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Research Report

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Title of Research: Post War Public Housing Reconstruction in Iraq

Using of visual social methodologies to investigate and analyse post war Iraqi housing situation in a selected metropolitan Iraqi cities

Purpose of Research:

Iraq now is in the focus of the drastic developments of the contemporary history of Middle East. From the 1980, Iraq was under a series of destructive war from the Iraqi-Iranian conflict to the surrender to the Americans in 2003. As a matter of fact, war periods always connected with dramatic changes in the structure of the society, people's way of living and the built environment of the city. Briefly, we can summarize two faces of the changes in the built environment before and after 2003. Firstly, the dramatic cut with the traditionally built environment began in the 1950s of the last century with the intercalation of the modernism in the third world societies. Then, the word (modern) translated successively into many architectural aspects. However, most of its attributes belongs to ideals or upper strategies far from the real knowledge of the essences of the Iraqi living environment. Except in few attempts of single solutions of individual architects that mostly reflected in the houses of the rich families, the ordinary people, especially the poor, always suffers from the attempts to adapt their inherited way of living to the transported models of the few accomplished pre-war public housing projects (in the 1980s and 1990s). Accompanied with the above circumstances, post war housing (after 2003) suffers from substantial deterioration of living standards, badly damaged infrastructure, official and management instability and finally and most importantly is shortage in producing mega housing projects. Moreover, post war period is characterized by the emergence of a new democratic society. That gave a new power to the individuals in expressing the speciality of their way of living, social principles and inherited habits.

In a review to the post war housing research studies we found that the centralized role of the government, the almost nonexistent role to the private companies and the multi theoretical attitude of the university studies that mostly far from real circumstance, made an explicit lack in studies that deals with the onsite housing problems especially for the ordinary people.

According to the above we can formulate the purpose of our research as investigating the appropriate way to deal with the post war housing problems in the light of the new society symbolization, evaluating the qualify the actual housing situation and extracting the ideals that guide the reconstruction process in Iraq to build socially adequate built environment for the governmental public housing. And finally (which still under research) we aim to propose suggestions to a housing model that can satisfy a variety of post war housing requirements in Iraq.

Content/Methodology of Research:

In attempt to fulfil the aspects of the housing situation in post war Iraq, our research divided into steps according to the purposes of the research from the most general to the most specific. In our investigation for the appropriate way to deal with the post war housing we tried to specify the general directions and tendency of the research. Tracking suitable model for the reconstruction process, put us in the trade-offs between the pragmatic short term goals of

immediate housing and the long term goals of developing a housing environment that reflects the life of inhabitants.

However departure point was that the reconstruction process in spite of providing aids, funds and material, is actually a process of reconstructing the community. So, the subjectivity of the Iraqi individual is the real actors behind rebuilding process, through local way in problem solving and decision process. A true post war housing recovery should be based on creating a socially adequate physical environment. Therefore the direct reconstruction efforts should be redirected from the current pragmatic short-sighted goals to the wider objectives of constituting social capital and social cultural community that helps to manage a process in which people can live in their own choice.

In our first paper (*The Possibility of Social Principles of Architectural Planning on Housing Situation in Post-War Iraq*), we investigated a possible approach to overcome the difficulty of lacking a suitable model for the reconstruction process in Iraq by identifying an appropriate metaphor in countries or nations that faced the same grand challenges. The similarity of post war destruction and the pioneering of the model, make the Japanese experience a proper metaphor for the Iraq case. So, we adopted the Japanese Architectural Planning Research (APR) with a special emphasis on the social approach of Uzo Nishiyama, especially his lifestyle theory. APR mainly focuses on (life and space) due to its historical and social aspects. In his life style theory, Nishiyama attributed the success and fail of the space according to the space ability to reflect the changes in the lifestyle of the ordinary Japanese people in the post war era. In our second paper (*Typing Theory in Post War Japanese Architecture Planning, Lessons for the Iraqi Post War Situation*) we explained the architectural application of the above idea .APR concerned with deciding ideals rather than standards for value judgment, decisions making and evaluations of housing solution in post war period. So, APR depended on the Idea of type to harmonize both the democracy and advancement as source of change in post war days. According to such background, Nishiyama developed his idea of plan type in which the house is a result of examining and considering society. He tried to draw analogy between laws of life process in ordinary people dwelling with modern way of living. In an attempt to follow the same strategy, we developed the idea of Typing Theory that works on estimating the value of relativity of change, trying to connect advancement and rapid improvement of living, individuality, and unitary face of common type. So, we decided that investigating ordinary people housing will provide the ideals for the reconstruction process.

In a field work survey, we were able to define main distinctive feature of housing experience in the collective dwelling, the Arbitrary Housing (AH) or the informal settlement, from the governmental public housing and the housing units built by the private companies. Through interviews and investigation of the every day life in our third paper (*An Analysis of Arbitrary Housing in Post-War Iraq Housing Experience*) we found that the arbitrary housing is the fertile land for providing the ideals of the Iraqi people housing design. We extended the idea of typing theory to develop what we called Ethno Typed Built Environment (ETBE) to describe the arbitrary housing environment. The term ETBE intended to describe a built environment governed by its surroundings, where the last bestowed typical similarities upon the first. Circumstances here give the distinction to AH built environment by its unique ethno-characters as collectively decided by people. We used ethnomethodology in general and its documentary method in special to analyze the scene of life in the arbitrary housing and as (ETBE) such environment provided a good example to reflect the dominance of social principles on the housing spaces arrangement. Despite the fact that space arrangement still suffers many architectural mistakes as these houses were built by the inhabitants themselves. In our forth paper (*Using the Space Syntax to Clarify the Socio-Spatial Characteristics of the Governmental Public Housing Solutions in Post War Iraq*) we utilized the space syntax theory to investigated the public housing built projects a period from 2003 to 2010. Although it is experience here is still premature, the aim was to evaluate the space arrangement and predict family movement in these units in the light of the spatial configurations which extracted from the (ETBE).

Conclusion/Observation

From the general observations and analysis of the current housing problem, it was possible to conclude that beside the problems of administrative and financial management the dilemma of Iraq post war housing situation is expressed by lacking of a suitable model for reconstruction

process. By using a metaphor for a leading post-war experience like that of japons, we were able to decide the generality of our theoretical frame work as follows. Post war appropriate housing model is a model that satisfies the short range requirements of ordinary people for mass housing, while achieved the long term notion of creating a physical environment that reflect ordinary people real life. The main learned lesson from post war APR is its attitude toward change and individuality. From the APR, we were able to extract the idea of Typing Theory as a background for a model type that Justify people individual way of living with continuous social and cultural changes in post war era. In addition, we deduced from the works of Nishiyama that people individual way of living and life style are mostly reflected in the ordinary people dwelling. We have found an equivalent for that idea in the AH gatherings in Baghdad. We developed the notion of ETBE to explain that special interference between social and built environment experiences. By utilizing ethnomethodological analysis, we identified that the main social ideals of lifestyle of the Iraqi family are the dominance of religious doctrines, group affiliation, separation of the genders, accumulation and sharing of experiences. These ideals were the deciding principles for the space arrangement in AH units. In addition, space syntax analysis revealed that ETBE is a functional space cantered layout with special importance to the (Entrance) space as inside-outside transition and the (Living-Cooking) space as a transition from the isolated general spaces to the most private one. When compared to ETBE, we found that it is difficult to find similar spatial characteristics within a sample of post war governmental public housing units. In addition, it is difficult to identify a specific spatial trend within the considered sample, which dominated by a type based on repetition of standardized solutions. On the other hand, the results of social speculation of the syntactic analysis indicates that the spatial orders in ETBE is successful in respecting the social habits of the Iraqi family, especially gender separation, the privacy of the woman space and, the protection of the inhabitants movements from the visitors' line of vision. In contrast, the spatial order of only some of the units within the public housing is partially addressed these social themes, while the remaining units, are good examples of ignoring the social perspectives of the Iraqi family.