changing according to change the members. Unfortunately, we have some difficulties to explain them the importance of values, and this is not limited to the secretary, but include local citizens.

What was the impact of the multi decision makers? The projects and plans set out according to their desires, no one think about the town.

Is there any opportunity to protect the old town? It is really hard to protect the reminder of the old town. However, we scanned the town, and find there are 9 groups of buildings can be protected. I think any future development should be based on these groups.

How you get the primary materials before the design process? Unfortunately, there is no clear documenting system in Najaf. Therefore, it was coasty, and hard to reach simple data. However, we did good work because we need to support the city.

Arc6

What is your opinion about the development projects in Najaf old town? I am totally disagreeing about most of these projects. The most significant problem is that designers do not have any background in the best conservation management practices of religious cities. The main problem is that unprofessional and incompetent figures are the decision makers of managing and planning heritage. Sometimes political influence allows unqualified people to achieve powerful positions with or without qualifications.

How? Political issues played a significant role in terms of developing the urban fabric. Before 2003, the old town suffered a great negative impact, as a result of hidden conflicts between the Baath regime and the Shia religious scholars. On the other hand, since 2003, the quota system among the parties has enabled many non-specialists and incompetent people to become key figures in managing and developing the old town.

Could you tell me more about your design proposal, the concept etc.? In fact, I designated some problems in the relationship between the shrine and its surrounding area, and he wanted to solve these problems. Therefore, proposal design divided the old town to two sections, and that's could threaten the old town continuity. Moreover, it did not respond to the high temperature during day time, and how can avoid it. The big open spaces are usually very hot, and fountains that he proposed are not enough. The courtyards of the most shrines' in Iraq have covered to face the high temperature.

Did you establish it as a part of Ilewelyn Davies master plan? No, I gave it to the shrine spritely.

Why the authority did not accept the project? They did not accept the proposal for different reasons. Most the land authority is private; and the Shrine Institution does not have enough money to buy it, as well as most the authorities do not want to sell their shops and buildings.

What is your opinon about the Sahan Fatima project? It's called *sahan Fatima*, but where is the *sahan*? I told the designer and the shrine secretary may main points. Pilgrims do not need establish big masses close to the shrine; it can be built outside. And the proposal movement could confuse pilgrims, why pilgrims should change the levels several times. It should be direct way to the shrine. However, they disagreed my comments; therefore, the secretaries do not call me later.

Why? I think because they did not need any objections at that time. In addition, the main funding from Iran, so the secretary cannot stop or change anything.

Arc7

Architectural education in terms of conservation or heritage studies, did you get any modules deals with it or not? And do you teach it? I did not get any specific modules during my bachelor and master studies in Iraq. Even I did some practice works in conservation and Islamic aspects, but I depended on my self-research. The only module was in the 4th year design project, (in full urban design), and the design tutors asked us to protect the urban context. I can state that there is unbelievable teaching level of conservation values in our universities. Overall, the education system with particular reference to architecture is the main blame of low level of awareness toward protecting built heritage.

What about the school of town planning? The school is new established, and the program of study is still unclear. It was proposed to become school of architecture and planning, but the Ministry of Higher Education rejected that proposal because there was no enough academic staff in architecture. Therefore, it becomes the school of town planning. In fact, there is an approach toward conservation aspects in the school. However, the problem is most of the staff don't understand the meaning of it, the process, etc. In summary, they think conservation mean leave every think as it was, don't touch it, or manage it. They don't know what heritage means.

How? Few years ago, we organized symposium about conservation Najaf heritage, and 3 papers had presented. All of them focused on the positive issues of Najaf without mentioned about the current problems and challenges. The main paradox that they were praise the old town, but they left it redundant and refused to live in it. I was the chairman session, so I mentioned some current problems for example there is no enough car parking, neglected, infrastructure problems, etc. Most the audiences dis-agreed my comments because their idea of conservation is to a lock the town. I think they have forgotten conservation mean reactivate the physical and social activities of the town.

What are the main problems of the school? The main problem is the description of the graduate students. Most the students don't know what they will be, their future job, are they engineers looks like the architecture or not. I think they should work for example in the GIS centers, to activate this approach, as well as contributing in the projects of the Master Planning of the cities.

Do you teach any specific module of conservation values, cultural heritage, or vernacular architecture? I do not think so, most the staff background are civil engineering.

Let me ask you about the role of the religious system in preserving heritage? There are two main approaches on the ground. The first group thinks the architects and developers do not understand the current problem. The town does not offer enough services to pilgrims and local citizens. The second group (with Al-Sistani) think it should leave these decisions to the experts and specialists of architecture. However, I can argue that at national and local levels there are not enough architects or competence to play a significant role to protect its heritage. Our experiences on conservation values are simple, and not enough to go ahead. Therefore, for example we could not discuss these aspects with the designers of the *Shahan Fatima* project. Then, our discussion did not mention any heritage

aspects. Consequently, the Shrine Secretary as well as religious scholars do not pay attention to the private properties in the old town, and most their attention is to some specific properties such as significant religious schools, dwellings, and mosques. They want to extend the shrine to cover the whole town.

What is your opinion about *Shan Fatima* extension project? Architecturally it is good; its design element took from the old town, and it is with the urban context. I think it is the best scenario.

Is it having any impact on the town? The shrine secretary does not pay attention to the social life of the town, they only want to accommodate huge number of visitors. In addition, the Iranian designers explored the site, and illustrated that there are no other options in terms of the area. Also, 80% of pilgrims come from that side. The concept is to imagine the Imam Zain Al-Abidenn historical movement to the shrine. Overall, I think it is much better that the development in Karbala town.

What about *Dewan* proposal? The *Dewan* proposed three main designs. The first alternative was the town of pilgrim. The main weakness of it that it was fails to consider the identity and solidarity of the old town. In addition, it could be weakening the dominance of the shrine on urban space configuration of the town. The second alternative is the old town for culture and knowledge, and the third alternative is the old town for residents. In fact, I think it was waste of money and time, because the authorities are looking for comprehensive design to cover all of these three alternatives; therefore, they did not accept this alternative. Then, after discussion these three alternatives with the decision makers at both national and local level, *dewan* offer to consolidate the alternatives to set out the final alternative: the old town for all. I assume the alternatives were unjustified work, because we already know we need the old town for all.

What about the final proposal? In the final proposal, *Dewan* proposed to clearance all the area surrounding the shrine. The problem is that they did not pay attention to the protection of the significant heritage, even they had stated to conserve some significant buildings. The designer assume that it should clearance this area to accommodate pilgrims, and he state that you will demolish all of the new buildings in the future because you need open spaces close to the shrine, therefore, their idea to create big open spaces. The other problem is that most of the design details were so far from vernacular architecture. Overall, it should be explained that *Dewan* Company worked, investigated on the ground, and then outlined the design.

What has happened then? The design not satisfied the shrine secretary, therefore, some of the decision makers were thinks to call for some designers to design the area, and others were thinks to call for international design competition. This group thinks that the shrine not for local pilgrims, but it is for Islamic world; therefore, this international competition could support the town to become contemporary city. Therefore, they asked University of Shahid Beheshti to design the site.

What about the proposal of Llewelyn Davies Yeang? First of all, there was not British company worked on the ground. My main concern is that some of their work was remote, and did not explain the mechanisms of controlling development in practice. For example, it mentions the control the

buildings height in the old town, but not who is responsible for managing current building height. However, some issues have led to a stoppage of their work in the old town, which had been set out in the master plan of Najaf governorate without consideration of the old town.

What the pressure, which led the town, becomes redundant? In fact, there are different reasons. The families are grown, so the original houses in the old town could not host all of them. Accordingly, some of their sons moved to new neighbourhoods when they married, but their daily jobs remained with their parents or relatives inside the old town. This situation supported their relatives moving away, particularly when they compared the small-sized and densely-packed houses inside the old town to the large houses with wide streets and many new facilities on the outskirts.

Where are the problems? Before 2003, the town did offer any services for example car parking, enough schools, parks; wide streets, etc. so supported local citizens to move. After 2003, the security situation leads to lack most the main roads, and many check points have been established; therefore, it become really difficult to go to the town.

How new generation are looking to the old town? The new generations look to the old town as their source of income. Therefore, after moving from the old town, they have started to rent their houses as private rooms to visitors and religious students. This has then led to land being developed to become hotels and to accommodate other commercial activities inside the urban fabric. Accordingly, this point had played a significant role in encouraging people to move outside of the town.

What has happened to the traditional houses? Unfortunately, the courtyard house types have gradually broken down, for a variety of reasons. They did not offer a comfortable modern life, especially since air-conditioning systems appeared in the 1980s. Nowadays, most of houses' basements cannot be used, as a result of rises in the water table level.

What is the role of the government authorities and agencies? Even the local municipality of Najaf and the Najaf town planning authority want to protect the identity of the old town, but most of the employees do not have enough background to enable them to do this. However, the central approach of the local government is to redevelop the town to become like Dubai or Mecca.

Why? I think the main reason of the lack of knowledge because the universities don't teach these aspects comparing with other universities in the international level.

What about the roles of NGOs? They want to change, but they still minority.

Arc8

What is your opinion about teaching conservation process and values in your department? I was a module leader of conservation, and I think its need more and more to become active. The problem is most students are focused on the design because of the units of it is higher than others. As well as they must be passed through the first attempt, but other modules there have 2nd attempt, and sometimes the exam or department board moderates lower marks to ensure Cohort success. Moreover, the staff does not have enough skills, and clear curriculums to teach students.

How can improve that? The architectural education system should be adopted new teaching methods, modules to combine between theoretical approaches and designs. Otherwise, if the graduation projects of architecture departments still focus on “Tamayouz Excellence Award” without pay attention to the local challenges. I can state that we are based on some PhD thesis by some Iraqi researchers who they finished their studies in the UK. Comparing with other countries in the region, these countries were depended on western experts from the UK, USA and France to build up strong conservation system. I think we need some workshops, seminars, and courses to support our staff.

Is there any listing building system on the ground? There are some heritage elites and specialists are calling for listing significant national monuments, buildings and sites; however, listing buildings is not the priority of the national and local authorities. In fact, builders, workers or local residences solely responsible as redevelopments are led and controlled by decision makers and authorities such as national and local governments.

How heritage has been managed and protected on the ground? There is no clear management or protection system. Multiple decision makers and agencies without enough background led to threat heritage. Personally, I think it is no enough to graduate from school of architecture for example, to work in heritage sites. These sites need an extra training to deal with them.

What do you the future of Iraqi heritage? We still have an opportunity to protect heritage, but that’s need real hard work. Otherwise, Iraq will lose heritage step by step.

Arc9

Could you tell me about the teaching process of conservation? I was module leader in my architecture department. We based on the curriculum of the University of Baghdad. In fact, I can argue that our student doesn't pay attention to this module, because they focus on the design. In addition, we do not have enough background to teach conservation in depth.

Why you select the curriculums of Baghdad University? It is the oldest university in Iraq, and I graduated from it. I think we do not have enough experiences, so we based on their curriculums.

Can you change them? The tutor has enough space to exchange and present his/her ideas, and there are some staff members calling for adopting vernacular architecture.

What they call exactly? They are calling for supporting local style. National and local level have many architectural elements should stand and continue in future design. But the main problem is that authorities or communities do not pay attention and support them.

Do you have any experiences of working in Najaf? I worked with private company to design some projects in Najaf. There are some projects of the Najaf capital of Islamic culture 2012 were contracted because there is a relationship between decision makers and the investors or designers. As a result, they selected a design of hotel to build in Najaf, which were totally copied form Dubai, without paying attention to the local architecture.

Why? Simply, it is the corruption.

Arc10

What the role of the Iraqi Engineers Union toward increasing understanding and protecting heritage? In terms of increasing awareness toward heritage, the Union organised architectural symposium, which was divided into two main parts. The first part focused on the conservation values, and it outlined some recommendations to protect Iraqi heritage. Nowadays, we are working to set out a declaration for conserving heritage, and will ask architects to sign it.

Do the Iraqi Engineers Union participating in making decision, and how it is the relationship between the union and local government? Yes, it is contributing to offer some advice in policies and legislation in terms of engineering sector. However, the main concern is that local governments are still not respond. I think day by day they will respond.

What is different of the Union role before and after 2003? There is a big change. Before 2003, it was under the Baath government role, and now it is totally NGO, and has enough freedom.

Do you think architectural bureaus and companies have contribution to protecting heritage? Up to the present, they do not have any contribution to conserve heritage. We are looking for the declaration, to encourage them to protect heritage.

What are the main reasons of neglecting most historical cities? They are legislative and executive, because the previous legislation and resolutions do not implement, and there are no policies to prevent the neglecting, and no monitoring or controlling development system on the ground.

Do the Union have clear plan to protect heritage? Unfortunately, there is no clear plan. However, the architectural department at the union is trying to do that, but nobody respond.

Do you have clear statistics in terms of the number of bureaus, or specialists in heritage? We do not have any statistics.

Do you have enough collaboration with the Union and the Universities, Heritage and Antiquities authority, Endowment, etc.? There is, but not enough.

Do you think the architectural education system and curriculums deals with conservation values and heritage aspects in the wright way? I do not think so, I told most of the schools that we do not teach the conservation in its wright way.

Where Iraqi heritage are going? It is going to the terrifying fate, because what has happing every day will erase local the architectural identity. However, I think heritage elites do not agree with this situation, and will change it. In fact, stopping heritage destruction became an issue which was discussed at the first annual symposium of the Union in 2016, and one of the recommendations was a demonstration of solidarity to support Iraqi heritage in the historical core of Baghdad, to protest and lobby, but the response from officials is limited.

LR1

Do you think Najaf has been impact according to the huge number of pilgrims? Yes, the old town in general with particular reference to the shrine because: After 2003 there are no restrictions by the government in terms of *Shia* worship activities. It should be noted that the *Baath* regime prevented most of these activities, which thus impacted on the relationship between the shrine and the old town. Moreover, many cars and vehicles are export after 2003. The Najaf airport established, and that led to increase the number or international pilgrims to the town. And, there are no rules to manage the pilgrims' numbers, particularly from Iran.

What is the impact of demolishing the shrine surrounding area from buildings? In fact, the demolishing of these buildings have negative impact on Najaf's citizens particularly heritage elites, historians and intellectuals. May be it is positive in terms of accommodating pilgrims, but they can protect the significant buildings and extend only in the western phase. The old town has long history, so demolish these significant fabric and buildings is effected the local identity.

What is your opinion about the development and extension project last 30 years? Are they having impact? Can stop them? How and why? Before 2003, the shrine did not extend, however many buildings and fabric had removed to pretend extend the shrine. After 2003, some projects have been done for example the extension of the *al-Rass* mosque, which demolished one of the significant characters called (*Al-Subat*). It should be noted that many events took place in this place; indeed, one of the most significant being the signing of the Najaf peace treaty between the Shi'a and Sunni communities in 1743. In fact, religious scholars were the key players in this agreement, and it opened a new page in Islamic history. Also, recently the *sahan Fatims* extension project has been constructing on the area that previous regime removes it. Moreover, the shrine secretary is selling any available property inside the town, and I think that for their future plans and projects.

What do you think the secretary priority? Their priority is to accommodate pilgrims. The protecting heritage issues are considered by only heritage elites, and unfortunately nobody listen to them.

I want to ask you, when the external walls of the shrine decorated? The outer walls of the shrine have been changed for different phases since 1949 when new streets have opened surrounding the shrine. Therefore, many joined buildings demolished. Consequently, the exterior walls had become isolated from the surrounding buildings; therefore, a new skin wall was built, using some Islamic engravings and arches to decorate it. Its materials (bricks) mark a return to the Sumerian civilization, and its decoration evokes Islamic civilization.

What were the impacts of the Saddam government on the heritage of the old town? The previous regime demolished many historical buildings as well as *Al-imarah* neighborhood. I can state that every alleyway of Najaf has story, because Najaf has long and rich history.

LR2

What is your opinion about the shrine extension projects? They are good, if they protect heritage as well.

What about *Sahan Fatima* project? It is completely wrong.

Why? There are many spaces can accommodate pilgrims without demolishing the heritage of the old town. The other concern is that local communities and pilgrims might be unable to watch the golden dome as well as other architectural features clearly.

But Saddam government demolished the area not the current shrine secretary.

Yes, I know that, but I cannot understand the current design, I think it is wrong.

Why? I think it is really hard to rebuild the demolished parts, but they should protect the other fabric.

What is the relationship between the shrine and the old town? The shrine is the identity of the town; it has intangible heritage. I think there are enough open spaces to manage the pilgrims' activities without demolishing any extra part. The shrine has many significant elements for instance the golden dome and *minarets*, the clock, and the *Al-Subat*. Unfortunately, they demolished the *Al-Subat* so we don't need to lose more.

What are the current problems of the old town? It has many problems, for example the lack of services, check points, and neglect.

Are these problems having impact on the religious tourism? Yes, off course, in addition to the corruption. Local hotels authorities complain from the monopoly of some companies for accommodating international pilgrims, which contracted with specific hotels. They think it is part of corruption.

What is the impact of demolishing the shrine surrounding area from buildings? Sure it has negative impact. In addition, local communities didn't understand buildings values, and the government didn't prioritise heritage protection lead to neglect and demolish many buildings.

What is the impact of removing the urban fabric to establish the city of pilgrims? It is negative. At the international level, most the people are proud of their heritage, and they try to manage their cities in the perfect way. In terms of Najaf, it has many significant values, which should be protected.

What is your opinion about the development and extension project last 30 years? Are they having impact? Can stop them? How and why? The previous regime had worked to remove the history of Najaf. They also tried to reduce the power of the shrine and religious scholars. The problem was nobody could able to stop them. And I think the current local and central government should work together in order to develop the town and the shrine.

How are decision makers in terms of protecting and developing the old town? Before 2003, the Baath government was the only key player, and after 2003 the central and local government, as well as the religious scholars.

Where do you think Najaf heritage going? The heritage under threat, and I think the best way to protect local heritage through collaborating between local and central government to sell all the significant houses, and change their function to become local museum. However, decision makers do not think more about the town.

LR3

Do you think Najaf has been impact according to the huge number of pilgrims? Yes, sure. Also the shrine becomes unable to accommodate them, because it was built more than 300 years ago.

What is the impact of demolishing the shrine surrounding area from buildings? The demolishing is still continuing up to the present. There is no clear law or regulation to protect heritage or historical buildings. The government and local citizens are take part in the destruction. We have many examples. The *al-Imara* had the most significant religious schools, as well as the dwellings of religious scholars, and many local mosque neighbourhoods. Another reason was perhaps to reduce the proportion of Shia visitors to the Shrine.

What is the impact of removing the urban fabric to establish the city of pilgrims? There is no thing called the city of pilgrims on the ground.

What is your opinion about the development and extension project last 30 years? Are they having impact? Can stop them? How and why? Your question can be divided into two parts. The first part is during Saddam rule: they did not offer any think. The shrine courtyard and walls had many cracks and problems, and no one respond. The second part is after 2003; it is become more active, and has many projects.

What is your opinion about removing the *Al-Rass* mosque and *Al-Subat*? When you watch the new, you will support the new extension design. Anyway, I was dislike remove the *Al-Subat* because it has significant values.

How are decision makers in terms of protecting and developing the old town? Up to the present, there is no law for protect the town. Even there is regulation and determines for buildings heights, but nobody pay attention. Land authorities can do what they want. In terms of the shrine, the head of the secretary is the main decision makers of the shrine, while other parts of the town are under the local government administration.

What were the impacts of the Saddam government on the heritage of the old town? The town consist of four neighbourhoods; Saddam regime removed one of them. Also at that time the shrine was neglected.

Why? Political issue because it has many religious schools, religious scholar's houses, and libraries. The previous regime did not accept them as key power on the ground. Moreover, the Iraq-Iran war encouraged the Saddam regime to reduce their power.

What about the social life of the town? The old town was very active, and has some open spaces. These open spaces offered local citizens, particularly youth, a place to meet others and play. In the 1970s, these spaces became daily markets from early morning until midday. It is also having some beautiful courtyard houses. The main concept of the courtyard house as a building located on a piece

of land framed by a continuous perimeter wall of considerable mass, acting as a defensive wall, which achieves the internal courtyard, and provides the backbone for domestic activities and movement.

Why they are different areas? In terms of its area as well as the courtyard's size and location. In terms of the dwelling area, different reasons have led to variant areas, such as economic or social status, or the size of family. In this sense there are big or small houses. I remember my house; the *Barrani* of my family house had two rooms, a toilet and basement. The big room was a guest chamber, and the small room was more private. The *Juani* was the biggest part, and consisted of courtyard surrounded by bedrooms, kitchen and bathroom. The house entrance divided into two sides, towards *Barrani* and *Juani*, and the main entrance does not give direct access to the *Juani*, in order to add more privacy to the domestic area. This is simply description, and most traditional houses are the same.

What were the main activities in the shrine before 1970? And what it's impact on the social life?

Until the 1970s the shrine open space was used for many activities: for instance, as a traditional school and for social activities, because it was the biggest open space inside the town. In fact, far too little attention was paid to managing and protecting the cultural heritage of the shrine and other historical buildings at this time. The problem is the Saddam regime (1968-2003) was prevented most the Shia activities as I told you before.

What happened after 2003? It is huge change in terms of managing, organizing and developing the old town.

How the shrine been managed before and after 2003? Before 2003, the central government was the decision maker. At that time, little money was spent on protecting, developing and managing it, so it is hard now to see and understand what was done. The main problem is that the pilgrims' donations went to toward the central regime without them being used to improve the shrine and/or the old town. Because of the dictatorial regime, nobody could complain or as questions about this situation. After 2003, the new era has been started. The shrine secretary is working to offer services and accommodate huge number of pilgrims, and establishing many projects for that reason.

What is the reaction of the new extensions projects (90m and *sahan Fatima*) on the ground? I can state that the ambition of the Shrine Institution is to develop the shrine and old town to become contemporary city, and a good example of blending between protecting heritage and modernity. It should be one of the significant places in the Islamic world. However, these ideas are facing some disagreed. In fact, most the shop owners and land authoriteis also do not accept to sell their properties in order to establish the project, because it might affect their business. However, the design offer some alternatives for them.

LR4

Could tell me about the social and physical life of the old town? The old town has long history, and many significant persons live in there, as well as it witnessed many significant political and religious event. The communities lived in the past as one family. Even we did not have enough open spaces to play or sit, but the *fadwa* and narrow alleyways were our places to sit and play every night.

What has happened there? Day by day, Najaf lost many of its significant buildings, with the old town suffering from neglect and consequential demolition during the 1990s. Moreover, many local citizens emigrated to Western Europe and the USA through Saudi Arabia and Iran, while the *Baath* regime arrested most of the remaining young citizens. The central government had tried to neglect the town, to reduce the power of the religious scholars. As a result, most of local citizens moved outside. The city becomes abandoned.

And after 2003? Then and now, the main problem is that there is an increase in commercial land use instead of residential area, and the local and central government still lacks control over this. Multi store buildings have been establishing, and that destroyed the skyline of the town. The other significant problem is the huge number of hotels inside the residential areas. According to our culture, we dislike to live close to commercial activities or hotels. Thus, most local residents move out.

Do you think it can stop that? I don't think so.

Why? Because the authorities do not need to stop them. The corruption also has great impact. In addition, the new neighbourhoods offer good services and infrastructures for instance wide streets, parks, schools, etc.

Where is the problem in terms of the destruction? Lack of regulation, decision makers not from the town, and don not understand the town.

What do you think the future of Najaf? My main concern is that I cannot see the old town. I am really afraid.

Why? The old town is a part of our identity. The shrine, traditional houses, alleyways, and other elements are shape our local identity. Therefore, we hope to protect all of them.

Do you think the new generation understand that? Yeas and no. The new generation want to protect the old town as a part of our history, and at the same time they do not agree to live in there. It is really difficult argument.

LR5

Do you think the structural government on the ground is good enough? I don't think so. The successive central governments have changed the ministry, which deals with heritage authority several times. This change in structural government has had a negative impact on the ground. The government not prioritising heritage in their agenda, and this neglected heritage sites and buildings. I think the changes in the structure of the foundation and ministries that dealing with heritage have led to it appearing weak, and do not allow it to grow and extend to cover all the cities.

Why? The successful government have many problems, wars, economic sanctions, security situations, and political conflicts, altogether played to waken heritage. And currently ISIS terrorists' attacks are threatening many heritage sites in the north and west of Iraq. This conflict also encourages some groups to loots significant artefacts and smuggled them outside Iraq. Accordingly, there has been no clear governmental volition to support these sites.

So what has happened on the ground? All heritage protection attempts are based on individual experiences; there is no designation or listed building system. I can state that most historical cities in Iraq are death, and the creation of Ghost Towns. Nobody wants to live there, because they are neglected.

Why? There are different reasons, Najaf old town for example the political factor plays significant roles. In 1991 witnessed a popular uprising in most Iraqi cities after the end of the occupation of Kuwait. The movement was focused around the holy cities and their religious scholars and Najaf was deliberately targeted by the Baath regime, using missiles and military units. Therefore, it is neglected, and become dangerous. After 2003, it is still without any development projects. I think the old town with particular should develop to become like contemporary city. It has many significant buildings and sites for example the *suq al-Houaish*, historical *khans*, and religious schools, which can play the backbone of any development. However, what have happened is awful; land authorities and local government do not pay attention to heritage. In their development, they using new strange shapes and types of structures and materials because they think they are part of modernity. The problem is no authority can or wants to stop them.

Why? I think the Corruption, as well as misunderstanding heritage.

Do you think heritage tourism can be main source of income? I think so, if we have clear organization. In fact, pilgrims are the main income source for some heritage sites, and can exert a negative or a positive impact. In Najaf, the previous government's intention was to generate income, without paying sufficient attention to the local heritage by removing significant historical fabric and threatening the city's historic identity.

What is your opinion about the new extension projects? I think most pilgrims to the shrine are preferred comfortable places and spaces rather than protected heritage. In fact, this is normal, because any pilgrim needs a wide and comfortable place, as well as easy access, without consideration of the

place significance. However, my main concern is that this extension project focussed on developing the western phase, and that might be encouraged pilgrims to visit the shrine and back to the car parks without entre the old town. Hence, it has side effect in terms of economic situation, and the life of the old town. The new hotels also have changed the skyline as well as the social life.

How? In the past, pilgrims had rent small rooms form the local citizens to stay. However, since 2003 new types of accommodation for visitors to the holy cities have appeared and replaced the rural *caravansaries*. Called *Mawkib* or *Husania* these are mobile or fixed; small tents or large structure, which offers the same function of accommodating and feeding visitors free of charge. These have changed the phase of the accommodating pilgrims.

What about local citizens, do you think they participate in making decisions? I don't think so; decision makers and agencies do not ask local communities and stakeholders about any new design project or development in their neighbourhoods.

What about inside the old town? Historically, there were some khans inside the town to accommodate pilgrims for instance *khan Dar Al-Shifaa*; it was one of the oldest khans in Najaf located in the corner of the Imam Ali Shrine. The Arabian Traveller Ibn Batota described it when he visited the holy city in 1326, and it hosted travelers to the Shrine. It was fully demolished in 1982. Many other Najaf *khans*, for instance, the *khan Al-Assam*, the *Sayid Chaloob*, the *Merzah*, the *Abu Ruqaeba*, and the *Al-Sadawi* have been fully demolished. This constitutes a significant diminishing of Najaf old town's architectural identity and both central and local governments through many municipal authorities have adopted demolition of historic khans without pay attention to their architectural and cultural values. This example shows the way of protecting and managing Iraqi heritage, which do not pay attention to the process of conservation best practices.

LR6

What has happened to Najaf's heritage before and after 2003? It is neglected during time, and the central and local government do not pay attention to protect local heritage. There are many examples show that. The *khan Al-Shilan* for example the government changed the function several times for different reasons. Then, finally the leaseholder changed the function of the building through subletting 13 small shops in the ground floor, as well as leasing the courtyard to become a restaurant, and the first floor rooms sub-let to become a storage rooms. I think there was no monitoring or managing the building; therefore, the leaseholder changed as he like. The main concern is more about the private sector, because land authority can change any part of their properties, with or without building permission.

Why? The heritage is not priority before 2003, and after 2003 accommodate pilgrims is the priority. The decision makers are not from the city, so they cannot understand its values. Moreover, there is no clear regulation, as well as the corruption.

What about the relationship between authorities? The relationship is not clear, for example the current law led to stir up some problems between the central and local government. The Public Board of Heritage and Antiquities participates with the departments and the relevant ministries in the preparation of studies and conferences related to heritage. I can be stated that the government agencies and authorities spend lots of money and time to rehabilitate some heritage sites for special event, and after these activities they leave historical buildings or sites neglected.

How is heritage protection understood at local level? It is in sad level. Most management lacked awareness and knowledge of the composition, complexities and consequences of the legislative and legal environment governing tourism and antiquities in Iraq. This explains the lack of a unified vision and clear positions regarding the overlaps, contradictions and problems arising from accumulating a large number of legislative tools that are still effective by virtue of law, although de facto inactivated in whole or in part.

Do you think protecting heritage can be new source of money? I think so; the pilgrimage to Imam Ali Shrine and other Shia shrines in Iraq can become a good source of income. However, what has happened on the ground is completely different. Some decision makers think that the shrines are for all Muslims; therefore, it should accommodate them with free of charge. This group think it is religious issues. Therefore, without clear planning and implementation, they cannot reach this aim. Overall, I think we need clear authorities to protect Najaf heritage on the practice.

What this authority should do? I think they should start thinking to stop destruction heritage, then set out clear regulation and plan.

Is that enough? I think we need collaboration work between agencies and communities. Without this collaboration, Najaf will lose its heritage.

How local communities respond heritage aspects? Step by step, their awareness is increased. But it is still under expected. Daily forums, sessions, workshops are helpful to increase their awareness.

What is your opinion about the new extension projects of the shrine? The new extension projects built in the area that Saddam regime demolish it. Therefore, I think it is much better than leave it clear. The project is better than the design of the city of pilgrims, because it will offer good and enough spaces for worships. However, my concern is that it is higher than the shrine, and that would hide the golden dome.

Where do you think Najaf heritage going? I am afraid that we will lose the long history and values of the old town. Thus, local communities should stand to prevent that.

How can they do? It is difficult, but not impossible. Local communities should understand heritage, to protect them, otherwise heritage destruction will be the winner.

Sta1

What was the impact of removing the historical building around the Shrine? In fact, we should support the modernity as well as heritage, and we can combine them, as most the active nations that are developing and conserving at the same time. There are many ways to protect cultural heritage that we can use, because heritage expresses the history of the place. However, when heritage was removed, it is still just literary text written and it is very difficult to prove. Therefore, it would be erroneous to dismiss the impact of removing many historical buildings in Najaf old town. Najaf is known and characterized by ancient alleys (roads), deep crypts (basements), *subats*, as well as underground houses. We call for any building in the old town must be lower than the Imam Ali Shrine, because the Shrine has a particular character, and should watch from long distance. However, some new buildings as well as *Sahan Fatima* buildings are erroneous. After the previous regime demolished *Al-Imara* historical neighbourhood, it was supposed to build a large *Sahan* rather than this project. Therefore, any person can watch the Shrine from different views, and these building can build them in other place. However, they reduced the spaces through buildings, so missed landmarks and it's really difficult to watch the golden dome.

What about the key players? Key players, local and central government don't pay attention to heritage, and don't understand the meaning of heritage. Overall, Iraqi cities have witnessed many projects to redevelop the cities, but with some debates. Firstly, they do not have a clear national system (policy or regulation), which deals with controlling the Iraqi heritage. Secondly, the Council of Iraqi Revolutionary Command and Council of Ministers Resolution have the ability to change any law, policies or policies.

What is your role as intellectuals and researchers? We are tired of the official's leaders, because they never listen to us. It's really difficult to understand leader's intention in terms of protecting Najaf heritage.

Who are officials, central, local government, or Imam Ali Shrine secretary? All of them, the Imam Ali said, "No opinion those who don't obeyed".

What is your opinion about *Al-Rass* mosque project? I was the first person who deprecate of demolishing *Al-Rass* mosque. University of Kufa held a conference to discuss this project, so I told the audience *Al-Subat* should conserve and add to the Shrine because it is a historical landmark. Then you can add *Al-Rass* mosque to the Shrine as well to become bigger than before. In sum, we would like to extend the Shrine, but protect the historical features as well.

What happened later? What happened as can be seen; they demolished one of the oldest parts in the Shrine. In particular, it should be mentioned that previous regime demolished "takia Al-Bakeshtia" which dated back to Mughal era. Saddam regime wanted to build host "Mudhef", the sad thing was the regime was bragging without paying attention to the heritage. They can build it in any other place, because the main function of "Mudhaf" is place of receiving official delegations. The other clear example was *Al-Tosi* mosque. It was underground, so I asked them to protect it and build new mosque

over the old one. In this case we can protect the historical significance of the mosque, and visitors can watch it, and then go to the upper floor for prayer. Unfortunately, it was completely demolished. The official leaders (central and local government can't understand the history and heritage, however, every day we hear they want to demolish the Najaf great *sug* (market).

Do you mean the 90m project? I disagree with 90m project, but with 60m project. I do not want to demolish new extra parts from the urban fabric.

But the new proposal is 190m? Every day, we are hearing from some ignorant that they want to demolish the whole Najaf old town. I ask them to visit Paris, London, Syria, etc. I visited Algeria before, so I notice that they protect the road, which entered French forces from it. So; why we are different, why we are demolishing our great history. In addition to the *Sahan Fatima*, some services for example the library, the museum and the administration offices can be moved outside the town, because currently it takes a big part of the project area.

Where is the problem? The problem is official leaders. The city governors do not priorities protecting heritage. They did not take care of the old town as a historical city. The official leaders (central and local government, and official trusts) do not understand the historic, cultural, social and architectural value of Najaf's physical fabric. Consequently, every day we hear about the building authorities or the government wanting to demolish a selected part of the Najaf's old town.

What about the local community? Local community also ignore that. I can state that when the community aren't aware of this responsibility, they support and involve official leaders in this aspect. Therefore, they need awareness.

Is it possible to stop these projects? Yes, if the specialized organization will be formed.

My question was realistic and not emotional? Yes, that's possible. Najaf is one of medieval cities, and 90% of these cities are ceased to exist. So, where is old Baghdad, Kufa, Mosul, or Karbala, so it is very important to protect Najaf old town.

What are the difference before and after 2003 and its impact on the ground, in terms of managing the old town and the Shrine? The Shrine, as other institutions; any person before manage it should understand it in terms of its historical, cultural, and economic significance. However, some of the Shrine administrations don't understand the Shrine values.

And the old town? It is the same problem. The governor should work locally to improve the city. It marked the culmination of the policies of the former regime, so it is very difficult to return to its origin. These policies were rooted among decision makers; it will take time and considerable effort to overcome this long period of mistreatment of the shrine and its surroundings.

Does the Shrine have impact on the old town? When things are random and unorganized, will lead to see high buildings in the narrow alleys. However, if there are a regulation to organise the relationship between the Shrine and surrounding buildings, that will become completely different.

Where is the problem, in regulations or the process on the ground? I think both of them. Imam Ali Said “a must for people of government, was fair or unfair”.

Is there any possibility to correct the situation (in terms of blocking the dome)? How can correct? Billions was paid to build these high buildings.

But these hotels are illegal? Yes, but where is the government of this illegality. Government must be accountable before them.

What is *Khan Al-Shilan* represent in Najaf memory? In 1974 Najaf governor visited school of *Fiqh*, and decided to make the Khan Al-Shilan under the school administration, after it was a mill from Monarchy. This situation remained until 1991 when the economic sanction began, so the school became unable to manage it, and the central government did not pay attention to Najaf heritage. I’ve translated many of the writings of the British prisoners. The main problem there are no official statistics or records documenting the demolition historical buildings in Iraq with particular reference to the holy city of Najaf, it can be safely stated that the official demolition is bigger than private demolition, which often includes the clearance of large old areas.

Was it worked as Khan? It was hostelry, but the Othman government as well as British forces changed it to become the place of its local government. Then, during Monarchy it became a mill. The significant event was the British prisoners who have spent time inside it.

Does the previous rehabilitation process conserve it? Yes, protect it in an acceptable phase.

Where does design concept comes from? Its shape stems from some traditional houses.

Khan Al-Shilan is beside *Al-Khawarnaq* school which was built in 1925, therefore I proposed to made both of them as a big museum and archaeological site, but it still impermeable.

What is the impact of the traditional alleys to Najaf social life? A wall surrounded Najaf old town; therefore, it was a limited construction. As a result, alleys were narrow and houses very small area. But it supports the community to cooperation, for instance when one of men wanted to marry and their house was small, neighbour normally offer them to use one of extra room of his house. Therefore, houses become nested.

What is the relationship between residents and traditional house? The traditional houses were built close to each other to help them to protect each other from sand storms and solar radiation. In addition, the environmental solutions helped shape residents living conditions, according to the season’s temperature; therefore, they used the basements during hot summers, ground floors during acceptable temperatures, and upper floors during cold periods.

How the local communities were using the open spaces (*fadhwa*)? In fact, these spaces acted as a forum for the local community, so local residents spent most of their time speaking together and sharing news. Because the old town is surrounded by a wall, it has insufficient open spaces; therefore, *fadhwa* became a neighbourhood club and most local citizens met there every night.

What is the Al-Subat represent to Najaf? The old families lived in this small area; therefore, they used it to extend their houses throughout built arch over the alley to build room over it. It was normally built in the intersection of alleys. Unfortunately, nowadays no body call for protect this significant features. Najaf should protect its local identity through conserving current town. It has many significant features for instance: basements: each houses have basement floor use it in summer, wells: for watering and washing, *Fathwa*: it is an open space inside alleys as a local club which most local citizens sit in it at night after close the outer wall gates.

Do you think Najaf heritage under threat or it in good way? If we don't protect it, it would be under threat.

Sta2

Do you think Najaf has been impact according to the huge number of pilgrims? Yes, off course. The Shrine Secretary is thinking more about how accommodate the huge number of pilgrims.

What is the priority of the Shrine Secretary, protecting heritage or accommodate pilgrims? This question is the main reason for the threat of heritage. The Shrine Secretary is thinking the pilgrims are priority, while heritage is minority. This point of view of most religious scholars, unless Al-Sistani. They argued that the old town constructed small because the pilgrims were also few. Therefore, its growth is normal. One of the head of the secretary said about the Imam Ali Shrine: “it is shrine not a museum, so we shouldn’t protect it”. Accordingly, the understanding values level is under expected. For evidence, they wanted to demolish significant strip around the golden dome of the shrine, and we asked a secretary member to stoop them, and he did.

Where are the problems of misunderstanding heritage? In fact, there are different factors for that: the economic situation, wars, structural government and intentions, and the education system have impact on the understanding of cultural heritage. In addition, most of the decision makers don’t have any background knowledge about heritage. I complain about the universities, particularly schools of architecture, because up to the present there are not enough researches to support the values of religious cities.

Let me ask you about the role of the religious system in preserving heritage? Al-Sistani is specialist in religious affairs, so he appreciates other different specialists, and don’t interfere in other disciplines. However, Al-Sistani office wants two main outcomes: Najaf old town should appear as a sacred city, and the religious schools must stay inside the old town. They believe that other processes should be managed by the specialists, architects, and planners. Other issues are left to the designers and developers. I attended a UNESCO workshop in 2013; it was about listed *Wadi Al-Salam* cemetery in the WHL. The dominant tendency of that period was that the religious scholars with particular reference to Al-Sistani did not agree to list the Imam Ali Shrine in the world heritage list. Therefore, this sermon emerged in response to that, and showed he adopted and supported protection heritage.

Could you tell me about the process of listing *Wadi Al-Salam* cemetery? Up to the present, there has been a major discussion regarding whether to listing *Wadi Al-Salam* as a world heritage site, in terms of its dimensions, what it should cover, and whether the shrine and the old town is part of it or not. All of these questions have been discussed by the UNESCO mission to Iraq and the Iraqi heritage authority which is represented by the national committee.

Who are the key players to decide? The problem is that there are many decision makers; there is no specific organization. The other problem is that most of them do not understand what heritage means. In addition, there is no clear documenting system, for example there are no documents or materials about how the Al-Imara neighborhood was before the demolition by Saddam government.

What is your opinion about the current condition of the urban fabric? The narrow alleys provide the modern developers and decision makers with a crucial opportunity to replace these alleyways with wide roads because it is impossible to offer basic services to local residents, such as fire escapes or a sewage system. This is a reason for local residents to move outside the old town in search of a better material quality of life, using cars and other new technology and facilities. Accordingly, the current condition is very sad. They want to film a television series about the life of “Najim Al-Bakal”, one of the significant figures of the 20th revolution in Najaf, but the series director did not find any traditional place in Najaf in which to locate the story. Finally, they decided to film in Basrah city in the south of Iraq.

What is your main concern about the current construction in the town? The change is degrading the core of the old town. Most attempts to protect the cultural heritage are usually timid, unclear, and unsatisfactory from a heritage protection perspective. There are many reasons for this situation. One is that the decision makers do not have enough understanding about conservation management. My main concern is that land authorities are copy-paste some materials and shapes from different places and sites without pay attention to the local identity. Sometimes, developers and designers are based on other cities for example Mecca and Mashhad. In my opinion, what has happened in Mecca was increase of demolishing historical fabric, I think it should balance.

What about the shrine extension projects? After 2003, the increase in the number of pilgrims allowed the shrine couldn't offer enough space. To achieve the best solution, the shrine secretary selected the *Al-Rass mosque*, *Al-Subat* and *Al-Mudieef* to extend the shrine. The main reasons of selecting them because they had many closed spaces, such as small cemeteries and storage rooms; therefore, pilgrims could not reach the mosque. In addition, the *Baath* regime changed it step-by-step. As a result, during the construction of the project it was found that some parts had been built by using concrete and modern decorations, which were in a very bad condition. This was evidence that it was not a part of the original shrine. In addition, it was higher than the shrine level; therefore, it was very difficult to open it toward the shrine as one space, so the Shrine General Secretary chose to extend the shrine.

However, committee of architects came to evaluate the project, and they stated in one-page report “it should stay as it was, no one can change it”. The head of the secretary did not respond, and ordered to demolish and develop the area, because the committee didn't offer any solutions. The main action by the secretary has been to create large open spaces outside the central space of the shrine to manage crowds, and herein lies the great challenge to balancing the needs and requirements of pilgrims while protecting Najaf's heritage. Altogether, this puts pressure on the core of Najaf's old town, and the authorities have not proposed any solution to control this. Religious authorities as well as central and local government are in the process of thinking how to accommodate the huge number of pilgrims, rather than protecting the heritage.

What is your opinion? I think it is good, because it offers enough space, and the only original part is the *Al-Subat*.

What about the effect of the other projects on the values of the old town? The *Dewan* Company has been working to set out the master plan of the old town, in addition to the Karbala, Kadhimiya. They proposed big open space surrounding all of these sites to accommodate the huge number of pilgrims. In addition, they proposed the buildings height are more than the wall of the shrine. This will put the local identity under threat. Implementation of the proposal would mean demolishing and reconstructing many parts inside the urban fabric. This is really dangerous in terms of hurting the old fabric, unity and local identity. As a result, some local citizens, heritage elites, and researchers reacted to these proposals by trying to make an official complaint to the planning authority in Najaf. However, decision makers and stakeholders have been making huge pressure to change the regulation of buildings height to become between 4-5 floors.

And the *Sahan Fatima* extension project? First of all, it is constructing on the area that the previous regime demolishes it. The main problem that there are not documents or materials shows what it was. The central government offered the financial support to compensate some hotels and land authorities. The shrine secretary contracted with the University of Shahid Beheshti to set out the design. The designers spent long time (around 3 years) to investigate the old town in depth. The problem is there are not documents or architectural drawings to explain the original shape of the area. After this long investigation, the designers have been tried to copy some elements from the old town such as arches, decorations, etc. to simulate the vernacular architecture of the town. The new design allows pilgrims to enter to the Shrine through new town entrances, not direct to the cenotaph. This supports the Shia thought not recommended to enter directly to the head. I think this is protecting the values of the original shrine building. However, it has only one problem.

What is it? The new extension is higher than the shrine walls around 2 meters. The UNESCO mission to Najaf also mentioned this point in their report, and they disagreed about it. The main concern is that this problem has weakened the position of heritage supporters, because, if the shrine itself does not abide the regulations. Day by day, this situation made the Secretary cannot call for stopping land authorities to build new buildings higher than the shrine wall. In fact, this point is the major concern of the UNESCO to join the Shrine with the *Wadi Al-Salam* cemetery in the WHL.

What about the 90m extension project? It is the best solution. It is simulating the traditional life of the old town, and protect the vernacular architecture. It seeks to emulate the historical fabric and its architectural elements through metaphor the forms and details from the old town. I can state that the new design is based on some historical photos from the past, to present the design to be newly with old flavor. The designers do not use any strange or unfamiliar shape or detail, and this point supports them to keep going in the design. Overall, the project offers a typical solution, because it restored something of the traditional heritage, a town that surrounded the Shrine. I think the new courtyards will be a part of the shrine; therefore, the connection between them and the town is similar to the past. There is no open spaces between the Shrine and the urban fabric of the old town.

Do you think the project will be implemented? It is really difficult. It is need money to sell the land of the project, and most the land authorities don't want to sell their properties. I proposed to start with some part which ready.

Do you think Najaf heritage under threat or it in good way? Up to the present, it is under threat. There is no regulation, policies or politics. Decision makers, architects, local and central government, authorities, and stakeholders do not have enough understanding level of what is heritage means.

What is your opinion about the future of the town? Najaf old town has long history, so it should be protected. The wave of changing is great, and heritage destruction are demolishing many significant buildings as well as urban fabric. However, there is still opportunity to protect heritage through adopting clear process.

Is that possible? It is really hard, but if authorities and communities support each other, we can reach it. My dream is to protect every single part of the old town. Moreover, we should think more about protecting both; tangible and intangible heritage.

Sta3

What is your opinion in terms of Najaf cultural heritage, and its management on the ground, so is it going to the best way or not? and why? It seems that there is still no official inventory of Iraq's cultural heritage; therefore, it is necessary to prepare such an inventory in the first place. Furthermore, we should have a clear understanding of what is being managed. This implies information of its history, typology, etc. and also what is its state of conservation and how to establish a renewal, repair and maintenance strategy. Obviously, there is need of a team on the site, and possibly a steering committee. Therefore, a local management team should be established involving all relevant authorities, and capable of communication with all stakeholders involved in the planning and management of the heritage and the city. The legislation and protection laws should also be looked at.

What were your recommendations about Najaf? And can list it on the World heritage list and why? Najaf is in a sad condition. It is losing its historic fabric, and is undergoing much demolition. Cheap looking structures are mushrooming in every corner. There is no overall management in place. The Cemetery, which is an important element of the city, is in a ruinous state. At this stage much work needs to be done prior to consideration for the World Heritage listing.

Do you think there is a big problem comes from an increasing visitor's number toward the Shrine? And how they can manage it? The carrying capacity of the Shrine should be taken into consideration. Visitor management is an important issue, and a more general itinerary needs to be provided so that the visitors would become aware of other interesting features and historical and cultural sites of the region. This needs research, study and identification of such sites in the territory, and will give the possibility of better managing the visitors. This is rather urgent because of the ongoing demolition. It seems that there has been a visitor management plan prepared by the Ministry of Tourism. This means that the visitors should be offered something more than just the Shrine.

What the impact is of demolished the historical buildings and urban fabric which surrounded the Shrine? The impact is great, and not positive. The social structure and life of the urban area is changed, tall hotel buildings are built, and historic features are lost. The quality of the new buildings is low, the old bazaar, such as the booksellers, has now ceilings made of plastic material. The original structures are being demolished to be rebuilt in shiny materials. With gentrification the social structure is lost.

What do you think around the current development project of the Shrine in terms of the conservation management? (Extent project) Historically, the Shrine was the main and dominant feature of the Holy City, but with such a massive extension it is becoming a small element in proportion to the whole complex. I would have preferred to have the site as it was, a small jewel, and built the enormous development project somewhere else.

Who are the key players in terms of the heritage protection in Najaf? I would rather say who can be: all stakeholders such as the Holy Shrine Authority, the *Awqaaf*, the city municipality, the *Wadi al-Salam* management authority, and relevant ministries such as tourism, culture, planning and

development, NGOs, as well as the representatives of the community/residents. These should form a management team for the city. There is also need for Territorial Planning.

What is the main architectural feature you like it in Najaf, and you want to protect it? Primarily, we have to identify what Najaf is. Najaf is a historic city developed around the shrine of Imam Ali, and the existence of the city together with its cemetery (*Wadi al-Salam*) is because of the Shrine. The holy city of Najaf became the most important pilgrimage centre for the Shi'a and a centre for Islamic learning. So these three elements: The Shrine, the Holy city and the cemetery should be considered as one whole ensemble. This implies that every building in the holy City is important, being part of the whole. The characteristic features of the city such as the narrow alleys, open spaces for each neighbourhood, main bazaar, courtyard houses, etc. were typical of the local building tradition and urban spaces. So there is not one feature that can be appreciated, it is a combination of many features.

Do you think Najaf cultural heritage under threat, and why? Most parts of the city are under continuous demolition, being replaced by tall buildings. The new buildings are of bad quality and UGLY. They have nothing to do with the traditional building technology and the climate. The delicate and fragile fabric of the Holy City is not taken into consideration. There is rubbish everywhere. There is no conservation work.

What do you think the strength and weakness of Iraqi Ministries and organizations that deals with heritage? Is there any strength in a context where heritage is not a governmental priority, budgets are insufficient, institutions lack trained staff, and local governments and private sector interests are stronger than national legislation? How about corruption?

What were your main concerns (UNESCO) about Najaf's heritage? UNESCO's programme for Najaf was focused on specific aspects of heritage, namely manuscript collections, and preparation of a World Heritage nomination dossier for Wadi As-Salam. The intention here, like other nomination sites, was to raise a national and local interest in regard to new approaches to heritage. In fact, many sites have OUV but their state of conservation is inadequate. Iraq has been closed to international conservation institutions and standards for a long time, therefore, there is much to do before people and places will be ready for WH or even just international-level conservation policies. Thus, preparing nomination dossiers is a pedagogical and awareness-raising exercise. In Najaf, this opened a path for putting conservation of the built heritage, including the shrine and the old city, on the local agenda. Thanks to UNESCO programme, there are now in Najaf some people and institutions who are aware of international conservation approach even if the building work at the shrine has continued.

Do you think religious authority and NGOs have impact on Najaf's heritage management? Financial interests are too high in Najaf. But now civil society, not UNESCO, has to lead this struggle. In short, this is mostly about civil society strengthening in a country that has not had civil society in the past.

What is your recommendations (personally and the UNESCO) for the future of Najaf's old town?

1. Stop the demolitions,
2. Provide appropriate and effective planning and management system
3. Involve all partners and stakeholders, government, etc.
4. Save the remains of the historic city, rehabilitate, provide infrastructures,
5. Prepare Urban Conservation Plan and Management
6. Be careful with new structures, developments in the historic town
7. Do not copy Dubai architecture in the historic city (it is a sacred city, maintain the genius loci
8. Implement, monitor and control legal requirements and building regulations,
9. Allocate the necessary resources;
10. Capacity-building
11. Tourism and pilgrimage management plan is essential at territorial level
12.
13.

Sta4

Do you think Najaf has been impact according to the huge number of pilgrims? Yes, since 2003 the old town has been changed. Most the private buildings have changed the land use, or rebuild to become hotels to accommodate pilgrims. As a result, many buildings are more than 10 floors. This situation is normal for any pilgrimage site or historical city. However, the main problem is the absence of clear regulations dealing with historical areas on the ground; therefore, building authorities can change land use with or without permission. The local government determined these building is illegal because they are built without building permission, but nobody can stop the construction. I can state that Najaf old town is the only survive historical town in Iraq, the mosque (shrine) in the middle and the great market in front; while Baghdad, Mosul, and Basra are completely demolished.

What is the impact of demolishing the shrine surrounding area from buildings? Up to the present, it is protected its heritage.

Why the *Al-Imara* neighbourhood demolished? The main reason was politically, because it had many religious schools, and it was the residential area for most religious scholars. However, currently the shrine secretary is using the area to extend the shrine.

Is there any documenting system or archive at national or local level to document these significant heritages? Unfortunately, personal interpretations are not restricted to the documentation system, but it also involved in decision-making, based on conservation practices. A clear example is the project of the Najaf Islamic Capital 2012, where the local committee selected some buildings and sites to protect. However, the selective system was not based on a conservation plan, it depended on the committee members' desires.

And protecting system? Up to the present we don't have clear system. However, I think adopting a clear protection system can encourage pilgrims to visit these sites, and support income-generation. Step-by-step, this will make the old town busy, and support the economic situation rather than historical, cultural, and architectural aspects.

What is your opinion about removing the *Al-Rass* mosque and *Al-Subat* to extend the shrine? In 2007, I attended symposium in the University of Kufa about the project, and I was one of the objectors to the project. I felt it is a crime. According to my background knowledge as an archaeologist, I think all the significant buildings should be protected. The shrine is a heritage building has a worship function. The problem is decision makers think only about its function. Accordingly, the project removed tow of the main significant features: The *Al-Rass* mosque and the *Al-Subat*. I think they can do international design competition to design it. the main weakness of this project was the failure to address the issues of how to strike a balance between heritage protection, development control and pilgrims' needs.

Why they did? As I told you, since the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003, the number of pilgrims has been increasing and the shrine and city's ability to host an increased number of pilgrims has been at the expense of protecting the city's heritage.

What is the reaction of the *sahan Fatima* extension project on the ground? Overall, I support the project, because it used the area that already clearance by the previous regime. Besides, most the architectural elements and shapes come from the architecture of the old town, and it will offer good services to the pilgrims. However, my concern is that pilgrims need the space, so other activities can move toward *bahr Al-Najaf*.

What about the 90m project? I did not see the maps and plans of the project. But I think it is good to protect and re-function the historical buildings.

How are the decision makers in terms of extending projects? I think this is my specialist, and I do not know any one. The provincial Council, the Central government, the city Governor, the Shrine Secretary, etc. however, decision makers prioritising that the demolishing is the easiest way to develop.

What represent the alleyways of the town? They are the spirit of the old town. The town is the body, and the alleyways are the spirit. Each alleyway has story, so I think the whole town is important. The urban fabric of the city has many significant elements such as the Al-Subat, *suq al-houaish*, and traditional houses. However, both physical and social fabric of the town has changed for different reasons.

Why the social fabric changed? And the space becomes redundant? As I stated, there are different reasons within different eras. In the mid of 1980, many people moved from Basra to Najaf as a result of the Iranians - Iraqis war. The main reason for choosing Najaf was because all the religious cities were safer than others in terms of the war. In fact, the culture of the local community of Najaf's old town was to dislike the new refugees from other cities, and those who were able moved outside the old town. In this particular, it should be mentioned that the local citizens of Najaf old town determined that every family who lived inside the wall before its demolition were native residents and others foreign, even if born in Najaf. After the overthrow of the Saddam regime in 2003, the security situation appeared as a new reason for moving to the outside the old town. The increased numbers of security check points and the long queues also encouraged some families to move. In fact, my family sold their own house inside the old town during the 1990s at a cheap price in order to move to the new neighbourhood, while now its value equals more than 50 times the price.

And the physical fabric? How the *suq al-houaish* is developed? The *suq al-houaish* became a significant location for book shops because it is close to the *al-Hindi* mosque and the *al-Ansari* mosque, which host most of the religious sessions; in addition to the Imam Ali Shrine. It is developed because it is close to the religious schools. It has specific publishing houses, for instance *Dar al-Hikma* publishing, in addition to many book shops and booksellers. It has become a significant part of the old town; therefore, the government has begun to maintain it as a part of the Najaf capital of Islamic culture 2012. I think its extended is positive to activate the social life of the town. It is really

busy market. The maintenance work covered all the elevations by traditional bricks, to appear unique and traditional.

What is your opinion about *Dewan* proposal for the *suq*? The current and proposed extension of the *Suq al-Houaish* is to replace the residential area; and this has led to an increase in land value and a reason for locals to sell and leave. Overall, I did not know the last update of the proposal.

What represent the *Al-Subat* of the town? This architectural feature is called “the *al-Subat*” at the local level, and it is becoming one of the most significant vernacular features of the local residential area. Until the 1970s some buildings of this character remained, but there are only two surviving ones at present. This rarity adds more significance and value to them. It should be noted that this feature is only found in Najaf’s old town, and not in other Iraqi cities. However, its origin dates back to the Ottoman era. It seems that the directory of archaeology in Najaf has been collaborating with the Imam Ali Shrine to try to maintain the *al-Subat* as a historical monument in the old town, but they have no clear strategy for this.

What represent the *Fadhwa* of the town? the *fadhwa* has been designated as a neighbourhood centre, so the *fadhwa al-Houaish* host many religious and social activities, such as “*Mawakib*” particularly during *Muharam*, as well as being the market for the neighbourhood.

What represent the *khans* of the town? There was an intensity of *khans* around the *Imam Ali Shrine* and the great market (*Suq*), as well as some *khans* outside the wall to accommodate visitors arriving outside of the opening times of the main gate of the old town. The 1960s showed the biggest intensity of *khans* with over 30 *khans*, followed by a massive reduction during the 1980s, and unfortunately, up to the present there is only the *khan Al-Shilan* which still stands in the old town.

What represent the *khan Al-Shilan* of the town? As the only extant *khan* of over 30 *khans* in the old town it also has evidential value despite its relatively late construction in 1899. It was built to accommodate the visitors of the *Imam Ali Shrine* by the head of the Najaf’s merchants (*Moeen Al-Tujar*). It was the biggest and highest building in the old town at that time except for the Shrine, marking it out physically both as a landmark of the old town and a site that enabled its occupants to control the surrounding area.

Could you explain it? The design shape of the *Al-Shilan* simulates the traditional buildings and houses of Najaf in terms of the courtyard, interior design, the well, the cellar, and the *Iwan*.

What has happened during the Baath rule? During the Baath rule, it was the practice to confiscate properties, with or without paying any financial compensation. In 1991 the economic sanctions began; and the school became unable to manage the Khan and the central government did not pay attention to Najaf’s heritage. Therefore, the Khan became under the Ministry of Culture administration who changed its function through renting it as small shops instead of maintaining it. In the 1990s, the authorities leased heritage buildings due to economic sanctions. The *Khan* was leased to leaseholder who was supposed to carry through a plan approved by the Public Board of Heritage and Antiquities

to convert the ground floor into shops. In fact, the plan proposed to change the elevation, plan of the building, as well as its function. The main approach at that time related to how can the authority could earn money, and not to pay attention to the management of heritage values and its procedures.

What the significant values of the building? The British prisoners and their graffiti added to the *khan Al-Shilan* historical and political values. The previous government's awareness of the historic and politics values could be considered to be based on very little cultural heritage knowledge. Some of these graffiti have taken away as a part of mismanagement and lack of assessment procedures, particularly the ground floor graffiti as the function of the *Al-Shilan* several times.

What is your opinion about the future of the town? I wish that we can conserve our priceless heritage. I think that need real hard work to do it.

Sta5

Could you tell me a short brief history of the *Khan Al-Shilan*? It is one of the main important traditional buildings in Najaf. Currently, it is a museum of Najaf cultural heritage to present Najaf history. Its significance comes from its history, so it was established in 1899 to accommodate visitors of Imam Ali Shrine. However, it doesn't lead the main purpose of it as Khan because of: Iraq was going through very difficult circumstances during the end of Othman era; and the weakness of Ottoman regime led to many disorders and revolutions. Therefore, ottoman ruler decided to move to this building for being fortified, so since that time it becomes government building.

And then? When it became ottoman government headquarters, it became the icon of history of political struggle of Najaf. The splendour and excellence of its construction, unfortunately, placed the *Al-Shilan* under threat, due to it being commandeered as a strategic location by foreign powers. The Ottoman local government controlled the building and made the *Al-Shilan* its headquarters making it a target for the rebels who tried to occupy it. In 1915 it became the seat of the Najaf's local government after a local insurgency. In 1917, the British army occupied Najaf town and the *Al-Shilan* again became a headquarters (for the local British governor), and then the local training camp for the British army. As with the Ottoman occupation, there were again a series of local revolts against the British occupation forces between 1917-1920 and the British forces changed the function of the *Al-Shilan* to become a detention centre for the local rebels and revolutionaries. 167 prisoners were launched around 4 months in it. The prisoners were documented that period through some writings, photos and messages written on the walls of Khans. Accordingly, association of British prisoners has been established to take care of them under religious scholar's supervision.

After that, what happened? After the twentieth revolution, *Al-Shilan* function changed continuously, from electricity department which hosted the first power generators, to mill, etc. nowadays, it becomes Najaf heritage museum, and it rehabilitate according to original maps under by archaeologists. It should be noted that the local government called Turkish company to rehabilitate Al-Shilan, but the company proposed to demolish and rebuild it. Therefore, Iraqi arachnologists rehabilitate it in best way.

In terms of the design shape, where it come from? Architecturally, *Al-Shilan* design returned to Abbasid style has 3 crypts (basements) uses it in summer when it is very hot, and the open courtyard to meet visitors. It has many beautiful decorations, so it has historical and aesthetics significance. Currently, it becomes a good example of heritage buildings.

Architecturally, are there any similar examples? Yes, Khans are normally 2 types of buildings: inside cities, and outside (rural area). Most khans have same shape, but the outer khans have protection towers because they are outside walls. There are 4 main khans outside Najaf wall: *Al-Musalla*, *Al-Nuss*, and *Al-Nukhaila*. Inside Najaf there were about 70 khans, most of them demolished. Al-Shilan is the biggest khan in Najaf.

What is the relationship between Khan and local citizens? The main function of the inner khans is to accommodate visitors in addition to the provision of public services.

What is the government point of view about *Khan Al-Shilan*? Key players and official's leaders don't care about cultural heritage and historical or archaeological sites. They pay attention toward painting streets more than protect heritage. Najaf has many cultural sites, unfortunately most of them untapped.

What has happened in terms of the rehabilitation of it? The practice that was enacted by the leaseholder was different and was not approved by the Public Board of Heritage and Antiquities. This situation led to the removal of many historical elements and graffiti, and created some shops with very bad condition and sub-lets these shops. The ground floor became shops which opened toward the street, and the new tenants painted the walls. This erased all the graffiti of the ground floor, weakening its historical and cultural value. Furthermore, part of the *khan's* courtyard became the rubbish dump and gradually lost many of its architectural elements. Heritage elites and local residents did not like this situation, so they had tried to change it. Thus, the government accept to change it function to become the museum of Najaf heritage.

What they did? In the years preceding 2010 many parts of the *khan Al-Shilan* were fully or partially demolished. As a part of Najaf the Capital of Islamic Culture 2012, they decided to rehabilitate the building. Thus, the local government tried to ask a foreign company from Turkey to conserve it, but they proposed to demolish and rebuilt a new building with same plans because of the existing condition of the building. Therefore, they refused the proposal. Then, the Public Board of Heritage and antiquities decided to implement the project.

What they did? The building was in very bad condition. Therefore, they started to clean the site first, and maintain it step by step. Some archaeologists were participated in the process. The first think they cleaned and maintained the three cellars. However, it should be noted that these cellars are still closed and abandoned, and the new administration do not think about how using them.

And then? The external concrete panels locally called "*shtaiger*" covered the courtyard floor and this material was added by the leaseholder. Local brick called "*farshi*" as a traditional local material replaced it, and the floor of the inside rooms were used a special type of brick made in Iran. Accordingly, it can be said that the conservation process did not based on any international guidelines; therefore, they changed some parts of the building or its materials without any evidence. Also, the team decided to re-open the walls between the rooms as an origin because the leaseholder built it. In depth, this decision is supported the new function as a museum to be able to move around the rooms.

Why they close the *Iwans*? The new function of the *Al-Shilan* as museum encouraged the authority to close all the *Iwans*; in order to use them as showrooms.

Do you think key players think about heritage to be a new source of income? Najaf has many untapped heritage sites, and official's leaders don't pay attention to this aspect.

Do you think Najaf heritage is at risk? I can state that there is no conservation work on the ground; nowadays the security situation has great impact on social and government priority. In addition, the absence of clear authorities and regulation deal with heritage are the main problems on the ground.

What is your opinion about removing the historical urban fabric? The previous regime demolished *Al-Imara* neighbourhood to reduce the Shia power, therefore, it was completely politics issue. However, after 2003 the demolishing is continuing to extend the shrine. As I'm local citizen, my aims are to extend but with conserve historical buildings. Visitors to the Shrine become millions, so we need balance between extend and conservation of built heritage. In particular, *Al-Rass* mosque has been demolished, so they should be punished because they demolished a significant building of Najaf memory. And currently, *Sahan Fatimia* project over one of the great historical area, which has many historical features.

What about 90m project? They did a small symposium to present the project, but they didn't invite me. Anyway, I think it would be better that the first proposal. It should be noted that the Shrine secretary determine itself is over and better than others, so they don't ask anyone to discuss their orders. For example, *khan Al-shifaa* they rebuilt it as 5 stars hotels not as its origin.

Do you think it can rehabilitate Najaf urban fabric? Sure, Najaf old town has many origin roads and alleys; unfortunately, it is going to extinction for instance the *Al-Subat*. I think it can be protected, if national and local authorities want that.

Could you tell me what is the Al-Subat? It is arch to extend house, so they built room over it. The *al-Subat* is one of Najaf's cultural heritage features, but there are no clear conservation processes to protect it. It is at risk, as there is the potential that it could be demolished soon. Unfortunately, there is no work to protect the *al-Subat*, in 2010 it was in good condition, and now it will full demolish. The biggest *subat* in the old town is called the *al-Subat Ali Agha*, and it became more significant than before when *Ayatollah Sayed Abu al-Hassan al-Esfahani* lived in the room over the *al-Subat* at the beginning of the 19th century. The second *subat* is smaller than the first; it is also neglected and has many cracks.

Sta6

Could you tell me brief of the *khan Al-Shilan* rehabilitation work? It is a project within the serious of Al-Najaf the Capital of Islamic culture 2012. It was selected by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities / The Public Board of Heritage and Antiquities because it is the biggest *khans* in the old town. It was in very bad condition, had many structural problems and the destruction was prevalent theme throughout the building. Moreover, it demonstrates an issue that what it stated and approved to happen on paper does not happen in practice and no sanctions are applied and enforced. Principles of heritage practice internationally advocate a clear relationship between permits and sanctions. In addition, it has significant values; therefore, they selected it to be developed.

What you did first? The first step of the rehabilitation procedure was recorded, documented, and evaluated the building condition to designate the adding and original parts, as well as the structural conditions. Accordingly, we took many photographs, and reported that to the Public Board. The first decision was that the rehabilitation team had started to remove all the added parts by either the leaseholder or others. The team removed all the external concrete pouring in front of the shops on the Northern and Western elevation, and closes them, as well as support the outer walls particularly the South phase.

Could you explain the leaseholder used the only ground floor? No, they used the whole building, the first floor was warehouses, the courtyard was restaurant, the ground floor was small shops, and had built new toilets in the North of the building, and the waste storage was under the Northern *Iwan*, which was the main reason of demolishing a big part the Northern *Iwan*. During the rehabilitation procedures they removed these toilets and the waste storage, and rebuilt the *Iwan*. By doing so, the team decided to prevent the building of any toilet inside the *Al-Shilan* because it could hurt the structure condition of the building in the future. In fact, rising damp could be causes of decay; therefore, it would be better to avoid it. In terms of the three cellars, they started to take out the rubble from the cellars, and then rebuilt the demolish elements with the same materials and size.

What you did to the main portal? The main portal of the *khan Al-Shilan* and its decorations are protected throughout built the demolished part as the same origin.

And the courtyard? The courtyard is the main significant part of the building; it is look like the lung of the building because it controls most the public activates and movement. The team maintained the old wall because it was in very bad condition and then proposed to build a new brick skin. Al-Najaf Reconstruction Commission refused the new skin because they do not wish to see any added new elements to the structure of the building; however, finally they accept and new brick wall skin has built.

Why you propose the new skin? We think the museum should appear unique and beautiful, and the new skin of bricks can offer that. And after finishing the work, all of them thank us.

Did you select builders and workers whose specialists in heritage sites? Most builders in Iraq base their work on their own experiences without any theoretical background. The builders have good experiences and they supported and trained some new builders to deal with heritage sites. Thus, at the end of the maintenance work of the *Al-Shilan* the new builders became more than three experts and can deal with the heritage sites in the future.

What about the building materials? We tried to use the same shape materials with the same original specifications, because there were not the same original building materials. Moreover, the team had prevented using any type of the cement in the work, and used the plaster instead. It should be stated that the University of Kufa in the 1980s maintained the building in the wrong way. They had used mechanical bricks; therefore, we removed all of the new bricks, and maintain it.

Did you have any original plans, sections, etc.? Unfortunately, we did not have any original plans.

What are the new additions to the building? I can state that all the doors and windows are new, because it did not have it before, or they were in very bad condition. The rehabilitation team has tried to simulate the Najaf's social life throughout using the same shape of the doors and windows that have used at the same era of erected.

Did you open new slots between the rooms? The leaseholder closes all the slots between the rooms, so we returned them to its original phase.

What about the rehabilitation work of the 1st floor? The first floor of the *Al-Shilan* has 4 uncovered rooms on each corner of the floor (for lighting and ventilation); the problem is that exposure to rain and raised humidity levels have caused damage. The solution for the biggest room which close to the graffiti room was by covering it by vaulted transparent cover; and the brick decorations on the wall is still in origin phase.

What about the graffiti? The graffiti are in the corner of the 1st floor, and added extra values to the building. The prisoners used the carbon to draw and write them; therefore, we tried to protect them. The material "carbon" that been used is very difficult to protect it during the time; therefore, we asked the specialists from laboratory of the Iraqi National Museum to paint these graffiti with special paint to protect them. After the painting we decided to cover all the graffiti by glasses boxes to be saved as long as possible. **Are they all original?** Yes, sure.

What you did to the floor of the building? Concrete pouring was covered the floor, and the *shtieger* covered the roof. We changed all of them by local bricks (*farshi*) for the roof and open spaces, and Iranian bricks inside the rooms.

How long the rehabilitation work was? It was more than 3 years, between 2010 – 2013.

Why? There were different problems, the finance, security situation, and religious events.

Did you have any progress reports? We send monthly report to the Public Board and the Al-Najaf Reconstruction Commission.

Sta7

What is your feedback about the heritage of Najaf? It has many significant problems. There is very difficult to get primary materials. It has long history, but the sources about it are very limited. Most the Iraqi researchers, writers, and historians copy and rewrite other materials. Therefore, we spend very long time to get some data.

Where is the problem? I think the Political, cultural, and the government system. I noticed that it has some nice architecture, particularly the *Al-Houaesh* neighbourhood. However, local authorities and people don't care about them. For example, during my journey to Najaf, I collected a piece of tiles about 20 X 20 cm was dumped in the street, after demolishing historical religious buildings. The bulldozer removed the building in order to rebuild it; even it has long history. The builders are not specialists, and do not understand the values of the town.

What is your opinion about the *sahan Fatima* extension project? In fact, its realistic design, because they are used the areas in the best way particularly the underground levels, but it could cover the town and the shrine. I like it. The project itself is attractive and great functionally. It is used the areas in the best way, and it much better than the current random style of buildings and hotels surrounding the project. However, it will reduce the shrine dominance, and could impact on the old town. The project is better than other similar pilgrimage cities such as Mecca, Medina and Mashhad.

The project is better than the random buildings. I think there is no think reason for optimism. Decision makers are focussed on specific issue, and left other. I think it will bloom commercially, but it is impossible to live in there. In Damascus was the same problem; they changed the land use of the old town from residential to commercial use (hotels, restaurants, and coffee shops). Day by day, local citizens disliked staying because it is noisy, etc. Therefore, it should be take care of social life.

What do you think about the future of Najaf? I think Najaf heritage is under threat; I mentioned that many times in my book, but the editor delete that. The current conservation practices are simple, and unclear. They are using many new materials without pay attention to the values of the building.

Sta8

Could you tell me about the conservation values on the ground? The Najaf old town has many significant and historical buildings, and the *Al-Marjia* “Al-Sistani” calling for protecting heritage. However, what has happening on the ground is awful. Arguably, the desires of the politicians are the key to decision-making. Indeed, the decision makers do not discuss cultural heritage issues with their advisors or specialists. As evidence, some local government members want to bulldoze the whole old town and keep just the Imam Ali Shrine. Their ambition is to copy Mecca, Mashhad or Dubai, as these cities have changed their historical fabric by constructing high-rise buildings.

How and why? the *Al-Waqaf Al-Sheai* tried to demolish and rebuild many mosques after 2003 and spent large sums for these specific projects. They thought the repression by Saddam’s government had been main reason of neglect for these historical mosques, and they should redevelop them. However, the final outcomes are new buildings without any significant heritage value. Heritage elites and researchers raised concerns the destruction of the significant and ancient mosques should be ceased.

What do you think the solution? I think the solution by supporting a new approach in Iraq to encourage designers, authorities and communities to work together to protect Najaf’s heritage. It marks the culmination of NGOs work in Najaf, and how the charter has gradually spread its influence, some key players having begun to encourage it.

What about the extension projects of the shrine? In terms of the Al-Rass mosque there were some reason to establish the project; for instance, the increase number of pilgrims to the shrine. However, there are some points we learned from this project: we should be conservatives, but flexible; as well as the importance of protecting heritage. Thus, we should find real solutions, not only prevent any development project. I can state that nobody thinks about the alternatives, because the decision makers don’t have enough background knowledge.

Where was the problem? The shrine secretary was with the demolition choice, and the heritage elites with conserving the place. There was no clear alternative to solve the problem. In addition, the other group do not offer any solutions; therefore, the shrine administration decided to speed up the work and demolished the *Al-Subat* and the *Al-Rass* mosque.

What is your opinion? I think it was supposed to think a compromise, because the current solution offers extra space, but through removing significant part of the shrine.

And the project of *Sahan Fatima*? The huge number of pilgrims makes big pressure on the town and the shrine. Therefore, the secretary is thinking more about the best way to accommodate them. They selected the area that previous regime removes it in the 1980s.

What has happened to that neighbourhood? As a part of the deliberate remodelling of society, the *Baath* regime conducted confiscations of property, and then gave it to other people who supported the Baath from different cities. Accordingly, some of the local families moved out of Najaf’s old town

because the new families made lots of trouble. In fact, there are various reasons which have led to a change in the social demography of Najaf's old town, and to weakened social relationships and activities in the historic neighbourhoods. In total, more than 300 significant historic site features, traditional houses, religious schools, cemeteries and libraries were demolished.

Could you tell me the positive of the Saddam regime to the old town? I can state that during 30 years of *Baath* rule, no positive work was undertaken in the old town. The regime demolished many significant buildings and traditional religious schools, and tried to change the demography of the old town.

What is your opinion about the extension project? The local government inherited the situation of demolishing the neighbourhood; therefore, I think it is the best solution to select this part for extension the shrine. In addition, I think the shrine secretary good choice the University of Shahid Beheshti to design it. The designer team approach to conserve the old town, and avoid the mistakes of Mashhad in Iran.

What about the local residents? Do you think they like it? In fact, some local residents have enough awareness toward protecting heritage, but they are few compared to the other party. Therefore, some of the local citizens agreed about the current project, because it is only using the clearance area, and the design using the local elements. In addition, most the open spaces are covered, and that would be helpful in summer. I think over time the project will get used, and will become a part of the pilgrims and local citizens' memory.

Who are the decision makers? In Iraq, we have an inverted pyramid of making decisions. The politicians' desires are the priority, and the advisors should find solutions for that. The main concern is that some of the decision makers in Najaf for example, want to demolish the whole the old town unless the Shrine, and then rebuilt it in modern style. The problem is that they are the majority. However, there are minority elites whose want to protect the town.

What do you think well than in terms of protecting heritage, the shrine secretary or the local government? I think the secretary is much better, because most of their decisions are based on the advisors' ideas, while the local government based on their parties.

What is your opinion about the future of the town? I am optimistic condition: continuing work to increase people awareness toward protecting heritage.

Do local communities participate in making decisions? No, the politicians only decided.

Sta9

Could you tell me how you learn working with historical buildings? In fact, I did not have any background information about dealing with historical buildings. My previous experiences in building field of houses and buildings on the old towns support me to deal with the historical sites. I thought that my experiences allowed me to know the restoration and rehabilitation process on the ground; and I trained other builders on the site my technique.

Do you think that's enough? It is flexible question. Yes, because I think I can do that. And No, because I think I need some extra courses to understand other techniques. The problem is there are no organisation offer these courses.

Could you tell me your experience of rehabilitating the *khan Al-Shilan*? We worked in the site step by step. First, we tried to clean the site from the rubbles. Then we tried to maintain and build the demolished parts. We used the same patterns and techniques. However, the main problem was the materials (bricks). We tried to use new materials (mechanical brick) instead of the origin materials (*farshi*) but with the same size, shape, and colour of it. The main reason for that because currently they cannot get the same materials. However, the main difficulty was how introduction of the construction materials into the old town. The security situation, and building without permission lead the team to ask the local government for extra support to allow them to introduce the materials. In addition, we had used an organic material made from timber benzoin (instead of the iron) and the plaster for linking the cracks in the walls as a traditional technique. Moreover, we are protected some wooden trusses which supported the roofs of some rooms. Actually, I know these techniques from my long experiences.

In addition, we put some lanterns on the main elevation of the building to simulate the historical life of Najaf; because in the past these lanterns were the main source of lighting city streets and alleys.

Are there any problems in site? I am not quite sure; there were no big problems.

Do you use original maps, plans or any other documents? There were no original maps, or any other materials; our work based on the completion parts, as well as the directed by supervising team.

What do you think the main problems facing Iraqi heritage? There are many points. The building technique is different from place to place, region to region, and in some case from builder to builder; therefore, we don't have clear style. In fact, modernist architecture has moved gradually into most Iraqi cities. In Baghdad, for example, there are many new neighbourhoods with high-rise developments, and different types of modern buildings and houses. Moreover, the new materials, for example using the *Alucobond* because it is cheaper than other finishing materials, and make building looks like modern. I think it is put the heritage under threat. The other problem is the increase in the proportion of salts in the Iraqi clay has significant impacted on bricks. To avoid this, we usually use traditional techniques, immersing bricks in clean water for 24 hours before using them.

Do you think that's enough? It is better than nothing.

How can improve builder's skills in terms of conserving heritage? I think builders need more practice to understand and learn the traditional techniques.

How and where can learn that? Unfortunately, there is no specific place to get some sessions about traditional building techniques. Therefore, live projects are the only places to learn that.

What is your opinion about the future of the town? It will be changed to become contemporary city.

Why? Because nobody or authority care about it.

Sta10

According to your position, could you tell the process of rehabilitating the *Khan Al-Shialn*? It is one of the significant buildings in the old town; it has many types of values. The government decided to rehabilitate the building, but without clear plan. Because it is administratively linked with the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities; therefore, the Public Board of Heritage and Antiquities was responsible of the rehabilitation work. However, the rehabilitation team do not have enough background about protecting heritage buildings; therefore, their decisions based on what they need without clear conservation plan. The main problem is that the master plan at local level is the key component of developing, managing, and monitoring urban areas, and the significant way of solving and improving their urban environment.

What is the local government do? The project was taking around 3 years, starting from 2010 to 2013. Every month, the team send a progress report both to the central government and the local government. However, the Al-Najaf Reconstruction Commission does not have any recording of these monthly reports. Therefore, you can see how heritage has been managed.

What about the central government, did they think about protecting heritage as new source of money? In terms of the central government; the Tourism Board responsibility is developing, accommodating, and supporting tourists in Iraqi, without attention to protecting, managing, or supporting national cultural heritage. After 2003, it was amended to become a part from the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. However, tourism in Iraq until 2003 was a small activity as a result of the wars and political issues.

What has happened to Najaf's heritage? The old town has many significant buildings; the problem is every day we missed one.

Why? There is no policy or regulation to prevent land authorities to demolish their properties, and rocket land values encourage them to go ahead. Moreover, the shrine institution is buying any single building in the town.

Why the do that? Their ambitious is to cover the whole old town, to manage it, and extend the shrine. The main concern is that they do not have clear future plan. I am afraid that we may lose our heritage.

Supplementary visual materials:

Evaluations of historical, religious, and heritage buildings in the old town; Dewan. (1-5)

(2-5)

(3-5)

(4-5)

(5-5)





Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9

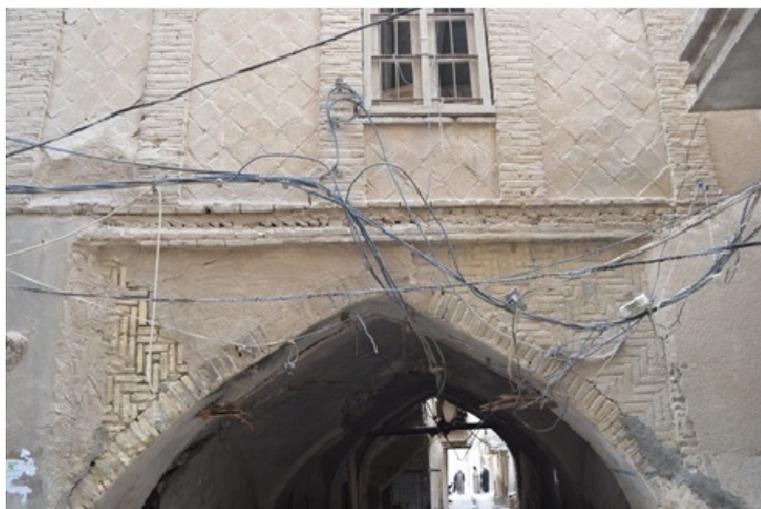


Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12

The 90 m extension project (1-7)

(2-7)

(3-7)

(4-7)

(5-7)

(6-7)

(7-7)

The 90m extension project

The 90m extension project

The 90m extension project

خطبتنا صلاة الجمعة (17 محرم الحرام 1432هـ الموافق 24 كانون الأول 2010 م) بإمامة الشيخ الكربلائي

في ما يتعلق بتصاميم التوسعة للمدن المقدسة والأماكن الأثرية في العاصمة بغداد والكاظمية والنجف الاشرف وكربلاء المقدسة، أوضح سماحة الشيخ الكربلائي في الخطبة الثانية " إن المرجعية الدينية العليا تؤكد على ضرورة المحافظة على الطابع التراثي لهذه المدن والأماكن .. نعم .. من الضرورة توسعة العتبات المقدسة من أجل توفير الخدمات المطلوبة للزائرين وأداء المهام والنشاطات الفكرية والثقافية والخدمية، ولكن لا يمكن ذلك على حساب المحافظة على الطابع التراثي لهذه المدن".

وكشف سماحته إن المدن القديمة .. كمدينة النجف الاشرف وكربلاء المقدسة والكاظمية المقدسة وبعض المناطق المقدسة الأخرى تضم حولها مناطق قديمة تشتمل على أبنية تراثية بل هي في طبيعة أزقتها وشكل البناء لأبنيتها تحمل بصمات تراثية فلا بد من المحافظة عليها، وإذا كانت للتوسعة ضرورة ملحة من أجل تقديم الخدمات المطلوبة للأعداد المتزايدة من الزائرين، فلا بد أن تكون ضمن حدود الضرورة فقط وبحيث يحافظ على الطابع التراثي لجزء من المدينة القديمة فيتم الحفاظ على أزقتها بما تحمله من طابع تراثي وإن كانت هذه الأزقة ضيقة يحافظ على أبنيتها ودورها التي تحمل بصمات تراثية من الهندسة المعمارية، وإن كانت هذه الأبنية والدور آيلة للسقوط وتحتاج إلى تجديد البناء فلا بد أن يحافظ على التراث المعماري لها مع التجديد ولا يقبل عذر إنها لم تعد صالحة فنزال بالكامل ..

وجه كلامه إلى الوزارات المعنية في بلدنا والمسؤولين والشركات الهندسية المعنية بذلك من وزارة البلديات والآثار والسياحة والشركات المصممة لمشاريع تطوير وتوسعة العتبات المقدسة قائلا " من المعلوم إن الكثير من أمثال هذه المناطق من جميع دول العالم تعتبر من المحميات التراثية التي لا ترضى تلك الدول بتغيير معالمها التراثية لأنها تحمل تراثاً معمارياً وهندسياً ويؤشر لحضارة تمتد في أعماق التاريخ لذلك البلد وذلك الشعب، وكذلك لمدننا المقدسة بمواقعها القديمة تراث هائل من الحضارة والفكر والثقافة فهذه المناطق القديمة تشتمل على أبنية مدارس دينية وبيوت تحمل بصمات معمارية حضارية وأزقة ذات طابع تراثي تاريخي يذكر بأحداث تاريخية بهم، فلا بد من المحافظة عليها ضمن خطة التوسعة والتجديد".

The Friday prayer sermon in the 24th of December 2010

The Undergraduate Curriculum

The annual system of study is followed in the department. The following is the curriculum of the department for the five years of study.

| FIRST YEAR | | | 1 st Semester Hours/Week | | | 2 nd Semester Hours/Week | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|----------|-----------|-------------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| Code | Subject | Units | Theo. | Tuto. | Lab. | Theo. | Tuto. | Lab. |
| Arc 101 | Architectural Design | 12 | 2 | - | 8 | 2 | - | 8 |
| Arc 102 | Architectural Graphics | 4 | 1 | - | 2 | 1 | - | 2 |
| Arc 103 | Freehand Drawing | 3 | - | - | 4 | - | - | 4 |
| Arc 104 | Principles of Art and Architecture | 4 | 2 | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| Arc 105 | Building Construction I | 4 | 2 | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| G.S 106 | Mathematics | 4 | 2 | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| G.S 107 | Computer programming I | 4 | 1 | - | 2 | 1 | - | 2 |
| G.S 108 | Arabic Language | 2 | 2 | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| G.E 109 | English Language I | 2 | 2 | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| G.S 110 | Human Rights | 2 | 2 | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| Total | | 41 | 16 | - | 16 | 16 | - | 16 |
| Total hours per week | | | 32 | | | 32 | | |

| SECOND YEAR | | | 1 st Semester Hours/Week | | | 2 nd Semester Hours/Week | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|----------|-----------|-------------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| Code | Subject | Units | Theo. | Tuto. | Lab. | Theo. | Tuto. | Lab. |
| Arc 201 | Architectural Design | 12 | 2 | - | 8 | 2 | - | 8 |
| Arc 202 | Architectural Graphics | 4 | 1 | - | 2 | 1 | - | 2 |
| Arc 203 | Freehand Drawing | 3 | - | - | 4 | - | - | 4 |
| Arc 204 | Building Construction II | 6 | 2 | - | 3 | 2 | - | 3 |
| Arc 205 | Structure I | 4 | 2 | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| Arc 206 | History of Architecture I | 4 | 2 | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| Arc 207 | Logic and Design Methodology | 2 | 2 | - | - | - | - | - |
| G.S 208 | Computers II | 4 | 1 | - | 2 | 1 | - | 2 |
| G.E 209 | English Language II | 2 | 2 | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| G.S 210 | Freedom and Democracy | 2 | 2 | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| Total | | 43 | 16 | - | 19 | 14 | - | 19 |
| Total hours per week | | | 35 | | | 33 | | |

The curriculms of the Department of Architectural Enginerring / Baghdad University (1-4)

| THIRD YEAR | | | 1 st Semester Hours/Week | | | 2 nd Semester Hours/Week | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|----------|-----------|-------------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| Code | Subject | Units | Theo. | Tuto. | Lab. | Theo. | Tuto. | Lab. |
| Arc 301 | Architectural Design | 14 | 2 | - | 10 | 2 | - | 10 |
| Arc 302 | Building Construction III | 6 | 2 | - | 3 | 2 | - | 3 |
| Arc 303 | Structure II | 4 | 2 | - | 1 | 2 | - | 1 |
| Arc 304 | Principles of Planning | 4 | 2 | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| Arc 305 | History of Architecture II | 4 | 2 | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| C.E. 306 | Sanitary Services | 2 | 2 | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| G.S 307 | Air-Conditioning Services | 2 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| G.S 308 | Lighting Services | 2 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| G.S 309 | Computer Programming III | 4 | 1 | - | 2 | 1 | - | 2 |
| Arc 310 | Methods of Conservation | 2 | 2 | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| Total | | 39 | 15 | - | 16 | 15 | - | 16 |
| Total hours per week | | | 31 | | | 31 | | |

| FOURTH YEAR | | | 1 st Semester Hours/Week | | | 2 nd Semester Hours/Week | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|----------|-----------|-------------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| Code | Subject | Units | Theo. | Tuto. | Lab. | Theo. | Tuto. | Lab. |
| Arc 401 | Architectural Design | 14 | 2 | - | 10 | 2 | - | 10 |
| Arc 402 | Interior Design | 2 | 1 | - | 3 | - | - | - |
| Arc 403 | Landscape Design | 2 | - | - | - | 1 | - | 3 |
| Arc 404 | Advanced Building Technologies | 4 | 2 | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| Arc 405 | Housing Planning | 2 | 2 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Arc 406 | Housing | 2 | - | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| Arc 407 | Theories of Architecture | 4 | 2 | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| Arc 408 | Islamic Arab Architecture | 4 | 2 | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| Arc 409 | Architecture and Climate | 2 | 2 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Arc 410 | Acoustics of Architecture | 2 | - | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| Arc 411 | Theories of Urban Design | 2 | - | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| C.E 412 | Surveying | 2 | 1 | - | 2 | - | - | - |
| Total | | 42 | 14 | - | 15 | 15 | - | 13 |
| Total hours per week | | | 29 | | | 28 | | |

| FIFTH YEAR | | | 1 st Semester Hours/Week | | | 2 nd Semester Hours/Week | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|----------|-----------|-------------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| Code | Subject | Units | Theo. | Tuto. | Lab. | Theo. | Tuto. | Lab. |
| Arc 501 | Architectural Design | 7 | 3 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Arc 502 | Thesis Project | 15 | 2 | - | 65 | 3 | - | 15 |
| Arc 503 | Specification and Estimation | 2 | 2 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Arc 504 | Profession Practice | 2 | - | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| Arc 505 | Theories of Architectural Design | 2 | 2 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Arc 506 | Theories of Architectural Criticism | 2 | - | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| Arc 507 | Contemporary Iraqi Architecture | 2 | 2 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Arc 508 | Contemporary Arab Architecture | 2 | - | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| Arc 509 | Philosophy of Architecture | 2 | - | - | - | 2 | - | - |
| Total | | 36 | 11 | - | 15 | 11 | - | 15 |
| Total hours per week | | | 26 | | | 26 | | |

(2-4)

Postgraduate Curriculum

M.Sc. Courses; Environment and Technology in Architecture.

| | Code | Subject | Hours | Units |
|--------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| 1 st Semester | ARC 601 | Advanced Arch. Design. | 1 | 3 |
| | ARC 602 | Arabic and Islamic Architecture | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 603 | Research Methodology. | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 604 | Climate and Architecture. | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 605 | Theory Of Architecture. | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 606 | Advanced Building Technology. | 2 | 2 |
| | GE 607 | English Language. | 2 | 1 |
| | ARC 608 | Arabic Language and Writing Method. | 2 | - |
| | Total | | 15 | 14 |
| 2 nd Semester | ARC 609 | Environmental Arch. Design. | 1 | 3 |
| | ARC 610 | Environmental Psychology. | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 611 | Architecture and Technology. | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 612 | Environmental Acoustics. | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 613 | Elective Course (1) | 2 | 1 |
| | ARC 614 | Elective Course (2) | 2 | 1 |
| | GE 615 | English Language. | 2 | 1 |
| | | Total | | 13 |

M.Sc. Courses; Theory of Architecture and Islamic Architecture

| | Code | Subject | Hours | Units |
|--------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| 1 st Semester | ARC 601 | Advanced Arch. Design. | 1 | 3 |
| | ARC 602 | Arabic and Islamic Architecture | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 603 | Research Methodology. | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 604 | Climate and Architecture. | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 605 | Theory Of Architecture. | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 606 | Advanced Building Technology. | 2 | 2 |
| | GE 607 | English Language. | 2 | 1 |
| | ARC 608 | Arabic Language and Writing Method. | 2 | - |
| | Total | | 15 | 14 |
| 2 nd Semester | ARC 616 | Conservation and Application Design. | 1 | 3 |
| | ARC 617 | Philosophy and Criticism. | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 618 | History and Criticism of Architecture. | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 619 | Theory and Application in Arabic and Islamic Architecture. | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 620 | Elective Course (1) | 2 | 1 |
| | ARC 621 | Elective Course (2) | 2 | 1 |
| | GE 615 | English Language. | 2 | 1 |
| | | Total | | 13 |

(3-4)

M.Sc. Courses; Housing and Urban Design in Architecture

| | Code | Subject | Hours | Units |
|--------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| 1 st Semester | ARC 601 | Advanced Arch. Design. | 1 | 3 |
| | ARC 602 | Arabic and Islamic Architecture | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 603 | Research Methodology. | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 604 | Climate and Architecture. | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 605 | Theory Of Architecture. | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 606 | Advanced Building Technology. | 2 | 2 |
| | GE 607 | English Language. | 2 | 1 |
| | ARC 608 | Arabic Language and Style of Research Writing. | 2 | - |
| | Total | | 15 | 14 |
| 2 nd Semester | ARC 622 | Urban Design Application. | 1 | 3 |
| | ARC 623 | Theories of Urban Design. | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 624 | Housing Economics. | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 625 | Housing Parameters. | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 626 | Elective Course (1) | 2 | 1 |
| | ARC 627 | Elective Course (2) | 2 | 1 |
| | GE 615 | English Language. | 2 | 1 |
| | | Total | | 13 |

Department of Architecture Engineering

Ph.D. Courses; Philosophy in Architecture

| | Code | Subject | Hours | Units |
|--------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------|-------|-----------|
| 1 st Semester | ARC 701 | Theories of Arch. | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 702 | Research Methodology | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 703 | Thought of Arabic and Islamic Arch. | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 704 | Urban Design Theories | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 705 | Elective (1) | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 706 | Elective (2) | 2 | 2 |
| | GE 707 | English Language | 2 | 1 |
| | | Total | | 14 |
| 2 nd Semester | ARC 708 | Philosophy of Arch. | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 709 | Philosophy of Science | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 710 | Seminar of Thesis | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 711 | Technology and Arch. | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 712 | Elective (3) | 2 | 2 |
| | ARC 713 | Elective (4) | 2 | 2 |
| | GE 714 | English Language | 2 | 1 |
| | | Total | | 14 |

(4-4)

المرحلة الأولى

| الرمز | المادة | الساعات الأسبوعية | | | |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------|-------------|------|
| | | الفصل الثاني | | الفصل الأول | |
| | | نظري | عملي | نظري | عملي |
| 101م | التصميم المعماري (1) | 8 | 1 | 8 | 1 |
| 102م | الرسم اليدوي والحر 2d/ | - | - | 3 | - |
| | الرسم اليدوي والحر (إظهار منظوري/3D) | 3 | - | - | - |
| 103م | تركيب مبانئي (1) | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 104م | تاريخ عمارة (1) (وادي الرافدين ووادي النيل) | - | - | - | 2 |
| | تاريخ عمارة (1) (الآغريقية والرومانية والعصور الوسطى) | - | 2 | - | - |
| 105م | حاسبات (1) | 2 | 2 | - | - |
| 106م | فن وعمارة (1) (تفهم أساسيات عمارة) | - | - | - | 2 |
| | فن وعمارة (1) (تفهم جماليات عمارة) | - | 2 | - | - |
| 107م | معامل وستوديو موديلات | 4 | 4 | - | - |
| 108م | الرياضيات | 4 | - | 2 | - |
| 109م | اللغة الانكليزية | 4 | - | 2 | - |
| 110م | حقوق الإنسان | 2 | - | 1 | - |
| المجموع | | 18 | 11 | 18 | 11 |
| | 40 | 29 | | 29 | |

المرحلة الثانية

| الرمز | المادة | الساعات الأسبوعية | | | |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------|-------------|------|
| | | الفصل الثاني | | الفصل الأول | |
| | | نظري | عملي | نظري | عملي |
| 201م | التصميم المعماري (2) | 9 | 1 | 9 | 1 |
| 202م | تقنيات الاظهار المعماري والرسم الحر | 5 | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| 203م | الهندسة الوصفية | 2 | - | - | - |
| 204م | المساحة | 2 | 1 | 1 | - |
| 205م | تركيب مبانئي (2) | 5 | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| 206م | إنشاءات (1) | 4 | - | 2 | - |
| 207م | حاسبات (2) | 2 | 2 | - | - |
| 208م | تاريخ عمارة (2) (عمارة العصور الوسطى وعصر النهضة) | - | - | - | 2 |
| | تاريخ عمارة (2) (عمارة القرن التاسع عشر) | - | 2 | - | - |
| 209م | عمارة ومنطق | 2 | - | 2 | - |
| 210م | حرية وديمقراطية | 2 | - | 1 | - |
| المجموع | | 39 | 18 | 11 | 17 |
| | | 29 | | 27 | |

The curriculums of the architectural department / University of Technology (1-5)

المرحلة الثالثة

| الرمز | المادة | الساعات الاسبوعية | | | |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------|--------------|------|
| | | الفصل الاول | | الفصل الثاني | |
| | | نظري | عملي | نظري | عملي |
| 301 هـ م | التصميم المعماري (3) | 1 | 9 | 1 | 9 |
| 302 هـ م | تركيب مباني (3) (تفاصيل) | 1 | 3 | - | - |
| | تركيب مباني (3) (تقنيات بناء معاصر) | - | - | 1 | 3 |
| 303 هـ م | انشاءات (2) | 2 | - | - | - |
| | انشاءات (2) عملي/تقنيات بناء معاصر | - | - | 2 | - |
| 304 هـ م | تاريخ عمارة (3) (عمارة الحداثة وما بعد الحداثة) | 2 | - | - | - |
| | تاريخ عمارة (3) (معاصرة) | - | - | 2 | - |
| 305 هـ م | منهجية التصميم المعماري | 2 | - | - | - |
| 306 هـ م | عمارة و بيئة | 2 | - | 2 | - |
| 307 هـ م | حاسبات | - | 2 | 2 | - |
| 308 هـ م | تاريخ مدينة | 2 | - | - | - |
| 309 هـ م | مبادئ التخطيط والتصميم الحضري | - | - | 2 | - |
| 310 هـ م | خدمات صحية | 2 | - | - | - |
| 311 م هـ | خدمات تكييف | - | - | 2 | - |
| 40 | المجموع | 14 | 14 | 12 | 14 |
| | | 28 | | 26 | |

(2-5)

المرحلة الرابعة

| الوحدات | الساعات الاسبوعية | | | | المادة | الرمز | |
|---------------|-------------------|------|-------------|------|--------|------------------------------|----------|
| | الفصل الثاني | | الفصل الاول | | | | |
| | عملي | نظري | عملي | نظري | | | |
| متطلبات القسم | 12 | 10 | 1 | 10 | 1 | التصميم الحضري والمعماري (4) | 401 هـ م |
| | 3 | - | - | 4 | 1 | تصميم فضاءات داخلية | 402 هـ م |
| | 3 | 4 | 1 | - | - | تصميم فضاءات خارجية | 403 م هـ |
| | 2 | - | - | - | 2 | نظرية التصميم الحضري | 404 هـ م |
| | 2 | - | 2 | - | - | نظرية التصميم المعماري | 405 هـ م |
| | 2 | - | - | - | 2 | عمارة عربية اسلامية | 406 هـ م |
| | 2 | - | 2 | - | - | عمارة محلية عراقية | 407 هـ م |
| | 2 | - | - | - | 2 | خدمات ميثي | 408 هـ م |
| | 2 | - | 2 | - | - | خدمات صوتية | 409 م هـ |
| | 2 | - | 2 | - | - | علم النفس المعماري | 410 م هـ |
| | 4 | - | 2 | - | 2 | الاسكان | 411 م هـ |
| | 2 | - | - | - | 2 | بيئة مناخية حضرية | 412 م هـ |
| | 38 | 14 | 12 | 14 | 12 | المجموع | |
| | 26 | | 26 | | | | |

المرحلة الخامسة

| الوحدات | الساعات الاسبوعية | | | | المادة | الرمز | |
|---------------|-------------------|------|-------------|------|--------|------------------------|----------|
| | الفصل الثاني | | الفصل الاول | | | | |
| | عملي | نظري | عملي | نظري | | | |
| متطلبات القسم | 15 | 10 | 1 | 16 | 1 | الاطروحة التصميمية | 501 هـ م |
| | 6 | 6 | - | 2 | 2 | تفاصيل معمارية | 502 م هـ |
| | 2 | - | 2 | - | - | ادارة مشاريع | 503 م هـ |
| | 2 | - | - | - | 2 | قوانين بناء | 504 هـ م |
| | 2 | - | 2 | - | - | كميات و مواصفات | 505 م هـ |
| | 2 | - | - | - | 2 | بحث الاطروحة التصميمية | 506 هـ م |
| | 2 | - | - | - | 2 | فلسفة وعمارة | 507 هـ م |
| | 2 | - | - | - | 2 | عمارة مستدامة | 508 هـ م |
| | 33 | 16 | 5 | 18 | 11 | المجموع | |
| | 21 | | 29 | | | | |

(3-5)

Study plan for students of Master in science in the department of architecture



| Branch of Architecture design First semester | | | | Branch of Architecture design Second semester | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------|------------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------|------------------|
| Course | Weekly hours | | Credit unites | Course | Weekly hours | | Credit unites |
| | Theoretical | Practical | | | Theoretical | Practical | |
| Design Strategies | 2 | 2 | 3 | Climatic Environment design | 2 | - | 2 |
| Building Systems Technology | 2 | 2 | 3 | Architecture Environment Physiology | 2 | - | 2 |
| Architecture Theory | 2 | - | 2 | Architecture Theory | 2 | - | 2 |
| Systems & Architecture | 2 | - | 2 | Research Theory | 2 | - | 2 |
| Selective Subject (1) | 2 | - | 2 | Islamic Architecture | 2 | - | 2 |
| English Language | 1 | - | 1 | Selective Subject (1) | 2 | - | 2 |
| Total | 11 | 4 | 13 | English Language | 1 | - | 1 |
| | | | | Total | 13 | - | 13 |

| Urban Design Branch First semester | | | | Urban Design Branch Second semester | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|-----------|------------------|----------------------------------------|--------------|-----------|------------------|
| Course | Weekly hours | | Credit unites | Course | Weekly hours | | Credit unites |
| | Theoretical | Practical | | | Theoretical | Practical | |
| Housing theory | 2 | 2 | 3 | Sustainable Urban design | 2 | 4 | 4 |
| Land scape design | 2 | 2 | 3 | Urban design strategies | 2 | - | 2 |
| Urban Environment analysis | 2 | - | 2 | Visual Environment analysis | 2 | - | 2 |
| Theory of urban design | 2 | - | 2 | Research Theory | 2 | - | 2 |
| Selective Subject (1) | 2 | - | 2 | Selective Subject (1) | 2 | - | 2 |
| English Language | 1 | - | 1 | English Language | 1 | - | 1 |
| Total | 11 | 4 | 13 | Total | 11 | 4 | 13 |

(4-5)

Study Plan for lecturing PhD. students in the department of architecture



| Architecture design/ First semester | | | |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------|---------------|
| Course | Weekly hours | | Credit unites |
| | Theoretical | Practical | |
| Architecture philosophy | 2 | - | 2 |
| Research Theory | 2 | - | 2 |
| Theory of urban design | 2 | - | 2 |
| Architecture & environment | 2 | - | 2 |
| Selective Subject (1) | 2 | - | 2 |
| Selective Subject (2) | 2 | - | 2 |
| English Language | 1 | - | - |
| Total | 13 | - | 12 |

| Architecture Design/ Second semester | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------|---------------|
| Course | Weekly hours | | Credit unites |
| | Theoretical | Practical | |
| Architecture Theory | 2 | - | 2 |
| Architecture research philosophy | 2 | - | 2 |
| The concept of architecture technology | 2 | - | 2 |
| Seminars for the research proposals | - | 4 | 2 |
| Selective Subject (3) | 2 | - | 2 |
| Selective Subject (4) | 2 | - | 2 |
| English Language | 1 | - | - |
| Total | 11 | 4 | 12 |
| The selective subjects depended on the research units determinations and according to the nature of the student research . | | | |

(5-5)

