

Assessing Authenticity in Heritage Conservation

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Case Study: Architectural Conservation in Bahrain

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The thesis *"Assessing Authenticity in Heritage Conservation. Case Study: Architectural Conservation in Bahrain"* enriches the academic controversy on authenticity in heritage conservation with the perspective of laypeople. Thereby, and with the aim of contributing to the development of the key normative concept, the author critically assesses the pertinent methodological guidance for its application in architectural conservation practice: the ICOMOS Venice Charter and paragraphs 79-86 on authenticity in the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention. These standard setting documents reflect essentialist and constructivist understandings of authenticity. In the essentialist understanding, authenticity is a measure on the basis of which the historicity of a heritage site can be scientifically certified based on intrinsic qualities. According to the constructivist understanding, authenticity is a sum of value attributions and is established in the interaction between the user and the heritage site.

Based on the Nara Document on Authenticity, the Operational Guidelines currently provide the most detailed and influential definition of authenticity. They anchor the concept in the credibility and truthfulness of an open-ended list of internal and external factors – referred to as information sources – that communicate a heritage site's cultural values. Conversely, the thesis explores the communicative impact of built heritage sites and assesses the truthfulness of the messages they convey to professionals and laypeople in the field of architectural conservation. To this end, the author conducted an exploratory inquiry and interpretive, comparative content analysis focused on two specific reference sites in Bahrain. The qualitative case study research involves mixed, including quantitative, methods and is based on semi-structured and unstructured interviews with more than sixty people, site assessments, participant observation and desk research.

The first reference site is a refurbished colonial-style ensemble of governmental buildings including the iconic city gate Bab al-Bahrain in Manama. The ensemble was originally built in the mid-20th-century as the first, representative modern city centre in the Gulf during early state modernization under British influence. The second site consists of the Siyadi Shops in the historic market area Suq al-Qaisariya in Muharraq. The partly ruined vernacular commercial structures originate from the late 19th and early 20th century when Muharraq was the centre of the regional pearling economy. Their rehabilitation took place in the course of a World Heritage nomination and served as a pilot project for conservative architectural works as per international conservation standards. The two sites are hence comparable in typology but stand for different historic eras and differing conservation approaches.

The content analysis compares how architects, who represent professionals in the field of architectural conservation, and non-architects, representing laypeople, perceive the two sites and the interventions within them. In order to assess the truthfulness of the conveyed messages in each group, the author compares the interviewees' authenticity ratings to her own assessments of the two reference sites. With the aim of tracing potential cultural contingencies in the perception of authenticity, the interviewees moreover represent various nationalities and cultures. With its culturally diverse population and varied heritage conservation practice, Bahrain lends itself to such a study.

Assessed against heritage conservation standards, the rehabilitated site in Muharraq proved more authentic than the one in Manama at the time of the assessments in 2014/15. In addition, the Siyadi Shops were clearly preferred by the majority of interviewees in both groups not least for their perceived authenticity. However, the meanings that were found to be produced in the interaction between the sites and the interviewees proved to be of limited truthfulness in both cases. A key finding of the research is hence that a constructivist authenticity concept can serve no normative function when heritage conservation is considered a discipline at the service of historiography aiming to preserve heritage sites as reliable information sources for future generations.

The empirical data of the inquiry confirms pronounced differences in the way architects and non-architects perceive authenticity but much less so between representatives of so-called 'Western' and 'Eastern' cultures. Professionals and laypeople tended to attribute different values to the sites and hence differently prioritize the individual dimensions of authenticity. Originality of form, design, material and substance were found to be essential measures of historical truthfulness foremost for architects. For non-architects these dimensions tended to matter primarily for their sensual and experiential qualities. The group representing the laypeople's perceptive, in turn, tended to stronger anchor authenticity in cultural continuity related to uses and function or other intangible factors. In both groups, however, authentically preserved historic fabric was strongly valued either as a scientific or a psychological resource of strong emotional appeal. The perceived material authenticity was found to be an important reason why the Siyadi Shops were generally much appreciated regardless of the interviewees' professional and cultural backgrounds. The site's rehabilitation successfully reconciled essentialist and constructivist authenticity understandings by paying tribute both to the documentary value of the historic site and to the experiential needs of its users.

The findings hence support the material-focused approach which the Venice Charter endorses for architectural conservation practice on the one hand, while on the other confirming the relevance of the broadened authenticity understanding as per the Nara Document. All potential dimensions it introduced were found to be relevant but to require more practice-oriented methodological guidance. Based on the findings, the author recommends adding interpretation to the open-ended list of potential information sources. With a view to streamlining terminology, another recommendation is to refer to these as dimensions of authenticity.

Finally, the case study research illustrates the importance of expert knowledge and skills when scientifically assessing the authenticity of architectural heritage sites. It thereby flags limits to democratizing or even deinstitutionalizing conservation practice. At the same time, the findings highlight the importance of integrated, participatory approaches that balance different authenticity perspectives, value attributions, expectations and usage requirements.

PREFACE

*“Above all, authenticity reflected public trust that material things, unlike words, did not lie.”
(Lowenthal, 1999)*

But lied to, precisely, is what Mariam felt she had been when she understood that certain traditional houses, which she had taken for evidence of her home country’s pre-oil era, were entirely new facsimile constructions:

*“Old buildings are there to last and tell us about the past. But those buildings are fake?!
What will I tell my children?” she exclaimed. “That is like I write an autobiography at the end
of my life, and I write whatever about who I was!” (Interview 46b, 2012)*

This statement of a young Bahraini artist about a certain heritage conservation project in Bahrain was what triggered my decision to engage in a study on authenticity perceptions of laypeople in the field. The artist’s indignant exclamation raises important notions of authenticity in built heritage conservation. She acknowledges the communicative impact of heritage sites and of interventions within them. She associates her country’s conservation efforts for built heritage with a national narrative of cultural identity and local history and thereby hints to the documentary value of historic sites for present and future generations. The metaphor of a forged autobiography expresses the awareness that historic facts can deliberately or unintentionally be distorted through interventions at historic sites. Her agitation about having mistaken historicizing architecture for historic fabric illustrates that material things can communicate facts as much as they can create misconceptions through the messages they convey. All of these aspects are reasons why authenticity features in standard conservation doctrine as a qualifier of heritage sites, and why the concept – along with methodologies to assess it – keeps evolving as paradigms of heritage conservation change.

1. INTRODUCTION

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1.1 SCOPE AND AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The thesis at hand aims at enriching the academic authenticity discourse in the field of architectural conservation with the perspective of laypeople. Thereby, the research intends to contribute to the understanding and development of authenticity as a normative concept in architectural conservation. By gathering and analysing empirical data from a case study, it aims at furthering knowledge about the communicative impact of conservation measures in heritage sites and about the cultural, personal and site-specific contingencies of messages conveyed to professionals and laypeople in the field of architectural conservation.

To this end, the case study research explores the perception of two revitalized historic urban quarters in Bahrain, and the messages these sites convey to different audiences on the basis of interviews with site users of various professional backgrounds. A group of architects with experience in architectural conservation represent the professionals, while the group of non-architects consists mainly of laypeople in the heritage sector. Identifying differences in the way these two groups perceive, define and value authenticity in architectural conservation is hence at the heart of the qualitative research. With a view to potential cultural contingencies in the perception of authenticity, the interviewees moreover represent various nationalities and cultures. The findings are compared to the author's own authenticity assessments of the two reference sites. These are carried out on the basis of an analysis of their construction histories and in application of the most detailed and influential methodological guidance for authenticity assessments which at present the UNESCO World Heritage system provides. On this basis, conclusions and recommendations are derived with regard to the current normative definition of authenticity and for architectural conservation practice more generally.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Authenticity is one of the main tenets of cultural heritage conservation standards, guidelines and legislation at international and national levels. The international heritage community has come a long way in acknowledging the complexity of the concept and of its application since its first mention in early conservation charters, foremost the Venice Charter of 1964 (ICOMOS 1964). Through scholarly discussion and controversies, the volatile concept keeps evolving as paradigms of conservation change (Jokilehto 2019), while the provision of methodological guidance for its application lags behind. Reform initiatives in the context of UNESCO World Heritage address various points of criticism such as the concept constituting a Eurocentric assessment standard which disregards discrepancies between 'Western' and 'Eastern' definitions of authenticity (Larsen 1995; Kono 2014). As concerns for cultural contingencies, intangible heritage and emotive dimensions increasingly complement the early focus on material authenticity, the concept is becoming more and more complex. This development is, on the other hand, accompanied by justified concerns that a shift from the material-based concept of authenticity towards a value-based understanding along with the marginalization of expert involvement will jeopardize the paradigm of testimonial value and the mandate of heritage institutions to preserve tangible vestiges of the past as verifiable sources for historiography. In the course of democratisation efforts in the heritage realm, the prerogative of heritage professionals to assess authenticity in the public interest is increasingly being challenged. This is why perspectives on authenticity by laypeople is of particular interest.

The multitude of research activities, publications and conferences which address authenticity of cultural heritage is indicative of the unabated relevance of the debate, as will be discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis. Given the fundamental importance authenticity has in heritage conservation, it plays into most heritage discourses on theory and practice of conservation. The focus of current research initiatives in this context ranges from reconstructions of heritage sites, democratised and right-based heritage practices, to streamlining terminology.

To date, the most detailed definition of authenticity, as well as the most comprehensive guidance on how to assess it, is provided in the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO 2021) – hereafter the Operational Guidelines. This is because passing a test of authenticity is one prerequisite for UNESCO World Heritage listing of cultural sites. With reference to the Nara Document on Authenticity (ICOMOS 1994a), the Operational Guidelines anchor the concept in the credibility and truthfulness of information sources that communicate the sites' cultural values of "artistic, historic, social, and scientific dimensions." (UNESCO 2021, § 84) The potential information sources are further specified by a non-exhaustive list of "internal and external factors" ranging from "form and design" to "spirit and feeling" (UNESCO 2021, § 82).

Anchoring authenticity in the truthfulness of information sources points to the communicative power of cultural sites and of interventions within them. The ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites, known as the Ename Charter, acknowledges "that every act of heritage conservation – within all the world's cultural traditions – is by its nature a communicative act." (ICOMOS 2008, Preamble, 2) This also applies to architectural conservation. Understanding the messages architectural and urban sites actually convey not only to experts but to site users more generally, is therefore of utmost interest when discussing authenticity. This constitutes a key objective of the research at hand.

The Operational Guidelines, acknowledge that "judgments about value attributed to cultural heritage, as well as the credibility of related information sources, may differ from culture to culture, and even within the same culture" (UNESCO 2021, § 81). Although authenticity is striven for throughout societies, its basics are often disregarded in architectural interventions in historic contexts across the globe. This is most apparent in reconstruction projects which are often driven by civic engagement. This hints to a prevalent discrepancy in theory and practice of cultural heritage conservation and suggests that authenticity perceptions also differ between heritage professionals and laypeople in the field. While the main objective of the research at hand is to explore such differences between laypeople and experts in the field of architectural conservation, it also keeps an eye on potential cultural contingencies.

1.3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The aim of the research is to empirically explore the differences in the perception and valuation of authenticity of built heritage sites and of interventions within them between architects and non-architects as representatives of professionals and laypeople in the field. The author herself is an architect with both academic training and work experience in the realms of architectural and urban conservation as well as UNESCO World Heritage, including in Bahrain.

According to the standard methodology which is provided in the World Heritage context, the authenticity of a heritage site is to be measured against the truthfulness and credibility of sources of information. Following this logic, it should be possible to assess authenticity on the basis of the messages which the site actually conveys to its users. This is the fundamental rationale of the research at hand.

Bahrain lends itself as a case study for the exploration of the communicative impact of diverse architectural heritage and of the perception of its authenticity by people of different cultural and professional backgrounds. The relatively young architectural conservation practice in Bahrain is developing at a quick pace and offers examples ranging from conjectural and facsimile constructions in historic contexts to conservation projects striving for minimal intervention. The research design takes advantage of this diversity of conservation approaches administered to different kinds of built heritage in Bahrain as well as of the diverse demographic structure with 50% foreigners from across the globe.

The focus of the research is on two urban ensembles in historic market areas in the old towns of Manama and Muharraq.¹ The two main reference sites are comparable in typology but differ in their historical testimony and the way they have been rehabilitated in the 21st century.²

The first reference site is an ensemble of mid-20th-century governmental buildings in local colonial-style in the centre of Manama. It originates from the early state modernization phase under British influence shortly after oil was first discovered in Bahrain. The site includes the emblematic city gate Bab al-Bahrain, which was first refurbished in the 1980s in the course of the post-independence development of the capital city Manama. The entire ensemble, including its central market lane, was subjected to a range of rehabilitative interventions in the 21st century.

The second site consists of the Siyadi Shops in the historic market area called Suq al-Qaisariya in Muharraq. The vernacular commercial structures originate from the late 19th and early 20th century when Muharraq was Bahrain's capital and centre of the regional pearling economy. The privately owned shop units survived the physical deterioration of the historic market area in a neglected state. Their rehabilitation took place in the course of the nomination of Bahrain's second World Heritage site³ in 2010/11 and served Bahrain as a pilot project for conservative architectural works as per international conservation standards.

In comparing the perception and valuation of the main reference sites by architects and non-architects, the research explores both the emotional and semantic dimensions of the two sites as well as expected differences in the messages conveyed to professionals and laypeople in the field of architectural conservation. Interviewing people of both 'Western' and 'Eastern' cultural

¹ Throughout the thesis, Arabic names are presented in the form they are most commonly used in Bahrain, while technical terms are transcribed on the basis of the system set forth by the International Journal for Middle East Studies (IJMES).

² Refer to chapters 3.3 and 3.4 for detailed descriptions and to the annexes 3.3.1 and 3.4.1 for photos and plans of the two reference sites.

³ Refer to chapter 3.2 for an introduction of this and other heritage sites in Bahrain.

origin⁴ allows exploration of cultural contingencies in the assessment of authenticity in parallel.

The qualitative research is carried out using mixed methods involving data collection and content analysis on the basis of both primary and secondary sources. The research is presented in the following order:

Chapter 2 first introduces the concept of authenticity in cultural heritage conservation. This includes the description of the development of the normative concept through reform initiatives in the UNESCO World Heritage context as well as references to authenticity discourses related to architectural and urban conservation. This description of the state of research is founded on secondary research of scholarly works, including conference contributions, as well as on relevant international conservation guidelines and laws.

The case study research of chapter 3 involves field research in the form of semi-structured and unstructured interviews, site assessments and participant observation as well as desk research. Chapter 3 starts with a more detailed description of the methodology of the field research. This is followed by an introduction to the country and heritage, including an overview of how architectural conservation practice developed. The latter descriptions, which include accounts of how individual heritage sites and interventions were perceived by the interviewees, are based on information provided by professionals of the local heritage conservation sector and by site users as well as on participant observation protocols of the author's involvement in heritage conservation in Bahrain from 2008 to 2015. These information sources are complemented with a review of the relatively scarce literature on Bahrain's built heritage and of archival and press documents.

The central pieces of the case study, presented in chapters 3.3 and 3.4, are the authenticity assessments of the two reference sites first by the author on the basis of international heritage standards, foremost the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, and second through the eyes of the interviewees on the basis of qualitative interviews and following content analysis. In each case, this is preceded by descriptions of the sites and their construction histories as well as by assessments of their cultural significance.

The core of the case study research are 32 individual semi-structured on-site interviewees at the two reference sites with 18 different people. These interviews are supplemented with in-depth expert interviews with professionals who were involved in the rehabilitation of the site as well as with shorter, mostly spontaneous on-site conversations with site users. Overall, the author held and analysed more than 50 conversations of different lengths and breadth with more than 60 people of various cultural and professional backgrounds, gender and ages. Approximately one third were architects. Almost all interviews were recorded and transcribed, except a few that were documented in notes.

⁴ Refer to chapter 3.1.3.1 for a definition of the categories. It is acknowledged at the outset that the East–West dichotomy (Pattenberg 2013) is a problematic concept as it tends to create artificial regional and cultural affiliations and oversimplifies the complex matter of cultural identities of people and regions.

The focus of the content analysis is the identification of differences in the perception of the rehabilitated sites and their authenticity by the two different professional groups of interviewees. The findings are presented in text and on the basis of bar diagrams that serve to depict tendencies in the way architects and non-architects perceived and valued the sites. The diagrams are color-coded in order to also indicate potential cultural contingencies.

While the interviews were conducted in a rather open, explorative manner, the analysis of the data employed both deductive and inductive approaches. The latter were guided by the individual information sources of authenticity, which the Operational Guidelines provide. These are: form and design; materials and substance; use and function; traditions, techniques and management systems; location and setting; language, and other forms of intangible heritage; spirit and feeling; and other internal and external factors (UNESCO 2021, § 82). The different authenticity assessments of both sites are then compared in chapter 3.5.

The final chapter 4 discusses the findings and derives conclusions and recommendations both with regard to the current methodological guidance for authenticity assessments which the World Heritage system provides and for architectural conservation practice more generally.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE, TRANSFERABILITY AND LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The thesis contributes to the evolution of the concept of authenticity in heritage conservation with a practice-oriented field research, which assesses the communicative impact of sites from the perspective of site users. It enhances scholarship on how the assessment of authenticity is culturally and personally contingent, as much as it is site-specific, and thus serves to draw practical conclusions on how to assess and preserve authenticity of built heritage.

The research is innovative in its focus on the perspective of laypeople. Previous research on authenticity in heritage conservation is mostly theoretical in nature or based on comparative analyses of conservation approaches in different cultural contexts. Inquiries or surveys with laypeople in the heritage realm have so far mostly been used in tourism science, as will be discussed in chapter 2. With a focus on laypeople in the field of architectural conservation, the research thus generates new empirical data and tackles a communication deficit between the general public and the expert community with regard to the significance and meaning of authenticity in historic sites.

The outcome is considered of relevance to the reflection of current heritage conservation policies in the face of calls for a more inclusive practice. It is important to consider value systems outside the professional and academic realm not only with a view to the mandate of institutional heritage protection authorities to act in the public interest. Understanding authenticity perceptions of laypeople and comparing them to those of heritage professionals is particularly important in the face of democratisation efforts in conservation practice and the increasing role civil societies play in it. It is also of highest relevance with a view to endeavours to make heritage conservation practice more inclusive and representative of diversity. A controversially discussed question in this context, to which the thesis at hand intends to provide some answers, is: who has the prerogative and capability to identify and assess designated heritage sites?

By assessing the reference sites' authenticity on the basis of the Operational Guidelines and by exploring the messages which the individual sources of authenticity actually convey to site users, the research moreover assesses the comprehensiveness and ease of application of the

current methodological guidance provided in the World Heritage context. By comparing perspectives of laypeople to those of heritage professionals, the research also aims at contributing to a critical reflection of pertinent architectural conservation doctrine. The findings can hence contribute to the development of the normative authenticity concept in the context of World Heritage.

Last but not least, the case study contributes to the scholarly documentation and analysis of architectural heritage and conservation practice in Bahrain including its public perception. Both constitute understudied fields of research.

While the World Heritage system provides a methodology for authenticity assessments of most varied cultural sites and diverse heritage categories, the case study research is more limited in scope. The findings on differences in the perception of heritage sites between experts and laypeople as well as conclusions about the appropriateness of the existing methodology are limited to the field of architectural conservation. In addition, the case study research focuses primarily on architectural interventions within two comparable historic market areas in one specific country. The transferability of the findings to other sites and contexts may vary.

Moreover, any identified differences in how architects and non-architects, who represent professionals and laypeople in the field of architectural conservation, judge the sites' authenticity indicate only tendencies. This applies even more so to any potential findings on cultural contingencies, which was not the focus of the research. For further information on intrinsic limitations of the research design and methodology refer to chapter 3.1.6.

Despite this thematical, typological and geographical limitation, the expected insights into the communicative impact of the two reference sites are likely to be in principle transferable to other sites of built heritage and architectural conservation practice more generally.

2. AUTHENTICITY IN HERITAGE CONSERVATION

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2.1 AUTHENTICITY IN ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION

“The craving for authenticity is widespread, above all in heritage conservation. It denotes the true as opposed to the false, the real rather than the fake, the original, not the copy, the honest against the corrupt, the sacred instead of the profane. These virtues persuade us to treat authenticity as an absolute value, eternal and unshakable. Yet authenticity is, in fact, in continual flux, its defining criteria subject to ceaseless change.” (Lowenthal 1999, 5)

Authenticity discourses are omnipresent throughout societies. In everyday life, one encounters authenticity as an advertising term in commercials for a range of products from the simplest commodities to real estate. Often enough, it seems, the term serves to cover up an actual lack of authenticity or some sort of other deficiency. To give an example, the translation of a German advertising text at a sale stand offering Vietnamese knives is shared here:

“What distinguishes ‘Authentic Blades’? The special thing about these products is their authenticity. They are made in the same way that the Vietnamese make knives and scissors for their own use. From a European perspective, this gives them a quaint vintage charm. Please do not judge the knives by local quality standards.”

In different professional contexts and sciences, the concept has diverging meanings and functions. Authenticity plays an important role in economics, including the tourism sector, in history, psychology and cultural studies. In social studies, the social longing for ‘the authentic’ is for example generally interpreted as a sign of crisis (Saupe 2014, 182).

In historiography and associated disciplines, authenticity conventionally served plainly as a measure of the reliability of artefacts and documents as information sources. This is the reason, why in the practice and theory of cultural heritage conservation authenticity is of fundamental importance. On the international level it plays a pivotal role as key qualifiers for World Heritage listing.

In architectural conservation – here defined as the preservation, restoration and adaptation of historic buildings or their remains – the concept of authenticity therefore has an outstanding normative function. When assessing the cultural significance of historic buildings and the compliance with conservation ethics of interventions within them, the concept of authenticity is pivotal. Since its mention in the Venice Charter of 1964, which remains the fundamental reference for conservation architects worldwide, the concept has however evolved far beyond its original material-based focus.

This chapter introduces the significance and development of authenticity as a normative concept in the heritage realm – first in architectural conservation and second in the context of the UNESCO World Heritage system. Thereby, the chapter presents the assessment methodology which is used within the World Heritage system, and which guides the case study research. The chapter provides an overview of current research foci on the international level and ends on the state of the art in Germany and Bahrain, as two examples of authenticity research at national levels.

2.1.1 EUROPEAN ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF CONSERVATION ETHICS

Considerations of authenticity in architectural conservation can be traced back at least to the Italian Renaissance, as the conservationist Jukka Jokilehto did in his doctoral thesis of 1986. By the age of the Enlightenment in Europe, authenticity had come to signify “veridically genuine,

as opposed to forged or apocryphal” and was to be judged by “[s]tandards of critical evidence” (Lowenthal 1999, 6).⁵ The fact that by the 19th century in Europe, the understanding of authenticity reflected “public trust that material things, unlike words, did not lie” had to do with the study of Roman and Greek antiquities, is highlighted by the American historian and geographer David Lowenthal (1923 – 2018) in one of his seminal works in the field of heritage studies (1999, 6).⁶ At the same time, he points to the proliferation of forgeries in arts and culture in the 19th century, which was also the epoch of architectural historicism that imitated the styles of past eras. In the same century, fierce controversies about opposing approaches to architectural conservation, often revolving around concrete projects, emerged in Europe and paved the way for authenticity concerns to shape standards of conservation ethics. Some, but by no means all important protagonists of the 19th and 20th centuries are named in the following as they contributed fundamental views on authenticity in architectural conservation which resonate throughout the case study:

The French architect and art historian Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (1814 - 1879) and the English architect Sir George Gilbert Scott (1811 - 1878) were protagonists of the ‘restoration movement.’ It propagated the ‘stylistic restoration’ which entailed the creative restoration of historic monuments including the reestablishment and enhancement of their original architectural design. This approach of heritage conservation, if one wishes to call it that, in particular, but the emerging monument protection movement in general, served as a tool of cultural identity creation in the face of rising state nationalism in 19th century Europe.⁷

The best-known opponents to Viollet-le-Duc’s approach, whose positions are reflected in conservation doctrine to date, were the English designer, conservationist and activist William Morris⁸ (1834 – 1896) as well as the philosopher and art critic John Ruskin (1819 – 1900). The conservation movement, or ‘anti-restoration movement’ “headed by John Ruskin and William Morris emphasized historical authenticity – the concept that each period leaves its specific mark on the object, making it unique and authentic in relation to time.” (Jokilehto 1995, 28) For them, “[t]he ideal of authenticity, or ‘truth’ as Ruskin usually put it, now rested not in the form but in the material, and was attributed vastly higher moral importance.” (Glendinning 2013, 119)

⁵ The etymology of the term is based in Greek: authentikos "original, genuine, principal" (<http://www.etymonline.com>).

⁶ Refer to Jokilehto (1986) for a history of architectural conservation and its roots in the studies of classical antique monuments.

⁷ Germany, which emerged as a national state in the 19th century, is an illustrative example of the discipline’s conflictual identity creating function. For a political analysis of German conservation history with a focus on authenticity concerns refer to Michael Falser’s dissertation (2008).

⁸ William Morris is also a key protagonist of the English Arts-and-Craft movement, which gave important impulses to the debates about honesty in product and furniture design as well as architecture. Authenticity considerations in the choice and use of materials and designs, which were further propagated in the context of the German Werkbund in architectural practice, remain a fundamental tenet in academic training of architects across the globe. The issue is mentioned here because it surfaces several times in the case study.

The Baltic-German art historian George Dehio (1850 - 1932) propagated 'simplicity' and 'honesty' in the treatment of historic monuments (Glendinning 2013, 150). With a view to the extensive reconstructions and traditionalist creations it involves, he brandmarked the 'stylistic restoration' as "an 'illegitimate child' of the 19th century historicism" (Glendinning 2013, 150). The dichotomy of authenticity of the material testimony versus the integrity of the architectural design remains a basic dilemma in architectural conservation as an applied discipline of historiography. It relates to the question of what truth is in architectural conservation:

*"Historical truth and artistic truth are in a state of tension. What is artistically false can attain historical truth, and what is historically false can possess artistic truth. This is not a paradox or arbitrariness, but points to the fact that 'truth' as a category of values must not only be sought and defended, but also defined."*⁹ (Will 2020, 214)¹⁰

The English architect and theorist Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812 – 1852) and the Italian architect and engineer Camillo Boito (1836 – 1914) shall be mentioned for their early reconciling approach between the two poles, which is called 'critical restoration' (Glendinning 2013, 155). It entails the differentiability of original and added fabric, which remains a conservation tenet to date. For Pugin, authenticity rested "in maintaining a sharp separation between old and new. In an epoch that relied on historical style to communicate architectural meaning, it became vital whether a building was 'original' or a 'fake'." (Glendinning 2013, 117) The Carta Italiano del Restauro, an inaugural charter on architectural conservation which was drafted by Boito and presented at the III Conference of Architects and Civil Engineers of Rome in 1883, moreover highlighted the importance of documenting any changes to a historic monument and holding the records publicly accessible. In addition, Boito anticipated the doctrine of reversibility of physical interventions in historic buildings (Glendinning 2013, 155).

Building on Ruskin's concepts and by taking into consideration aesthetic, historical and use values, the Austrian art historian and conservationist Alois Riegl (1858 - 1905), among others, contributed to the emergence of 20th century modern conservation theory. This has to be seen in the context of the emergence of urban conservation in the 19th century and "a new kind of authenticity, no longer concerned, as with Ruskin, with substance and detail, but with 'life' at an urban, landscape scale." (Glendinning 2013, 165) Building on these impulses, integrated approaches to urban conservation were in the 21st century cast in the UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape of 2011 (UNESCO 2011a).¹¹ Riegl serves to

⁹ All quotes from German or French sources throughout this thesis were translated to English by the author.

¹⁰ The author of this quote, the German professor of architectural conservation Thomas Will, relates the truth of a monument to originality and authenticity. "Originality here means that a historical object is identical with the object to which it refers in its appearance and structure", while authenticity means that the object makes a "valid statement" (Will 2020, 215), that it delivers truthful messages.

¹¹ The Historic Urban Landscape approach regards the urban heritage within its natural setting as a social, cultural and economic resource and integrates the goals of urban heritage conservation and those of social and economic development by participatory and sustainable means. (UNESCO 2011a) It shows clear parallels to the current European strive for 'Baukultur.' (Conference of European Ministers of Culture 2018)

exemplify the early awareness around 1900 that exclusive focus on material authenticity neglects other value dimensions of historic monuments, as the German art historian Ingrid Scheuermann stated at an interdisciplinary conference on the authenticity of cityscapes in Germany in 2014.¹²

Riegl's "central insight", which is fundamental for the case study at hand, "was that whether and why something was a monument, and thus any concept of authenticity of the monument, derived not from its origin, or from eternal values, but from its present-day *reception*."¹³ (Glendinning 2013, 141) He highlighted that the emotional appeal of historic monuments and their function as memory markers is significantly based on the 'age value', which is expression of "the modern awareness of time, and the desire to link one's existence with the historical time line" (Jokilehto 1995, 29). This desire had to do with alienation from the traditional world due to the tremendous societal transformations of industrialisation which brought about the European conservation movement in first place (Jokilehto 2015, 7).

Riegl's disciple, the Czech-born Austrian art historian Max Dvořák (1874 – 1921) shall be mentioned for his contribution to widening the concept of national monuments in the early 20th century when in charge of inventorying Austrian artistic and architectural patrimony. In his seminal publication of 1916, Dvořák argued not only for the preservation of all architectural styles but also of modest buildings for reflecting valuable local and historical characteristics. By the end of the 20th century, this development eventually led to the adoption of an international Charter on Built Vernacular Heritage.¹⁴ The growing respect for vernacular buildings within their rural landscapes in the early 20th century moreover went hand in hand with emerging concerns for environmental protection of which Dvořák was one of many fervent promoters in the context of the 'Heimatschutz' movement in German speaking countries (Jokilehto 1986, 382). This can be seen as a starting point for the recognition of the cultural landscapes as well as cultural routes, waterscapes and canals as heritage categories in the 21st century. The growing appreciation of pre-industrial technological and agricultural heritage moreover paved the way for the recognition of industrial heritage sites.

The Italian art historian Cesare Brandi (1906 - 1988), who was critical about 'absolute conservation' along Ruskin's lines, pointed to the importance of "defining what is aesthetically and historically significant in the particular work of art concerned" and of taking decisions on how to intervene accordingly (Jokilehto 1994, 16). "In reference to Brandi," Jokilehto argues, "one can see authenticity in two principal references: the artistic authenticity and the historic authenticity of the work of art. Like John Ruskin has seen it, these two authenticities are necessarily related." (1994, 16-17). The positions of Brandi, Riegl and others are expression of

¹² Oral statement by the German professor of art history Ingrid Scheuermann at the conference "Authentisierung von StadtLandschaften" (Battis personal archive, participant observation note, 21 June 2014, Potsdam).

¹³ The focus on *reception*, more commonly referred to as perception, suggests that authenticity is not primarily a characteristic of built heritage but a product of the interaction between a site and its users.

¹⁴ The charter defines built heritage as "the traditional and natural way by which communities house themselves" and highlights the central place it occupies "in the affection and pride of all peoples" (ICOMOS 1999).

the value-based conservation and authenticity definitions which became a prevalent paradigm by the early 21st century and still characterize current approaches to heritage conservation. This involves taking into consideration conflicting perceptions of heritage sites. In the 21st century, with reference to modern architectural heritage the German art historian Gabriele Dolff-Bonekämper (2021) coined the term “Streitwert” (German: value of dispute). It underlines the significance of built heritage as catalysts for socio-cultural negotiation processes around diverse value attributions.

The scholarly debates around conservation ethics and the understanding of authenticity at their base, continuously flow into standard setting documents ranging from declarations and recommendations to charters and legally binding conventions of which a few will be addressed here. The rather influential Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments of 1931 shall be mentioned among the exuberant number of such documents for the following reasons: Following the “Ruskinian position” (Glendinning 2013, 199) the charter gave impetus to the institutionalization of the conservation practice at national and international levels and highlighted the importance of professional expertise. In stipulating the respect for all stylistic periods of a building, the charter also anticipated the persisting doctrine that monuments should preserve traces of historical development. Drafted at a time characterized by a strong belief in technological progress, the charter moreover legitimized the use of modern building techniques to support the conservation and repair of monuments. Finally, the Athens Charter of 1931 already endorsed the protection of a monument’s setting.

Another 19th and early 20th century debate among European conservationists which resonates in the case study, was the division of monuments into ‘living’ monuments, which maintained a contemporary use, and ‘dead’ ones – that is obsolete museum-like monuments of mere documentary value (Jokilehto 1986, 399). This strict division, which goes back to Ruskin, did not find its way into contemporary conservation doctrine but the related considerations of permissible levels of intervention – ranging from no intervention, via conservation and anastylosis to reconstruction – remain fundamental.

Discussions about the moral dimensions of falsifying historical testimonies by reconstructing lost structures gained importance with World Wars One and Two. They were decisive historical events that exacerbated the ongoing debates in the face of vast losses of built heritage in many European countries. On the one hand, there were extensive reconstructions such as in the prominent case of the Old Town of Warsaw that deliberately discarded the discipline’s conventions. More so, however, the war destructions gave impetus to the further destruction of built heritage in the name of modernization that broke with architectural traditions. These developments are still shaping current discourses. Especially in Germany, debates about historical revisionism flared up again after reunification. The controversies are fuelled by traditionalist reconstruction projects that have proliferated since the 1990s and are often supported by civil society and justified with identity needs (cf. Buttler et al. 2010; Falser 2008). A prominent example is the reconstruction of Dresden’s Frauenkirche and of the old town area surrounding the church. Somewhat comparable cases will be discussed in the case study.

Both World Wars, moreover, nourished the idea of cultural and natural heritage being a common and fragile good to humanity. Given their tragic effects, the wars boosted the internationalization of heritage conservation efforts beyond Europe in the context of the formation of the United Nations. From this process, the World Heritage Convention emerged

in 1972. The three advisory bodies to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) had already been founded as international organizations in 1948, 1965 and 1956 respectively. In the process, the conservation doctrine that emerged from the European debates gained global influence and started at the same time to be challenged in other cultural contexts.

2.1.2 INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION STANDARDS – THE VENICE AND BURRA CHARTERS

A “landmark” of the long development of European conservation ethics and their transfer to a global level is the ICOMOS Venice Charter of 1964 (Jokilehto 1986, 6). Among many doctrinal texts which have since built upon the Venice Charter, the Burra Charter of 1979 by ICOMOS Australia gained influence internationally. Some of its definitions are cited below as they specify the different levels of interventions in architectural conservation, which will be referred to throughout the case study.

2.1.2.1 The Venice Charter

The ICOMOS International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (the Venice Charter) was drafted as guidelines with the function of setting universally valid standards for the conservation and restoration of historic monuments. A team of heritage experts from various countries and continents drafted the document at the Second International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments in Venice in 1964. The International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) was founded in consequence of the congress and adopted the Venice Charter in 1965.¹⁵ The charter is the most important international monument conservation text of the 20th century and remains a fundamental reference for conservation architects to date.

As expressed in the preamble, the charter was based on the belief in universal human values and the will to assume a common responsibility of preserving humanity’s built cultural heritage. The scope of the charter is to guide the “preservation and restoration of ancient buildings” with a set of internationally agreed principles that each country is responsible to apply “within the framework of its own culture and traditions.” (ICOMOS 1964)

The charter’s definition of historic monuments embraces the single architectural work and its features to its urban or rural setting and extends “not only to great works of art but also to more modest works of the past which have acquired cultural significance with the passing of time.” (ibid.) This hence encompasses vernacular built heritage.

¹⁵ The advisory body to the World Heritage Centre consists of an interdisciplinary network of experts that is “dedicated to promoting the application of theory, methodology, and scientific techniques to the conservation of the architectural and archaeological heritage” as stated in the mission statement on the non-governmental organization’s website. (<https://www.icomos.org/en/about-icomos/mission-and-vision/mission-and-vision>, Accessed July 5, 2022) In 2023, ICOMOS counts more than 10 500 individual members in 151 countries.

Authenticity features prominently in the preamble. It highlights authenticity as a fundamental quality of historic monuments to be protected and links this primarily to the documentary value of monuments while indirectly evoking notions of emotional appeal, cultural continuity and identity:

“Imbued with a message from the past, the historic monuments of generations of people remain to the present day as living witnesses of their age-old traditions. People are becoming more and more conscious of the unity of human values and regard ancient monuments as a common heritage. The common responsibility to safeguard them for future generations is recognized. It is our duty to hand them on in the full richness of their authenticity.” (ibid.)

The charter provides no definition of authenticity nor of its twin concept integrity, which is mentioned in article 14. Nevertheless, the charter’s conservation standards – outlined in the following – are expression of the authenticity understanding which underlies them.

Raymond Lemaire, a co-signer of the Venice Charter, highlighted that during the Congress in Venice in 1964 “there was no explicit discussion on the concept of authenticity. It was assumed that the meaning of the concept was not problematic.” (Larsen and Marstein 1994, 131) There seems to have been an intuitive understanding of the term authenticity among the 95% of European congress participants in 1964 (Stovel 1995b).

Clearly, the authors of the charter sought to balance artistic authenticity and historic authenticity as the “intention in conserving and restoring monuments is to safeguard them no less as works of art than as historical evidence” according to article 3. Article 9 further specifies that restoration aims “to preserve and reveal the aesthetic and historic value of the monument.” At the same time, article 11 stipulates that “valid contributions of all periods to the building of a monument must be respected, since unity of style is not the aim of a restoration.” (ibid.)

Indebted to the mandate of preserving tangible witnesses of the past, the charter promotes the paradigm of minimal intervention in architectural conservation while accommodating provisions for sensitive adaptation and development of monuments. Articles 4 and 5 highlight the importance of permanent maintenance and adequate use of a monument with a “socially useful purpose,” while pointing to limits of change to its layout and architectural features in this context. (ibid.)

The section *Restoration* – articles 9 to 13 – promotes a historically truthful and comprehensible presentation of the monuments. Conjectural restorations that involve reconstruction works which are not based on material or other historic evidence are strictly dismissed in article 9. Additions are considered acceptable if necessary, but required to “bear a contemporary stamp” for the sake of differentiability of authentic and new elements. New elements and replacements are moreover to be subdued to the historic parts and integrated “harmoniously with the whole” (ibid., articles 12 and 13).

In the context of archaeological heritage, in the section *Excavations*, reconstruction work is ruled out “*a priori*.” Here, only anastylosis, that is “the reassembling of existing but dismembered parts,” is considered permissible, and again it is highlighted that “material used for integration should always be recognizable” as such (ibid., article 15).

Throughout the charter, there is only indirect reference to the interpretation of monuments but a clear dedication to promoting the legibility of their history and cultural significance. Article 15 stipulates that “every means must be taken to facilitate the understanding of the monument and to reveal it without ever distorting its meaning” (ibid.). Article 14 demands that sites of monuments “be presented in a seemly manner.” (ibid.)¹⁶

Article 10 gives general preference to traditional building techniques in the restoration of historic monuments, but modern conservation techniques are not ruled out. Articles 2 and 16 moreover point to the importance of research and “precise documentation in the form of analytical and critical reports, illustrated with drawing and photographs” of all works on historic monuments (ibid., article 16). The latter article moreover stresses the importance of disseminating the outcome of such research. Articles 6 and 7 highlight the importance of preserving foremost spatial and architectural characteristics of a monument’s setting and of its location. Finally, the charter stipulates that value judgements and decisions on interventions “cannot rest solely on the individual in charge of the work.” (ibid., article 11)

In summary, the Venice Charter is indebted to the documentary value of built heritage. Recognizing the exceptional role authentic historic fabric plays as a data carrier of reliable information from the past, it prioritizes material authenticity. With innumerable additional charters building upon it, it remains an authoritative reference decades after its inception, even if theory and practice often lie apart in reality. To date, the Venice Charter constitutes the most important doctrinal text for architectural conservation in the service of heritage protection and its mandate to preserve authentic evidence of the past for future generations. At the same time, the charter’s conservative purport, the fact that it prioritizes material authenticity and particularly its restrictive approach to reconstructions are increasingly being challenged by sections of the heritage conservation community. More conservationist quarters within the community, in turn, highlight the potential threats to the traditional heritage conservation mandate. This arises from the popularity of architectural and urban reconstruction projects across the globe as well as from calls for democratisation of conservation practice in combination with the questioning of the authority of institutional heritage protection and conventional doctrine. The broadening of the authenticity concept within the UNESCO World Heritage system, which will be described further below, is central to such controversies.

2.1.2.2 The Burra Charter

At its Fifth General Assembly in 1978, ICOMOS decided to keep the Venice Charter unrevised after not finding consensus on a draft revision (Glendinning 2013, 414). The Australia national committee of ICOMOS thereupon drafted and adopted the Charter for Places of Cultural Significance 2013 – the Burra Charter – in 1979.

¹⁶ In 2008, ICOMOS adopted the ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites. The so-called Ename Charter defines ‘Interpretation’ as “the full range of potential activities intended to heighten public awareness and enhance understanding of cultural heritage sites.” (ICOMOS 2008, Definitions, 4) It defines ‘Presentation’ as “the carefully planned communication of interpretive content through the arrangement of interpretive information, physical access and interpretive infrastructure at a cultural heritage site.” (ibid.)

It adapted and further specified the provisions of the Venice Charter for the Australian context and reflects the special polarization of Australian heritage between European materialistic culture and the intangible heritage of the aboriginal inhabitants (Glendinning 2013, 414). Since then, the Burra Charter's various revisions have gained global recognition and influence for their focus on cultural diversity and for "striking a new general balance between the universal and the local" (ibid.). The explicit mention of social and spiritual values in addition to aesthetic, historic and scientific ones in the definition of cultural significance in article 1.2 is expression of this:

"1.2 Cultural significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations.

Cultural significance is embodied in the place itself, its fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places and related objects.

Places may have a range of values for different individuals or groups." (Australia ICOMOS 2013)

The terms authenticity and integrity are not used in the Burra Charter. On the one hand, the concise definitions of the different interventions levels in architectural conservation illustrate enduring respect for material authenticity in the conservation of built heritage. On the other hand, the above quoted cultural significance definition as well as the definition of 'conservation' in article 1.4, is expression of a holistic authenticity understanding.¹⁷

"1.4 Conservation means all the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance.

1.5 Maintenance means the continuous protective care of a place, and its setting.

Maintenance is to be distinguished from repair which involves restoration or reconstruction.

1.6 Preservation means maintaining a place in its existing state and retarding deterioration.

1.7 Restoration means returning a place to a known earlier state by removing accretions or by reassembling existing elements without the introduction of new material.

1.8 Reconstruction means returning a place to a known earlier state and is distinguished from restoration by the introduction of new material.

1.9 Adaptation means changing a place to suit the existing use or a proposed use.

1.10 Use means the functions of a place, including the activities and traditional and customary practices that may occur at the place or are dependent on the place.

[...]

1.17 Interpretation means all the ways of presenting the cultural significance of a place." (ibid.)

¹⁷ Note that there is a global mismatch of fundamental terminology in the field. What is for example referred to as 'heritage conservation' in the European context is traditionally called 'historic preservation' in US-American contexts. This thesis uses the term 'architectural conservation' as defined in the beginning of the chapter. The term 'heritage conservation' as per the Burra Charter's definition in article 1.4 is used when conservation works are referred to that go beyond architectural interventions.

A term which is not introduced in the charter is ‘rehabilitation.’ It will be used throughout the case study to refer to the architectural and urban rehabilitation measures that were carried out at the reference sites. They involved all of the above levels of interventions and other measures that did not necessarily contribute to retaining the cultural significance of the sites.

2.2 AUTHENTICITY IN THE CONTEXT OF UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE

In the context of UNESCO World Heritage, the concept of authenticity has always been subject to intense debate. The Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage 1972 – the World Heritage Convention – is currently the highest international heritage legislation. Given the prestige of the World Heritage status and ensuing global popularity of the system, the standard setting supporting documents which accompany the convention are of tremendous global influence.¹⁸ Authenticity – and its twin concept integrity – play a fundamental role in the World Heritage system. To be deemed of Outstanding Universal Value and thereby worthy of protection under the World Heritage Convention, a site has to fulfil three prerequisites: it has to meet at least one of ten selection criteria, which describe the cultural and/or natural value; adequate mechanisms of protection and management need to be in place; and the site has to pass the test of integrity and authenticity. In the case of natural sites, the test is restricted to the condition of integrity. Cultural and mixed sites – that is those that are protected under selection criteria for cultural and natural heritage resources – have to meet both conditions.

The enforcement of the convention is based on the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO 2021) – hereafter referred to as the Operational Guidelines. Serving as guidance for professionals who nominate or manage World Heritage sites – both cultural and natural – as well as those who evaluate applications to the convention, the document has a major international standard setting function including for conservation architects. The Operational Guidelines have been continually updated since 1977 by the international expert community. Through the process, the concept of authenticity has been significantly broadened and delimited from the concept of integrity, as described below.

Although in the international heritage debates the concept of authenticity receives more attention than that of integrity, both concepts are closely related and are currently equally important qualifiers for the World Heritage listing of cultural sites. A publication took stock of the development outlined in the following in 2020. It was published by ICCROM as a special issue dedicated to Herb Stovel (1948-2012), who was one of the key protagonists in the process (ICCROM 2020).

2.2.1 CURRENT DEFINITIONS OF AUTHENTICITY AND INTEGRITY IN THE OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

Neither authenticity nor integrity are mentioned in the 1972 World Heritage Convention. Both concepts and terms were however introduced with the second version of the Operational Guidelines in October 1977 (UNESCO 1977, §§ 9 and 11).

¹⁸ The World Heritage List is continuously expanding and in 2022 encompassed 1154 sites in 167 states. With a total of 194 states who ratified the World Heritage Convention, most countries of the world are part of the system.

2.2.1.1 Authenticity

Since 2005, the Operational Guidelines have provided a comparatively detailed explanation of the concept of authenticity and certain guidance for assessing it. Paragraphs 79 to 86 of the Operational Guidelines as well as Annex 4 are dedicated to the test of authenticity. Based on the Nara Document on Authenticity, which is reproduced in Annex 4 to provide “a practical basis for examining the authenticity” of cultural sites (UNESCO 2021, § 79), the Guidelines anchor authenticity in the credibility and truthfulness of information sources that communicate the site’s cultural values of “artistic, historic, social, and scientific dimensions” (UNESCO 2021, § 84).¹⁹ Paragraph 84 defines those information sources as “all physical, written, oral, and figurative sources, which make it possible to know the nature, specificities, meaning, and history of the cultural heritage.” (UNESCO 2021, § 84)

Paragraph 82 provides a non-exhaustive list of sources of information of authenticity, or rather categories of potential sources:²⁰ “form and design; materials and substance; use and function; traditions, techniques and management systems; location and setting; language, and other forms of intangible heritage; spirit and feeling; and other internal and external factors.”²¹ (UNESCO 2021, § 82)

Paragraph 80 moreover points to the importance of information sources related to the original and subsequent characteristics of a heritage site for the understanding of its value and authenticity and thereby takes up the paradigm of preserving evidence of the site’s historical development.

It shall be noted that the Operational Guidelines do not stipulate the assessment of the entire list but only of its applicable sources of information and potentially additional ones. Depending on the type of heritage and its attributed significance, the relevance of the individual

¹⁹ The terms credibility and truthfulness are not differentiated in the document. The author assumes, that credibility was introduced as a complementary term in order to pay tribute to the fact that truthfulness is a contested concept in historiography of which heritage conservation is an applied discipline.

²⁰ The English version of the Nara Document, from where the list stems, refers to the items as potential “aspects of the sources” and well as “factors” (ICOMOS 1994a, article 13).

²¹ In the French version of the Nara Document, which is annexed to the official French version of the Operational Guidelines, the list is not open ended. Instead of on ‘other internal or external factors,’ the list here ends on “original state and historical development.” (French original: “état original et devenir historique”) (ICOMOS 1994b, §13). The French version hence does not foresee other factors but points to the fact that information sources may be intrinsic to the heritage resource or extrinsic. (ibid.) (French original: “Ces sources sont internes à l’oeuvre ou elles lui sont externes.”) Moreover, the French version uses the terms “esprit and expression” (ICOMOS 1994b, §13) instead of “spirit and feeling” (ICOMOS 1994a, §13). This makes a fundamental difference: feeling is extrinsic to the heritage asset because it refers to the emotions the heritage evokes among people. Expression, on the contrary, is intrinsic even if its reception occurs in the heads and hearts of people. The divergent language versions of the Nara Document indicated that the role of intrinsic and extrinsic factors of authenticity seem to have been a conflictual issue from the outset of scholarly debates on authenticity.

information sources therefore varies, since the aim of the test is to authenticate the site's Outstanding Universal Value.

This comprehensive definition, which surpasses the earlier material- and design-based approach to authenticity of built heritage, is aimed to be applicable to the diversity of cultural heritage sites which fall under the umbrella of the World Heritage Convention in varied cultural contexts. The downside of this comprehensiveness is of course a lack of site-specific and context-specific guidance for the individual disciplines.

The test of authenticity is applicable only to cultural sites. Natural heritage sites, to be inscribed exclusively under any of the criteria (vii) to (x), are exempt from the test of authenticity. They have instead to pass a test of integrity.

2.2.1.2 Integrity

Since the revision of the Operational Guidelines in 2005, cultural sites also have to pass a test of integrity. Since then, integrity has been defined as a measure of the wholeness and intactness of the site and involves three points: first, the site must contain all the features necessary to convey the Outstanding Universal Value; second, it must be of appropriate size for this purpose and fully reflect all the features and processes that constitute the significance of the site; third, under the current definition, it must be demonstrated that the site is protected from loss of integrity due to adverse impacts by adequate management and protection mechanisms²² (UNESCO 2021, § 88). For the assessment of the integrity of natural sites it is necessary to demonstrate that the biophysical processes and typical features of the landscape are relatively intact (*ibid.*, § 90).

The Operational Guidelines further specify that the integrity of cultural sites hinges on the good condition of the physical fabric and its important features (UNESCO 2021, § 89). For complex sites such as cultural landscapes and historic settlements, integrity extends to "relationships and dynamic functions" that are essential to their distinctive character." (*ibid.*) This "structural integrity" includes intangible aspects such as symbolic, functional and scientific relationships in addition to physical and visual relationships (Cotte 2015, 5). This approach of applying structural integrity to cultural heritage sites stems from natural heritage conservation, which deals with the preservation of complex and fragile ecosystems.

2.2.2 AUTHENTICITY AND INTEGRITY – A DIALECTIC RELATIONSHIP

Initially, authenticity and integrity were not on par as complementary qualifiers for built cultural heritage within the World Heritage system. Their current definition is the result of a continuous and ongoing development process and debate about their interrelation. The matter shall be outlined here, although it is not at the heart of the case study research.²³

²² In the author's eyes, this latter requirement is an unnecessary duplication with the third pillar of the Outstanding Universal Value: adequate protection and management of the site which has to be demonstrated separately.

²³ In doing so, the author draws on an article she published in 2015 to illustrate the interdependencies of authenticity and integrity based on Bahrain's World Heritage site: Pearling, Testimony of an Island Economy (Battis 2015).

In non-academic discourse – an often enough among academics, too – the terms authenticity and integrity are used indiscriminately, including in several of the interviews carried out in the course of the case study. Their relation is in fact intricate and dialectical: an intact cultural heritage site in terms of completeness is not necessarily authentic, and a collection of authentic attributes, in turn, does not necessarily make a complete representation of the attributed cultural significance (Cotte 2012, 2-3). While the authenticity of a cultural site is linked to the completeness of its value constituting attributes, the integrity of a site is linked to the authenticity of its individual elements. Despite this dependency, authenticity and integrity can also be in contradiction to each other. Ruined historic buildings, for example, often have an exemplary material authenticity. However, the integrity of the substance is usually poor and the ruin's preservation not guaranteed. When the ruin is restored, the overall material authenticity necessarily decreases with the enhancement of the structural and architectural integrity. After the restoration, the historic patina, what Ruskin called the "golden stain of time" (Ruskin 1849, 172), is then often artificially enacted by architectural or other means of place branding. The second reference site will give examples thereof.

A fundamental issue is the nature-culture divide. Many World Heritage sites combine cultural and natural elements or are even inscribed, based on cultural and natural heritage criteria and hence require a test of both qualifiers. With the following example the author wishes to illustrate that the test of authenticity might be relevant in natural heritage sites, although the Operational Guidelines do not foresee that at present: The Ras Al Khor Wildlife Sanctuary, the Ramsar Site no. 1715, is a coastal mangrove lagoon in Dubai and protected as a genuine, local landscape reserve by the Ramsar Convention since 2007. According to Gavin Schalliol (2014), an elaborate procedure was employed in the 1980s to artificially establish the mangroves in this location. If this is the case, the reserve's genuineness in historical and ecological terms is certainly disputable. Nigel Dudley (2011), in his book *Authenticity in Nature: Making Choices about the Naturalness of Ecosystems*, provides further examples of natural heritage sites where human interaction and value attributions justify a discussion of authenticity. It is just one of many publications dealing with the culture-nature divide, which is a research field in its own right.

These issues – how to differentiate between the two concepts or to simplify them with a view to an effective handling in the international heritage arena – have been debated in the World Heritage context from the start. According to the final report of the World Heritage Committee meeting in 1977, the problems of the overlapping concepts of authenticity and integrity and difficulties to define them in a universally valid way, already characterized the debates at that time. Interestingly, only the term integrity was initially intended to be used for cultural and natural sites, as the recent president of ICOMOS International, Toshiyuki Kono, demonstrated in his presentation at the ICOMOS USA symposium "The Venice Charter at Fifty" in April 2014 (Kono 2014, 438).²⁴ Instead, authenticity was given precedence for cultural sites. The 1988

²⁴ The proposal to give preference to the term integrity was guided by the management guidelines of the US National Parks Services, which assess the state of conservation of both natural and cultural heritage under the term of integrity while covering aspects of authenticity (National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior 2006). To date, the Canadian heritage authority uses 'commemorative integrity statements' to comprehensively assess the state of conservation of cultural sites (Parks Canada 2002).

version of the test of authenticity in the Operational Guidelines included a note on the integrity of cultural sites (UNESCO 1988, article 24.b.ii) but a full test of integrity was not required for them before 2005 (UNESCO 2005c, §§ 79 – 86). Again in 1998, another expert meeting on the subject concluded that authenticity should be integrated into the concept of integrity, and that natural and cultural heritage sites should be subjected to the same test (UNESCO 1998). A different working group involved in revising the guidelines of the World Heritage Convention in 2001, on the contrary, concluded that the two concepts were fundamentally different (Kono 2014, 438). The former president of ICOMOS Japan, Yukio Nishimura, hence stressed the need to find a way between authenticity and integrity (Nishimura 2011). Along the same lines, the Canadian conservationist Herb Stovel, who was one of the initiators of the Nara Document, suggested in 2007 with a view to better applicability that the two concepts be combined and differentiated according to types of sites (Stovel 2007). However, so far, the Operational Guidelines define authenticity and integrity as complementary but fundamentally different concepts despite the above-described dialectic.

2.2.3 DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT – THE NARA DOCUMENT ON AUTHENTICITY

From 1977 to 2005, the test of authenticity for cultural sites was limited to “design, materials, workmanship and setting” and explicitly included such modifications to the building or site which “themselves possess artistic or historical values” (UNESCO 1977a, article 9). This art historian approach to authenticity was widened with the integration of the Nara Document on Authenticity of 1994 into the Operational Guidelines in 2005.

In the post-modern era of preservation, an anthropological view of cultural heritage gradually superseded the monumental one (Jerome 2008, 4). In the 1990s and 2000s, the fundamentals of heritage conservation, including the authenticity concept as it emerged from the Venice Charter, were hence increasingly questioned. The theoretical discourses of authenticity drifted “from fixed, authoritative monuments towards the amorphous territory of intangible heritage or memory landscape.” (Glendinning 2013, 441) The case study will provide examples of what the Scottish professor of architectural conservation Miles Glendinning considers to be “perhaps the most striking shift in the new and uncertain world of post-1989 conservation: the decline in authority of the old, Ruskinian/ Modernist emphasis on the distinction between new and old, and between restoration and original. Increasingly, under the influence of the postmodern shift from reality to image and spectacle, all these have started to become mixed together, with disorientating effects.” (ibid., 418)

In response to an emerging criticism of Eurocentrism, intangible heritage dimensions, which were considered more relevant to many non-European cultures, gained more and more importance – both with the adoption of an own UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO 2003) and simultaneously under the framework of the World Heritage Convention. One reason for the criticisms of Eurocentrism of the World Heritage system was the monumental focus which reflected in typological, geographical and cultural imbalances of the World Heritage List. In consequence, ICOMOS carried out a global study from 1987 to 1993, following which the World Heritage Committee launched the Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List in 1994. It aims to correct the imbalances among the sites protected under the World Heritage Convention. The material- and design-based focus of the authenticity concept that had been applied since the 1970s was seen a potential obstacle, particularly for cultures with a less monumental cultural

heritage.²⁵ The assessment of authenticity and integrity of historic towns and districts with their complex socio-economic structures, of cultural landscapes, industrial or sacred indigenous peoples' sites, but also of the architectural heritage built of less durable materials like wood or clay is more complex than in the case of single stone buildings, with which the conservation movement essentially took off. In consequence, the test of authenticity was widened in order to make it compatible with a wider typological range of cultural heritage sites and cultural contexts.

A landmark of this development is the Nara Document on Authenticity. It was drafted at an international conference in the Japanese city of Nara in November 1994 after a preparatory workshop had taken place at the beginning of the same year in Bergen, Belgium. The 45 participants at Nara drafted the document which was prepared and edited in two official, albeit not entirely congruent versions in French and English by the general rapporteurs of the conference, Raymond Lemaire and Herb Stovel. In addition, the conference proceedings of both meetings remain important references to date (cf. Larsen and Marstein 1994; Larsen 1995).

The aim of the expert meetings was to revise and extend the definition of authenticity for cultural heritage sites. To this end, the Nara Document introduced the above-described non-exhaustive list of potential information sources on the basis of which to measure authenticity in relation to the site's cultural significance. In 2005, the list was integrated into the Operational Guidelines and the entire Nara Document annexed (UNESCO 2005c). Since then, tangible and intangible characteristics of the sites, their spatial and functional context, as well as socio-cultural levels of meaning, including associations and feelings the site evokes, are hence to be considered in the authenticity assessment if applicable. At the same time, the test of integrity was redefined as described above. The Venice Charter offered room for this development, as it refers to both concepts – authenticity and integrity – without defining them.

Overall, the Nara Document certainly constitutes a basis for more comprehensive authenticity assessments. There are however legitimate concerns among heritage professionals that the expanded definition of authenticity threatens the conservative preservation mandate for built heritage if immaterial sources of information are to replace material ones. That this does not seem to have been the intention of the authors of the Nara Document can be inferred from its preamble:

²⁵ The example that is most often referred to in this context, including by one of the interviewees who took part in the field research (I 33), is the Ise Grand Shrine in Japan. The wooden structures of the shrine are regularly reconstructed as part of a ceremonial process, thereby ensuring the continuity of the associated carpentering craft. It is however "essential to repeat here that the reconstruction of the buildings of Ise Shrine every twenty years is not regarded as architectural preservation in Japan. The vicennial cycle of reconstruction is a religious event and cannot be interpreted in any other way." (Larsen 1994, 67) The example is ill-suited to illustrate a discrepancy of 'Western' and 'Eastern' authenticity conceptions according to Knut Einar Larsen. He points to the fact that the appreciation of objects for their patina is common to Japan. Japan, he points out, actually constitutes "a model example for conservation of timber structures according to the ideal of preserving the material authenticity of a historic building" (Larsen 1994, 67-71) that goes even beyond Western standards.

“The Nara Document on Authenticity is conceived in the spirit of the Charter of Venice, 1964, and builds on it and extends it in response to the expanding scope of cultural heritage concerns and interests in our contemporary world.” (ICOMOS 1994a, article 3)

Latest since the adoption of a separate convention for intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO 2003), the decision has been made not to place living traditions on an equal footing with material evidence of the past under the World Heritage Convention. The preservation of tangible historic evidence hence remains a priority in World Heritage sites and in architectural conservation practice. But “the 1994 Nara Document played an important role in building bridges between definitions of tangible and intangible heritage.”²⁶ (Orbasli 2016, 178)

In summary, the Nara Document was drafted and integrated into the Operational Guidelines in reaction to a broadened understanding of heritage, the pluralization of actors involved in heritage conservation and an ensuing complex interplay of various social, ecological, economic and political interests in heritage conservation as well as in consciousness of the fact that value attributions vary from culture to culture, person to person and site to site. Criticism that the material- and design-based definition of authenticity was Eurocentric and not necessarily applicable to all sites and cultural groups played an important role. The main trigger, however, was the expansion of types and typologies of monument categories in the realm of World Heritage, which called for a more flexible definition of authenticity.

2.2.4 RESEARCH NEEDS – STRENGTH OF THE UNDEFINED VS NEED FOR CLARITY

Authenticity, which Gustavo Araoz referred to as the “leitmotif” of the 1990s (Araoz 2008, 33), remains a major subject of discussion and research in the second and third decades of the 21st century. This section outlines the most important recent or ongoing research and reform initiatives in the context of World Heritage. Among the wide range of identified research needs only those desiderata which are of particular relevance to the case study at hand are described in more detail.

With the aim of illustrating how the international discourse on authenticity is underpinned by research activities and controversies at national levels, reference will additionally be made to the contemporary debates in Germany, where the author is based. The chapter closes with a look at the state of research in Bahrain.

2.2.4.1 From Nara +20 to Nara +30

On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the World Heritage Convention, the Agency for Cultural Affairs of the Government of Japan organized an international symposium under the title: “Heritage and Societies—toward the 20th anniversary of the Nara Document Authenticity, and beyond”. From the expert meeting, which was held in November 2012 in Himeji City, emerged the so-called Himeji recommendations. These acknowledge the need for further research into authenticity. The recommendations highlight a range of themes to be further discussed and clarified, such as “the relationship between value and authenticity”

²⁶ The Yamato Declaration on Integrated Approaches for Safeguarding Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO 2004) was drafted in order to highlight the interdependence as well as distinctiveness of the two categories and also pointed to the difficulty of applying the concept of authenticity as used for World Heritage to intangible cultural heritage as defined in the 2003 Convention.

including “the integration of local and global values” as well as how to “accommodate the evolution of heritage values over time” in the assessment of authenticity (Japan 2012). The experts also underscore the need to discuss “the relationship between authenticity and integrity, and how this relates to the practice of heritage management” as well as “what ‘other internal and external factors (Nara paragraph 13) might be relevant in the determination of authenticity” (Japan 2012). The recommendations further point to the occurrence of “disputes within and between communities, governments and other stakeholders over heritage values and claims for authenticity” and thus highlight the need for community involvement in heritage conservation (ibid.). Of prime importance to the research at hand is the statement that “more discussion is needed on how to assess the credibility of sources used in determining authenticity.” (ibid.) In this context, the recommendations point to a need for discussion and clarification of the “relative roles of experts and communities in the process of establishing authenticity.” (ibid.) Last but not least, the recommendations point to the need to “effectively integrate the cultural dimension into the discourse on sustainability” and to the necessity of developing “inclusive and integrated management approaches” in the heritage realm (ibid.). These themes are reflected in the five key papers of the Himeji Symposium published in a special issue of the journal *Heritage & Society*: the diversity of cultural processes; the impact of changing cultural values and the integration of global and local values; the consideration of conflicting claims and interpretations in increasingly pluralistic societies; and the need to engage diverse stakeholders (Kono 2013).

In preparation of the 20th anniversary of the Nara Document, the group of experts under the leadership of then president of ICOMOS International, Prof. Toshiyuki Kono, conducted the so-called Nara Survey within the 'Nara +20' initiative. The evaluation campaign collected best practice examples of the Nara Document’s application worldwide. The results of the survey were presented in 2014 at the General Assembly of ICOMOS International in Florence but have not been published elsewhere.

On these bases, the expert group, in cooperation with ICOMOS International and the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, drafted and adopted in 2014 a supplement to the Nara Document called “NARA + 20: On heritage practices, cultural values and the concept of authenticity.” (Japan 2014) Contributions from various international experts were again published in the journal *Heritage & Society* in order to contextualize the Nara +20 document in 2015 (Chilton and Labadi 2015). Building on the Himeji Recommendations, the Nara+20 document “identifies five key inter-related issues highlighting prioritized actions to be developed and expanded within global, national and local contexts” (Japan 2014, preamble). Under Issue 1 the document reaffirms the “diversity of heritage processes” and points both to the increasing consideration of “social processes by which cultural heritage is produced, used, interpreted and safeguarded” including the use of emerging technologies such as 3D modelling (Japan 2014). Under the same heading the recommendation call for research into “methodologies for assessing this broader spectrum of cultural forms and processes, and the dynamic interrelationship between tangible and intangible heritage.” (ibid.) Issues two to three reiterate the evolution of cultural values, potential conflicting claims and interpretations and the importance of stakeholder involvement aiming at consensus-building. The fifth issue, again highlights the need to explore means to leverage the undisputed potential of cultural heritage to contribute to sustainable development.

The most recent research initiative strictly focusing on authenticity in the World Heritage context is the 'Journeys to Authenticity' project led by the ICOMOS Emerging Professionals Working Group (EPWG) with support from the Advisory Committee of ICOMOS International. The aim of the five-year scientific effort is to "explore different understandings of Authenticity and ways to apply them" in preparation of the 30th Anniversary of the Nara Document and its possible revision in 2024 (ICOMOS 2021a). The Nara +30's first project in 2021 was an international survey among ICOMOS members which aims to gather empirical data about diverse understandings of authenticity, including how the concept is referred to in other languages. The results of the survey were not yet published at the time of writing.

2.2.4.2 Democratisation of heritage conservation – Who decides what is authentic?

With the recent social turn in heritage conservation, questions about who has or should have the right to identify, manage and assess heritage sites, including their authenticity are more and more heatedly discussed (Winter 2017). Orthodox approaches to theory and practice of heritage conservation stand against heterodox approaches, which wish to see heritage management as a community driven process (Lixinski 2015; Schofield 2014; Deacon and Smeets 2013). The Nara +20 process and its emphasis on stakeholder involvement is perceived as one sign of "the diminishing role played by the State in the heritage field, and by extension that of the expert and the scientific discourse from which modern conservation evolved." (ICOMOS 2017)

The World Heritage Convention of 1972 points to the need "to give cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community" by means of comprehensive policies and planning (UNESCO 1972, article 5a). In 2007, the World Heritage Committee added community involvement as a fifth to the four strategic objectives to the convention. In the face of actually often poor active involvement of stakeholders if any, the 'Our Common Dignity Initiative' of ICOMOS aims at raising awareness of rights and responsibilities in the conservation and management of heritage sites and promoting participatory practice. In 2011, members of the initiative established an international working group on rights-based approaches in the field that looks into prerogatives of institutional representatives and at levels of involvement of communities.²⁷

Expert positions on the matter range from claims to deinstitutionalize heritage conservation to requests for making the practice more inclusive and socially relevant. A progressive doctrinal text in this regard is the Faro Convention, the European Council's Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society of 2005. It focuses on "the need to put people and human values at the centre of an enlarged and cross-disciplinary concept of cultural heritage." (Council of Europe 2005)

Contributing to the understanding of opportunities and limits of participatory conservation is at the heart of this thesis. With a view to the discrepancy between the reality of the practice and the theory, Jukka Jokilehto highlighted the need to extend the discussion about heritage

²⁷ Refer to the webpage of the working group: <https://www.icomos.org/en/what-we-do/disseminating-knowledge/icomos-working-groups?start=1> (Accessed June 29, 2022).

conservation beyond the circle of heritage professionals.²⁸ The US American conservation academic Jeremy Wells, who is one of the professionals advocating a human-centred and more inclusive conservation practice, points to the lack of empirical data with regard to the way laypeople perceive and value historic places (Wells n.d.).²⁹ This is the desideratum which the case study primarily addresses.

Moreover, on the occasion of the International Day of Monuments and Sites 2021, ICOMOS International pointed out, that greater inclusion and recognition of diversity in heritage conservation starts with self-reflection within the community of heritage professionals (ICOMOS 2021c). The thesis at hand is an example of such self-reflection.

2.2.4.3 Reconstructions – Changing attitudes?

Other initiatives in the realm of World Heritage that closely relate to authenticity, deal with reconstructions and facsimile architectural interventions in historic contexts and with the question of whether the restrictive position of the Venice Charter on the matter remains valid in present day societies.³⁰

The above description of the origins of the conservation movement showed that reconstructions – whether conjectural or faithful – have always been a focal point of the scientific discourse. This is not surprising because, as the Austrian historian Valentin Groebner points out, the question of authenticity only arises when there is the possibility of a replication (2018, 180). Although there are many reconstructed sites on the World Heritage List, the test of authenticity is a typical pitfall for nominations which involve reconstructions.

Few examples will be pointed out to illustrate this:³¹ A prominent example on the World Heritage List is the 19th-century reconstruction of the fortress of Carcassonne by Violet-le-Duc in France. Its inscription on the World Heritage List in 1997 as a masterpiece of ‘stylistic restoration’ was unproblematic. The same was the case with the Jewish SchUM sites of Speyer, Worms und Mainz in Germany, inscribed in 2021, where destructions and reconstructions are part of the narrative of cultural and religious endurance which the site stands for. The inscription of the post-world-war reconstruction of the historic centre of Warsaw in 1980 for the identity affirming effect of the national reconstruction endeavour, on the contrary, was much more controversial. Although ICOMOS stressed that the inscription of Warsaw’s centre shall not serve as precedence for further inscriptions of reconstructed sites based predominantly on associative value, it certainly did. While the recommendations from ICOMOS

²⁸ Oral statement by Jukka Jokiletho at the Symposium on Urban Conservation and Reconstruction in the Gulf Region held in Dubai 25-26 March 2015 (Battis personal archive, participant observation note, 25. March 2015, Dubai).

²⁹ Jeremy Wells’ webpage (<https://heritagestudies.org>) was formerly programmatically called ‘Conserving the Human Environment. Balancing Practice between Meanings and Fabric.’ It has been revised and renamed ‘Lived heritage studies’ in 2022.

³⁰ Refer to the UNESCO webpage with the title Post-Conflict and Post-Disaster Reconstruction and Recovery for a list of initiatives in this context: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/reconstruction/> (Accessed June 29, 2022).

³¹ In doing so, the author draws on an article that she co-authored in 2021 (Schinker and Battis 2021).

prevented the inscription of various reconstructed sites, lobbyism in the World Heritage Committee shattered the arguments against inscription and authenticity concerns in other cases. An example of 'heritage placemaking' (Silberman 2015, 9) where the scientific evaluation by ICOMOS prevailed, is the failed nomination of Khor Dubai which will be introduced in the case study.

The World Heritage community has been discussing over and over again if it must change its restrictive attitude, particularly with a view to identity needs in the face of destructions of heritage sites in the context of armed conflicts or natural disasters. As a sign of changing attitudes, The Riga Charter on authenticity and historical reconstruction in relationship to cultural heritage (2000) will be mentioned here. It was drafted under the leadership of ICCROM in response to "a sudden proliferation of 'in-authentic reconstructions' in the newly liberated former Soviet Union republics" and aimed at defining the limits and conditions within which reconstructions of lost monuments are acceptable (Stovel 2008, 14). The identity-creating capacity of reconstructions seem of particular importance at times of unprecedented globalization and "must be acknowledged as a serious component of contemporary architecture and urban planning, which points to complex relations with society and identity, history and memory." (Mager 2016, 227).

Another initiative from the realm of World Heritage to be mentioned here is the international ICOMOS University Forum Workshop on Authenticity and Reconstructions. It was held in 2017 as a pilot project of the new forum to stimulate dialogue between academics and heritage experts. The workshop with the subtitle "A contemporary provocation: reconstructions as tools of future-making" responded to the pressing need to position oneself towards the reconstruction of heavily damaged or fully destroyed World Heritage sites particularly in North Africa and the Middle East. Questions that Gustavo Araoz pointed to as president of ICOMOS in 2015 to potentially play a role in authenticity assessments of reconstructions relate to: the reasons for the destruction and reconstruction, the time elapsed in between, the evidence used and the continuity of intangible heritage expressions (participant observation note, Dubai, 25 March 2015). Such aspects are further discussed in the scientific publication of the forum (Holtorf et al. 2018) and also reflect in a matrix that ICOMOS compiled for a global case study project (ICOMOS 2018).

Another recent initiative with the name 'Analysis of Case Studies in Recovery and Reconstruction' and a publication in three volumes was carried out jointly by ICOMOS and the regional office of ICCROM in Sharjah (Kealy, de Marco, Hadzimuhamedovic, Marchand, Gregory and Ploteau 2021). The report states that "the studies raise questions about interpretations and understandings of authenticity at a popular level and within cultural organizations, official bodies or professional bodies" and that "the question of where authenticity lies in the reconstructed resource, or how authenticity is defined in the given context was less comprehensively addressed than had been hoped" (ibid., 4-5). The report however also points out that "where the importance of retaining cultural value is recognized, restitution of physical/spatial/visual characteristics frequently takes priority over adherence to conservation principles as they relate to authenticity of materials and techniques" (ibid., 4).

Beyond the World Heritage realm, in the theory and practice of architecture more generally, reconstructions and traditionalist designs are likewise a highly controversial topic. They are central to the perennial question of how to build in an adequate contemporary manner in

one's respective geographical and cultural context – a question that will also surface in the case study. Among laypeople, reconstructions and historicizing architecture seem often to be confused with monument preservation. To give an example: the Germany Institute for Demography regularly carries out surveys and interviews, in order to rank public perception of institutional heritage conservation in German cities (Pantera AG and IFD Allensbach 2017). Each time, since 2012, Dresden ranked highest in these polls as the famous reconstructions of the Neumarkt area and Frauenkirche in Dresden's historic centre are obviously perceived as a successful case of institutional monument preservation. From the conservationist's perspective, however, it is rather a case of 'heritage' placemaking.' Investigating the attitudes towards reconstructions and traditionalist designs within the reference sites and the messages they convey to laypeople is one research interest of this thesis.

2.2.4.4 Constructivist vs essentialist authenticity definitions – Preservation of values?

The Venice Charter's restrictive attitude towards reconstructions in fact became the "battle banner" of those defending the conservative preservation mandate against "[t]he call for a new conservation paradigm of accepting change and adapting to it," (Silberman 2015, 6) which divides the heritage community.

Some contributions to the special issue, which was published in the course of the Nara +20 initiative, suggest that the main aim of heritage conservation is to preserve values (de la Torre 2013) and that in view of the inevitable change in heritage sites, the management of change has to be focused on (Araoz 2013). Experts critical of such paradigm shift, such as Jukka Jokiletho, prefer to speak about "management of continuity" instead.³²

For the test of authenticity, the paradigm shift would mean "to look to new mechanisms beyond strictly object-centred criteria" that "might help conserve perceptions of heritage value, significance, and historical rootedness in the midst of unprecedented demographic movement, landscape transformation, and technological change." (Silberman 2015, 6) It would also require regularly reassessing the cultural significance and consequently also the authenticity of the heritage. The static nature of the Outstanding Universal Value which is only once defined at the time of inscription to the World Heritage List is in fact often criticized in this context along with the prevailing focus on material authenticity:

"The cultivation and safeguarding of informed and deeply-felt collective memory, not only stones, must become a prime objective of 21st century heritage practice—even if the Operational Guidelines of the World Heritage Convention, with their once-and-for-all-time judgments on integrity, authenticity, and Outstanding Universal Value actually create a global archipelago of expert declared authenticity that stands hermetically sealed from contemporary context [...]." (Silberman 2015, 6)

Central to the debate is hence the question what to preserve: the heritage assets or the values attributed to them? There seems to be a longstanding consensus in the heritage community, that "authenticity is not itself a value" (Stovel 1995a, 121), although it certainly is something that people aspire to and that influences value judgements of heritage sites (Jokiletho 2015,

³² Oral statement by Jukka Jokiletho at the Symposium on Urban Conservation and Reconstruction in the Gulf Region held in Dubai 25-26 March 2015 (Battis personal archive, participant observation note, 25. March 2015, Dubai).

5). The English version of the Nara Documents therefore speaks of authenticity as “the essential qualifying factor concerning values.”³³ (ICOMOS 1994a, §10) Hence, “to be authentic does not give a value per se; rather it should be understood as the condition of an object or a monument in relation to its specific qualities.” (Jokilehto 1995, 19)

The question of what to preserve – the site or its values – reflects in an evident schism of essentialist and constructivist authenticity understandings. An authenticity definition posted by ICOMOS International in 2020 in the context of the Nara+ initiatives on Google’s Arts & Culture web application is expression of a constructivist authenticity understanding:

“Several different layers of values for a heritage place combine to establish the authenticity of an element. Conserving the authenticity of an element involves maximizing the values of the different layers, more layers than the values suggested in the Venice Charter (1964).”

(ICOMOS 2020)

According to this definition, authenticity is a sum of value attributions to tangible and intangible heritage dimensions of a place. Usually, this is referred to as cultural significance rather than authenticity. The aim of heritage conservation according to the above definition is the enhancement of this significance rather than the preservation of the heritage asset itself.

Counterpart to the constructivist authenticity understanding are positivist and essentialist concepts of which the Venice Charter of 1964 is an expression. There, authenticity is a measure of historical reliability of a heritage site which is to be objectively – that is scientifically – assessed and, in this capacity, serves as a normative instrument to preserve the heritage asset itself. As per this understanding, we “must not mix authenticity and values, as values change through time” (Marstein and Larsen 1994, 133) while the test of authenticity “is a measurement of the impact of time (or history) on the cultural heritage” (Stovel 1995a, 122).

Constructivist and essentialist authenticity definitions hence refer to different processes of authentication, for which the German language offers two different verbs/nouns: *authentisieren/Authentisierung* and *authentifizieren/Authentifizierung*. The research alliance ‘Historical Authenticity’ of the University of Heidelberg defined the first as “processes and discursive practices of authentication that serve cultural labelling and are thus to be understood as central aspects of the social construction [...] of cultural values,” while the latter refer to scientific practices that certify authenticity (Saupe 2017).³⁴

The constructivist understanding prevails in social sciences which analyse authenticity as a culture-specific product of societal discourse. There, “[a]uthenticity is not about factuality or reality. It is about authority.” (Crew/Sims 1991, 163) According to this understanding, authenticity can indeed be ascribed to things quite independently of their material substance or history, which are considered credible until social and cultural contexts of authorisation shift (Saupe 2014, 182). “It therefore makes sense to examine authenticity with regard to

³³ The French version likewise refers to authenticity as a qualifying factor but “of the credibility of information sources” rather than values. (ICOMOS 1994b, §10, French original: «le facteur qualificatif essentiel quant à la crédibilité des sources d'informations disponibles»)

³⁴ German original: „*Authentifizierung* meint dabei vor allem wissenschaftliche Praktiken der Identifizierung, *Authentisierung* dagegen Prozesse und diskursive Praxen der Beglaubigung, die der kulturellen Markierung dienen und damit als zentrale Aspekte der gesellschaftlichen Konstruktion sozialer Wirklichkeit bzw. kultureller Werte aufzufassen sind.“ (Saupe 2017, 4)

communication structures, that is to ask who or what is attributed authenticity, when, how and why.” (ibid., 183) This is precisely what the case study does.

2.2.4.5 Communication, perception and the credibility of information sources

The perception³⁵ of heritage sites, as well as of objects and human environments more generally, is a separate field of study. “Things” – and that refers also to buildings – “do not only have a practical-functional material or utility value, but they also have a meaning – they are often sign and medium.” (Samida, Eggert, Hahn 2014, 1) This is the case when meaning is produced by means of non-verbal communication called perception (Kienlin and Widura 2014, 31). According to this constructivist understanding of language and signifying processes (Hall 1997, 25) meaning is produced in an interaction between objects and people – between the heritage site and its users.

With its focus on information sources, the redefinition of authenticity in the World Heritage system in the context of the ‘cultural turn’ emphasizes ‘meaning’. Since 2005, the condition of authenticity is considered to be met when the cultural significance of the site, as defined in the statement of Outstanding Universal Value, is truthfully and credibly expressed through a range of information sources. In this case, it should in theory be possible to assess authenticity on the basis of the messages actually conveyed to the site users. The case study follows this rationale, and since perception extends to all senses, looks into architectural and non-architectural aspects of the reference sites’ conservation. By comparing the messages conveyed to the users with the historical authenticity of the two reference sites, the author assesses the credibility of the information sources. With this approach, the case study contributes to the discussion “on how to assess the credibility of sources used in determining authenticity” (Japan 2012), which was identified as one research need in the Nara +20 initiative.

In addition, architectural conservation usually is a form of intentional meaning production, by which the architect aims to impose and communicate certain messages (Hall 1997, 25). This certainly was the case particularly in the second reference site of the case study (Battis and el-Habashi 2013). But it actually holds true for heritage conservation more generally, as “every act of heritage conservation—within all the world’s cultural traditions - is by its nature a communicative act.” (ICOMOS 2008, 2). By assessing the communicative impact – the messages actually conveyed to site users – the case study research analyses how well such intended meaning production works in the case of the reference sites.

2.2.4.6 Cultural memory and identity formation

Places and objects are not only a medium of communication, they constitute a form of memory when they save information (Hoffmann 2000, 37). This is particularly true for historic buildings of historical significance. The signs they carry are traces of history which gain significance as the observer decodes them. Jukka Jokilehto hence defines cultural significance of heritage sites as a “sum of signs” (Participant observation note, 26. March 2015, Dubai).

³⁵ Perception is generally defined as the reception and processing of sensory information through all human senses.

Moreover, things and material culture serve to establish and express individual or collective identity, and to demonstrate social and cultural distinction (Kienlin and Widura 2014, 31; Bosch 2014, 75).³⁶ Heritage places and memorial sites play a particular role in this as they materialise past experiences and memories (Saupe 2014, 182):

“Because these things [ancient objects of arts and culture] are beautiful and touching, because they are sensually attractive and not just cognitively demonstrate that we are involved in a long chain of human development beyond our limited individual existence, they secure our identity and are of inestimable value.” (Bosch 2014, 74)

However, the identity creating capacity is not limited to historic artefacts and sites. It extends to cultural heritage more generally, including reconstructions and intangible heritage expressions whether genuine or staged.³⁷ Both authentic and replicated heritage expressions serve as identity creating resources – from place and product branding to identity politics. A seminal collection of scholarly articles with the title “Understanding the Politics of Heritage” illustrated in 2009 how notions of identity, social class and nationhood can even divert monument preservation practice from preserving authentic historical evidence to delivering political objectives (Harrison 2009). While neither cultural, national nor social identity formation processes are at the heart of the research at hand, they do all resonate throughout the case study.

2.2.4.7 Cultural contingencies and relations of tangible and intangible heritage

Other central issues of the discourse which the case study considers are cultural contingencies in the perception of historical authenticity as well as the “dynamic interrelationship between tangible and intangible heritage” which the Nara +20 Document identified as a research need (Japan 2014). While the European origins of the authenticity concept in heritage conservation are well researched, the role and development of similar concepts in other cultural contexts are certainly less well known. The above-mentioned Journey to Authenticity project focuses on these matters by surveying authenticity understandings of ICOMOS members worldwide.

As described above, the development of the authenticity concept in the realm of World Heritage occurred partly in response to the criticism of Eurocentrism or even cultural imperialism. Non-western cultures often have a less monumental heritage. They are hence often considered to be less material-focused and to attribute greater value to intangible heritage expressions. With reference to cultural landscapes in Oceania, Jennifer Ko for example describes that “while many European and Asian cultures heavily value physical vestiges as testimonies of their past, many Pacific Islanders engage with their ancestral history in less concrete forms of heritage, such as oral traditions and performances, which make the past personally relevant and socially significant to the community.” (Ko 2008) For Africa,

³⁶ Identity in this context means the “psychological self-perception of an individual or of a group” in which perceived similarities and particularly differences to other individuals and groups are essential (Buckland 2013, 3). In the case of national identity, the group concerned is the population of a national state. Authenticity and identity are hence both concepts that indicate difference in the cultural and social realm (Saupe 2014, 182).

³⁷ The term “staged authenticity” has been used in tourism and cultural management since the 1970s and refers to the staging or enactment of heritage expressions (MacCannell 1973).

Pascall Taruvunga argues that colonialism almost erased a local understanding of heritage which was based on indigenous knowledge and replaced it with a “monumentality approach, further reinforced by the World Heritage concept.” (Taruvunga 2019, 123)

The Nara Document is generally perceived as “a turning point, in that it gave a voice to other worldviews” (Orbasli 2016, 180) because it recognizes intangible aspects of authenticity such as feelings and associations which are believed to play a more crucial role in Eastern cultures with a less monumental heritage. The Nara process certainly initiated “an open dialogue in the understanding that the search for authenticity is universal, but recognizing that the ways and means to preserve the authenticity of cultural heritage are culturally dependent.” (Larsen 1995, xiii) The Nara Document explicitly encourages States Parties to the World Heritage Convention to define authenticity within their cultural realm. Although this seems to have rarely happened so far,³⁸ the document is nevertheless seen as evidence “that international preservation doctrine has moved from a eurocentric approach to a post-modern position characterized by recognition of cultural relativism” (Larsen 1995, xiii). One may however ask if this is not yet another proliferation of current Western trends.

Simplistic tendencies to reduce Western concepts of heritage and conservation to materialism and juxtaposing it with an intrinsically more intangible outlook of non-Western cultures are, at any rate, not uncontested. Metaphysical conceptions of authenticity are not alien to European culture either. Lowenthal highlights in this context, that in medieval times, “Christian relics were authenticated not by proof of origin but by their begetting of miracles”:

“Modern criteria of materials, form, process, provenance, and intentionality scarcely mattered. What made a relic authentic was less what it was than what it did. The miracles that relics engendered proved them authentic.” (Lowenthal 1999)

Lowenthal (1999) goes on to describes the shift towards science and ratio in the time of Enlightenment, which played into the emergence in the modern age of what is often criticised as “fetishism of substance” (Larsen and Marstein 1994, 132). The term ‘material culture’ is however contradictory as it suggests a problematic divide between the material and the immaterial in the cultural realm. In fact “everything that can be subsumed under the term ‘material culture’ represents a combination of the spiritual and the material.” (Samida, Eggert, Hahn 2014, 3f) Jukka Jokilehto is one of many in the field who keeps pointing to the interrelation of tangible and intangible heritage and to the fact that values are at the base of all heritage perceptions and always intangible. He refers to the US-American anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1993) to highlight that “all cultural World Heritage properties are associated with intangible aspects, starting from their significance and symbolic meaning” and that in fact “everything that human beings do or build is always associated with an intangible aspect, because it has a particular meaning or significance” (Jokilehto 2015, 2-3). Along the same lines the German historian Manfred K.H. Eggert points to Walter Benjamin’s concept of aura (Benjamin 1934) and highlights that in the realm of material cultural heritage there is probably no phenomenon more immaterial than that (Samida, Eggert, Hahn 2014, 174). Throughout the

³⁸ Important follow-up meetings took place in San Antonio, Great Zimbabwe and Riga for the Americas, Africa and Eastern Europe respectively from which influential charters emerged (Stovel 2008).

case study, perceptions of aura and of tangible and intangible heritage resources by people of different cultural backgrounds will be assessed.

2.2.4.8 Need for methodological guidance and clear terminology

Although authenticity was a key concept in discussions about conservation of cultural heritage in the two decades between the 1970s and the 1990s, its meaning was never clarified (Jokilehto 1995, 17). As described above, the Nara Document of 1994 set out to remedy this desideratum and to comprehensively define authenticity as a normative concept to be applied in the realm of World Heritage and potentially beyond it. However, as this chapter has illustrated, the concept instead became even more complex and probably even harder to apply. The list of potential sources of information on the basis of which authenticity is now to be assessed certainly provides some but, overall, very limited methodological guidance for the task.

On the one hand, the fuzziness of the concept is part of its strength. It leaves sufficient room for interpretation to accommodate divergent value attributions to varied heritage sites. “In this way, it emerges as an ideal concept of a discipline that draws its social relevance from a permanent process of communication and which, in the discursive negotiation of various interests and concerns, itself constitutes an elementary part of society.” (Mager 2016, 228) In this sense, the openness of the concept is a sort of guarantee for topicality. When drafting the Nara Document, ICOMOS hence recognized that authenticity assessments cannot be “reduced to a mechanistic point-scoring system” but require a case-specific analysis (Cleere 1995, 66). Some even suggested that “it will not be possible and may not be desirable” to define a “true meaning of authenticity” and that “it may perhaps be better and more realistic to assume that there is not and will never be, an unambiguous concept of authenticity.” (Droste and Bertilsson 1995, 15)

On the other hand, the level of subjectivity and lack of transparency which authenticity assessments consequently entail constitute weaknesses with a view to the concept’s normative function. Every discipline, and particularly one that is supposed to operate in the public interest and within defined legal boundaries, requires clear terminology and concept to works with (Seidenspinner 2006). Experts of governmental heritage authorities have to justify their binding directives on how to intervene on registered monuments with cogent arguments that are not only comprehensible to those concerned but that also stand up to legal challenges. Hence, reliable and concise definitions of key normative concepts like authenticity and integrity are imperative. Likewise, the credibility of the UNESCO World Heritage system as a global “authentication agency” for heritage sites requires clear operational criteria and concepts (Rehling 2014).

The above introduced paragraphs of the Operational Guidelines are the most comprehensive guidance for the assessment of authenticity available at present. The Guidelines themselves point to the difficulty that not all of those information sources or factors – referred to as attributes in that paragraph – “lend themselves easily to practical applications” and thereby indirectly point to the need for methodological guidance (UNESCO 2021, § 83).

In an attempt to ease the application, researchers at the Raymond Lemaire International Centre for Conservation at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in Belgium in 2008 published the so-called Nara-grid as an assessment tool of authenticity with reference to multiple layers of

potentially conflicting values. In essence, the Nara-grid hardly goes beyond the guidance provided by the Operational Guidelines.³⁹ The author is not aware to what extent this grid finds practical application. It is for example not endorsed in the Resource Manuals of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. The author is also not aware of any practice-oriented methodological guidance that would enjoy wider dissemination. Neither does the author know about any guidance at all for participatory authenticity assessments, although more citizen participation in institutional heritage conservation has long been propagated both on national and international levels.

The lack of methodological guidance also concerns the test of integrity of cultural sites. Since their second version of 1977 the Operational Guidelines give detailed examples of how the integrity of a natural heritage site is to be assessed. This testifies to the early awareness of interrelationships and interdependencies in nature conservation, which seems to be lacking in the case of cultural sites. Clarifying that concept for cultural heritage remains an “unfinished business” (Cameron 2019, 95). Since 2005 all versions of the Operational Guidelines, including the current one, have a note to article 89 saying that examples of how to apply the conditions of integrity to cultural sites are under development.

The inconsistent terminology used in the paragraphs 79 to 86 on authenticity in the Operational Guidelines further reduces clarity.⁴⁰ To “meet the condition of authenticity” (ICOMOS 2022, §79) “information sources about” “the value attributed to the heritage” must be “credible or truthful” (§80). What credible and truthful means is not explicitly specified. “Knowledge and understanding” of the information sources, which relate to “the original and subsequent characteristics of the cultural heritage, and their meaning” are pointed to as a prerequisite for assessing “all aspects of authenticity” (ibid.). Descriptions of the information sources throughout the different paragraphs are rather contradictory. Paragraph 80 points out that the “ability to understand the value attributed to the heritage” depends on the truthfulness or credibility of “information sources.” According to paragraph 82, in turn, “attributes” have to “truthfully and credibly” express values. By ending the list of attributes with “other internal and external factors,” yet another term is introduced there. Paragraph 84 then returns to the term “information sources” rather than attributes or factors but avoids the term value by speaking of “specific artistic, historic, social, and scientific dimensions of the cultural heritage.” The use of the term “attributes of authenticity”, which appears in paragraph 85 is in fact no longer considered appropriate among World Heritage experts. It is advised now to speak of ‘attributes of Outstanding Universal Value’ and of ‘information sources’ on

³⁹ The grid translates the list of information sources that was derived from article 13 of the Nara Document into a table format as a tool for site-specific assessment (van Balen 2008). The vertical axis of the table lists the information sources of authenticity – here referred to as aspects. The horizontal axis addresses the dimensions of cultural heritage value: artistic, historic, social, and scientific dimensions.

⁴⁰ While the original English and French versions of the Nara Document, which are annexed to the English and French versions of the Operational Guidelines, deviate from each other both in terminology and content, at least the versions of the paragraphs 79 to 86 of the Guidelines are congruent in both languages.

authenticity.⁴¹ In an attempt to streamline terminology in the World Heritage system, a commentary on keywords used in the conservation of natural and cultural sites was recently compiled jointly by ICOMOS and IUCN (ICOMOS 2021b) — with little attention to the terms authenticity and integrity however.

In conclusion, despite the fundamental significance authenticity and integrity have as a normative function, a practice-oriented methodology or even a concise terminology for the assessment of authenticity of cultural heritage sites and of interventions within them does not exist. Several of the past and ongoing research initiatives described throughout this chapter as well as the case study try to address this gap.

2.3 STATE OF RESEARCH AT REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS

The international discourse on authenticity is underpinned by research activities at national and regional levels, as exemplified in this final subchapter. The research policy for cultural heritage of the European Commission from 2018, for example, highlights that the concepts of authenticity and integrity “need to be reconsidered and redefined in order to give examples for heritage communities how to safeguard their heritage and manage the occurring changes” (European Commission 2018, 37-38). Making “the language of cultural heritage assessment intelligible” is another necessity which the research policy of the European Commission highlights (*ibid.*).

2.3.1 AUTHENTICITY RESEARCH IN GERMANY

In Germany, where one would think that concern for material authenticity is historically deeply rooted, currently “houses are built everywhere that look like from before yesterday,” (Rautenberg 2012). For more than a decade, the ensuing reconstruction debate has been taking place both in professional circles and among a wider public (cf. Buttlar, Dolff-Bonekämper, Falser, Hubel, Mörsch and Habich 2010). There are also debates about the role and prerogatives of the governmental heritage protection authorities. With a view to democratizing heritage conservation practice, there have for example been longstanding attempts to grant civic associations the right to initiate legal proceedings in order to enforce monument protection. Such right has long been established in the case of environmental protection (Möller 2014, ICOMOS Germany 2020). Another pressing challenge is to reconcile authenticity with the quest for energy efficiency of historic buildings. It is currently gaining impetus with the New European Bauhaus project of the European Commission which intends to promote a sustainable building culture.⁴²

⁴¹ The author was instructed to such use of terminology when being trained as ICOMOS World Heritage Advisor in 2019/20. The use of the term ‘attributes’ seems however not fully clarified yet. The World Heritage Manuals, which are published on the resource manual page of the World Heritage Centre’s website, use one list of characteristics of cultural sites as potential attributes of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) and information sources of authenticity. In the case of natural properties, the manuals moreover more commonly speak of features rather than attributes.

⁴² Refer to the initiative’s website: https://europa.eu/new-european-bauhaus/about/about-initiative_en. (Accessed June 29, 2022)

Authenticity is moreover referred to in literally every scientific event in the field of built heritage conservation in Germany, and many conferences are dedicated entirely to the topic. For example, an international symposium with the title 'Continuity and Authenticity – On the Cultural Significance of Rebuilt Monuments' addressed the question whether UNESCO and ICOMOS are changing their attitude towards reconstructions (cf. Generaldirektion Kulturelles Erbe Rheinland Pfalz, 2018). The conference was organized in the context of the World Heritage nomination process of the aforementioned SchUM sites.

There are several research programs and related publications focused on authenticity. The research program "Aspects of Authenticity in Architectural Heritage Conservation" of the Leibniz Association for example looked at cultural contingencies by bringing together professionals from different cultures at the Ruprecht-Karls University of Heidelberg to evaluate architectural conservation practices in India, Nepal, China and Germany (Weiler and Guschow 2017). The research alliance 'Historical Authenticity' of the Leibniz Association applied an interdisciplinary approach in furthering knowledge about the process of authorizing the past in different disciplines and sectors of present-day society, including heritage conservation and World Heritage (Bernhardt, Sabrow and Saupe 2017). Following on from this project, the German research alliance "Value of the past"⁴³ started in 2021. A handbook on historical authenticity (Sabrow and Saupe 2022) was in the process of being published at the time of finalizing this thesis as part of the alliance's publication series. Finally, authenticity is not the focus but certainly a topic in the current graduate colleges "Identity and Heritage" of the Technical University Berlin and the Bauhaus-University Weimar as well as in the one of Brandenburg Technical University Cottbus-Senftenberg with the title "Cultural and Technological Significance of Historic Buildings."

Two independent doctoral theses on the topic, to be mentioned, are the work on identity and authenticity conflicts in German monument preservation history by Michael Falser (2008), as well as the discussion of authenticity and comparative study of conservation practice in the case of the Ise Shrine in Japan and the New Museum in Berlin by Tino Mager (2016).

2.3.2 AUTHENTICITY RESEARCH IN BAHRAIN

In comparison, there are fewer signs of public or scientific discourse explicitly focused on authenticity issues in Bahrain. The architect Suha Hasan points to "an emerging debate among architects in the country about conservation practices" in the third decade of the 21st century (Hasan 2022, 216). The number of scholarly works focused on authenticity issues in architectural conservation in Bahrain are indeed still rare (e.g. Aga Shah 2019; Alraouf 2014 and 2010; Battis and el-Habashi 2012). Literature documenting or analysing heritage conservation practice in Bahrain is mostly limited to working documents from the past three decades, such as progress or evaluation reports by local or international heritage consultants with early examples from the 1980s (e.g. Hardy-Guilbert et al. 1981). There are few internationally published articles on technical matters of architectural conservation (e.g. Banfi et al. 2019; Motisi et al. 2019).

⁴³ Refer to the website of the alliance: <https://www.leibniz-gemeinschaft.de/en/forschung/leibniz-research-alliances/value-of-the-past>. (Accessed June 29, 2022)

A matter that finds particular attention among scholars is the formation of national identity by means of reconstructions and architectural revivalism (e.g. Alraouf 2012; Bucheery 2004; Dayaratne 2008; Dayaratne 2012; Yarwood 2011; Yarwood and El-Masri 2006). Finally, there are also a few collected editions that critically discuss heritage related matters in the Gulf region from the perspective of cultural studies (e.g. Fibiger 2011; Exell and Trinidad 2014).

However, the case study will illustrate that the varied heritage conservation initiatives that started to thrive in Bahrain in the 21st century are certainly noticed and appreciated by the local public. Both private and public institutions, including the national heritage authority and the Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage in Bahrain, are actively promoting the matter and are flanking conservation projects with public events. A publication by Ayesha Aga Shah (2019) from Bahrain University involved a people's opinion survey on architectural practice in Bahrain by means of structured and semi-structured interviews. The author is not aware of any comprehensive surveys analysing how the public perceives the local heritage conservation practice and addresses this gap with her research.

3. CASE STUDY: ASSESSING AUTHENTICITY IN ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION IN BAHRAIN

3.1 METHODOLOGY OF THE CASE STUDY RESEARCH

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3.1.1 ASSUMPTIONS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The exploratory and comparative case study research (Yin 2009) is based on the assumption that authenticity perceptions of historic sites differ between professionals in architectural conservation and laypeople in the field along with the messages that the architectural testimony and interventions within it convey to them.

A second assumption is that authenticity perceptions differ among people of different, namely of Eastern and Western cultural backgrounds.

The empirical research is based on qualitative data collection by means of exploratory, mostly semi-structured face-to face interviews and ensuing comparative content analysis and guided by the following **primary research questions**:

- To what extent do value attributions and authenticity assessments of the two reference sites differ between laypeople and professionals in the field of architectural conservation and between interviewees of Eastern and Western cultural backgrounds?
- To what extent do messages, which the sites convey, and their level of truthfulness differ between laypeople and professionals in the field of architectural conservation?
- Which conclusions and recommendations can be derived from the findings with regard to the appropriateness of the most influential methodology for the assessment of authenticity provided in the World Heritage context?
- Which conclusions and recommendations can be derived from the insights into the communicative impact of built heritage sites and of interventions within them for architectural conservation practice more generally?

In order to verify and substantiate these assumptions and answer the above questions, the study explores the perceptions of two architectural conservation projects in Bahrain by architects, who have a certain experience with working in historic contexts, and by non-architects, most of whom are not professionally involved with architectural conservation or the heritage sector. Interviews with architects hence serve to explore the perspective of professionals in the field, while the other group represents the laypeople's perspective. The focus is on the perception of the two main reference sites. With a view to exploring cultural contingencies in the perception, the interviewees¹ are moreover categorized as per their cultural background.

The **secondary research questions** which guide the content analysis of the qualitative data are the following:

Communicative impact of the sites and interventions:

- Which messages, including associations and emotions, are conveyed?
- How historically and culturally truthful are the conveyed messages?
- Why or why not do different interviewees value the site and its interventions?
- Do patterns occur in the communicative impact of different interventions?

Cultural and personal contingencies in the perception of authenticity:

- How do the interviewees define and rate authenticity of the sites?
- How do the interviewees define and value truthfulness of messages?

¹ Throughout the thesis, interview partners are referred to as interviewees, as the term 'informants' typically used in social and anthropological studies evokes the notion of factual information rather than opinions and emotions which are primarily discussed here.

- Why, or why not, do the interviewees identify with the sites?
- How does the perception of the sites differ among interviewees from different cultural and personal backgrounds?

Methodological guidance of the Operational Guidelines for the assessment of authenticity:

- Were the individual information sources of authenticity referred to by the interviewees?
- How does the prioritization of the individual information sources differ between architects and non-architects in the case of the two reference sites?
- Which other sources of information did the interviewees refer to?
- Which challenges in applying the methodology to the reference sites emerged during the research?

3.1.2 CHOICE OF THE CASE STUDY AND THE REFERENCE SITES

3.1.2.1 Why Bahrain?

With a varied built heritage, quickly developing architectural conservation practice and a diverse population, Bahrain lends itself for a case study that explores how professionals and non-professionals in the field of architectural conservation of various cultural backgrounds perceive and judge the authenticity of different historic sites and interventions within them.

On the one hand, Bahrain has an extremely manifold demography of local nationals, expatriate residents, and visitors, from which interviewees of different cultures, professions, and levels of education from around the globe were drawn for the field research.

On the other hand, Bahrain possesses various types of built heritage on a limited territory, including urban, architectural and archaeological sites, which serve as reference objects for the field research. Many of these sites have been subjected to varied approaches of conservation, restoration and reconstruction during the past decades, which have witnessed a tremendous evolution of local conservation practice. Refer to chapter 3.2 for further information on Bahrain, its demography, heritage and conservation practice.

The author worked in the field of architectural and urban heritage in Bahrain for more than eight years and permanently lived and worked in Bahrain from 2008 to 2012. With varied work experience with Bahrain's governmental heritage authority and within the private heritage conservation sector, she has valuable insights, background knowledge and a professional and private network that enabled her to carry out the research. This was another reason to choose Bahrain as a case study, besides the author's motivation to critically reflect on her personal work experience.²

² The author was not actively involved in the rehabilitation projects carried out at either of the two main reference sites. She has however carried out some research on both sites in the context of her past work experiences in Bahrain:

In the case of the first reference site in Manama, the author was employed in 2011-12 by the architectural consultancy Gulf House Engineering to retrospectively analyze the company's heritage-related projects (Battis, 2012). This included a description and analysis of the refurbishment which the company carried out from 2006 to 2010 in parts of the reference site at Bab al-Bahrain.

In the case of the second site in Suq al-Qaisariya, the author was involved in the Siyadi Shops' nomination for UNESCO World Heritage as part of the site Pearling, Testimony of an Island Economy from 2008 and 2012. The author collaborated in compiling the various application documents and was part of the team

3.1.2.2 Why the two reference sites?

The two main reference sites feature are comparable in many ways but at the same time feature differences that are relevant to the comparative study of how professionals and laypeople perceive and rate authenticity in architectural conservation.

Both are historic building ensembles in traditional market areas that developed adjacent to the country's two former commercial harbours in Manama and Muharraq and are today set within significantly changed settings. Both have been subjected to governmental rehabilitation initiatives and attract users from Bahrain's culturally and socially varied national and migrant populations as well as tourists.

However, their architectural and urban features, the stages of Bahrain's history they testify to, and the conservation and rehabilitation approaches they were subjected to differ greatly, as described in detail in the chapters 3.3.1 and 3.4.1. While the vernacular shop structures capture an image of the 19th and early 20th century pearling boom town Muharraq, the more modern urban ensemble in Manama bears witness to the emergence of a modern state on the verge of the oil era during the 1940s. Atmospheric characteristics hence differ significantly. Moreover, both in area and scale of the buildings, the vernacular site in Muharraq is smaller than the modern site in Manama.

Both sites have been significantly altered in the course of rehabilitation works and display an array of interventions. Most interventions at the first reference site in Manama stand for a more intrusive approach on the historic testimony, parts of which have been criticized by academics of architecture as a "'fake' representation of the past" (Alraouf 2010) as well as for its "simplistic approach that is interested in the visual effects of design." (Ben Hamouche 2008) In comparison, the second site in Muharraq pioneered a conservative approach in Bahrain under the influence of international conservation principles in the context of a UNESCO World Heritage nomination. In addition, interviewees referred to a variety of other heritage sites mostly in Bahrain, partly in the Gulf region, or beyond. Comments on these sites serve to contextualize the case study but are not considered in the comparative study, which focuses on the two main reference sites. Table 3.2.A in the annex provides an overview of the sites, which were referred to repeatedly and which will hence be discussed. The table includes a short description of each site and of the conservation works it had been subjected to by the time of the inquiries in 2014/15.

3.1.3 THE INTERVIEWS

The research at hand makes use of interviews as "the most important sources of case study information" (Yin 2009, 106). It aims at investigating different authenticity perceptions with the full thematic scope of the concept in an unbiased and explorative approach. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were hence chosen as the most expedient method for the exploratory, comparative case study of the two main reference sites and constitute the main thrust of the research. Shorter unstructured interviews, as well as direct and participatory observation of site users as well as the analysis of media of different kinds additionally informed the survey but are of lesser significance to the research. This is because the latter methods do not allow for the

who surveyed the Siyadi Shops in 2008. She also carried out a state of conservation assessment in 2011 but was not involved in the conservation and rehabilitation works that followed.

same thematic breadth and depth as well as comparability in investigating how the reference sites are perceived by the site users and why (Yin 2009).

In addition, the author chose to conduct unstructured in-depth expert interviews. The partners of these interviews served foremost as informants for the descriptive parts of the thesis dedicated to the history of conservation practice in Bahrain and of the two reference sites. The information provided in these interviews complements the sites analyses, the content analysis of scarcely available documents on the local heritage conservation practice and the participant observations of the author's past work experience in Bahrain.

3.1.3.1 Why architects and non-architects?

Since a key research aim of the comparative study is to explore how assessments of authenticity of the two main reference sites differ between professionals and laypeople, the interviewees who commented on those two sites had to be divided accordingly. Deciding on such division is not trivial: Who should be considered an expert when it comes to the perception of authenticity and who not?

Even the division into professionals and laypeople in the field of architectural conservation proved to be not straightforward. Among the interviewees who participated in the inquiry were people from heritage academia, and others without such degrees but with extensive work experience in the field of architectural conservation in Bahrain. Moreover, among both groups, there were people who had internalized pertinent international conservation standards, while others followed different schools of thought. Sorting the interviewees on this basis would certainly not have been expedient.

The most objective categorization for this case study, which focuses on architectural conservation, was hence the division into architects and non-architects (refer to fig. 3.1-2): It is architects who are put in charge of such projects – albeit not always with a degree in conservation. Particularly in the Bahraini context, architectural training usually forms the basis for working in the field of architectural and urban conservation. Often, art historians play an important role in architectural conservation theory and practice. This was not the case in Bahrain at the time of the field research. No art-historians were involved in the conservation works at either reference site, and the author was not able to identify any representatives of that discipline in Bahrain to be interviewed. The interviewed architects were either trained in conservation or had at least worked on historic sites. Although the level of experience with architectural conservation differed among the architects, this group can be considered representative of professionals in architectural conservation. Finally, architectural training comes with its own notions of authenticity which reflected in the inquiry's results.

Among the larger group of non-architects there were three heritage academics³ and three interviewees who had more or less administrative or practical work experience in the heritage sector (refer to fig. 3.1-3). Although this constitutes a certain inaccuracy, the group of non-

³ Among the total number of interviewees are three archaeologists (I 3,14,31), of which one participated in an expert interview that was not related to the main reference sites. Although the conservation of historic built fabric lies within the scope of archaeology, the discipline and training fundamentally differ. This extends to the understanding of authenticity. In the field of archaeology, which relies on the documentary value of tangible evidence from the past, the importance of material authenticity is undisputed (Samida, Eggert and Hahn 2014, 4).

architects can overall be considered representative of laypeople in the field of architectural conservation.

It is important to note that each group is large enough to derive conclusive results for a comparison. With further subdivisions, the individual groups would not have been large enough to reliably inform a comparison.

3.1.3.2 Types and number of interviews

The author held and analysed conversations of different lengths and breadth with more than 60 different people of various professional and cultural backgrounds. This adds up to more than 40 hours of recorded interview time in addition to notes from a few non-recorded interviews and statements. Most interviews were conducted with one single partner. Basic information about the interviews which informed the study is presented in an overview table in annex 3.1 A. They involved **three interview types**:

- 1- semi-structured in-depth interviews which were based on a set of lead questions and conducted during a joint tour of the author and the interviewee at the main reference sites;
- 2- unstructured in-depth expert interviews with architects or non-architects involved in heritage conservation practice in Bahrain;
- 3- shorter, mostly spontaneous unstructured on-site conversations with representatives of local communities or other stakeholders.

The main body of the qualitative research are the 49 in-depth interviews of type 1 and 2 with a total of 32 different people. Among these, 18 different people including six architects participated in 32 semi-structured interviews of type 1, which involved a tour at one or both of the two reference sites and focused mainly on these. These type 1 interviews form the foundation for the analyses of the perception of the two reference sites.

17 people who had actively been involved in heritage conservation in Bahrain, including 11 architects, participated in unstructured in-depth expert interviews of type 2. Three of them participated in a type 1 interview as well. Statements about the two main reference sites made in type 2 interviews are considered in the analysis of how the sites are perceived by site users. However, type 2 interviews contribute to this analysis to a lesser degree as they focused either on gathering information about the conservation works carried out at the reference sites or addressed heritage conservation practice in Bahrain with a broader thematic scope. Few of the in-depth interviews involved email correspondence or online video conversations.

Additionally, the author used mostly spontaneous encounters in 18 different occasions for shorter, unstructured conversations with overall 38 people. Those interviewees were local community members and stakeholders including passers-by, visitors and customers, business owners, service personnel and migrant labourers. These conversations took place either at one of the two main reference sites or at other sites. Few of the type 3 interviews are actually only comments that the author took note of without actually engaging in a conversation. These are strictly speaking not interviews but are codified in the same manner.

Most interviews were conducted in the years 2014 and 2015. Few were conducted during the preparation phase of the thesis in 2011 or 2012 or even before that in the context of related research activities. Follow-up correspondence with few interviewees happened at later stages of the research.

The interviewees are coded with a number which is used as reference throughout the text of this thesis. The numbering follows the order in which the interviews are presented in the **overview table 3.1.A**. The order is arbitrary in the sense that it resulted from practicalities of the documentation, transliteration and content analysis processes.

Different interviews at various sites with one person are assigned one number and further differentiated by letter – e.g. 8a and b. Some interviews involved several people as indicated in the table 3.1.A. The overview table indicates the type of each interview. It includes information on the cultural and professional background of the interviewees, their age and gender, date, daytime, location and length of the interview as well as the format in which the information was documented. Although most interviewees consented to be cited by name, the author decided to indicate the names of the interviewees only in the case of experts involved in heritage conservation practice in Bahrain, with the exception of those who wished to stay anonymous. The table also indicates the topics and heritage sites that were addressed as well as additional notes on particular circumstances in some cases.

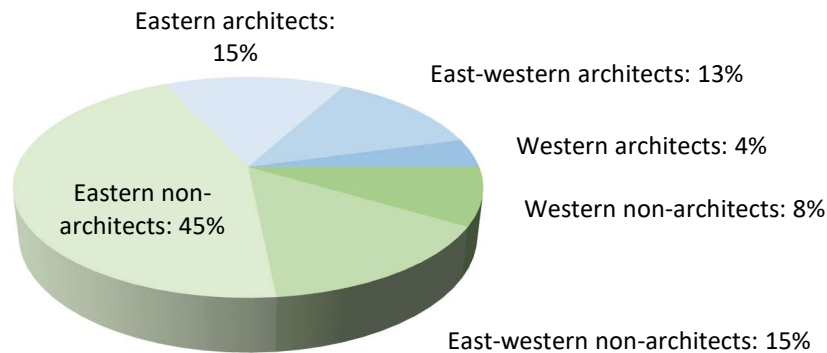


Fig. 3.1-1: **Cultural and professional backgrounds of the total number of interview partners**

The interviewees include locals and foreigners of various nationalities, representing ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ cultural backgrounds, as well as different professions, ages, genders and levels of education. In the table, the interviewees are categorized and color-coded as architects (blue) and non-architects (green). Depending on their nationality the interviewees were also categorized as being of Eastern or Western cultural background. A Western background was assigned to people from Europe and North America. Interviewees from Asia, Africa and the Middle East were considered to be of Eastern cultural background. These were classified as East-Western background if they had studied or lived in Europe or the USA. No interviews were conducted with interviewees of Australian or South-American origin. The cultural background is indicated in shades of colour, the darkest shade signifying Western and the lightest Eastern origin. Figure 3.1.-1 illustrates the percentages of cultural and professional backgrounds of the total number of interviewees. The same color-coding is used in comparative diagrams which illustrate the findings on the two main reference sites.

3.1.3.3 Interviews referring to the two main reference sites

The comparative study, which constitutes the main part of the research, is based only on the interviews which focus on or include statements about the two main reference sites – the colonial building ensemble in Central Manama and the Siyadi Shops in Suq al-Qaisariya in Muharraq.

In total, 46 people, including 14 architects, commented on their perception of either or both reference sites in the above-described three different types of interviews. Each of the sites was commented on by 34 people. Overall, about twice as many non-architects commented on each of the main reference sites than architects (fig. 3.1-2).

18 people, including 6 architects, were taken on tours for in-depth interviews of type 1, which focused on one or both of the reference sites (fig. 3.1-2). 14 of them participated in in-depth on-site interviews at both reference sites. Two interviewees participated in a tour at Suq al-Qaisariya only (I 21,30) and another two at Bab al-Bahrain only (I 19,33). The number of individual tours was hence 16 at each site.

The order in which the interviewees visited the sites was random according to practical considerations. Nine interviewees first visited Bab al-Bahrain and secondly Suq al-Qaisariya (I 3,10,11,12,14,15,16,17,18). Five interviewees were first taken to Suq al-Qaisariya and then visited Bab al-Bahrain (I 4,8,9,13,20).

The length of the individual interviews varied between 25 to 80 minutes. The average length of focused on-site interviews at both sites was approximately 50 minutes.

Out of the 46 people who commented on the main reference sites, 31 are male, 15 are female. This has to do with a higher exposure of men in public life in Bahrain, particularly among seniors and migrant workers. There were also significantly more men among the interviewed architects than women – eleven men and three women. The gender imbalance is less pronounced in the case of the type 1 interviews which were conducted with ten men and seven women.

All of the interviewed architects have some experience with working on historic sites. Seven of the architects interviewed about the reference sites were trained as architectural or urban conservation architects (I 7,16,20,23,24,32,49). Five of the non-architects had some sort of heritage-related education or work experience (I 4,3,13,14,26).

The cultural backgrounds of the 46 people were categorized as follows: 29 Eastern, 11 East-western and 6 western interviewees (fig. 3.1-4). With 25 Bahrainis, roughly half of the interviewees were locals (fig. 3.1-5). In the case of the type 1 interviews, eight people were of Eastern background, and five of Western and another five of East-Western background (fig. 3.1-4). Among those, one third were locals – six Bahrainis and 13 of other nationalities (fig. 3.1-5).⁴ Other interviewees who commented on the reference sites were from Lebanon (4 people), Egypt (3 people), Germany, England, Bangladesh (2 people each) as well as the Philippines, Italy, Kazakhstan, Serbia, Hawaii, Ethiopia, India, Syria and Pakistan (one person each). The distribution of professional and cultural background of all interviewees who commented on the two reference sites is illustrated in figure 3.1-6.

The age of the interviewees who commented on the reference sites ranged from people in their 20s to people in their 80s.⁵ However, a majority of interviewees, and particularly most of those involved in type 1 interviews, were in their 20s and 30s. Not all of the interviewees were asked for their age, which was estimated in those cases.

⁴ Some interviewees had dual citizenships, which is why the numbers do not add up.

⁵ The age distribution among the 46 interviewees who commented on one or both reference sites is as follows: 20s: 11 people/ 30s: 11 people/ 40s: 8 people/ 50s: 4 people/ 60s or older: 12 people.

At the beginning of the chapters 3.3.4 and 3.4.4, further information is provided on the interviews carried out at each of the two main reference sites.

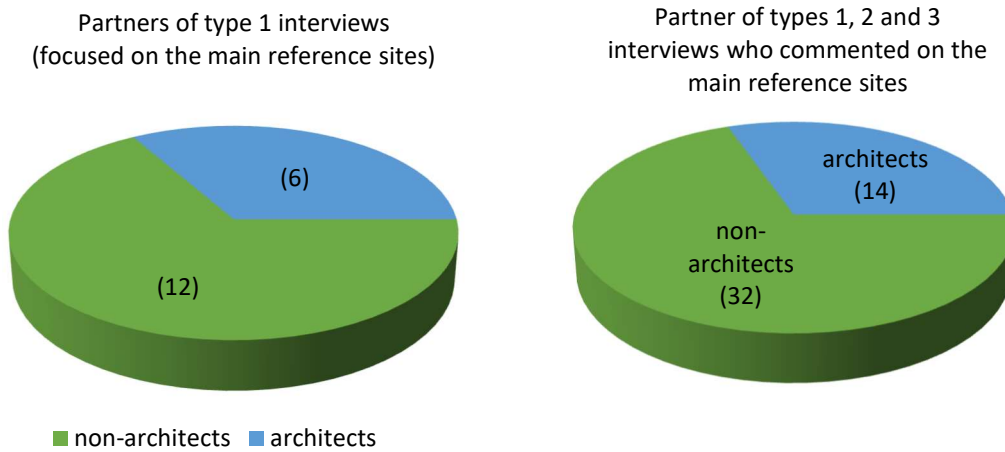


Fig. 3.1-2: **Architects and non-architects commenting on the main reference sites**

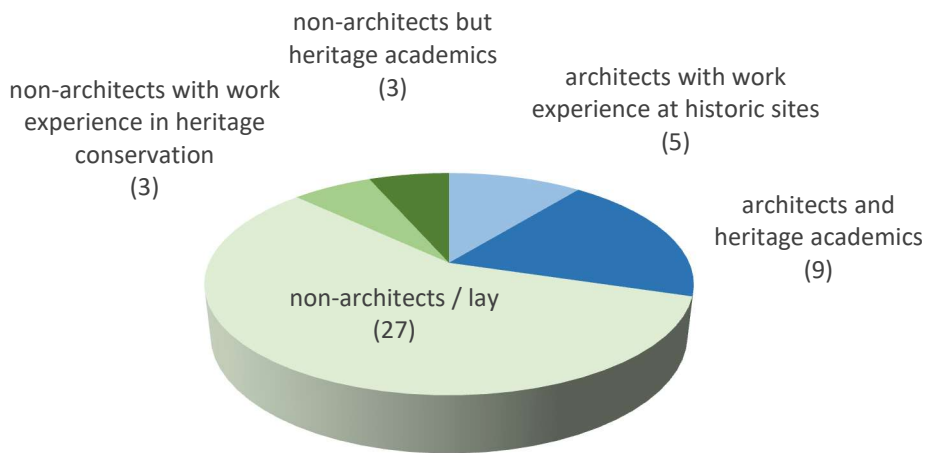


Fig. 3.1-3: **Heritage conservation expertise among the architects and non-architects commenting on the main reference sites**

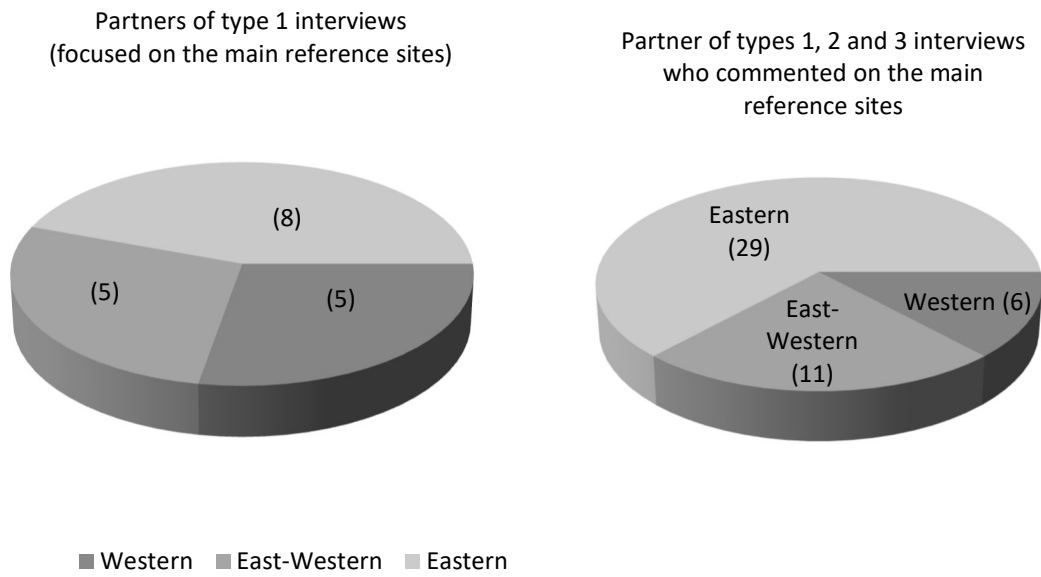


Fig. 3.1-4: **Cultural background of interviewees commenting on the main reference sites**

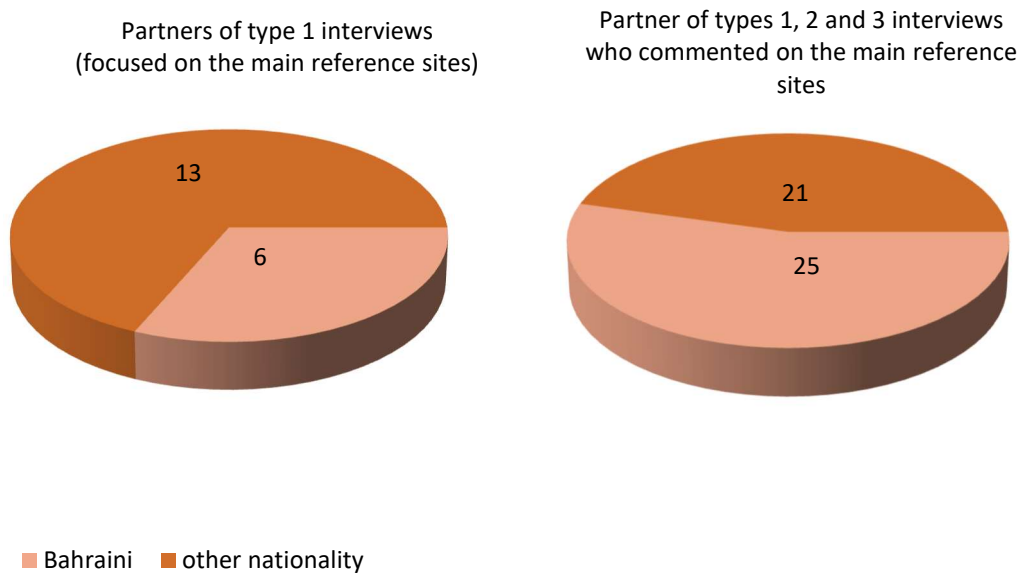
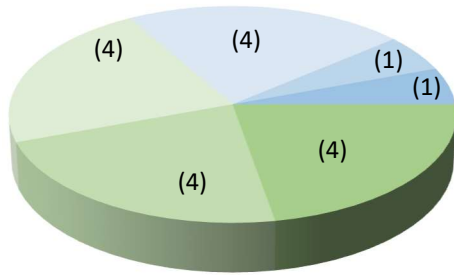
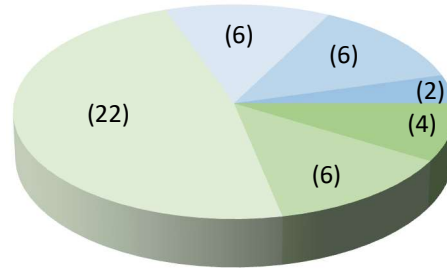


Fig. 3.1-5: **Share of Bahraini nationals commenting on the main reference sites**

Partners of type 1 interviews
(focused on the main reference sites)



Partner of types 1, 2 and 3 interviews
who commented on the main
reference sites



- Western layperson
- East-Western layperson
- Eastern layperson
- Eastern professional
- East-Western professional
- Western professional

Fig. 3.1-6: **Professional and cultural background of interviewees commenting on the two main reference sites**

3.1.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

3.1.4.1 Sampling

The author recruited the interviewees from her diverse professional and personal networks in Bahrain. The choice of interviewees additionally involved snow-ball sampling, as some interviewees recommended others. Moreover, spontaneous encounters with random people from local communities feature among the type 3 interviews.

With the aim of gathering information about the two main reference sites or about heritage conservation in Bahrain more generally, knowledgeable people in this regard, including key actors of past rehabilitation works, were chosen. For the study of the perception of the two main reference sites, people not necessarily knowledgeable in the field were invited for interviews. With the aim of representing various cultural and personal backgrounds, these were chosen from the local and expatriate communities and also included short-term residents and visitors. As described above, these interviewees also represent different age groups, with the exception of children and teenagers and with a majority of middle-aged people. Attempts to better balance the age groups were unsuccessful. Particularly, the interviews which involved tours at the sites were time consuming and physically rather demanding because of the heat, although most interviews were conducted during the months April and May which offer relatively moderate climatic conditions. Although more men were interviewed than women, the genders were more balanced in the case of type 1 interviews.

Arabic is the official language in Bahrain, but English serves as the lingua franca. English proficiency was hence one of the criteria for the selection, although this constitutes a certain benchmark in the level of education of eligible interviewees.

As the aim of the case study research is to explore the perspective of laypeople in the field of architectural conservation in comparison to the position of professionals in the field, more non-architects were interviewed than architects. Seven of the architects among the total number of interviewees had undertaken a specialized academic training in architectural or urban conservation (I 7,16,20,23,24,32,49). All except one (I 20) of the architects had been involved in architectural conservation or worked in historic contexts in Bahrain. 11 of them had been professionally involved with one or both of the main reference sites (I 6,7,21,22,23,25,30,32,33,42,49). On the one hand, this blurs the border between the two groups with regard to professionalism in the field. On the other hand, it corresponds to the reality that by no means all architectural interventions in historic contexts are carried out by trained conservation architects. Moreover, the range of expert heritage conservation knowledge among the architects allows to also be aware of the diversity of authenticity perceptions within this group.

The group of non-architects among the total number of interviewees is equally diverse and represents a wide spectrum of professional backgrounds. It includes people with academic training in various fields, as well as locals and expatriates of lower educational profiles. It includes few people with academic training in the heritage related fields: archaeology, anthropology and World Heritage Studies as well as some people with work experience at different levels in the context of architectural conservation or heritage conservation in Bahrain more generally. These range from clients and contractors of heritage projects to labourers.

3.1.4.2 Interviewing methods and lead questions

The interviewing methods varied among the three types of interviews, which were mostly based on open-ended questions inquiring about opinions, value judgements and reasons behind those, but also involved closed-ended questions as well as knowledge and factual questions (Frey and Mertens Oishi 1995; Faulbaum et al. 2009).

In preparation of type 1 interviews, the author addressed the potential interviewees in the following manner:

Author: „I am doing research on heritage conservation in Bahrain for a PhD.⁶ I talk to people of different backgrounds about how they personally perceive specific projects. Would you be willing to be take part in an interview?“

Most of the **type 1 interviews** followed a standard tour around the main reference sites. However, there was flexibility in adapting to the individual situation, so that the tours slightly varied as further explained at the beginning of the chapters 3.3.4 and 3.4.4. The interviews in the larger reference site at Bab al-Bahrain involved more walking. Several interviews in Muharraq concluded with a visit of a café on site. The café space constitutes an integral part of the rehabilitation project and was therefore included in the tours at Suq al-Qaisariya as was a publicly accessible mall building at Bab al-Bahrain. Other interior spaces were only exceptionally visited during the interviews, which focused on the outdoor spaces and exteriors of the buildings. The interviews had to be conducted on different weekdays and at different times, including working days (Sunday to Thursday) and weekends (Friday and Saturday). Interviews in evening hours with limited daylight were the exception. Interviewees who participated in tours of both reference sites did that either consecutively on one day or on two separate days. Some of the type 1 interviews were (partially) conducted off-site.

The tours and the sequence of buildings and interventions discussed provided a certain guidance, as did a set of lead questions for type 1 interviews presented in annex 3.1.B. The author asked these or similar questions only if necessary and if the course of the interview allowed. The questions correspond with the above listed research questions and address the following aspects:

- Value attributions to the site
- Evaluation of the sites' rehabilitation approach and interventions
- Messages conveyed by the sites including on historicity, age, original use and function etc.
- Value attributed to the truthfulness of messages conveyed
- Authenticity assessments of the sites and individual features

The order in which the items were discussed varied as per the course of the interviews. However, background information about the sites and about the personal relationship to the sites was usually explored at the outset of each interview. The author usually asked about personal information about the interviewees at the beginning or end.

The author did not systematically ask for the exact same features and interventions to be commented on in the different interviews. Neither were the interviewees systematically asked

⁶ The author used the more commonly used term PhD instead of doctoral thesis for ease of communication.

about the individual sources of information which the Operational Guidelines provide as guidance for authenticity assessments. This open, deductive approach aimed at exploring the interviewees' perceptions of the sites and their notion of authenticity without any bias. To the same end, the author tried to avoid "loaded" questions (Frey and Mertens Oishi 1995, 71) or to otherwise influence the interviewees with personal evaluations.

The theoretical concept of authenticity was usually not explicitly addressed by the author in interviews of type 1. During these, authenticity was usually discussed under this term only if the interviewee brought it up, which 14 interviewees did.

In the **type 2 interviews**, which were carried out mostly with experts, the author more often opened the discussion with reference to the concept of authenticity or mentioned it as the overall research topic beforehand. The course of the type 2 interviews depended on their individual purpose and information the interviewee was able to contribute. These interviewees were in essence unstructured. Usually, the author invited the interviewee to share information about a particular architectural conservation or revitalization project he or she was involved in, including personal motives and intentions as well as challenges. The author also invited most of these interviewees to comment on heritage conservation practice and its development in Bahrain. Follow-up questions were generated as per the individual topic and course of each interview.

In order to contextualize the perceptions of the two reference sites, the author asked most participants of in-depth interviews of type 1 and 2 about their favourite heritage site in Bahrain. The replies are presented in chapter 3.2 and in the annexed table 3.2.B.

The **type 3 interviews** differed in structure and content. Those which the author spontaneously conducted with site users of the main reference sites aimed at exploring the same questions as type 1 interviews. However, the significantly shorter interviews did not allow for a comprehensive inquiry and hence only addressed few individual aspects. It was usually also not possible to obtain detailed personal information. Age, professional and cultural backgrounds hence sometimes had to be estimated, which leaves minor room for error. The terms 'authentic' or 'authenticity' were not referred to in any of the type 3 interviews.

With the exception of the type 3 interviews, which resembled casual conversation albeit being led "with a purpose" (Bradburn 1992, 315), the interviewees gave their "informed consent" (Sudman and Bradburn 1982, 9-11) to participate in the interviews and to be either quoted by name or anonymously.

English was used in all interviews except one, which was conducted in German. Most interviewees were audio recorded and transcribed. A few were documented in written notes or consist of email correspondences. As the author conducted the interviews herself, they involved participatory observation.

3.1.4.3 Other field and desk research

Apart from the above-described interviews, the **field research** encompassed site visits during which the author photographed and analysed the two reference sites and some additional heritage sites. The visits also involved participant observation of site users. Moreover, the author drew on participant protocols and other documents from her involvement in conservation projects in Bahrain.

All field research was completed by April 2015 with the exception of a few follow-up questions posed to individual interview partners or other informants.

The **desk research** of the case study focused on gathering and analysing background information about heritage conservation practice in Bahrain and about the development of the two main reference sites in particular. This included the review of related print and web literature as well as of archival and press documents.

There is a wealth of academic literature on Bahrain's archaeological heritage (e.g. Insoll et al. 2021; Lombard 2015; Al-Khalifa et al. 1986; Bibby 1970), but significantly less in the case of its architectural heritage. The rather scarce existing literature is mostly descriptive of the local heritage more generally (e.g. Clarke 1981; Jenner 1984; Al Orrayed 2009) or of architecture specifically (e.g. Kazerooni 2002; Waly 1992; Waly 1990; Hawker 2008; Al-Oraifi 1989; Al-Oraifi 1978, Yarwood and El-Masri 2006). The works include several photo collections (e.g. Al-Khan 1987; Al-Khan 2007; Al Muraikhi 1991; Bahrain Directorate of Heritage and Museums 1986; Wheatcroft 1988) as well as historic travellers' descriptions, diaries and travel guides (e.g. Belgrave 1960, Belgrave 1975, Ward 1993). The earliest scholarly works originate from the 1980s. A particularly valuable source is the doctoral thesis by John Yarwood (1988). In the 21st century, there is an increasing number of historical scholarly works on urban development of Bahrain (e.g. Al-Nabi 2012; Wiedmann 2010; Kingdom of Bahrain and UNDP 2006a-d). With few exceptions (e.g. Hasan 2022; Motisi et al. 2019; Battis and El-Habashi 2012) most sources documenting or analysing urban and architectural conservation practice in Bahrain are working documents, such as progress or evaluation reports from the past three decades by local or international heritage professionals which are not always published or publicly accessible. Given the general lack of scholarly research on Bahrain's architectural heritage conservation practice and history, Chapter 3.2 provides an overview thereof.

Among the two main reference sites, the one in Central Manama is better documented and studied (e.g. Fuccaro 2009, Ben Hamouche 2008; Kingdom of Bahrain and UNDP 2006a-d). This includes a wealth of archival documents from the time of the British protectorate. The rehabilitation works of the earlier 2000s in Bab al-Bahrain Avenue moreover triggered the publication of some scholarly articles in the field of heritage studies (e.g. Alraouf 2010 and 2012). The most important work which documents and analyses the vernacular architecture of the second reference site in Muharraq, is the doctoral thesis by John Yarwood (1988). Another important source in the case of the Siyadi Shops were the nomination documents of the UNESCO World Heritage site Pearling, Testimony of an Island Economy (Kingdom of Bahrain 2010 c-d) as well as other documents from the application process, which the author collaborated in (Kingdom of Bahrain 2012a).

Most literature and other relevant documents are in English language. The author used translation services from Arabic only exceptionally for the analysis of documents.

The author analysed documents from the following archives in Bahrain and abroad: archive of the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities (formerly Ministry of Culture of the Kingdom of Bahrain); Qatar Digital Library; Gulf Collection at the Arab World Documentation Unit, University of Exeter; company archives of Gulf House Engineering; company Archives of Plan Architecture & Design – PAD; Kahlifa Shaheen Digital Images; and an personal private archive of photos and participant observation notes.

3.1.5 ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF DATA

The case study research is based on various site assessments as well as deductive, inductive and comparative analyses of the qualitative data (Bingham and Witkowsky 2022).

In order to contextualize the study of the two main reference sites and their perception by professionals and laypeople in the field of architectural conservation, the case study research starts with an overview of Bahrain's rather young heritage conservation history in chapter 3.2. In order to be able to assess the credibility and truthfulness of the messages which are conveyed to the interviewees, the author first describes and analyses the two main reference sites herself. This includes a description of their construction and use histories in 3.3.1 and 3.4.1. Both chapters are accompanied by compilations of relevant imagery in the annex. It includes site maps as well as photos and plans of the individual buildings and interventions ordered chronologically from the past to the present. They served as a basis for the site analyses. Conservation works and developments that took place at the reference sites after the last interviews were conducted in 2015 lay beyond the scope of this work and are not described in detail.

As the assessment of authenticity and truthfulness of messages hinges on the values attributed to the sites, the author presents a cultural significance assessment for each in 3.3.2 and 3.4.2. This is followed by the author's authenticity assessment on the basis of standard conservation doctrine in the subchapters 3.3.3 and 3.4.3.

The author carried out the cultural significance as well as her own authenticity assessments of both sites after having conducted the inquiry. The author was hence sensitized for certain value dimensions and notions of authenticity which she would not have been aware of without the information from the interviews. The scientific assessments are hence enriched by this part of the field research. The analysis of how the different interviewees assess the two main reference sites is presented in the fourth subchapters 3.3.4 and 3.4.4. The methodologies of these assessments are introduced below.

Chapter 3.5 is dedicated to the comparative content analysis of the different assessments. The first subchapter 3.5.1 compares the author's authenticity assessments of the two main reference sites. The second subchapter 3.5.2 presents comparisons of the two reference sites by the interviewees. Finally, 3.5.3 is dedicated to the comparison of the different assessments of the individual sources of information on authenticity based on the findings. The evaluation of the findings and conclusions are eventually presented and discussed in chapter 4.

3.1.5.1 Cultural significance assessments of the reference sites

The purpose of authenticity assessments in the field of heritage conservation is to authenticate the cultural value which is attributed to a site. Throughout the thesis, the author does this twice for each reference site: once from the scientific perspective in chapters 3.3.2 und 3.4.2 and once through the eyes of the interviewees in chapters 3.3.4 and 3.4.4.

Both reference sites are registered as monuments, but the national heritage register does not encompass statements of cultural value. Hence, the author presents her own scientific cultural significance statements. These are based on paragraph 84 of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO 2019) and Annex 4 of the same document. They elaborate on "the specific artistic, historic, social, and scientific dimensions" of

values. The assessments are furthermore guided by the more comprehensive cultural significance definition provided in article 1.2 of the Burra Charter.

The author relied on her knowledge of the sites that she acquired during her professional involvement in conservation practice in Bahrain from 2008 to 2015 and from the desk and field research carried out for this thesis. In the case of the Siyadi Shops, important information could be derived from application documents of the site's nomination for UNESCO World Heritage as part of the site Pearling, Testimony of an Island Economy (Kingdom of Bahrain 2010c, 2010d and 2012a).

An assessment of the cultural significance and other values, which interviewees attributed to the sites, was derived from the content analyses of the interview statements. The methodology is described below in the section 3.1.5.3.

3.1.5.2 Authenticity assessments of the reference sites

The author's own authenticity assessment of the two main reference sites on the basis of standard international heritage doctrine in chapters 3.3.3 and 3.4.3 relied on her knowledge from past work experiences and from desk and field research.

The assessments are based on the authenticity concept as it finds worldwide application in the context of UNESCO World Heritage. The full list of sources of information guides the authenticity assessments in tabular and text format. The assessments follow the order of sources of information of authenticity as listed in the Operational Guidelines. When assessing the impact of past interventions on the site's' authenticity, reference is moreover made to the ICOMOS International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (the Venice Charter 1964) as it constitutes the most important doctrine of architectural conservation that aims at handing humanity's historic monuments on to future generations "in the full richness of their authenticity" (ICOMOS 1964, Preamble).

The Operational Guidelines make it clear that authenticity always has to be assessed in relation to the values attributed to the heritage site. Both assessments therefore relate to the before-presented cultural significance statements. It was assessed to what extent the identified cultural significance is credibly and truthfully expressed by the site in its state of conservation in 2014/15.

The different categories of information sources of authenticity suggested in the Operational Guidelines were matched with site-specific characteristics in each case. The two reference sites share many but not all site-specific sources of information of authenticity due to their many similarities and differences. Moreover, not all of the Operational Guidelines' categories of information sources are clearly differentiable. Site-specific characteristics, like ownership and trade, could be allocated to several categories, such as 'Use and function', 'Traditions, techniques and management systems' or 'Language, and other forms of intangible heritage'. The author made choices and tried to link categories and characteristics consistently across the two sites. Full understanding of the historic significance of the two reference sites requires substantial background knowledge. The authenticity assessments of both sites hence embrace interpretation and research as relevant 'other external factors.'

The results of both assessments are depicted in tabular format involving a colour code at the end of each chapter. Green and red represent the highest and lowest level of authenticity respectively, with shades of yellow and orange for authenticity degrees in between. The

judgements presented in the tables are approximative and based on the qualitative assessment described in the text.

In addition to the author's authenticity assessments, the chapters 3.3.4 and 3.4.4 include analyses of how the interviewees rated the changes to the site as per the individual sources of information of authenticity. The analyses provide information about the truthfulness of messages conveyed and about the significance attributed to the individual sources of information by the interviewees. The methodology is described in the following section.

3.1.5.3 Analysis of the interview data

The interview findings were first systemized by means of deductive, inductive and comparative content analyses of the qualitative data (Bingham and Witkowsky 2022). This included the categorization and compilation of interview statements in various tables which are annexed to the thesis.

The inductive analysis of the interviewees' statements identified relevant themes and notions of authenticity that relate to the main reference sites or to other examples in Bahrain or beyond it. An inductive approach was also applied for the analysis of how interviewees valued the two main reference sites, assessed the age and historicity of individual features, and judged interventions within them. The initial sorting of the respective statements is presented in tabular format in the annexes (annexes 3.3.4. – 3-5 and 3.4.4 – 3-5).

The author used a deductive approach for the compilation of information about the personal connection of the individual interviewees to each main reference site and knowledge about it (annexes 3.3.4 – 2 and 3.4.4 – 2). A deductive approach was also applied in the second part of the analysis of authenticity assessments of both sites by the interviewees. While the interviews were conducted in an explorative manner, the statements were later categorized as per the individual information sources that also guided the author's authenticity assessments (annexes 3.3.4 – 6 and 3.4.4 – 6).

The findings that relate to the perception of the two main reference sites by the interviewees are presented in text and bar diagrams in the chapters 3.3.4 and 3.4.4. The diagrams serve to visualize and compare the main findings of the content analysis with the aim of identifying patterns in the way architects and non-architects perceive the reference sites and rate their authenticity. The diagrams are based on the total number of interviewees who commented on the respective reference sites and come in pairs. The bottom axis indicates the number of mentions of a certain aspect in each group of interviewees. The diagram bars are hence comparable in representing the share of comments on a certain topic out of the maximum possible number of comments, which corresponds to the overall number of interviewees in each group. Additionally, the diagrams are color-coded according to the number of comments from interviewees of different cultural backgrounds. The diagrams do not differentiate between the different types of interviews.

The diagrams hence use a quantitative approach but illustrate findings from qualitative data. Given the exploratory approach, the interviewees commented rather freely. If an interviewee did, for example, not say he specifically liked a certain feature does not mean he disliked it, and vice versa. Although the diagrams quantify comments, they hence merely serve to illustrate tendencies that were identified by qualitative research means. The purpose of the quantification

and visualisation is to aid the comparisons of the authenticity assessments of the two reference sites in chapter 3.5.

3.1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A conceptual limitation of the research lies in the fact that the empirical data consists of impressions from a case study of two reference sites only. The findings might hence be of limited transferability to other sites and contexts. Moreover, given that a limited number of people were interviewed, generalization even for the two reference sites needs to be handled with care. What the data indicates are mere tendencies in how the perceptions of the two reference sites and authenticity of built heritage more generally differ among the interviewed architects and non-architects. The qualitative research additionally provided insights into the reasons behind those tendencies.

The different authenticity assessments presented in this thesis refer to the state of the reference sites in 2014 and 2015. For the sake of an up-to-date contextualization, the chapters 3.3.1 and 3.4.1 give an outlook of how the sites developed further. The interventions that were implemented after the completion of the interviews would certainly make relevant objects of further studies but need not be of consequence within the scope of this work.

Certainly, research into the construction history of the two reference sites and of the individual buildings could have moreover been carried further. The presented information is however deemed sufficient within the scope of this work which aims at assessing the sites' authenticity and the truthfulness of messages they conveyed to the interviewees in their specific state at the time of the field research.

Other limitations relate to the effectiveness and reliability of the data collection and assessment methodologies. The explorative approach has certain implications on the informative value of the data and its comparability. Due to the open, deductive approach in exploring the different perceptions of the sites and their authenticity, the author often had to derive the interviewees' authenticity judgements based on more general comments about the sites. The content analysis, in turn, involves quantitative assessments illustrated in the diagrams of chapters 3.3.4 and 3.4.4, but is based on statements which the interviewees made rather freely in semi-structured or unstructured interviews. More standardized interviews would have eased the data collection and facilitated a more efficient analysis of differences in the way professionals and laypeople perceive authenticity in architectural conservation. However, as the research aims at exploring different authenticity perceptions with the full thematic scope of the concept, the open, explorative approach was chosen as the more expedient one.

The difficulties to categorize the interviewees as professionals and laypeople in the field of architectural conservation were described above. Further subdivisions of the groups of architects and non-architects according to expertise in heritage related fields were not possible. The heterogeneity of the groups in this regard was however found to only negligibly blur the findings. Further research into authenticity perceptions by representatives of different heritage disciplines would certainly be very informative, but such research lies beyond the scope of this case study.

In addition, the categorization of the interviewees into Eastern, East-Western and Western cultural backgrounds entails some imponderables. The rationale behind this categorization is that authenticity in heritage conservation is criticized as a Western or Eurocentric norm which

is imposed on other cultures with different value systems and perceptions of authenticity. In exploring authenticity perceptions of people from different cultural backgrounds, the research aims at generating some empirical data on this matter. However, in a globalized world and perhaps more so in a cosmopolitan state with an international population, it is difficult to draw lines across these categories. Many of the national and migrant interviewees of Asian, Middle Eastern or African origin have for example extensively lived or been educated in Western countries. Their understanding and perception of authenticity in heritage conservation might hence be influenced by Western views. This is certainly the case with the Eastern conservation architects trained in Europe or North America. The author tried to take such evident influences into account by assigning those interviewees a separate category, indicated as East-Western. Interviewees of Western origin, who were living in Bahrain at the time of the field research, in turn, were not assigned a separate category although the partners of interviews 7, 19 and 43 are long-term residents of Bahrain. The reason for not subdividing this smaller group, is that Western culture, including Western perceptions of authenticity, is generally regarded as dominant. Although all interviewees had been exposed to Eastern and Western cultures, it was impossible to take into consideration all such influences. A Lebanese architect trained at the American University of Beirut was for example categorized as Eastern as she had not lived in Europe or North America. Due to such problems in categorizing the interviewees as well as the limited number of interviews, findings with regard to cultural contingencies are to be handled with care.

A certain bias that has to be taken into consideration is the fact that perceptions of authenticity of heritage sites is much influenced by the cultural rootedness in the place. Certain discrepancies in this regard are unavoidable between local and foreign interviewees and are discussed in the assessments.

Another bias in the way the interviewees evaluated the reference sites and heritage conservation practice in Bahrain might result from the fact that the author was often perceived as being associated to the local heritage authority. The authority played a pivotal role in rehabilitation works at both reference sites and in heritage conservation practice in general. Some interviewees might hence have been self-conscious in their expression of criticism. The potential bias however appears to be negligible.

Moreover, it was unavoidable that some interviewees perceived the joint site visits and interviews as a sort of test situation. This did seem to create a certain anxiety in some cases, which should have ideally been avoided (Sudman and Bradburn 1982).

Certain limitations both with regard to effectiveness of the methodology and validity of the findings arise from language barriers. Given the fact that a certain level of English language skills was required to take part in the research, not all local and expatriate groups are hence equally well represented in the research. Of more consequence is that conversations with people with poorer English language skills were sometimes less yielding and more prone to misunderstandings. As for the gathering of background information about the case study, the author's poor knowledge of Arabic only caused minor limitations to the research as most relevant documents are in English language.

Further limitations relate to the case study's thematic scope and breadth of analysis. An aspect, which the research does not dwell on are religious contingencies in the perception of heritage conservation in Bahrain. The sectarian tensions between Sunni and Shia parts of the religiously

and ethnically diverse local population play a role in many academic discourses about Bahrain and are of interest to the field of cultural heritage conservation as well (e.g. Exell and Rico 2014; Fibiger 2011 and 2012; Alraouf 2012). The interviewees included representatives of both groups. But the research did not systematically analyse whether the perception of heritage sites differs along local confessional or ethnic lines.

Moreover, researching discrepancies in the perceptions of authenticity in heritage conservation among different age groups or genders would be worthwhile. However, a more balanced distribution among the age groups and a more quantitative approach would have been required. Conclusions in this regard are hence not possible. Likewise, the author did not put emphasis on analysing gender imbalances in the perception of the two references sites and their authenticity. Finally, authenticity perceptions among representatives of migrant labourers from South-East Asia could be of special interest, because this group is exposed to Bahrain's built heritage in a particular manner. For one, migrant laborers are the most common residents of historic vernacular buildings in Bahrain as the large number of dilapidated buildings of this kind offer cheap accommodation. Secondly, most labourers carrying out conservation and construction works in Bahrain are from this group.⁷ Since English language skills are scarce among this group, in-depth interviewees would have had to be carried out in other languages such as Hindi/ Urdu, Malayalam or Bengali. Therefore, only four shorter interviews, all of type 3, were conducted with migrant labourers from the Indian subcontinent.⁸

⁷ For an analysis of the experiences of South-East-Asian migrant workers in Bahrain refer to Gardner 2010.

⁸ Interviews with higher skilled expatriate workers from South-East Asia are not counted among these.

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3.2.1 BAHRAIN: COUNTRY, HISTORY AND HERITAGE

The Kingdom of Bahrain is a small island state that looks back on a history of more than five millennia as a strategically located trading post in the Arabian/ Persian Gulf. From antiquity, Bahrain's originally abundant fresh water resources, its dates and syrup produced thereof (dibs) and its natural pearls attracted traders, migrants and claims to power.¹

In the third millennium BCE, Bahrain was an important entrepot on the maritime trade routes between Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley by the name of Dilmun. The country's Arabic name reminds of the important role Edenic Dilmun played in Sumerian and Babylonian mythology.² In Hellenist times Bahrain was known as Tylos. Its pearls, harvested from the shallow marine oyster banks, were famed among Greeks and Romans (Hope 2019) and, throughout history, not only attracted various regional but also distant ruling powers, who all left their traces. Portuguese colonists took control of Bahrain, which was then called Awal, for 80 years from 1521. Persia had the hegemony over Bahrain for the first time from the 6th to the 3rd centuries BCE. In 1783, the still ruling Al Khalifah family seized power from Persia. The Al Khalifa belong to the Central Arabian Utub tribe and migrated to Bahrain via Kuwait and Qatar where they ruled in the early 17th century.

The harvest and export of pearls constituted the main basis for relative economic prosperity in the 19th and early 20th century. It strongly shaped the local culture and identity of all parts of the population. In the 1930s, the pearling economy demised with the introduction of cultured pearls to the global market and with the discovery of oil for the first time in the Gulf, in Bahrain, in 1931. Like other Gulf countries, Bahrain has faced radical societal and environmental transformations based on dramatically increased petrol revenues particularly since the 1970s. As the archipelago of originally 33 natural islands is expanding ever faster onto land reclaimed from the surrounding shallow sea, urbanization and modernization are threatening to deplete Bahrain's rich cultural and natural heritage.³

The basis for the modern state, which today, upon the depletion of most oil resources, relies much on the finance industry, had already been laid in the early 20th century during the time of the late British Protectorate (1919–1971) when Britain was the dominant military power in the region. British-Indian political influence on the country goes back to the early 18th century, when the British East India Company opened its first company agency in Bahrain. Treaties of 1880 and 1892 with the Shaikhs of the Al Khalifa family gave the British Empire control over defence and foreign relations. Bahrain became the centre of British commercial operations in the region and British representatives advised the sovereign Shaikhs on administrative and urban reforms. Bahrain was declared independent from the British Empire in 1971 and a constitutional monarchy in 2002.

¹ Refer to Gardner 2010, 24-48, for a summary of Bahrain's history with a focus on its cosmopolitan character or to standard works such as Al-Khalifa and Rice from 1986 and 1993.

² The name Bahrain means the land of two seas. Its formerly abundant terrestrial and maritime sweet water springs amidst the arid lands and salty waters of the Gulf, are the reason why Dilmun was cherished by Sumerians and Akkadians as an Edenic place. And it is here that the hero in the epic of Gilgamesh dives to the sweet waters of the abyss to pick the flower of immortality (Schrott 2011).

³ Refer to John J. Nowell's publication (1999) for a photographic documentation of the changes.

Bahrain's contemporary society of significantly less than 2 million inhabitants is almost equally divided into national residents and expatriates from around the globe with a majority of migrant workers from Southeast Asia. Further adding to the diversity, the national population is composed of different ethnic and confessional groups from the wider region as a result of the island's cosmopolitan history. Arabic is the official language in Bahrain, but English serves as lingua franca besides many other languages being widely spoken among the various ethnic groups. Ten years after the so-called Arab Spring, Bahrain is still impacted by the latest major unleashing of sectarian tensions between the two main religious groups of Shia and Sunnis in 2011. The growing efforts both of governmental and private actors to save the dwindling vestiges from Bahrain's varied past and to foster a common cultural identity by promoting tangible and intangible heritage have to be seen in this historical and political context.

In the 21st century, cultural heritage protection and conservation is seen as an agent of economic, social and political stability and constitutes an integral element of strategic national planning in Bahrain (Kingdom of Bahrain 2008). On the one hand, cultural tourism is gaining importance for the diversification of the national economy in the face of decreasing oil resources. On the other hand, the tremendous societal and environmental changes of the oil era raised concerns about the cultural rootedness and cohesion of the ethnically diverse national population. The governmental heritage authority is responsible for setting up plans and programs related to culture, arts and heritage. According to its mission statement, it aims at "enhancing the local community's knowledge about its origins and civilization which date back to several millennia" and "seeks to protect, enrich, and modernize the national identity" while "fostering national loyalty and affiliation." (BACA n.d. a) With three sites inscribed on the World Heritage List, the heritage authority has moreover made efficient use of the UNESCO World Heritage system as an important driver of conservation in Bahrain while promoting the country's heritage in the global arena.⁴

Each of the two main reference sites, which are primarily discussed in this case study, has been subjected to governmental revitalization initiatives that aim to increase their attractiveness for residents and visitors alike. The conservation measures at the second reference site, the Siyadi Shops, were moreover carried out in the context of a World Heritage nomination.

3.2.1.1 Demography

The case study research makes use of Bahrain's ethnic diversity to assess the messages that architectural interventions in historic sites convey to individuals of different cultural and personal backgrounds. Moreover, the local demographics were found to play into authenticity considerations throughout the case study and shall therefore be described in more detail:

Bahrain's population was estimated to 1,767,574 people in 2021 (World population review 2021). In the 2010 census, which remains the most recent one in 2022, local residents made up 46% and were found outnumbered by 54% of foreigners in a total population of 1,234,571 at the time (Central Informatics Organization 2011a). The vast majority of the expatriates were of Asian origin, constituting more than 45% of the entire population. Among these is a large group of South-East-Asians from which the construction and architectural conservation sector recruits

⁴ Bahrain ratified the World Heritage Convention in 1991.

it labourers.⁵ Equally of Eastern origin was the large group (more than 5%) of Arabs both from the Gulf region and beyond. The numbers of residents from the other continents and from the Western cultures of Europe and North America was significantly smaller, but all are represented. The expatriate communities are hence culturally extremely diverse. The foreign population is moreover characterized by a tremendous imbalance in gender and age among which reflects in an over-representation of male interviewee partners for this research (Central Informatics Organization 2011b).

While the national population, on the contrary, splits up almost equally between men and women it is ethnically and religiously diverse, too. The different ethnic groups which the Bahraini nationals pertain to are of varied cultural and geographic origins including Arab, Persian, African and Indian. Predominantly Islamic, the national population splits up into Shia and Sunni confessions – with the ruling Al Khalifa family belonging to the latter denomination – but includes other religions such as Hinduism and native Christianity and Judaism.

3.2.1.2 Built heritage: a threatened finite resource

The other asset which this research draws on is Bahrain's built heritage. Due to its extraordinary economic and geopolitical importance throughout history and the associated wealth, Bahrain is blessed with a rich cultural heritage. The tangible vestiges from the past range from archaeological remains of pre-Islamic and Islamic eras, ruins of medieval forts as well as testimony of the local vernacular building tradition in form of urban areas and individual buildings from the 18th to the early 20th century. Last but not least, the so-called British colonial-style buildings from the first half of the 20th century or even younger edifices testify to more recent developments. Three sites – Qal'at al Bahrain, the ancient capital and harbour of Dilmun; Pearling, Testimony of an Island Economy; and the Dilmun Burial mounds – have in the past two decades received international recognition of their importance through UNESCO World Heritage Listing. The most recent entries on Bahrain's Tentative List for future World Heritage nomination are since 2018, the historic parts of Manama as a "city of trade, multiculturalism and religious coexistence" and the Awali oil settlement since 2019 (UNESCO 2019a; UNESCO 2019b). The latter constitutes an early modern residential compound constructed in the 1930s by the Bahrain Petroleum Company in the southern desert landscape.

⁵ The living and working conditions of migrant workers in Bahrain are not the topic of this thesis. However, in the light of the integral role they play in architectural conservation an account by one of the four interviewed migrant labourers will be shared here. The security guard at the reference site at Suq al Qaisariya (I 28) – probably employed by a security company contracted by the heritage authority – gave a heart-wrenching account of his situation. The young man from Bangladesh wished to stay anonymous for fear of losing his job. Besides specific complaints about the working conditions at the restored site he pointed to the „unmerciful“ situation of migrant workers in Bahrain. He referred to insecure residence permits and corruption in the visa system, financial issues which are aggravated by the fact that migrants have to support their relatives in the home countries, lack of a weekly day off, fear for personal safety – which seemed to be fuelled by prejudices against Shia people which are rampant among some people of Sunni belief – and even abuse and sexual harassment particularly of house maids. The author did of course not verify these statements. However, they generally comply with the description Andrew M. Gardner gives in his book *City of Strangers* (2010). Moreover, the inappropriateness of the security personnel's working conditions were evident with regard to the lack of seating and shelter from sun and heat in the outdoor space where the interview took place.

Among all these types of built heritage there have been tremendous losses due to modernization, neglect and destruction particularly after the 1970s when development rocketed with revenue from the petrol industry (Pini 2006). To date, the urban and natural environments keep changing profoundly. Figure 3.2-1 illustrates the expansion of Bahrain's islands between 1956 and 2007. As more and more of the surrounding shallow intertidal zones are made arable in so-called land reclamation processes, the boundaries of Bahrain keep expanding to date. Figure 3.2-1 also illustrates the urban expansions on the original and newly reclaimed territories throughout Bahrain. The introduction of an ever-expanding road and highway network has moreover early on led to street widenings and loss of fabric within the historic urban areas of the country. Nevertheless, significant and varied evidence of five millennia of construction history and culture remains.



Fig. 3.2-1: **Maps of land occupation with land boundaries in 1956 and 2007.** Source: Al-Sayeh and Banchini 2010, 34. (rearranged by the author)

3.2.1.3 Vernacular and colonial-style architecture

The built heritage of core interest to the case study is the commercial vernacular and colonial-style architecture which features at the two main reference sites. Both typologies shall shortly be introduced here.

Most of the remaining historic fabric in Bahrain, as in the case of the second reference site discussed in this case study, is of the vernacular type (fig. 3.2-2 and 3.2-3). Refer for example to the works of Rashid Al-Oraifi (1978) and Ebrahim Essa Majed (1987) for descriptions of Bahrain's **vernacular architecture** including of its design and structural characteristics. Such buildings date mostly from the late 19th and early 20th century which saw an increase in this type of construction due to increased income from the pearl trade which was booming at the time.⁶ The architecture is a local variant of how communities traditionally built in the wider geographic and cultural

⁶ Previously, a large part of the population permanently lived in palm frond huts, so called *barasti* which served as airy summer retreats by the sea even to those who had the resources for a residence built in stone (Fuccaro 2009, Al-Oraifi 1978). No complete historic example of this vernacular typology remains.

region of the Arabian/Persian Gulf (Hawker 2008). Residential, commercial, religious and other public buildings as well as all segments of the society shared the same set of designs and construction principles which were “transmitted informally” from one generation to the next (ICOMOS 1999). Even the set of decorative elements were shared among the different building typologies. These include carved gypsum panels and friezes, ornamental plaster arches, coloured glass fanlights, profiled support brackets and merlons.

Depending on the location, the one to two-storied vernacular houses in Bahrain were either built of porous maritime coral stone⁷ or desert lime stone masonry. Both involved mortar of mud and lime and were rendered with plaster of gypsum and lime. Palm trunks that were used as tie beams and palm frond for ceiling mats were formerly available from plantations in wide parts of Bahrain. Few materials had to be imported from Iraq, Iran, India and Africa: mangrove poles for ceilings and stairs, strips of split bamboo used in the ceiling mats, and finer wood for doors and window shutters. A structural system of pillars and piers reduced the amount of construction materials needed and featured a variety of inbuilt ventilation systems that cooled the buildings. Their layout and structures were easily adapted and expanded around central courtyards as families grew.



Fig. 3.2-2 and 3.2-3: **Courtyard view of an inhabited vernacular residence in Muharraq (2014) and life-section through a partly demolished vernacular building in Muharraq (2008).**

Photos: Eva Battis

As other towns of the Islamic realm, the densely built-up urban areas that organically grew in the process were shaped by building norms that were based on functional needs and on mutual respect of privacy. A formerly characteristic feature of the wealthier historic districts of Muharraq and Manama were wind towers. The locally used name *badgir* indicates their origin from Persia. Today, less than a handful of authentic wind tower survive in Bahrain, while the feature proliferates as a non-functional adornment for example of staircases in modern residential development projects (fig. 3.2-4). The most refined vernacular buildings were and still are to be found in the old town of Muharraq, which was founded as the seat of the ruling family and its allies in the 18th century and constituted the regional pearling centre in the 19th and early 20th centuries.⁸

⁷ Throughout this thesis the term coral stone is used despite the fact that the less commonly used term sea stone is a more precise translation of the local Arabic name *hadjar al-bahr*.

⁸ The island of Muharraq however also bears archaeological testimony of earlier settlements starting from the Dilmunite Bronze age. The island was known as Arados in Hellenist times and



Fig. 3.2-4: **View of a new residential district with wind tower imitations in Central Bahrain in 2014.** Photo: Eva Battis

In the course of the 20th century, with propelled population growth, changing lifestyles, living standards, tastes and preferences, Bahrain's traditional buildings of the local vernacular style became obsolete. The traditional building techniques and typologies of buildings and urban spaces were given up in favour of modern ones (Al-Nabi 2012; Wiedmann 2010). As wealthier families gradually moved to the newly planned residential areas that follow Western typologies, most traditional urban areas within historic towns and villages turned into ill-maintained and congested low-income enclaves with a high percentage of migrant workers living in precarious conditions. Governmental urban renewal initiatives fostered the replacement of the outdated and often very simple vernacular fabric since the 1970s. Still at the turn from the first to the second decade of the 21st century, the author found a municipal list of houses in Muharraq that were classified as public hazards and prioritized for replacement to be a rather complete inventory of the remaining vernacular buildings in the town. Throughout Bahrain, the vernacular building stock has dramatically decreased in the past decades and continues to do so. Unfortunately, most of the vernacular fabric went undocumented. John Yarwood's seminal documentation of the traditional architecture in Muharraq is an exception (Yarwood 1988; Yarwood and El-Masri 2006). The majority of the vernacular buildings that remain in the third decade of the 21st century are rented out as ill-fitted accommodation to large groups of migrant workers. Buildings that remain inhabited by the original owners and are well-maintained by customary care, such as the residence in figure 3.2-2, are the exception. By the 1990s, however, the diminishing vernacular heritage started to be more widely valued as a finite resource of cultural identity and beauty as will be described in more detail throughout the case study.

There was generally much esteem and curiosity for the vernacular heritage and particularly for **Old Muharraq** among the interviewees who partook in this case study. Many interviewees (I 3,12,15,17,20,24,33) named vernacular buildings or areas as their favourite heritage sites for their architectural or atmospheric qualities and for nostalgic feelings they trigger. Several said they valued them as testimony to the past, to the traditional way of life or for facilitating a sort of time travel. Bahraini interviewees often expressed feelings of pride despite the humbleness of the architecture:

„I do like what we have in Bahrain, but they [the buildings] do not represent any human step forward. Not a single building we have is so amazing [as the Colosseum in Rome]. But it's my history and I really like it. The old houses, they represent a cosy feeling. It shows how simple life used to be in Bahrain. [...] Whenever I see an old house, I feel how life used to be, how

centre of the cult of the god Awal under the Seleucid Greeks. By the 5th century CE it had become a centre of Nestorian Christianity (Insoll et al. 2021).

simple and happy they were. I only hear stories of how life used to be and I never heard anybody who says we are living a better life now.” (I 15)

Old Muharraq, which was often associated with the pearling era, was repeatedly commented on for its particular authenticity and sensual qualities: the beauty of the vernacular buildings and their natural materials, the “mysterious” effect of sunlight reflecting on the whitewashed facades within the narrow lanes (I 12), the unpredictable and surprising vistas, the human scale, coziness and intimacy of the urban quarters as well as their distinctly oriental character. A foreign interviewee described the old town of Muharraq as the “real Bahrain” (I 9). At the same time, the tremendous loss of traditional urban areas and vernacular fabric throughout Bahrain was unanimously lamented, such as in the case of the vernacular building described in the following quote:

“It had a door with the painted slogan: Down with the colonial time. So, the door is at least before 71. It looked much older. That house was torn down four months ago. Somebody bought the door though. I don’t know where it is now. That house I regret they took down. [...] Not just because of the writing. Also for the house. Although the house was not beautiful, it was just old.” (I 15)

Urban development and architectural innovations during a transitional phase of the late pearling and early post-oil discovery eras brought about yet another typology of the local building culture which is only starting to find wider appreciation in the 21st century. The so-called **colonial-style buildings** developed from the local vernacular tradition with foremost British but also Indian influence during the time of the Late British Protectorate (Fuccaro 2008; Wiedemann 2010). The edifices are referred to as British/Anglo colonial-style or colonial-era buildings, although Bahrain, strictly speaking, was not a British colony.⁹ They combine stylistic and technical features of the local vernacular building traditions with newly available techniques and materials as well as cosmopolitan and modernist design influences. Most colonial-style buildings are governmental buildings. Typical characteristics are wider spans of spaces and openings which the use of steel beams and reinforced concrete allowed. The coral stone masonry walls however still follow the traditional system of columns and piers and are traditionally rendered and whitewashed. Vernacular ornamental features were reduced or omitted and sometimes combined with European features, as exemplified in the first reference site of this case study. Fusing the “old and the new, local and foreign” the colonial-style buildings are therefore sometimes referred to as hybrid architecture (Dayaratne 2008, 7; Bucheery 2004). Examples are found throughout the country but foremost on the fringes of the historic centre of Manama where new developments were focused in the first half of the 20th century. Further urban development and modernization however did not halt at this type of architectural heritage and led to the loss of valuable example like the iconic first petrol station of 1938 (Wheatcroft 1988, 108) in Manama. Many of the buildings could no longer sustain their original function and were either demolished or significantly altered.

⁹ James Onley, in an analysis of the Pax Britannica, argues that “British protection was not imposed on the Gulf shaikhdoms, but sought after and welcomed by the Gulf rulers.” (Onley 2004, 76) Refer, on the other hand, to Omar H. Al-Shehabi’s *Contested Modernity: Sectarianism, Nationalism, and Colonialism in Bahrain* for an analysis of how the colonial experience impacted and impacts Bahrain and its society up to date (Al-Shehabi 2019).

In the interviewees, Bahrain's architectural heritage from the time of the Late British Protectorate was exclusively discussed in the context of the first reference site at Bab al-Bahrain. Perceptions of the colonial heritage varied in this case as will be discussed in chapter 3.3.4.

3.2.2 DEVELOPMENT AND PERCEPTIONS OF ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION PRACTICE IN BAHRAIN

Architectural conservation is a relatively recent practice in Bahrain, which made quantum leaps particularly in the past two decades. These witnessed a wide range of different attempts to safeguard remains of the dwindling built cultural heritage. The beginnings lie in the 1950s when the country's ancient archaeological treasures were uncovered. First governmental reconstructions of fortresses and few restorations of individual vernacular buildings followed by the late 1970s and 80s. It was not before the late 1990s that wider public and private attempts to revive and preserve Bahrain's architectural legacy by means of restorations, adaptations or historicizing recreations indicate a late appreciation of the heritage almost lost. Conservative restorations of vernacular buildings made their appearance rather recently when international conservation standards started to make their impact in the course of a UNESCO World Heritage nomination to which the second reference site pertains.

The development of the architectural conservation practice is described in more detail in the following. With reference to individual projects and their perception by the interviewees who partook in the case study research (refer to annex 3.2A), this section introduces the dichotomy between approaches that seek to revive the local building culture and others that intend to preserve its vestiges as historical testimony. This dichotomy characterizes recent decades of architectural conservation practice in Bahrain and will be further explored on the basis of the two main reference sites.

3.2.2.1 Archaeology and museology: the beginnings of conservation in the 1950s

Institutional built heritage conservation in Bahrain has its roots in archaeological investigations in the 1950s. Archaeological remains that reach back millennia in Bahrain's history were the first to attract attention among foreign archaeologists.¹⁰ Since the decipherment of Mesopotamian cuneiform tablets in the 19th century and the rediscovery of Dilmun seals in the wider region, archaeologists sought to locate the historical and mystical place of this name. The English archaeologist Geoffrey Bibby, who took part in the first Danish excavations in Bahrain in the 1950s, wrote a fascinating account of how the riddle was solved and Bahrain identified as Dilmun (Bibby 1970). The ruling Shaikh, His Highness Shaikh Salman bin Hamad, took much interest in the discoveries and supported the display of finds in a first temporary exhibition in Bahrain in 1957. By 1970, the growing local collection was on permanent display and eventually moved to the purpose-built National Museum of Bahrain in 1988 (Kingdom of Bahrain 2013a). The archaeological sites were the first to be designated national monuments and put under the custodianship of the governmental heritage authority. Among them are the tell of Qal'at al Bahrain, the Dilmun temples at Barbar and Diraz as well as numerous ancient tombs and one of the regions earliest mosques sites, Al Khamis Mosque, from the 7th century.

¹⁰ The first reported scientific excavations of smaller scale occurred in Bahrain since the 1870s (Frohlich 1983, 4). Refer to the introduction of a survey report of Bahrain's cultural heritage by the Japanese Consortium for International Cooperation in Cultural Heritage for a summary of archaeological investigations in Bahrain since the 19th century (JCIC-Heritage 2012, 3-5).

From 1953, a non-governmental organization, the Bahrain History & Archaeological Society, took on heritage protection activities on a voluntary basis.¹¹ Bahrain's first governmental heritage agency, the Directorate of Archaeology¹² was established in 1968 one year after Bahrain had joined UNESCO as associate member.¹³ The directorate and the first national heritage legislation, the Bahrain Antiquities Ordinance of 1970,¹⁴ were established as per the recommendation of Bahrain's UNESCO consultant on archaeology Dr. Amanalanda Ghosh. His report of 1968 points to the neglected state of archaeological sites and medieval buildings in the country (Ghosh 1968), as does a report of two later UNESCO consultants in 1980 (Saidah and Lewcock 1980).

Since the 1950s, the discoveries and associated historical narratives and myths were clearly incorporated into the national identity in the following decades. Place and brand names as well as symbols that relate in particular to the Dilmunite and Hellenist eras abound throughout the country. Bahrain's leading money transfer and currency exchange company for example features the deity of a bullhead discovered at Barbar Temple in its logo. A large swimming bath in the arid desert landscape in the south of the country – the Lost Paradise of Dilmun Water Park – recreates a whole Dilmunite world in fibre composites out of motives discovered during the archaeological digs.

Despite this appropriation of the antique heritage, and contrary to the curation and exhibition of the movable finds, securing and presenting the archaeological sites was paid comparatively little attention in the first decades. The anthropologist Thomas Fibiger described this and other cases of “heritage erasure” as a “paradoxical process” in which Bahrain “has become more and more concerned with heritage, while at the same time erasing much of what defines this heritage to various sectors of the Bahraini and international community.” (Fibiger 2015, 390) It was not before 2008, that a site museum opened at Bahrain's first UNESCO World Heritage Site where excavations had started in the 1950s. The tell of Qal'at al-Bahrain, which includes evidence of Dilmunite, Hellenistic and Islamic era occupation, a medieval fortress, ancient palm groves and a marine water channel, was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2005 under the name Qal'at al-Bahrain – Ancient Harbour and Capital of Dilmun (UNESCO 2005a).

¹¹ Refer to the webpage of the non-governmental organization: <https://bahrainhistory.org/> (Accessed June 20, 2022).

¹² The first Directorate of Archaeology was established within the Ministry of Education. It shifted to the newly established Directorate of Heritage at the Ministry of Information in 1981. Since 2008, the Sector for National Heritage is in charge of assigning and administering Bahrain's historical sites. It was first established within the Ministry of Culture and Information which was renamed Ministry of Culture in 2010 and became the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities by royal decree in 2014.

¹³ Bahrain joined UNESCO as a full member in 1972, one year after its independence from the British Empire.

¹⁴ While the Bahrain Antiquities Ordinance was still focused on the protection of the movable archaeological finds, a more comprehensive law which encompasses the protection of architectural sites as immovable heritage followed in 1995 with the Decree-law N.11 Regarding the Protection of Antiquities. For a description of Bahrain's contemporary heritage protection legislation and analysis of law enforcement refer to Wosinski 2017.



Fig. 3.2-5 and 3.2-6: **View of Qal'at al-Bahrain in 2023 and by night (2014)**. Photos: Eva Battis

The Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities (BACA) envisages to provide each archaeological site with an own museum (Kingdom of Bahrain 2013a, 8). Among the ambitious plans is an iconic museum building designed by Tadao Ando for the Early Dilmun settlement at Saar as described on the authority's webpage. However, at the time of the field research, and still in 2022, most of the archaeological sites remained devoid of on-site interpretation and presentation facilities. This includes the samples of the formerly hundred thousand of Dilmun Burial Mounds which were inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2019 (UNESCO 2019c). Deficient on-site interpretation of Bahrain's archaeological heritage and therefore general lack of knowledge about Bahrain's past was criticized by several of the interview partners (I 3,4,13,15,19). A young Bahraini man (I 15), for example, lamented that the only site he never visited is **Barbar Temple** because he was not even able to find it. The spectacular Dilmunite temple site with ritual water springs remained poorly secured and signposted at the time of the field research although excavations had resumed in 2004 (Højlund et al. 2005). Nevertheless, some of the country's archaeological sites were what both local and foreign interview partners most frequently pointed to when asked about their favourite Bahraini heritage sites in the course of the field research (refer to Annex 3.2.B). Most popular among them, however, proved Qal'at al-Bahrain with its dominant restored medieval fortress which is impressively lit at night (fig. 3.2-6). Interviewees from the group of non-architects said they enjoyed archaeological sites for the pleasant visitor experience (I 3,15,21), for inspiring awe for the own ancestry (I 4), for their age, cultural testimony and scientific value (I 4,14,19) or as a source of artistic inspiration (I 9). Atmospheric qualities of Qal'at al-Bahrain's sea-side location and the site museum with café and interpretation facilities were found to significantly play into the particularly positive perception of the site, which had been promoted as World Heritage for a decade.¹⁵

3.2.2.2 Restorations and reconstructions of the medieval fortresses

Forts of medieval or younger origin were among the first sites to be subjected to architectural conservation works in the 1970s and 80s.¹⁶ Among them, is the 15th century fortress on the top of the tell of **Qal'at al-Bahrain**, also known as Bahrain Fort. The restoration of the ruined Portuguese fort (fig. 3.2-5 and 3.2-6), as it was previously and still is more commonly called informally, started in 1987. Like most other medieval fortresses in Bahrain, it was subjected to rather extensive restorations and reconstructions. According to the evaluation by ICOMOS, its

¹⁵ At the time of the field research the Dilmun Burial Mounds did not have World Heritage status yet.

¹⁶ Qal'at al-Diwan in Manama is an exception. The 19th century fortress has been in continuous use, serving as headquarters of the police force since the 1920s (Wheatcroft 1988, 66) and was continuously adapted in consequence.

restoration went “much beyond the acceptable according to the professional ethics” (UNESCO 2005b, 49). This expert judgement was shared by several interviewees who partook in the case study research. An architect of Indian origin, who used to visit the ruined fortress prior to its restoration, lamented the loss of aura which the extensive restoration and the formalized visitor management brought about (I 21). A British resident of different professional background, in turn, criticized the reconstruction for being conjectural and probably untruthful in its representation of the historic building. Several interviewees (I 3,4,13,31) moreover criticized the dominance of the restored fort over the historically more significant archaeological remains which receive little attention, if any, by visitors and which require additional interpretation. The management plan of Qal’at al-Bahrain admits deficiencies of the past restoration works and indicates for the early 2000s that “experts and conservationists are rethinking the past decade of conservation efforts” (Kingdom of Bahrain 2004a).

Despite such criticism, the fortress was overall met with much appreciation and significantly played into the positive perception of the World Heritage site. “People love this space without knowing much about it,” is how Dr. Nadine Boksmati, former director of the site museum, archaeologist and consultant to Bahrain’s heritage authority, summarized it and pointed to the importance the site and its setting have as leisure ground for local communities (I 31). Interviewees of both groups moreover commended the architecture of the contemporary museum for integrating with the site in subtle contrast (I 3,13,17). Dr. Boksmati also pointed to the importance of the official name change of the site in the course of its nomination for World Heritage. In the way the site is perceived, the new name helped to “change a little bit this domination” of the Portuguese fort over the Dilmunite and other archaeological remains (I 31).

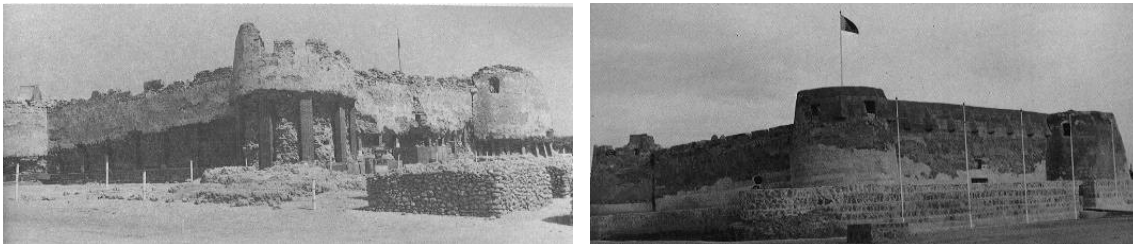


Fig. 3.2-7 and 3.2.8: **Arad Fort before and after restoration (1980s)**. Source: Walls 1987, 76 and 8.

Another medieval fortress which interviewees commented on is **Arad Fort** (fig. 3.2- and 3.2-8) on the shore of Muharraq Island. Its 15th and early 16th centuries Omani military architecture was equally extensively restored in the 1980s (Walls 1987). The differentiability of authentic historic parts and added elements is however a characteristic which two non-architects pointed out appreciatingly about this site (I 10,19).

A last example that will be introduced here is **Riffa Fort** which is officially called Qal’at Shaikh Salman bin Ahmed Al-Fateh after the ruler who had it built. The 19th century fort is located in the centre of the country and overlooks a wide desert valley. It served the Al Khalifa as retreat when they seized power over Bahrain and was the seat of the government until 1869. This fort, too, was extensively restored in the 1980s and fitted with visitor facilities including an exhibition on the history of the Al Khalifa family in the 21st century. Failed plans to install a military museum at the fort allegedly led to the construction of a rather similar looking replica in its direct vicinity (fig. 3.2-10).



Fig. 3.2-9 and 3.2-10: **Shaikh Salman bin Ahmed Al-Fateh Fort in Riffa** (right picture in the background) **and the newly constructed military museum next to it in 2014** (right picture and left picture in the foreground). Photos: Eva Battis

The construction of the adjacent military museum building was still ongoing and not widely known yet at the time of the field research. The author visited the site with four interviewees (I 5,10,11,20) and discussed the project with two others (I 21,30). Two of the interviewees mistook the replica for the original at first sight. All looked rather puzzled when having the full sight of the two forts next to each other. The interviewees from Europe, the Middle East and India, with whom the project was discussed scolded it as “ridiculous” and “absurd” and as a “mockery” of the original fort (I 5,10,20,21). Only two interviewees from the Philippines (I 11,30), including one architect, valued the replica as an expression of appreciation for Riffa Fort and considered that the comparability of the new and the old fort is to the benefit of the original.¹⁷ Lastly, a young local Shia spoke contemptuously of both the original and the copy of the ruling family’s palaces for representing “an existing colonizing power” in his eyes (I 10).

It is in fact questionable how original even the historic Riffa Fort is. The same interviewees who criticized the conjectural reconstruction of Bahrain Fort likewise pointed to artificiality in the case of Riffa Fort which they had seen in a severely deteriorated state in the early 1980s (I 19,21). The non-architect among them expressed his doubts that the reconstruction was based on “pictures or anything to authenticate it.” (I 19). Contrary to these judgments, three other foreign architects (I 20,30,22) perceived the restoration as less problematic for keeping the memory and testimony of the local culture “even if it is not a 100% authentic” (I 22).

At all three forts, interviewees lamented the degradation of their originally scenic settings due to urbanisation and land reclamation (I 11,14,10).

3.2.2.3 First restorations of vernacular and colonial-style buildings in the 1970s-80s

Attempts to reverse the deterioration and destruction processes of vernacular buildings and quarters came very hesitantly. This certainly has to do with the poor structural and architectural standard of many simple vernacular houses. Moreover, there is a widespread mistrust in the

¹⁷ The practice of replicating art objects or buildings as reverence to the original is commonly associated with far-eastern cultures (Weiler and Guschow 2017; Schultz et al. 2020) where authenticity concepts are believed to be non-substantive as opposed to the European understanding. At least in religious contexts, the practice has a tradition in Europe, too. One example from the architectural realm are the replications the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem in Europe (Groebner 2018, 37-59).

durability of Bahrain's vernacular structures which are commonly believed to have a short lifespan per se.

Conservation and restoration projects of vernacular buildings were hence rare until the end of the 20th century. John Yarwood, who worked as foreign urban planner at Bahrain's Ministry of Housing from 1983 to 1985 at hindsight lamented the lack of interest in and commitment to urban conservation throughout the 1980s and the 1990s. According to him, Muharraq was by Ronald Lewcock's and his own judgement "the best preserved historic town on the south side of the Gulf at the time" (Yarwood 2011, 51). The Australian UNESCO consultant Lewcock also predicted "that Muharraq would disappear by 2000 because it was being undervalued and neglected, but also because its construction was fragile and the climate was fierce. In other words, it would fall to pieces and not be rebuilt." (Yarwood 2011, 55)

The few restorations of often abandoned and deteriorated vernacular buildings from the late 1970s up to the late 1990s mostly concerned outstanding buildings such as 19th century residences of members of the ruling family. Examples are Bayt al-Jasra in the western part of the country, restored in 1986, the palaces of Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa and Shaikh Isa bin Ali al Khalifa as well as Siyadi Majlis (fig. 3.2-18). The latter three will be discussed below. As in the case of the medieval forts, the governmental restoration projects leaned towards extensive reconstructions with limited concern for material conservation and historical truthfulness of replicated features. Moreover, many of the interventions proved harmful to the vernacular fabric at hindsight. The latter two buildings nevertheless featured among the favourite heritage sites of the interviewees.

Bayt Shaikh Isa bin Ali al Khalifa¹⁸ was entirely abandoned in 1972 and to be demolished to make space for an urban square in 1975. It was spared that fate thanks to the intervention of the director of the antiquities department at the time, Skaikha Aya Al Khalifa. The heritage authority bought the house in an advanced state of deterioration and initiated its restoration in 1976.¹⁹ A study carried out by French conservation experts of the ongoing works in 1977 criticized the intrusive character of the interventions (Hardy-Guilbert and Lalande 1981). These were found to have significantly changed the building's architectural appearance as well as harmed the historic structure. The typical decorative gypsum carvings were for example generically reproduced in a uniform way that deviated from the original. The stone masonry walls were moreover repaired without the introduction of a horizontal barrier and rendered with a waterproof coating which aggravated the common problem of raising ground water. The architectural volumes and room program were however maintained and non-authentic decorative features partly removed in later interventions. The palace is moreover one of the very few buildings in Bahrain that retain a traditional window tower and where visitors can experience the cooling effect of natural air flow. At the time of the field research Bayt Shaikh Isa bin Ali al Khalifa was again subjected to restoration works which included plans for a permanent exhibition on the history and function of the building (I 31). Later works included an investigation

¹⁸ The following information about the building and its first restoration in the late 1970s is taken from Hardy-Guilbert and Lalande 1981.

¹⁹ Although Bahrain's heritage law allows property in private ownership to be designated as monuments, the heritage authority never exercised this right and relied on the appropriation of relevant sites until the second decade of the 21st century.

and 3D modelling of the building using modern techniques of Historic Building Information Modeling (Banfi et al. 2019). At the outset of the works one of the interviewees, a local architect, said Bayt Shaikh Isa bin Ali was his favourite heritage site in Bahrain for offering “the total experience of a traditional house” (I 17). Apart from the traditional room program he pointed to the vernacular materials and irregularities of forms as evidence of the building’s authenticity (I 17).

Siyadi Majlis (fig. 3.2-18) with the wealthy pearl merchant’s ensemble of residence, mosque and reception building (Arabic: *majlis*) was named as favourite site by another local architect for its outstanding vernacular architecture. The Persian-style plaster ornamentation from the early 20th century (I 33) on the exterior is well preserved despite intrusive alterations in other parts of this building. Siyadi Majlis was first restored in 1978. Its second restoration at the time of the field research faced the challenge of how to remedy structural reinforcements, conjectural reconstructions and additions, which had harmed parts of the historic fabric and reduced the legibility of the building’s history. This included the addition or replacement of walls in concrete blockwork, reinforced concrete ceilings and imitations of historic panelled ceilings in rather garishly painted plywood besides generic replicas of carved gypsum screens and friezes (Archives of BACA, El-Habashi 2007). Ronald Lewcock, who assessed Bayt Shaikh Isa bin Ali and Siyadi Majlis a year after completion of their initial restoration, therefore admonished the need to train local architects in conservation for more sensitive approaches (Lewcock 1981). The lack of local expertise in architectural conservation was, however, still a problem at the time of the field research in the second decade of the 21st century, when young, partly local architects and conservators were only starting to be trained on the job by foreign conservation experts.²⁰ The shortcomings of the typical interventions of the late 1970s however do not seem obvious to the untrained eye. A travel guidebook’s only criticism of the “immaculate” restoration of Siyadi Majlis²¹ in the 1990s was that it left the building unoccupied, devoid of permanent use and locked-up (Ward 1993, 100) – a problem that likewise still persisted in this and other cases in the 21st century.

A private initiative of the early 1990s is the restoration of **Bayt Asma** – a fine example of the many luxurious residential buildings that made the beauty of Muharraq in the 19th century and of which few remain today. Shaikha Hussa Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah, member of the ruling family of Kuwait and important protagonist of heritage conservation in the region, bought the building for private use in 1992 and renovated it with a local construction company in the following years (Archives of GHE, Battis 2012, 66-68). The typical vernacular features and details of the buildings were preserved at the time. Apart from the introduction of a swimming pool in the central courtyard most alterations seemed rather inconspicuous. However, when the building was again restored in 2004/05 by a local company that had in the meantime specialized in the local vernacular building tradition, it became clear that early interventions had caused severe physical damage and exacerbated typical pathologies of the local vernacular buildings. The application

²⁰ The heritage and archaeological strategies produced as part of the strategic national planning by the US American consultancy Skidmore, Owings & Merrill also pointed to a general “lack of professional capacity in the historic environment sector in Bahrain” and training in the field in 2007 (Skidmore, Owings & Merrill 2007). Japanese experts came to the same conclusion in 2012 (JCIC-Heritage 2012, 71).

²¹ Siyadi Majlis is referred to as Bait Ahmad Siyadi in the travel guidebook by Philip Ward (1993).

of cement-based plaster instead of traditional gypsum plaster aggravated the raise of ground humidity within the coral-stone walls and salt flaking on their surfaces. The swimming pool not only introduced harmful lateral forces into the structural system of the building but also increased dampness which caused wet-rod and termite infestation of wooden elements. Some interior separation walls had moreover been added at the upper floor without the necessary structural support. The second restoration reversed harmful additions, remedied the structural damage, reconstructed and carefully introduced necessary contemporary amenities (I 26). As a result, the building and its sober yet stately vernacular architecture appears authentically preserved and sensitively adapted to contemporary living standards. The building is not publicly accessible but with a total of 45 meters of traditional street facades it is one of the characteristic features of the surrounding narrow lanes of Old Muharraq.

Another, less intrusive private initiative among the few early projects was the transformation of a former residence, Maison or **Bayt Jamsheer**,²² to become a French-Bahraini Cultural Centre with accommodation facilities in Muharraq in the 1980s. As per a visual inspection at the time of the field research, interventions on the building were largely limited to customary care. In addition to typical vernacular features and lush greenery in the courtyard, the simple rehabilitation in fact preserved evidence of several changes over time. These include the installation of metallic windows which were typical in Muharraq in the 1950s and 60s in walls facing interior open spaces and terraces. Several traditional window frames and shutters, in turn, were painted with turquoise varnish – a colour scheme that was allegedly fashionable at some point in the later 20th century and could still be seen on some houses throughout Muharraq at the time of the field research. Two foreign interviewees (I 12,20) commended Bayt Jamsheer as “one of the most beautiful houses, because it has kept 100% its integrity of the place and its authenticity” (I 12). Both interviewees, a conservation architect and a civil engineer, perceived the architecture and the “spirit” of the house as unaltered in essence despite certain deviations from the local vernacular.

Few **colonial-style buildings** were subjected to conservation works as early as the 1980s. The iconic gateway Bab al-Bahrain, which will be closely analysed as part of the reference site in Manama, was among the first colonial-style building to receive attention. Its remodelling in Pan-Arab style in the early 1980s, however, can be interpreted as an attempt to erase the colonial testimony of this building. Two other examples are the governmental buildings which received early attention are the Municipality Building and on the Law Courts in Manama. The latter was relatively faithfully restored and equipped with a folklore heritage centre and pearl museum in the 1980s.

3.2.2.4 Architectural revivalism: rediscovery of the building culture since the 1990s

Bahrain’s historic building stock continued and continues to thin out. “And so Ron Lewcock’s prediction that the Bahrainis would appreciate their heritage twenty years too late (when it had already been more-or-less destroyed), was fulfilled” (Yarwood 2011, 53). Wider appreciation of the vernacular building culture emerged by the late 1990s. At first, this found expression in the

²² A second building by the name Bayt Jamsheer was being restored in Muharraq at the time of the field research by the national heritage authority to accommodate a training centre for conservation (I 24).

use of traditional design features in contemporary projects. This was followed by facsimile reconstructions and traditionally inspired recreations throughout the country.

A forerunner of this approach is the local architectural consultancy Gulf House Engineering²³ with its Bahraini lead architect Ahmed Bucheery. The initial refurbishment of Bab al-Bahrain Avenue of this case study's first reference site was done by this company and will be described in chapter 3.3.4. Convinced that despite the tremendous societal changes and a revolutionized building sector, the vernacular building tradition has intrinsic qualities that can be incorporated in modern construction, Ahmed Bucheery was among the first to take action.²⁴ He considered the local building tradition a fundamental component of Bahraini cultural identity and indispensable asset for sound societal development. Out of the wish to "make people love what we have" and "preserve what we have, before we lose it" (I 42) he specialized his architectural firm in the revitalization of Bahrain's architectural heritage. One of his companions credited the initiative with the following words:

"Gulf House are the first who worked in the traditional or Bahraini design. And a lot of people they like it... We put something to keep Bahraini identity in their buildings. And that is very good. Maybe I am clashing with a lot of people. Because they say, the old is old, the new is new. But I say, still we are Bahraini, we should have our identity." (I 26a)

Clearly, Gulf House Engineering hit a nerve at the time by doing what the local artist Rashid Al-Oraifi wished for already in the 1980s in one of the few publication about Bahraini architecture:

"It is hoped however, that in this rush into the modern building styles, time can be taken to absorb some of the older traditional styles into the new architecture, so that as we move into the future, we do not completely forget our past." (Al-Oraifi 1978, 42)

Since its foundation in 1990, Gulf House Engineering has emerged as one of the most successful architectural firms in the wider region to where it exports its traditionalist designs that are inspired from Bahrain's vernacular and other Arab and Islamic building cultures. Many of Gulf House Engineering's traditionalist projects — as in the case of the first reference site — are expression of architectural regionalism, which seeks "to create a (to some degree) unique architecture and urbanism specific to the local culture and conditions" (Yarwood 2011, 5). Their projects are at the same time often criticized precisely for "post-modern cliché-mongering" which regionalism should not drift into (ibid.).²⁵ The Bahrain-based architect and scholar Ranjith Dayaratne judges that Gulf House Engineering's influence "in defining the national identity of

²³ Refer to the company's website for a description of selected projects: <https://www.ghe.com.bh/> (Accessed June 20, 2022).

²⁴ Another, albeit less influential forerunner of such attempts to preserve and revive the local building culture as a living tradition is the Bahraini urban planner Ahmed al-Jowder. In the 1990s he built his own house in historicist style and partly traditional technique. "A lot of people tried to do something. But Ahmed al-Jowder, he worked, he researched, and he brought materials, methods — these things..." (I 26).

²⁵ Yarwood specifies: "'Identity' does not entail blind copying of decorative details from the past, but rather requires a grasp of principles, reference points, values, images, criteria etc., in defining and satisfying functional, cultural and spiritual requirements. Identity cannot be fossilized as a set of styles, but rather as a dynamic process, continuously refreshed and regenerated. Contemporary designers could look at—and absorb—history in this light because rejection of the past in the case of Arabia stretching back beyond Ur—will entrench an eventual cultural disaster." (Yarwood 2011, 5)

Bahrain has been significant” but that the company “however, has not been able to reproduce tradition for the contemporary situations as meaningful as it wants.” (Dayaratne 2012, 318).

Since “it is not about creativeness, it is about safeguarding”, as Ahmed Bucheery put it, what he is proudest of, by his own account, is the role he played in the creation of the consultancy EWAN al-Bahrain (I 42).²⁶ Established in 2003 by Khalid Abdulla Al-Shuaibi as a branch of Gulf House Engineering, EWAN al-Bahrain is dedicated to the revival of the local and regional vernacular in full consideration of modern living requirements and available contemporary techniques.²⁷ In the face of the imminent oblivion of traditional building techniques, which were abandoned in the second half of the 20th century, one of the most important achievements of EWAN al-Bahrain was their reactivation with the help of former master builders of the art. The initiative goes back to the first of a series of nostalgic vernacular reconstruction projects by local VIP clients. In 2001, Her Highness Shaikha Sabeeka Bint Ebrahim Al-Khalifa, wife of His Majesty King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa, entrusted Gulf House Engineering with designing and building a replication of her forefathers’ vernacular residences within her private seashore retreat in the south of the country. “Let us start to build in the old way!,” she allegedly said (I 26). The endeavour turned out to be challenging in several ways. None of the traditional building materials could any longer be sourced locally and even the sources of formerly imported materials had to be sought out abroad.²⁸ More importantly, the only people who retained the knowledge and skills of the vernacular tradition were men of advanced age who had learned the craft in the traditional informal manner in their youth but had given it up almost half a century ago. EWAN al-Bahrain managed to engage three to four former master builders (locally called *astar*) for the project and to teach younger Bahraini men on the job.²⁹ The master builders not only shared the skills of sourcing and producing the construction materials and how to use them but also disclosed their knowledge about customs and meanings of the tradition. For example, only people in the higher ranks of the social hierarchy rendered their residences with high-quality fine plaster of unburned, crushed lime (locally called *noura*) while poorer people had to be content with mortar and plaster of mud (I 26). As they argued about the techniques to be employed, the master builders from different villages and towns across Bahrain, moreover rose consciousness for local variants of the craft (I 26). The former master builders were sceptical about the initiative in the

²⁶ On its own website the company is named EWAN al-Bahrain for Construction and Renovation: <https://ewanalbahrain.com/>. On the updated mother firm’s website it is referred to as EWAN al-Bahrain Architectural & Engineering Consultancy: <https://www.ghe.com.bh/ewan>. (Both accessed June 20, 2022)

²⁷ Jassim Ahmed Jassim Ashoor, who was co-director of the company at the time of the field research and present in an expert interview, joined the team later (I 26). Both Mr. Shuaibi and Mr. Ashoor were not trained as architects but specialized in the vernacular building tradition and its replication in the process. This also applies to Mr. Ahmed Abdulla and Mr. Khaled Abdulrahman who likewise joined the company.

²⁸ With urbanization and land reclamation the natural sources of lime and sea stone have significantly diminished and those that remain are no longer quarried.

²⁹ According to the information provided in an expert interview, the master builders were in their 60s and 70s in the early 2000s and had stopped to build traditionally 40 to 45 years ago at the time (I 26).

beginning, as the founder of EWAN Al-Bahrain told in an expert interview but easily convinced them:

“Everybody is going to like what we are doing: to return our history back. To maintain, to safe our tradition.’ And they accepted. [...] They understood that.” (I 26)

While one of the master builders was still working with the company almost ten years later (I 42), finding Bahrainis who would be willing to take up the profession and stick to it turned out to be yet another challenge. Contrary to the company’s intentions it largely relied on migrant workers like any other contractor does in Bahrain.

The initial projects of EWAN al-Bahrain strictly stuck to the vernacular traditions with all the logistical, technical and economic challenges this entailed. As more and more clients from the local elite wished for replicas and recreations of traditional houses for secondary residential use in addition to their modern, western-style residences, the company increasingly took recourse to modern techniques in order to increase stability and reduce costs and maintenance. The projects hence range from entirely traditionally built coral stone houses to full concrete constructions in traditional style on a concrete baseplate. Many projects are hybrids thereof. The results are often of utmost likeness to the historic vernacular houses. An example are the **office buildings of EWAN al-Bahrain** in Manama (fig. 3.2-11). Khalid Shuaibi, general manager of EWAN al-Bahrain at the time of the field research, amusedly told about the building’s photograph mistakenly having been published in a book about Bahrain’s heritage with a caption that indicated it as a well-known historic vernacular building of 1907 (I 26). Asked what the motivation of his clients is to construction in traditionalist manner Khalid Shuaibi explained:

“They want something that is related to the history. I don’t know, that is my feeling and also our clients’ feelings: if you are doing something with a courtyard, with a Bahraini design, there is a kind of spirit in this house. It gives you some kind of peace or something. They are very happy with this and they are also supporting our idea to rebuilt in a Bahraini design. It is beautiful! [...] The lighting, the circulation of the air, it is healthier than the new houses.” (I 26)

Jassim Ahmed Jassim Ashor added that an additional motivation is “prestige” as “all things that look traditional” generally find public appreciation in Bahrain (I 26). Naturally, the rather cost-intensive traditionalist reconstructions proliferated among the upper class.

The author of this thesis visited the third project EWAN Al-Bahrain started in 2005 with the client. The young Shaikh (I 5), member of the Al-Khalifa family in his thirties, was in the process of completing the construction of a **facsimile vernacular residence** for his own family in Central Bahrain (fig. 3.2-12). Asked about his motivation, he said that the project was born out of a nostalgic interest in Bahrain’s history and heritage. His generation, who was born and raised in modern houses, he explained, started to perceive the local vernacular buildings differently than the generation which had abandoned them:

“For them it’s just a house. Whether it’s an old house or a new house – it’s a house. But for us – we really see the difference because we were born in those modern houses. We look at the old houses and we say: ‘This is really beautiful. We need to live in this!’ So, part of why I want to live in this house is just holding on to something part of my identity.” (I 5)

The courtyard building is based on a concrete foundation but otherwise traditionally constructed from recycled local limestone and traditionally rendered. In addition to a modern air-conditioning, it features a fully functional wind tower, which the client considered an essential Bahraini feature. This and other functional and decorative features were copied from a palatial

building in central Bahrain and probably from Muharraq, according to the interviewee (I 5). The design had been developed jointly by himself, his father, one of the above-mentioned senior master builders of EWAN Al-Bahrain, and the architectural consultancy Gulf House Engineering (I 5).

The young Shaikh, an anthropologist by training and employee of the national heritage authority at the time of the field research, described the design and construction process as an exploration of his own identity and history. However, he also pointed to the fact that the design of the house and the way it was conceived deviates from the buildings that would have been typical in this part of Bahrain. He stressed that the facsimile building does not as much serve as historical testimony and does not have the authentic aura of a real historic building. But he appreciated that with the construction of the traditionalist building, a part of the local architectural heritage was preserved as a source of cultural identity and connection to the past for the coming generations. He also referred to this as a fulfilment of a civil duty to preserve the local culture in the face societal transformations and cultural disorientation:

“Looking at the current state of culture in Bahrain, the current state of society, I think there is no fixed notion of what to build, what to dress, what to wear, what to think, what to believe. [...] Nobody knows, nobody is interested in where they came from, where they are going. They are just stuck in a kind of chaotic present. You know, a kaleidoscopic mishmash of colours and ideas and forms which they can’t make any sense out of.

So, what I try do, and what I inspire maybe in my family, is the idea that we came from somewhere and should preserve it. We should preserve the structures we live in. And we should live in and use these structures rather than just look at them as objects – museum objects and amazing artifacts.” (I 5)

The state of disconnection from the local past and culture which the interviewee described in the above quote coincides with statements in many other interviews. He partly explained this phenomenon with the fact that Bahrainis do not get to “see any part of their history in their everyday life, in their lively world.” (I 5) He lamented a mixture of diffuse pride and ignorance as well as uneasiness linked to current sectarian and geopolitical conflicts in the region:

“I don’t think they really know what is real anymore, from the past. If the past is real. [...] They can’t taste it. But whenever there is an encounter, from a modern Bahraini with the past, he is either scared or amazed or confused. You know, he doesn’t sit easily with the past.” (I 5)

In this context, it has to be noted, that several interviewees explicitly pointed to a lack of historical education in Bahrain:

15: “For some reason, in Bahrain, they don’t write the history, although it is very rich in history and relative to the other Gulf countries. [...] I don’t think we read anything in school about how our government got established. I know we used to pearl and that we used to live from the sea. I know whatever is written in the museum, because I read it all. [...] The information is there, but nobody made a proper book about it. Something to study in school.”

Author: “Where is the information?”

15: “All over the places. Between families. And part of it is in small books. And part of it is with the buildings.”

As a result, another Bahraini interviewee said, she spent all her live looking up to civilizations like the Egyptian and the Roman Empire, not being aware that Bahrain also looks back onto an important history and that built heritage thereof exists as evidence (I 4).

During the same tour, the Shaikh also took the author to two other residential palaces in Riffa, which had recently been restored, extended and partly reconstructed. He commended both projects for preserving parts of the historic buildings and facilitating the continuity of residential use. At the same time, he lamented that parts of the buildings were demolished and that there had been no conservation guidance from the side of the heritage authority:

“They preserve on their own impulse. The Ministry of Culture isn’t there at all to tell them ‘We are here to preserve!’ But anyway...” (I 5)

The author discussed the projects with the interviewee in 2014, when more conservative approaches to architectural conservation were emerging in Bahrain. He hence described an ambivalence of these and similar private restoration and reconstruction initiatives from a conservation point of view. For him, the benefits of preserving the building tradition as a living culture and facilitating continuity of use clearly prevailed over international conservation principles, which the heritage authority had started to promote:

“The fact that we started to renovate or build old houses: we started to create something new. At the same time, we are just expressing what was there before but in a newer sense. [...] Because the fact that there were ruins that were not being used, but that we are reusing now, is a way of continuing the culture without making it relict or fossil. It’s still alive as it was and is being used again. I see it as that. [...] I think this initiative to save or preserve culture – the rush to save it – might erase a part of the building or destroy some part. It will preserve the part which the person undertaking the project wants to preserve, rather than what the government sees, or the government specialist sees as worthwhile preserving. [...] I think this re-interpretation that happens, it could be good or bad. But this is what happens. It’s a reinterpretation. But if I compare reinterpretation of culture to no culture at all, I prefer the reinterpretation.” (I 5)



Fig. 3.2-11 and 3.2-12: The historicizing EWAN offices (left) and newly built private family residence (right) in 2014. Photos: Eva Battis

Without doubt EWAN Al-Bahrain, Gulf House Engineering and their clients’ have to be credited for raising wider awareness for the values of the local building tradition and of the remaining historic houses, even if many projects are debatable in the light of conservation standards. One of the interviewees described his personal enlightenment form working with the architectural consultant (I 17). At the time of the field research, he had applied for an architectural conservation course abroad with the aim of joining into the endeavour of preserving rather than reconstructing Bahrain’s vernacular building stock:

“Joining Gulf House Engineering as an architect two and half years ago was a turning point in my career. You know, after we graduate from the university you think only about design

concepts and you just want to create something new. But then, when I worked in Gulf House, I realized that not only design is what matters. There are some other things that would really help the country. Like the heritage for example.” (I 17)

Gulf House Engineering played an important role when architectural and urban conservation initiatives emerged on a wider scale in the first decade of the 21st century. EWAN Al-Bahrain would moreover come to play a crucial role in conservative restoration projects that picked up in the second decade of the 21st century. By the end of the field research in 2015, the heritage authority was relying foremost on EWAN al-Bahrain for its architectural conservation projects. With ten years of vernacular and semi-vernacular projects, at the time, the company had an advantage over other contractors and experience to share when conservative restorations of vernacular buildings started to be in demand.

3.2.2.5 Heritage conservation in the early 21st century: the Shaikh Ebrahim Center

The early 2000s saw an increase in initiatives that aimed to actually preserve and revitalize vernacular buildings and quarters particularly in Muharraq. In this Shaikha Mai bint Mohammed al-Khalifa played an outstanding role.³⁰ Prior to being assigned head of the national heritage authority in 2009, Shaikha Mai founded a non-governmental association that undertook hands-on urban revitalization in Muharraq and later in other parts of Bahrain. Shaikha Mai founded the **Shaikh Ebrahim bin Mohammed Al Khalifa Center for Culture and Research** in 2002 and named the organization after her late grandfather (mid-19th century – 1933) whom the centre’s webpage describes as a leader in the fields of education, culture and the social sciences.³¹ According to a former employee of the centre and later consultant to the heritage authority Dr. Nadine Boksmati, the intention was to revive the traditional architecture and area of Old Muharraq, which had been abandoned by most of its original inhabitants (I 31).

The centre’s projects range from urban in-fill and design interventions to the preservation of historic buildings in which cultural and educational facilities are installed that relate to intangible heritage associated with the respective building or site. The initiative is funded by private and corporate sponsors. Most projects are located within the neighbourhood of Old Muharraq where the initiative started, but some extend to other parts of the town and to wider Bahrain. All projects are moreover characterized by a strong focus on design. All buildings are delicately furnished and the urban interventions are rather avant-gardist. To date, the Shaikh Ebrahim Center remains the most active non-governmental institution dedicated to the safeguard of local tangible and intangible heritage.

³⁰ At the time of writing Shaikha Mai was president with ministerial prerogatives of the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities while still serving on the board of trustees of the Shaikh Ebrahim bin Mohammed Al Khalifa Center for Culture and Research. After serving as Undersecretary to the Sector of Culture and Heritage, she was appointed Minister of Culture and Information (later Minister of Culture) in 2009, which was renamed Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities (BACA) in 2014. She is niece of the ruler of Bahrain, a historian by education and profession and published about her grandfather’s poetry. Refer to her personal webpage for further information: <https://www.maimohammedalkhalifa.com/> (Accessed January 15, 2022).

³¹ Refer to the centre’s webpage for an overview and description of its projects: <https://shaikhebrahimcenter.org/en/history-of-the-center/> (Accessed January 15, 2022).

At the time of the field research, the centre's portfolio encompassed the adaptation and re-use of nine vernacular buildings, three urban in-fill projects and two artistic public space installations apart from basic infrastructure upgrades. The houses had turned into one of the major tourist attractions in Bahrain and they have further risen in popularity since. The centre's rehabilitated and new buildings are advertised as "traditional houses" on the centre's webpage and widely considered important heritage sites in Bahrain.³²

The author addressed the Shaikh Ebrahim Center's projects in several in-depth interviews and identified many misconceptions about the historicity of the different buildings among the interviewees (I 3,10,46,24,12,33). As will be exemplified in the following, most houses were mistaken as restored or adapted historic buildings. However, few interviewees showed surprise or disapproval when informed they are not historic. The young Bahraini artist's indignation, quoted on this initiative in the preface, was in fact an exception:

"Old buildings are there to last and tell us about the past. But those buildings are fake?! What will I tell my children? That is like I write an autobiography at the end of my life, and I write whatever about who I was!" (I 46)

Only one other young Bahraini (I 17), an architect, was also fundamentally critical of the initiative with regard to authenticity:

"There are some historic – not historic – traditional buildings in Muharraq that I like. But then, when I came to know that they were demolished and rebuilt again, it lost its sense." (I 17)

Selected projects in Muharraq, which the interviewees commented on are described in the following. The centre's urban revitalization in Old Muharraq started with an in-fill project on a plot which belonged to Shaikh Ebrahim's former residence. Since its opening in 2002, the building, which is known as the **Shaikh Ebrahim Center**, has been hosting weekly events in the fields of philosophy, literature, poetry, culture and the arts. It was designed by Abdulla Saad Mohsen Almishari of the local consultancy Bu Saad Engineering with stylistic reminiscences of the local vernacular. It is an entirely new construction. But, with the exception of those who were familiar with the details of the project, all non-architects with whom it was discussed remembered the building as a historic one (I 3,10,12,13). This certainly has to do with the historicizing design that features abundant traditional oriental wooden trellis work. Another feature that was found to play into this perception, is a seemingly historic wall of exposed coral stone masonry purposefully built in the auditorium that was added to the building by 2008 (fig. 3.2-15). The auditorium's otherwise strikingly contemporary design, which was commissioned to the local consultancy Plan Architecture & Design – PAD, was found to "blend well" (I 12) with the historic surroundings while responding to modern standards of living:

³² With the exception of the Nukhida House (fig. 3.2-19), which forms part of the World Heritage listed Pearling Testimony, none of the Shaikh Ebrahim Center's buildings were registered national monuments at the time of writing. A technical report prepared in the course of national strategy planning by the consultancy Atkins nevertheless lists the Shaikh Ebrahim Center houses among the most important and valuable heritage sites in Bahrain (Atkins 2011, 17). Often, the Shaikh Ebrahim Center's houses are moreover falsely considered part of the World Heritage site as the representation in local media and online resources as well as some interviews indicated (I 20,13).

“It has a foot in the past and a foot in today. And we all love our comfort. When you want to attend a lecture, a presentation or a music concert – you want your comfort. You want to sit comfortably. You want beautiful acoustics. You want everything to enjoy the performance. When you go out, you also want to be reminded that this is kind of a historic place.” (I 12)

The centre’s second project in direct vicinity was – like most of the centre’s projects in its first decade – designed by Ahmad Bucheery’s consultancy Gulf House Engineering: the restoration, adaptation and extension of **Abdullah Al Zayed House** in 2002/03 (fig. 3.2-13 and 3.2.14). According to the interpretation provided at the house and on the centre’s webpage, Abdullah Al Zayed (1899-1945) was a local intellectual and founder of the first Bahrain newspaper. His vernacular residence, including a colourfully painted wooden ceiling in the interior, were preserved and complemented with facsimile additions. The central courtyard was roofed with a glass ceiling in contemporary design. Later, a strikingly modern extension was added to the house. Again, the non-architects, who had visited the building in the past, remembered it as a historic, traditional house (I 10,19) while there was greater awareness about the nature of the intervention and the contemporary additions among architects and interviewees involved in heritage conservation in Bahrain (I 17,20,26,31,33). In this group, criticism was raised about the designs of the adaptation and extension (I 20,31). A foreign conservation architect, for example, pointed to a “hotchpotch of features” but appreciated that “old and pseudo-old” were at least differentiable (I 20). Moreover, in this, as in other projects of the centre, interviewees pointed to deficiencies of the provided interpretation:

“I mean, a house like Abdullah Zayed, there is a library in it. It is the house of the first Bahraini who started a newspaper here. He is one of the pioneers in media here in Bahrain. So, that story, I think it is not told in that house. As a character he is very fascinating. But the house does not portray that story.” (I 33)



Fig. 3.2-13, 3.2-14 and 3.2-15: **Exterior and interior views of Abdullah Al Zayed House and the auditorium of Shaikh Ebrahim Centre in Muharraq in 2014.** Photos: Nils Schinker and Eva Battis (right)

The centre’s only project in the neighbourhood that is largely devoid of contemporary features is **Kurar House**. The facsimile courtyard building was equally designed by Gulf House Engineering and built of traditionally rendered concrete blockwork (fig. 3.2-16 and 3.2.17). It opened in 2007 with an exhibition on the local art of *Kurar* gold embroidery. Aiming to safeguard the craft, it is also supposed to serve as a training centre. The building’s simple traditional design is generic. Only the courtyard elevation of one room at ground floor is reminiscent of the sole vernacular fabric that had survived on the plot, albeit in advanced state of deterioration (I 26). The only

elements that were actually physically preserved are the trees in the courtyard which was left uncovered in this project. The trees were found to play an important role for the authentic traditional feel of a typical local courtyard building, which several interviewees commended (I 10,12,20,26,33). Almost all interviewees with whom the project was discussed (I 3,10,12,17,24,33,46), regardless of their professional background, tended to take Kurar House for a restored historic vernacular building.³³ In fact, several interviewees, including many architects who were not familiar with the specificities of the project, considered this building to probably be the most authentic one in form and substance among all the Shaikh Ebrahim Center's works at the time. Khalid Al-Shuaibi, who had been building similar facsimile houses for some years, seemed very surprised to hear that apparently most people – locals and foreigners – mistake the building for a historic one merely due to its vernacular design (I 26). For him the building is “a pure traditional Bahraini”, “an originally Bahraini house” despite being new:

“Why they think it is old? Because it is a Bahraini?” (I 26)

For the director of EWAN al-Bahrain, constructing in the vernacular style in current times was not a matter of “cheating” (I 26), but a matter of safeguarding a living tradition. What he was very critical of, however, were deviations from the vernacular design, like golden coloured *danshal* beams, which he considered untruthful to the local tradition.³⁴ He concluded, however, it might be necessary to indicate the construction date in this and similar projects in order to avoid such misunderstandings.

The following excerpt of an interview with of a long-term Lebanese resident of Bahrain (I 12), artist and civil engineer, exemplifies that Kurar House's special appeal is in fact partly rooted in the illusion of authenticity and historicity it creates:

“I think we love to believe that this is historic. If we go Baalbek, if they rebuilt it completely in concrete, but it looks completely the same, you would feel less towards it, I think. The same applies to the Acropolis. If they tell you: ‘Look at it! Do you like it?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘By the way, we demolished the old one and we did a new one.’ I think, you would feel a little bit ripped off.” [laughing] (I 12)

A young Bahraini interviewee (I 10) – likewise not an architect – who is quoted in the following, seemed at first to consider the notion of betrayal but eventually expressed his approval of the approach taken in Kurar House. Although, like others, he considered the conservation of authentic historic buildings a priority over facsimile reconstructions, he nevertheless appreciated the project as a means of preserving heritage and cultural memory:

10: *“Kurar House is probably one of the most authentic ones.”*

Author: *“What again do you mean when you say authentic?”*

10: *“Not fake.”*

Author: *“If I tell you that except Abdullah Zayed House – a small section of it – it is all fake, it is all concrete, it is all something that never existed?”*

³³ The author herself, when she first visited Kurar House in 2008, could not tell if the building was restored or newly build. Likewise, a survey report from Japanese heritage experts mistook Kurar House as a renovated historic building (JCIC-Heritage 2012).

³⁴ *Danshal* is the local term for mangrove beams used in vernacular buildings. The beams were usually plain wood or painted dark red.

10: “Ya, that can be possible. I know that the Qahwa House³⁵ is all concrete. I would assume the Ebrahim Center is also new. I thought that if there is any house, it would be Kurar House or Abdullah Zayed House.”

Author: “And if I tell you that even Kurar House, there is one room that looks similar to a room that was there before, all the rest is made up. They don’t know what was there. It was something very simple before.”

10: “Ok.”

Author: “How do you feel about that?”

10: [thinking] “I feel like I have been... [pause]. I did not think about it in that way when I saw it. It has the housh [Arabic: courtyard], it has the open area, it looks similar to any old Bahraini house. It doesn’t really bother me that they made it that way, because they didn’t really change much about it. [...]”

Author: “Are they still authentic?”

10: “Now, that you told me that it is all rebuilt, I know it is not authentic. But it doesn’t really bother me. I mean they are there to fulfil a different function. The fact that they used to be houses of ordinary people as places of living and now they have a totally different function, so the whole thing is not authentic. There are no real people living in them. One is a gallery, one shows you how to make women’s dresses and one is a coffee place. And none of them was that function.”

Author: “Does that bother you?”

10: “No. I think it’s a good way of preserving certain cultures. It’s education, because I think many of the new generation have no clue what was... I feel like I have the privilege at least to live in a house similar to Kurar House, it has a housh inside and the rooms around it. New generations don’t have that privilege.”



Fig. 3.2-16 and 3.2-17: **Exterior and interior views of Kurar House in 2014.** Photos: Eva Battis

General appreciation of the overall approach of the Shaikh Ebrahim Center and its individual projects was shared among all interviewees with whom the initiative was discussed. At least two of the Bahraini architects (I 22,32) tended to consider the Shaikh Ebrahim Center’s initiative the starting point of a conservation movement in Bahrain and particularly in Muharraq (I 22,32):

“Maybe the Shaikh Ebrahim Center initiated the conservation.” (I 32)

“It was a society losing its heritage in a way. And losing the interest in a way. [...] Until something happened in the society. And this something happening started maybe with a

³⁵ The House of Coffee is a stylish café opened by the Shaikh Ebrahim Center in the same neighbourhood in 2009.

small house in Muharraq: the Center of Shaikh Ebrahim. And this was not a heritage conservation! It was a new building within a historical setting.” (I 22)

Other interview partners, too, acknowledged that the center was successful in raising awareness of Bahrain’s vernacular architectural heritage and that it started a positive trend in the urban development of Old Muharraq:

“The aim is to get people to come back to Muharraq. At least some of its original residents. It is going to take time. It is a matter of generations. But now you feel people go there, spend time there...” (I 31)

Some interviewees explicitly commended the introduction or preservation of urban greenery (I 3,12,33). A foreign architect took particular interest in the variety of heritage conservation approaches that can be studied in the projects (I 20). Several pointed to the educational and social benefits of the new facilities which include various museums, auditoriums, cafés and two children’s libraries – one established in Muharraq and one in a village in the south of the country (I 20,22,23,25,31). Many interviewees explicitly commended the attempts to promote the country’s varied intangible heritage such as poetry, music and crafts (I 3,12,20,23,25). At the same time, the provided interpretation was often considered deficient and an emphasis on appearances and display rather than on content criticized. Basic information was found to be missing as much as an overall narrative (I 31,33):

“You are not sure whether people get the messages out of these houses.” (I 31)

The interviewees, actually pointed to a range of authenticity deficits, including a lack of an integrated approach to urban planning and clear vision for the initiative (I 31,23,31). The Bahrain-based Lebanese interior designer and architect involved in most of the centre’s projects, Janan Habib, said at hindsight:

“And in fact, in the beginning, I would say, for whom is this? For these upper-class ladies, the Shaikhas, who come for the opening parties? [...] It was not a discussion. The point was: let’s do it!” (I 25)

There was a consensus among the interviewees with whom the Shaikh Ebrahim Center was discussed that this actionist courage is what constitutes its main strength and made it “a great initiative” (I 31) and “great project at that time” (I 24):

“So that approach, you can’t totally bash it, because it was the first things that were done in Bahrain. And it was actually a very bold move to just go in there and just restore whatever is there. Of course, in terms of conservation ethics, there is nothing really to hold on to. Because the spaces were usually completely changed or completely built from zero with a traditional look. Features that didn’t exist anywhere before, were used. So, it had a very important cultural impact. But in terms of authenticity, it has very little value.” (I 23)

The above quoted Bahrain-based Lebanese conservation architect Ghassan Chemali elaborated on the conjectural designs and lack of historical research:

“The language is created and everything is built up from nothing. Without proper research, without proper archaeology, without proper investigation.” (I 23)

Like other architects he moreover expressed doubts about the sustainability of the approach by pointing to the limits of converting former residences into museums as a means of urban revitalization (I 20,22,23,24,25). Several interviewees pointed to a certain elitism, lack of liveliness or feeling of alienation towards the restored houses (I 12,25,31,33):

“They are beautiful houses. They are well done. But they are missing life sometimes. [...] It is elitist. Some people will feel intimidated also to come. I am not sure. And this is not the point in Muharraq.” (I 31)

Clearly, there were also reservations with regard to the atmosphere of the buildings and urban spaces as the follow two quotes exemplify:

“If you continue doing everything the same way in Muharraq, then Muharraq will all have this fake, detached atmosphere.” (I 23)

“The initiative was very good, to preserve these houses, to preserve this quarter and to bring people to come to it. But I always feel there is a missing element in these houses. I am not sure how to put my finger on it in a sense.” (I 31)

One Bahraini interviewee, who grew up in Muharraq, expressed a fundamental authenticity concern. In his eyes, the neighbourhood of Shaikh Ebrahim Centre in Muharraq has been purposefully turned into a heritage area by projecting cultural significances onto what had been rather standard vernacular houses in an ordinary traditional neighbourhood:

“During much of my primary school time, between 8 and 12, that was my playground. I never heard of the Shaikh Ebrahim Center or all of those other historical or heritage, traditional places until they have been done in the last few years. So, I have no connection with that. In my opinion, it is just an old house and they wanted to turn it into a cultural centre. And all of the other places, they were just houses of normal people, who have different functions in society. And they decided to turn that neighbourhood into a historical neighbourhood. [...] But the only objection I have to that is that I feel it is being advertised like it has always been such houses. I don’t think this area is more significant than any other part of Old Muharraq. In any sense. [...] I don’t know who is Shaikh Ebrahim. I don’t know what he did – I mean his contribution to society. [...] Probably the fact that he comes from the royal family helps a lot, and the fact that he is related to the Minister of Culture – it’s the grandfather. If I was the Minister of Culture, probably I would make the area of my grandfather the cool area. So, it makes sense.” (I 10)

Overall, authenticity of substance and design were clearly overruled by considerations for adaptive-reuse and for the presentation of intangible heritage associated with the buildings in the first decade of the centre’s work. Janan Habib tried to explain this with the nature of Arab culture which, in her eyes, attributes greater importance to poetry and narratives than to tangible vestiges of the past.³⁶ On Janan Habib’s account, what triggered Shaikha Mai to found the centre was a dream she had in which her late grandfather, whom she was familiar with from his poetry, asked her to do so (I 25):

25: “As everything, it started with a dream. But this really WAS a dream! What was surprising for me, is that I realized that actually Shaikh Ebrahim passed away in 1933. Which is really interesting. Because this is so much part of the Arab culture: the word, the poetry, and the narration. Which links you to the past in a way that you feel that it is present. Which is very particular to the Arab world.”

Author: “More than the building, you think?”

25: “The building? Definitely! The building does not mean anything to them. Don’t believe that.”

³⁶ Along those lines, an international consultancy’s report on Bahrain’s cultural heritage pointed out in 2007 that “there is much clearer appreciation in the middle-east than many places in the west, of the value of what is termed intangible heritage, which includes cultural traditions, songs, dances, narratives and traditional crafts [...]” (Skidmore et al. 2007)

Author: "In Europe it is the opposite, isn't it?"

25: "Of course! Because here they started as Bedouins with a tent and they just move on. You built, you destruct and then you build again. And you know, it is not the foundation. It's the word. It's the memory of the word."

By the end of the first decade of the 21st century, criticism of the Shaikh Ebrahim Center's early projects – foremost from conservation experts of the heritage authority (I 25) but also by other experts³⁷ – somewhat marred the fruitful cooperation between the Shaikh Ebrahim Center and the architectural consultancy Gulf House Engineering. Architectural revivalism which characterized many initiatives in the early 21st century, were seen more and more critically. In the second decade of the 21st century, projects of the Shaikh Ebrahim Center started to show an impact of international architectural conservation standards introduced in the course of Bahrain's second World Heritage nomination, as will be discussed below.

3.2.2.6 Architectural and urban conservation in Muharraq for UNESCO World Heritage

By the end of the first decade of the 21st century, Shaikha Mai was able to extend her influence and efforts for the safeguard of Bahrain's heritage in her function as Assistant Undersecretary of the Sector for Culture and National Heritage at the Ministry of Information and eventually as Minister of Culture. Cultural heritage moreover had started to play a key role in national strategic development planning. International consultancies involved in the national planning processes acknowledged the government's and namely Shaikha Mai's achievements in "attracting private investment for capital works associated with culture and heritage" (Atkins 2011, 17). With regard to architectural conservation, the reports recommended further heritage inventories as well as capacity building and guidance for conservation works in addition to strengthening legislative and planning tools (Atkins 2011; Skidmore et al. 2007). With a view to national identity construction, it was also recommended to enhance "Bahrain's reputation on the world stage as a place with a rich history and culture." (Atkins 2011, 21). In line with this, Bahrain established the Arab Regional Center for World Heritage (ARC-WH) in Manama in 2012. The centre's objective is to aid the implementation of the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention in the Arab region, including the development of human skills and capacities for heritage conservation (Arab Regional Center for World Heritage 2022).³⁸ Bahrain also hosted the World Heritage Committee Meeting in 2018 after a previous attempt fell victim to the political turmoil in 2011. The second decade of the 21st century moreover led to the inscription of two more Bahraini World Heritage sites and preparations for further nominations.

Particularly the preparation of the Bahrain's second World Heritage site led to an increased exposure to international heritage conservation standards and to the involvement of a larger number of foreign, predominantly Arab experts in architectural conservation on behalf of the heritage authority.

³⁷ Japanese heritage experts for example reported to the heritage authority in 2012 that the Shaikh Ebrahim Center's projects, rather than focusing on restoring historic buildings and preserving them "in their existing state," were foremost dedicated to their adaptive reutilization for cultural and educational purposes (JCIC-Heritage 2012, 62).

³⁸ Refer to the centre's website for further information: <https://www.arcwh.org/>. Accessed January 12, 2022.

The serial site with the name **Pearling, Testimony of an Island Economy** (short: Pearling Testimony) consists of a representative selection of oyster beds in the territorial waters of Bahrain and seventeen vernacular buildings in twelve clusters in Old Muharraq. The latter are linked by a visitor pathway – the so-called Pearling Pathway – of 3,5km length. Each building represents a particular function within the pearling society on the basis of an individual family property that together illustrate the social hierarchies and the lifestyle of the pearling era.³⁹

The initiative to nominate a narrative site that would tell the story of pearl harvest and trade in Bahrain was driven by the intention to preserve and promote a site that would reflect the cultural identity of the widest possible range of people from contemporary Bahraini society.⁴⁰ This happened in reaction to an Islamic group’s campaign in the local media that accused the heritage authority of administering exclusively heritage sites that did not reflect Bahraini identity (I 44). In response, Shaikha Mai in her position as Undersecretary at the national heritage authority masterminded the narrative site together with Dr. Britta Rudolff in her position as counsellor to the same ministry in 2006.

The nomination process involved extensive research ranging from the identification of representative vernacular buildings and the documentation of associated oral histories of the collective pearling memory (Battis 2012). It was not until the turn to the second decade of the 21st century, that architectural conservation started at the site. Most of the selected buildings were fragile if not ruinous when the site was proposed to UNESCO in 2010. At the time of the field research, the architectural conservation works on the Pearling Testimony were hence still in their infancy.



Fig. 3.2-18 and 3.2-19: **The Siyadi Ensemble and the restored Nukhida House with urban space intervention along the Pearling Pathway in 2014.** Photos: Eva Battis

The site’s first restoration project was the above mentioned **Nukhida House** (fig. 3.2-19). The simple vernacular structure, which originally served a boat captain as reception building, was restored and adapted in a cooperation of the heritage authority and the Shaikh Ebrahim Center for Culture and Research. A German conservation architect, Wolfgang Koelisch, gave initial advice for the restoration which was then commissioned to the local consultancy Plan

³⁹ For a description of all individual buildings refer to the site’s official webpage at <https://pearlingpath.bh/en/> (accessed January 29, 2022) or to the site’s entry on the website of the World Heritage Centre at <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1364/> (accessed June 28, 2022).

⁴⁰ The term narrative site is here used to indicate that the collective memory and representation of Bahrain’s pearling history by means of narrative discourse (Abbott 2008) lends the core value to the heritage site.

Architecture & Design. The building opened to public in 2011 with an exhibition on the role of boat captains and their relation to the divers within the pearling economy. The three interviewees who commented on the project expressed appreciation about the exhibition (I 3) and the tasteful integration of new and old fabric (I 12,16). At the same time, the conservation architect among them criticized that a small section of the historic building had been deliberately destroyed to make space for the new parts (I 16). Similar criticism was at the time shared by experts involved in the nomination and led to a fundamental shift in conservation approach in the following projects. In fact, ICOMOS and the World Heritage Committee referred the nomination back to the State Party in 2011 due to concerns that the capacities required for conservation measures in line with international standards might not be available in Bahrain (ICOMOS 2012c). Clearly, the World Heritage inscription required a more conservation approach than previously practiced in the country. To this end, the heritage authority hired a permanent conservation expert, Dr. Alaa el-Habashi from Egypt, who had been trained in the United States. He led the governmental conservation projects in the following years and built local capacities for the works. One of the two first projects, which stand for the new approach, which the heritage authority pioneered between 2010 and 2012, are the vernacular Siyadi Shops in Muharraq which serve this case study as second reference site. The project is described and analysed in chapter 3.4.1. A second example, Bayt Shaikh Salman Bin Hamad Al Khalifa, will be introduced below. The Pearling Testimony eventually came under the protection of the World Heritage Convention in 2012 after these conservative projects had started and their documentation been submitted to UNESCO as an update to the nomination (Kingdom of Bahrain 2012a).



Fig. 3.2-20 and 3.2-21: **Column in Bayt Shaikh Salman during and after restoration.** Photos: Eva Battis

Figures 20 and 21 illustrate the new approach to architectural conservation in Bahrain which the heritage authority promoted. It shows a repaired column with a capital in **Bayt Shaikh Salman Bin Hamad Al Khalifa**. The restoration of the late 18th and 19th century palace in Old Muharraq in 2010 and 2011 was an important capacity building initiative, which took place in parallel to the restoration of the Siyadi Shops. The large ruler's palace does not form part of the World Heritage site, but contrary to the rather simple architecture of the Siyadi Shops, it is richly adorned with incised gypsum panels, friezes and merlons as well as wooden carvings on doors and windows. Similar delicate decorative features also characterize the nominated buildings at the upper end of the pearling hierarchy, foremost Siyadi Majlis (fig. 3.2-18). Building capacities for their conservation was hence one important objective in this project. To this end, the heritage authority engaged a team of Egyptian and Sudanese conservators under the lead of Dr.

Alaa el-Habashi.⁴¹ Bayt Shaikh Salman had been among the first buildings to be restored in the 1970s and 80s and was since that time covered with a thick layer of cement render. The column was discovered when removing this layer. The conservation team elaborately reassembled and consolidated the capitel's disintegrating elements. Batches of original surface plaster were consolidated and stand out among the recessed new render. In an interview, a young architect from the Philippines, who was trained by the heritage authority at Bayt Shaikh Salman, appreciatingly referred to the column when explaining that architectural conservation is not about "beautification" but about preserving original fabric (I 30). Contrary to that perception, a non-architect whom the author interviewed at Bayt Shaikh Salman considered that in the case of this detail, the building's museification had been overdone (I 12).

The third project of the Pearling Testimony that was completed at the time of the field research – following the Nukhida House and the Siyadi Shops – was **Bayt al-Ghus** (Diver's House). The simple, one-storey courtyard building had long been rented out as accommodation to migrant labourers and was in an advanced state of deterioration. With one exception (I 26) all interviewees who commented on the project (I 1,2,12,26,32) were highly appreciative of its restoration between 2012 and 2014:

"It's so beautiful. [...] I think this is very authentic to the original. I am sure they did a lot of renovation to save the place. You can tell it was in dilapidated state. It is very inviting. You go in, you feel the intimacy of the place, you breath its history." (I 12)

At the building's opening ceremony in 2014 (fig. 3.2-23), the author talked to three local community members from the neighbourhood who all were in their thirties (I 1,2). They commended the atmosphere of the restored Ghus House, with the exception of one room with artistic sculptures that was conserved in its ruinous state (fig. 3.2-22). The partners of interview 2 thought the room was frightening. All three of them expressed feelings of pride and nostalgia for the past, for the pearling era and for the local building tradition. One of them mistook the restored wooden entrance door with a replica. He thought it had replaced a metallic entrance door of the type shown in figure 3.2-25. Although the interviewee did not consider such doors particularly "nice," he rightfully identified them as a typical feature that emerged numerously in Muharraq in the second half of the 20th century and attached feelings of nostalgia to them (I 1). Again, a tree in the courtyard was highlighted by several interviewees (I 2,12):

"I like the tree... Actually, I miss this, because my grandfather's house was just like that. And they have sold it 14 years ago. [...] So, we used to enjoy this kind of atmosphere. Now it all disappeared..." (I 2-1)

The only fundamental criticism was expressed by Khaled Shuaibi from EWAN al-Bahrain, who carried out the restoration. He disapproved of the fact that the building's new surface plaster had been artificially patinated on the request of the heritage authority. He considered this untruthful to the vernacular building tradition and to the sense of place of the traditional house (I 26).

Not all interviewees were moreover fully satisfied with the exhibition which is supposed to illustrate the working conditions of the pearl divers (I 32). Others however pointed to the importance of the exhibition to tourists and younger generations of Bahrainis, who did not witness the pearling era (I 2). The same interviewees wished for the playing of local pearl diving

⁴¹ The author was in charge of the documentation of the team's works and their logistics.

music, which was played by a live band during the opening event (I 2), as an additional means of interpretation:

"Music would be nice. We would enjoy that. You know, we don't hear those songs a lot." (I 2)

The three interviewees from the neighbourhood (I 1,2) were aware and appreciative of the UNESCO World Heritage status. They were looking forward with anticipation to the completed narrative site and associated urban upgrade from which they expected new community facilities (I 1,2):

"It's very good! They keep it in the UNESCO because if they don't repair it, they will lose it." (I 1)

What characterized the new conservation approach was the dedication to authenticity in substance as well as form and design in line with the Venice Charter. In the course of the restoration and adaptation of the individual buildings of the Pearling Testimony, historic fabric was preserved where possible. The designs and construction methods of reconstructions and additions were to be based on site analyses, archival research and oral history documentation. Detailed documentation of the works and preceding archaeological investigations were promoted as new requirements for interventions in historic contexts. The heritage authority also set up a centre to train Bahraini women as restorers and organized public lectures on architectural and urban conservation.



Fig. 3.2-22 and 3.2-23: **Opening ceremony of Bayt al-Ghus in 2014.** Photos: Eva Battis

The works on the World Heritage site were moreover accompanied by broader urban conservation and development works which continue in the third decade of the 21st century. This includes the functional and aesthetic upgrade of urban spaces as well as a number of new construction projects including several iconic interventions by contemporary architects of international renown. It also involved legal protection for a wider range of vernacular buildings throughout Old Muharraq and the setup of a so-called emergency team. Its task is to stabilize buildings that are in imminent danger of collapse as a preparatory step for more thorough restoration works.

In this context, in 2014, the heritage authority was investing considerable efforts into the preservation of some simple courtyard buildings in Muharraq that dated in substance predominantly from the 1960s to 70s (fig. 3.2-24 to 3.2-26). Built partly of concrete blockwork, fitted with metallic windows with sash bars and metallic doors that were typical at the time, and rendered with spray plaster, the buildings certainly stand for a transitional period before the vernacular principles were entirely abandoned. On a joint visit of one of the buildings with the

commissioned contractor, EWAN al-Bahrain, Khaled al-Shuaibi expressed his reluctance to reinforce the fragile structure of otherwise questionable architectural merit (I 26). Obviously, there was little understanding for the initiative to undertake the complicated matter of trying to preserve this particular building:

“But the ministry, or the consultant in the ministry, said, this is the transfer between the old to the new method.” (I 26b)

Since the case study’s inquiry, works along the Pearling Pathway and throughout Old Muharraq have continued. The achievements were internationally acknowledged in 2019, when the revitalization of Muharraq received the Aga Khan Award for Architecture (Aga Khan Foundation 2019). In the same year, Muharraq joined the UNESCO Creative Cities Network and was labelled “Creative City of Design” for integrating history, art and architecture and combining the city’s Arabic character with international standards of modernity. The local architect Suha Hasan analysed in 2022 that diverging conservation approaches were being applied along the Pearling Pathway. According to her analysis, the conservation in the south section of the pathway, which is now being led by the Spanish conservation architect Dr. Lucía Gómez-Robles, “is subtle and blends in with the old fabric.” (Hasan 2022, 216) The northern part, which has come under the lead of the Dutch architect Anne Holtrop, whose signature architecture is of international renown, on the contrary “stands in contrast from the environs.” (Hasan 2022, 216) The perception of the different approaches by the local community would make an interesting study. However, such dichotomy was not yet perceivable at the time of the field research, when conservation works along the Pearling Pathway had only started. All seventeen buildings of the Pearling Testimony are supposed to be restored by the end of 2022 and equipped with interpretation facilities by 2023.



Fig. 3.2-24, 3.2-25 and 3.2-26: **Protected transitional buildings in Muharraq in 2014.** Photos: Eva Battis

3.2.2.7 The impact of international conservation principles

The promotion of international standards of conservation principles by the heritage authority started to have repercussions in private architectural conservation projects at the time of the field research. Clearly, clients, planners and contractors started to adapt in one way or another to the new paradigm of material authenticity which was promoted by the heritage authority.

A stronger concern for the preservation of authentic fabric was perceivable in the projects of the Shaikh Ebrahim Center and in private VIP projects by EWAN al-Bahrain (I 5,26). Given their previous experience, EWAN al-Bahrain had in fact become the most important contractor for the rapidly increasing number of conservative projects by the government, by the Shaikh Ebrahim Center and by individual clients at the time. Output from the on-the-job- training by the conservation experts of the heritage authority thus triggered to the private building sector. During the field research several interviewees considered that the public and private projects led by Shaikha Mai were becoming better and better “because they are becoming more sensitive to the material and the environment and there is more understanding for the value of the old structure.” (I 25)

The interior designer and architect Janan Habib referred to the latest project by the Shaikh Ebrahim Center in 2014, which she had been in charge of, as the “culmination” of this development (I 25). The project called **Memory of the House** is a seemingly strictly conservative restoration of a single vernacular room by EWAN al-Bahrain. A fascinating discovery had been made within the inconspicuous building in the vicinity of the Shaikh Ebrahim Centre in Muharraq: a single historic room which allegedly belonged to the formerly extensive residence of Shaikh Ebrahim. The windowless room was originally adorned with wall niches that characterize most traditional rooms in Bahrain and with ornamentally carved gypsum panels above them. As the street level rose, the room was however horizontally divided and its vernacular features were hidden. A left-over space remained below-street level, and a plain, modernized upper room above (I 26). The new floor divided the wall niches which were the only visible features that gave away the historic origin of the room when inspected in 2013. The new floor level was thereupon removed. The room’s original features were restored, including its original access via a small internal hallway, its traditional *danshal* ceiling and its wall niches with coloured framing (fig. 3.2-27).

The project was ceremoniously inaugurated at the time of the field research in 2014 and advertised by the Shaikh Ebrahim Center personnel as “all original – *mille bil mille* [Arabic: 100%].”⁴² (I 48) The attendees of the opening ceremony – including members of the local elite, Bahraini and foreign representatives of institutions, employees of the heritage authority as well as a local community members – responded with appreciative and surprised avowals about the clearly different approach the Shaikh Ebrahim Center had chosen to restore this “very old” and “nice”, “typical Bahraini” room and revered the nostalgia and awe it inspires (I 48). A journalist commented that he had never seen a restoration like this in Bahrain and an official of the heritage authority judged that “something went wrong in the 90s.” (I 48)

Indeed, the restored room looks very similar to those which the authority’s conservation team had laboriously worked on at the above-mentioned palace Bayt Shaikh Salman. However, in this room, no traces remain of its former division and modernization. The rather homogenous surfaces of traditional wall plaster bear no scars that would tell about the past disfigurement and recent rediscovery of the room. A window that had been broken into the street facade was

⁴² Similarly, the center’s webpage describes the room as “a single memory” of Shaikh Ebrahim’s original residence – “faithful in its gestures and details,” “witness and guardian of time.” (Shaikh Ebrahim Center 2014)

closed up “seamlessly” for the sake of aesthetics (I 25). Unfortunately, an archaeological wall window, which showed layers of different colour schemes of the frames around the wall niches were painted over, too, allegedly at the request of the client (I 26). Some of the carved gypsum panels were removed to make space for fibreboard imitations which serve as serviceable covers of AC outlets. The historic wooden door which gives access to the room was recycled from a different building (I 26). Only in the hallway from which the room is entered, the concept of differentiating between preserved and new plaster was experimented with upon the advice of the heritage authority (I 25) (fig. 3.2-28). Janan Habib was very upset about the aesthetics of this detail and expressed a fundamental concern about the newly advocated conservation approach:

“We can’t hurt ourselves. [...] It has to look good. No matter what, there is a certain sense of aesthetic that has to be there!”

In her eyes, the stark contrast between the pearly white new plaster and the rather dark brownish historic remains “looked like a cancer.” As if to denounce the intervention as a mumification of what she considered a living heritage she exclaimed:

“They are not so old! People still build like this. They still live in these places. They still identify with this. The heritage is still alive!” (I 25)

The quote is indicative of certain local authenticity conflicts that will be further discussed throughout the case study. The example also stands for a tendency to apply the new conservation paradigm foremost in image and appearance. Apart from actually preserving more historic fabric, newer projects at the time of the field research displayed a vintage charm that the earlier projects lacked.



Fig. 3.2-27 and 3.2-28: **The restored room at Memory of the House and plaster detail in the hallway in 2014.** Photos: Eva Battis

In addition, historical research and documentation of architectural interventions certainly did not play the role they should in private sector projects at the time of the field research. The heritage authority struggled with these requirements even in the governmental projects. However, some positive trends were perceivable in this regard, too. The construction of the **Mohammed Bin Faris Music Hall** in the Suq of Muharraq by the Shaikh Ebrahim Center was for example accompanied by archaeologists from Oxford Brooks University, whom the heritage authority had gotten engaged in the context of the nomination of the Pearling Testimony. The concert hall opened in 2013 after its rather futuristic design was adapted to the

finds. These were integrated in the souterrain of the hall and made publicly accessible. Unfortunately, however, there is no interpretation that explains them as remains of a settlement from the 7th and 8th century AD (Carter and Naranjo-Santana 2011). Hence, few people know about this (I 31).

With regard to the **colonial architectural heritage**, a report published in 2006 in the context of a capacity-building initiative for enhanced urban governance, pointed to the danger of focusing the dawning urban and architectural conservation efforts on the vernacular heritage at the expense of important colonial-style buildings (El-Habashi 2006, 227). A growing, albeit comparatively weaker interest in Bahrain's colonial-style architecture and heritage can be noted for the second decade of the 21st century. By 2012, several colonial-style buildings, including a number of school edifices from the mid-20th century had been added to the national heritage register (Kingdom of Bahrain 2012b). The most prestigious of the projects dedicated to colonial-style buildings are the restoration of the gateway building, the Post Office and Police Station as well as the Customs House within the urban ensemble of the first reference site at Bab al-Bahrain which are discussed in chapter 3.3.3. Other restorations of the colonial style edifices that are expression of this raising attention at the time of the field research include the restoration of the Awal cinema, later Lulu cinema, in Qudaibiya and the Bahrain Hotel in Manama.

3.2.2.8 Challenges, perceptions and criticism of the local conservation practice

Implementing the new conservation standards in the second decade of the 21st century involved a range of challenges. These were not restricted to technical issues related to the structural specificities of the historic buildings or to the difficulties of sourcing traditional construction materials.⁴³ In addition to a lack of architectural conservation experts, there was a lack of familiarity with conservation principles and standards on all levels of stakeholders (I 7). Contractors were for example neither familiar with the imponderables which conservation projects involve nor aware of the level of research, flexibility and documentation they require. Chemicals and tools needed for conservation works were hardly available locally. Training initiatives for labourers were hampered by the fact that hardly any Bahraini nationals are willing to work in the construction sector. Interviews in the course of the field research moreover indicate that appreciation for the conservation of the run-down vernacular fabric might be exceptional among the labourers who fill the gap (I 27,30). The author interviewed one of the most dedicated Indian labourers working with the heritage authority's emergency team. Originally trained in IT, he had a certain proficiency in English. He said that he and his co-workers saw value in their architectural conservation work (I 27). Contrary to this statement, an architect from the Philippines who supervised the team, said that the workers would usually speak contemptuously of the historic buildings and ask questions such as:

"This building is no use, so why do they have to rebuild this? Why do we have to stabilize this building?" (I 30)

⁴³ For details refer to the author's assessment of the information source 'Traditions, techniques and management systems' for the second reference site in chapter 3.4.3.3. For newer insights into technical conservation issues within the larger World Heritage Site refer to Motisi et al, 2019.

According to expert interviews such lack of appreciation also extended to large parts of the local community (I 7,25,30), particularly to the younger generations (I 7,30). According to the above cited architect, younger Bahrainis would pass by the emergency team's construction sites in Muharraq and ask:

"Why do you have to restore this rubbish building?" (I 30)

Certain reservations towards the conservation certainly also have to do with the fact that vernacular buildings require much maintenance. This was problematized in several interviews. Older people however, would typically be more appreciative and start "reminiscing all the past" when entering to the construction sites. (I 30)

Moreover, the strong property rights posed a challenge and were the reason why the heritage authority had previously purchased any private buildings when designated as monuments. That solution was no longer desirable in the case of the World Heritage nomination of the Pearling Testimony nor practicable in the face of the large number of buildings that were registered in that context.⁴⁴ Solutions to maintain private ownership in the case of heritage designation hence had to be negotiated for the first time. Last but not least, it was necessary to raise extensive public and private funds.

Several experts problematized a lack of appreciation for the government's urban conservation efforts in Muharraq among the local community, particularly among the youth. This impression does not comply with the findings from the inquiry but might be due to the fact that hardly any locals younger than mid-20s were interviewed. There was generally much appreciation among both foreign and local interviewees of the efforts to preserve the dwindling architectural heritage as well as awareness that these efforts significantly increased in the 21st century:

"It's only a few years back that they are trying to keep the heritage places. Before, they abandoned everything. They were not bothered to keep their heritage places and their historical buildings." (I 11)

"There was this period at the end of the last century when they just weren't interested in heritage. They did everything new. And now they realize what they lost, I think. Shaikha Mai has!" (I 19)

Among the interviewees there was uncontested acclaim for Shaikha Mai bint Mohammed Al Khalifa's role as key driver behind the development in heritage conservation (I 5,10,11,12,15,19,22,25,26,31,49):

"Now, there are – what you see in the last 15 years – very rewarding efforts that started from the believe of the Minister, the current Minister of Culture, Shaikha Mai. I think it was a personal appreciation and motivation to make sure to preserve whatever is left and even to rebuild some of the sites which you would think are of no hope. But she is doing tremendous efforts to preserve and conserve these sites. And this I appreciate a lot. [...] All the major houses that have been restored and form part of the cultural scene are initiated by Shaikha Mai. I don't recall earlier Ministers of Culture or individuals who have been keen and devoted to preserve the cultural heritage of the island." (I 12)

⁴⁴ In 2010, the heritage register was expanded from previously 26 mostly archaeological sites to a total of 141 monuments with a majority of vernacular buildings (Kingdom of Bahrain 2010a). With further designations of both archaeological and vernacular heritage sites the heritage register reached a total of 179 sites in 2015 (Kingdom of Bahrain 2015). The register is continuously expanded but unfortunately not publicly accessible.

“We appreciate what Shaikha Mai is doing also because everybody is looking for what I said: the Bahraini identity.” (I 26)

In her double function as head of the national heritage authority and founder of the Shaikh Ebrahim Center, Shaikha Mai is certainly unrivalled in her dedication to preserving what remains of Bahrain’s tangible but also intangible heritage in the 21st century and to celebrating it locally and globally. Interviewees also praised her ability to raise funds for heritage conservation and to bring back heritage back to the every-day life of people:

“It is becoming more than, like you know, I have a few images in a museum about heritage, to the experiencing of heritage.” (I 22)

Overall, Dr. Yarwood’s perception of Shaikha Mai’s achievements was shared by the interviewees:

“I rather think that Shaikha Mai has failed to reverse the non-commitment of Bahrain to urban conservation, but—having said that—she has done as much as any human being could have done, and deserves the gratitude of all of us.” (Yarwood 2011, xvii)

Regardless of such fundamental thankfulness, there was some criticism of Shaikha Mai’s initiatives, some of which was already alluded to in the project examples above.

One interviewee raised the question if the government projects indeed aim to foster Bahraini cultural identity or if they are much rather politically motivated:

“For example, like the fact that Bahrain has two UNESCO heritage sites recognized in such a short time is solely due to the Ministry of Culture’s efforts. But the question is: why does the Ministry do it? Why does it focus on culture? Is it really in order to preserve a Bahraini identity for Bahrainis or is it to try and have some sort of international say in politics? Because culture is a political tool.” (I 8)

The criticism that Bahrain’s recent heritage conservation practice has moved away from local to global values is shared by some scholars (Fibiger 2011; Exell and Trinidad 2014).

There were also some critical comments from the interviewees on the fact that Shaikha Mai promotes her own, royal family heritage (I 10,48). It shall, however, be highlighted that Shaikha Mai’s engagement extends to all parts of Bahrain and to heritage of varied social, ethnic and confessional backgrounds.

The strong design focus which characterizes all of Shaikha Mai’s architectural and urban projects was seen critically particularly by heritage professionals (I 7,23,32,31). As described above, interviewees criticized a certain elitism (I 25,31,33) as well as lack of sustainability of the revitalization projects. This extended to criticism of a lack of community involvement, coordination among governmental stakeholders and reconciliation of divergent stakeholder interests (I 5,8,20,22,23,24,25,49). Taking the local community along in the process and putting the urban and architectural conservation efforts, which were still largely confined to a local elite at the time of the field research, on wider shoulders was explicitly pointed out as a dimension of authenticity by some interviewees (I 7,8,23,49):

Author: “Authenticity is there in the stone, in the fabric?”

23: “Yes. And it is also there in the slowness of the process. Because if you come and change everything right from the start – like this design approach – then there is no time for the society to actually digest what you are doing and slowly reintegrate. If you are working from a point of view of a policy you will slowly engage people and NGOs and slowly engage them in restoration and into taking care of their own heritage and their own houses.”

A criticism of a prevalent focus on material conservation in recent architectural and urban conservation practice at the expense of an integrated approach is also expressed in scholarly works (Alraouf 2014; Aga Sha 2019).

Experts among the interviewees moreover criticized a lack of research in architectural and urban projects (I 7,23,32) partly due to time pressure in most projects. Such research deficit was considered to extend to the documentation of intangible heritage associated with the individual buildings:

“The belief systems, the norms and the uses of these structures. So that a large picture is painted.” (I 5)

Last but not least, a lack of interpretation facilities or deficiencies of their content were pointed out in many projects (I 32,31,33).

3.2.2.9 Local authenticity conflicts and cultural contingencies

In various interviews (I 7,22,23,25,26,48) experts of the heritage authority and people cooperating with them admitted that in the process, they learned from each other but also pointed to a number of conflicts that relate to authenticity. These range from controversies about technicalities of architectural conservation to more fundamental concerns including diverging authenticity definitions.

Not all interviewees were for example appreciative of the fact that Shaikh Mai turned away from traditionalist architecture (I 26,22). Her early projects often involved a feigned contrast between new constructions in contemporary and historicising designs. Out of design preference or for the sake of conservation principles, or both, her later projects are instead characterized by more conservative approaches to historic elements which are set in striking contrast with often avant-gardist new additions. It was described above and will be further explored throughout the case study, that some interviewees perceived this turn as a forceful museification of the vernacular architecture. Khaled al-Shuaibi considered the abandonment of architectural revivalism and the tenet of “presenting the old as old and the new as new” to even undermine the local cultural identity (I 26):

“I am against this! I say: still, I want my identity. Still, I want my identity. To present Bahrain as Bahraini. Even here in Bahrain, we are very rich in architecture. [...] It is collected from India, from... But at the end this is what we call Bahraini.” (I 26)

The British urban planner John Yarwood and the Bahrain-based Lebanese architect Dr. Souheil El-Masri – both fervent proponents of regionalism in architecture – shared the view that the act of creating regional architecture “is a necessary step to securing authentic self-regard and a fully independent identity.” (Yarwood and Al-Masri 2006, 202) In a joint publication they problematized the global condemnation of traditionalist architecture in favour of Western Modernism as “an issue of cultural colonialism whether imposed or self-imposed.” (ibid.) John Yarwood hence early on promoted the reconstruction of demolished vernacular houses in Bahrain that he had surveyed in the 1980s (Yarwood 2011). He argues “that fakery is really an authentic part of historical change and development, and that the modernist obsession with originality or ‘authenticity’ should be seen for what it is.” (Yarwood 2011, 55):

“In 2007, I proposed reconstruction of many (wholly demolished) historic buildings in Muharraq. The sites were still vacant. I said that new conditions of living should be accommodated, and this would mean some change to the materials and technical designs concerned. Would that be immoral fakery?” (Yarwood 2011, 55)

The notion that the vernacular building craft should be considered and treated as a living tradition rather than a historic relict was shared by other interviewees (I 25,33):

“I think as a style, the traditional one is nice. Why not build in it? But maybe just make it clear that this is new.” (I 33)

“This word historic freaks me out! I mean tradition. That’s tradition. Historic! Historic! Conservation! Big words for this. [...] Let’s stop the masquerade!” (I 25)

With reference to the Memory of the House project, Janan Habib specified her criticism expressed in the above quote. Pointing to the relatively young age of the vernacular buildings, she advocated a subtle rather than a stark contrast between historic and new fabric – another important aspect of authenticity that will be further explored throughout the case study:

“I mean the conservation has been an inspiration of course. And the concept of defining the old and the new is great. But in fact, the old and new should blend more seamlessly than how the conservationists or the norm of UNESCO... or I don’t know. Because this [the vernacular fabric] is not really that old, and it [the repair] is not really that new. But, I mean, it has to blend. But one has to be able to detect with his eyes, not to have something that looks sickly, or looks like a cancer of the wall.” (I 25)

Janan Habib also elaborated on reviving the vernacular architectural tradition, which she describes as “timeless” and essentially “modern”, will give people back some cultural orientation which gradually got lost in the 20th century with modernization, globalization and the oversupply of industrial design products:

“So, I have all these clients. They are all Bahraini. They are building these big houses, and they are so lost. They don’t know what to do with these spaces. They are not able to relate. They had a sense of proportion that was 3,60 meters.⁴⁵ Which makes sense, because you sit here, I sit there, you can face each other. The room suddenly got bigger. And the relation to the space just does not fit. And then they realize they have a hundred options of doors and, I don’t know, 500 options of door handles... [...] You should see how tormented they are, they sit in front of me, really tormented. Like, how would be the handrail? It will have to match with the floor pattern and the carpet pattern. [...] Because, where they come from, things were much simpler. It suddenly got so complicated. With so many options. And when you look at Europe. Europe, [...], they have gone the other direction of simplifying. They had all this rococo and all that stuff. And they went minimalist. But here it was always minimalist and then they introduced this monstrous stuff of so-called classic furniture and all that... So, it messed them up. And now, giving it back to them, in that simple form, so it’s a kind of treat. [...] They had this architecture. It was timeless. And it works.” (I 25)⁴⁶

To achieve this, Janan Habib argued, a “flexible” rather than a “dogmatic” approach would be required (I 25), “because this is what this architecture is all about. It’s flexibility and adaptability and the human scale. It is amazing. It’s an experimental field” and therefore “to say: No, don’t touch!” is wrong, she said (I 25).

It is worthwhile noting, that the lead conservation architect, Dr. Alaa el-Habashi, who was the main promoter of the conservative approach at the time, said he shared the aim of keeping the

⁴⁵ The vernacular room dimensions were defined by the length of available mangrove beams for ceiling spans.

⁴⁶ This description is evocative of the debates on style and taste that took place during the industrialization of Europe in the arts-and-craft movement and the German Werkbund.

vernacular heritage alive to some extent and hoped to revive the heritage without museumizing or touristifying it (I 7).

Some interviewees more or less explicitly criticized that foreign, essentially western conservation standards were imposed in Bahrain, albeit mostly indirectly by Arab experts in the field.⁴⁷ Comments on how Eastern and Western conservation approaches, or even mentalities more generally, potentially differ were rare. In some interviews the author addressed the issue directly. The Egyptian lead conservation architect who was trained in the United States, vehemently refuted the idea:

Author: "You have been educated according to a western system, right?"

7: "I like this statement. Yes, I agree that conservation is a western initiative of the 19th century. But then it has to be interpreted locally, reinterpreted from your own personal point of view. So, I don't like to say: 'Oh, you are educated in an American school, or an Italian school.' Sorry, you are educated in order to train your background into a certain direction. [...] Because what you are hinting here, is that you need to differentiate between the Western and the Eastern approach. I don't think there is such a thing. [...] The principles of conservation are, I think, universal." [...]

Author: "So, you feel there is no conflict between Western and Eastern conservators in their approach how they view authenticity?"

7: "I don't think so."

Similarly, an Egyptian-Bahraini non-architect, who had lived in both those and several European countries as well as in the United States, said he was not familiar with differences between Eastern or Western conservation schools but negated a dichotomy of mentalities among laypeople:

8: "There is no such thing as a Western mentality or an Eastern mentality."

Author: "No?"

8: "No."

Author: "Even when it comes to building conservation?"

8: "I don't know about building conservation. [...] I wish I knew. I am interested in architecture. It's an interest but, I don't know what the Western and Eastern mentality in conservation is. [...] This whole identity thing ... The only real difference I can think of has to do with... For example, a temple in India that is 1000 years old, has a lot of value to the people who still go to the temple and use it because they honestly believe that their god lives there, and he has been for a 1000 years. It is quite rare to find this in Europe. You have a church that is 400 years old but 10 people use it as an actual church, the rest of the people look at it as a monument."

A US-American archaeologist, in turn, conceded that people coming from a Western – that is industrialized – country, might have a different perception of the living environment and tend to impose this approach on others:

"I learnt a very important message once working in Micronesia doing an archaeological dig. They were putting a sewer line for a housing project. [...] It was just a salvage excavation. We were trying to get what we could. The bulldozers had all their permits. They were just going. And I said: 'Why you guys....? Everyone looks to the future but the past is so

⁴⁷ Khaled al-Shuaibi for example said in an interviewee that by cooperating with the heritage authority he learned about conservation standards from Syrian and Egyptian conservation architects who studied in Germany and the United States respectively (I 26).

important, you never forget the past!’ And the guy running the project said: ‘You know, we just want what you guys have. Who are you to say that we have to keep our island and its historic areas?’ And I thought he had a point. But coming from a Western society you are kind of just screening to have a little bit of something original.” (I 14)

The notion that the Western view to the built environment is characterized by a lookout for traces of the past was likewise expressed by a young designer from Kazakhstan who had studied and lived in Europe and the USA after having been raised in her home country.

Author: “If I asked: ‘Are you Western or Eastern or both?’”

9: “Both. I am not a typical Kazakh to consider my opinion as. I am a citizen of the world, I hope. [...] But my roots, I think, are more Eastern. Like, I mean, of course they are, but I feel them as well. I feel the Eastern part and it clicks with me here in Bahrain as well. A lot of common things, the cultural things. It clicks, but it doesn’t mean I agree with everything. Because I think the Western experience of living, liberal and everything also changed my personality.”

She specified that the experience of living in Europe is what evoked in her a hunger for authentic vestiges of the past and described the capital city of Kazakhstan, Astana, as “built from scratch” and “without a soul” (I 9):

“I think for me, it is the European impact in my life. I feel so. Because I see a difference between me and my people. People are more fascinated by all this new, modern buildings. They are like more cool, if you are living in a super modern...” (I 9)

Asked about the typical way people in Kazakhstan feel about authenticity of buildings in her opinion, she pointed to the more ephemeral building tradition and the scarcity of preserved authentic heritage:

“Well, simply, we were Nomads. So, we were not keeping the buildings. The main authentic building is the yurt. We have it as authentic. It has been recreated many times. But unfortunately, we have only few authentic buildings. It’s been taken care of. It’s appreciated by people. In general, talking about the general public, I wouldn’t say that people were really missing to see their authentic buildings.”

A Lebanese long-term resident of Bahrain who spend a part of his life in Canada specified that in the case of Bahrain, people are still in the process of developing a shared feeling of loss and appreciation of the remaining built heritage:

“But because we are missing this, we want it. Because we are still hungry. [...] When you have it in abundance you take it for granted. Like in Canada the parquet was in every house but then they put this cheap carpet on the top of the parquet. It was so fashionable. If you kept the parquet, you were so cheap. Now, people are revealing the most precious parquet. Now, it’s a trend. When you hide something for so long and then you reveal it, you want more and museumize it. And then when you have it in abundance you don’t mind adding. But now, we [in Bahrain] are still in the phase of uncovering the treasure that was buried and that is being lost. So now, they are looking for whatever is left.” (I 12)

In summary, these and other statements indicate that the interviewees acknowledged certain cultural differences between so-called Eastern and Western countries. But those who commented on the issue, tended to link divergent outlooks on authenticity in the built environment to the grade to which tangible heritage has been affected by modernization rather than to cultural mentality.

The interviewees did however problematize the fact that foreign experts might miss out on value dimensions for lack of familiarity with the local culture and history. As an example, the above

quoted Egyptian-Bahraini interviewee, pointed to narrative dimensions which reflect the social status, available resources as well as historical and biographical circumstances that formed the vernacular buildings:

“That has to be reflected in the renovation as well, ok?”, he said and wished, that *“there would be Bahraini architects working in this because they would understand these things.”* (I 8b)

It was also criticized, that the conservation team of the heritage authority devaluated the earlier works of architectural revivalism which most of the local public seemed to appreciate (I 25). Moreover, there were explicit complains about a lack of respect for the local expertise and consideration of the local context by foreign experts (I 8,25,26):

“I think, they should sit with the Bahrainis, to see what they are doing when they are building. Not to come with your idea to put it here.” (I 26)

A particularly controversial technical detail was the chemical composition of traditional plaster and the use of cement. Different mixtures the heritage authority was promoting upon chemical analysis of historic plaster were criticized for delivered poor results in terms of stability, fighting salt efflorescence and even hygiene in comparison to innovative mixtures which EWAN al-Bahrain had been using for some years (I 25,26).

Another controversial feature are the so-called archaeological windows which the heritage authority was promoting in various projects at the time of the field research, including at the two main reference sites. These areas of exposed coral stone masonry on originally plastered walls were seen critically by many interviewees:

“I will come back to you regarding the plaster. I mean, what the ministry is doing: Never you are going to see a plastered house showing the farush [local term: coral stone] from inside or outside. Now, the people, because it looks beautiful, they keep it. [...] I mean, yes, to keep something like that, to present how we built those houses is no problem for me, ok? But, if you are going to make it a standard, or everywhere like this – exposed – it is the wrong way! Because our way – our Bahraini way – we are not keeping exposed stone.” (I 26)

“They have never seen that. [...] So, just to say that this is historic: ‘We expose it.’ It does not make sense! [...] Here, they are not relating to that. They have a certain sense of aesthetics. And the aesthetics is clean and simple.” (I 25)

Even harsher criticism concerned the artificial patination of newly plastered surfaces with colour pigments:

26: *“What I don’t like is to make it like an old. This I am still against that.”*

Author: *“Why are you against that?”*

26: *“Because I think I am cheating! This is only my feeling. But I feel, I just put a makeup on it to present it as old. [...] No need! We should present to the people, this is... we renovated it. We plastered it newly but in the same concept, in the same method. This is my way. [...] Even some traditional houses, if you want to use it, if it is in a bad condition as a structure, you should remove it and rebuild it by the same concept. This is my way. This is my vision in traditional.”* (I 26)

This statement resonates with what John Yarwood wrote about his experience in Bahrain:

“From my own experience, I would say that it is easier to conserve the essence of a city like Muharraq if one is not focused too exclusively on ‘fabric conservation’, though one may find a contradiction here. As a result, to conserve the essence—whatever ones means by that—one may have to change the physical fabric of buildings, or even demolish them.” (Yarwood 2011, 58)

One of the authority's conservation architects, Ghassan Chemali, explicitly pointed to "the authenticity of the fabric" as one integral part of the essence:

"That is one thing. That is essential. Because if you remove that, the connection to the past is lost, right? Somehow. If you remove the fabric, if you remove the stone the connection is lost." (I 23)

Conflicting views about what makes a truthful representation of the local vernacular heritage – authenticity of the historic substance versus authenticity of the craft, appearance and atmosphere – are issues that are further elaborated on in the case study research.

Despite such conflicts with the conservation doctrine, several interviewees lamented the lack of expertise and professional conservation guidance in Bahrain and the ensuing loss of authentic features (I 5,25,31):

"The problem is, they are no professionals working also. [...] Whoever comes and does the conservation is just an architect who does this house in isolation of everything else." (I 31)

In the case of one of the last Shaikh Ebrahim Center projects which is called **Bin Matar House**, Memory of the Place and was completed by 2009 before the conservationist approach gained wider ground, Janan Habib for example lamented the absence of conservation experts to guide the project:

"At the opening of Bin Matar I thought this was a massacre. This is supposed to be the memory of the place. I said this is the amnesia of the place! [...] This one really needed conservation, and that time they were not around." (I 25)

Certainly, the impressive early 19th century residence of the pearl merchant family Bin Matar would have originally qualified to be part of the Pearling Testimony. After having been restored and adapted to host an art gallery, however, there was consensus among conservation experts that it would have not passed the obligatory test of authenticity. The building was hence not nominated for World Heritage listing. Contrary to the experts' view, one of the laypeople among the interviewees explicitly commended the integrity and authenticity of the restored building:

"I knew it from before. It was a beautiful house. Now, it accommodates the new look of the 21st century: combining some modern features on the inside while maintaining the integrity of the building on the outside. So, this I like. On the outside it looks like it was built before. You feel some authenticity in its look. When you go inside you feel the comfort that we all would love to be in when it comes to having modernity. And as a space, as an art space, it is a very beautiful space to exhibit." (I 12)

This common discrepancy in perception between experts and laypeople in the field of architectural conservation will be explored more systematically based on the two main reference sites. Before that, Bahrain's heritage conservation practice will briefly be contextualized in the Gulf region.

3.2.3 HERITAGE CONSERVATION IN THE GULF REGION: SELECTED PROJECTS

Although Bahrain was the first country in the region to tap into its oil resources, the social and environmental upheavals this entailed were even greater in most other Gulf countries.⁴⁸ For this reason, and due to its historic importance, the small island state Bahrain stands out among its

⁴⁸ The countries of the Arabian Peninsula and members of the Gulf Cooperation Council Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates plus Yemen are here counted as Gulf countries.

neighbouring countries of the Arabian Peninsula for its density and diversity of built heritage sites.

Bahrain was a forerunner among the northern Gulf countries by placing its cultural heritage in the international arena with its first World Heritage site inscribed in 2005.⁴⁹ Still in 2012, an expert report stated that “among the Gulf countries, Bahrain is particularly motivated to achieving growth centred on its culture.” (JCIC-Heritage 2012, 71) One of the interviewees who partook in the case study research in 2014, recalled a recent visit of the second reference site at Suq al-Qaisariya with a friend from Saudi Arabia. The latter was full of admiration for Bahrain’s dedication to preserving its built cultural heritage:

“He loved the place. And he started complaining that Saudi is not doing the same for their own architecture and archaeology.” (I 15)

Lately, by the second decade of the 21st century, the “heritage boom” certainly hit the remaining Gulf countries, too.⁵⁰ In the face of the tremendous environmental and societal transformation that continues in the 21st century, architectural heritage has come to play a key role in a shared quest for regional and national cultural identities. In addition to ancient archaeological sites and the regional vernacular-built heritage, increasing attention is now being paid to the modernist and post-modern oil-boom architecture. By the time of the field research, architects from the region were starting to discover the buildings of the 1970s and 80s as heritage assets and potential resources of a shared Gulf identity (Fabbri 2020; Fabbri and Al-Qassemi 2021).⁵¹

Several interviewees were aware that certain revitalized market areas in Khor Dubai, Qatar and Kuwait had served as models for the initial rehabilitation of Bab al-Bahrain Avenue at the first reference site. When discussing the more conservatively restored Siyadi Shops at the second reference site, some interviewees evoked the notion that Bahrain’s vernacular heritage stands out as particularly authentic among a number of more creative architectural and urban heritage projects in the region (I 4,7,10,15,17,26,33), including the **Al Wakrah heritage village** in Qatar:

“It’s very beautiful. Everybody likes it. They are making a huge village like that. A huge village. Five times the size of Suq Waqif. Almost the size of Old Muharraq. On the beach in Qatar. The same technique. Small narrow roads, all like these [vernacular shops in Suq al-Qaisariya]. [...] It’s a huge project. It’s slightly unfortunate, the countries with no heritage with money are starting to make their own heritage. And the countries with real heritage are not taking care of it as they should.” (I 15)

The transformations and loss of architectural heritage particularly in the Gulf countries is certainly one reason why the Bahraini consultancy Gulf House Engineering is so successfully

⁴⁹ In the southern Gulf countries Oman and Yemen as well as in the neighbouring countries Iraq and Iran first sites have been subjected to the World Heritage Convention already in the 1970s and 80s.

⁵⁰ The role of cultural heritage in identity construction in the Gulf was for example discussed at the 2014 Exeter-Georgetown Gulf Conference “The Heritage Boom in the Gulf, Critical and Interdisciplinary Perspectives” and was also at the heart of the publication “Cultural Heritage in the Arabian Peninsula” from the same year (Exell and Rico 2014).

⁵¹ In 2013 there were first attempts by the Bahrain heritage authority to expand the national monument register with buildings from the 1970s and 80s (Think Heritage! 2013). In 2014, Modernist Architecture of the Gulf and other Arab countries was the topic of Bahrain’s contribution to the 14th Venice Architecture Biennale.

exporting its traditionalist architecture. These losses also set the ground for attempts of the United Arab Emirates to make certain reconstructed areas of **Khor Dubai** acceptable for World Heritage: in 2015, the Architectural Heritage Department of Dubai's municipality invited the president of ICOMOS International and other renown experts from the field of heritage conservation from around the globe to discuss the World Heritage nomination of the harbour area Khor Dubai. Parts of the vernacular urban fabric of the area's residential and commercial quarters had essentially been reconstructed in traditional techniques on the basis of archaeological remains and oral history.⁵² During the two days seminar "Urban Conservation and Reconstruction in the Arabian Gulf" the authenticity of reconstructed heritage sites was the central topic. Due to authenticity concerns from the side of ICOMOS and poor success prospects, the United Arab Emirates however eventually withdrew the nomination in 2018 (UNESCO 2014; UNESCO 2018). The nomination process involved a quantitative public survey of local community perceptions of the reconstructions. The demolished and shortly afterwards reconstructed 19th century quarter by the name of **Shindagha** was found to be generally esteemed as memory trigger, as a touristic resource and for its beauty. Reservations with regard to authenticity were minor in comparison (Al Mulla 2015). At the same time, some scholars associated the failure of the restored **Al-Bastakiyya residential area** to attract Emiratis to live there (Boussaa 2006) with "a more generic Western sentimentality about the preservation of the built environment" (Exell and Rico 2013, 678). This was considered to overshadow generally supportive attitudes towards heritage preservation by failing to recognize local contemporary needs (ibid.).



Fig. 3.2-29: **View of Suq Waqif in Doha in 2013.** Photo: Diego Delso, <http://delso.photo/>. Source: Wikimedia Commons, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/legalcode>

Most frequently, interviewees made comparisons to **Suq Waqif** in Doha (fig. 3.2-29). The former main market of the Qatari capital city originally dates back to the 19th century when the settlement was still a village and the suq "a weekend trading area for the Bedouin" (Boussaa 2014, p. 65). The market dilapidated during the oil boom and after falling victim to an incendiary in 2003 it was extensively refurbished and gradually extended. The market's architecture is

⁵² It is pointed out that oral history documentation can only serve as an additional source of information to achieve "historical reliability" of reconstructions (Silbermann 2015, 8) because "there is no such thing as authentic remembrance." (Oral statement by the German historian Achim Saupe at the conference 'Authentisierung von Stadtlandschaften', Germany. Participant observation note, 21 June 2014, Potsdam).

strictly traditional, mostly inspired from the regional vernacular and even involves the use of traditional building materials and techniques. According to the Egyptian Doha-based architect and scholar Ali A. Alraouf Suq Waqif started off as “showcase of traditional architecture, handicraft and folk art” but was gradually “extended to include the authentic, the authentic fake and the fake.” (Alraouf 2012, 78) By the time of the field research Suq Waqif had become a “downtown hub of restaurants, cafes and shops” that has “been successful in terms of visitor numbers and mixed Qatari and expatriate use” but “contested in some heritage debates” (Exell and Rico 2013, p. 677). A fundamental criticism, which was also expressed by some interviewees of the case study research, is that the amplification of the traditional market area superelevates the historical significance of Qatar which, following the example of Bahrain and its British Advisorship (Fletcher 2022), started to develop only after World War II. The case study research will entail comparisons of the two main reference sites to Suq Waqif by several interviewees.

3.3 REFERENCE SITE ONE: THE FORMER COLONIAL TOWN CENTRE AT BAB AL-BAHRAIN

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3.3.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE COLONIAL TOWN CENTRE AND ITS CONSTRUCTION HISTORY

This subchapter introduces the first of the two main reference sites. It focuses on its development up to the years 2014/2015 when the inquiry was conducted. Given the fact, that the interviews were concentrating on the site's outdoor spaces and exterior appearance of the buildings, interiors are only exceptionally described. The photos and plans depicted in this subchapter, as well as all additional ones, are included in Annex 3.3.1 (fig. 3.3.1-1 to 3.3.1-108).

3.3.1.1 Location and scope of the reference site

The reference site is located in central Manama at the entrance to the capital's traditional market area – Suq al-Manama – that extends to its south. The site features the gateway and national icon Bab al-Bahrain (fig. 3.3-3 and 3.3-25) along with other buildings which were originally built in the late 1930s and 40s as centrepieces of a new representative governmental district. These are the building of the Old Post Office and Police Station (fig. 3.3-9) south of the gateway and the block of former Government Shops and Offices (fig. 3.3-7). The latter building was demolished and partly reconstructed between Bab al-Bahrain Avenue and Al Mutanabi Avenue to host a modern shopping mall (fig. 3.3-21 to 3.3-22). The refurbished and pedestrianized northern stretch of Bab al-Bahrain Avenue which extends south of the gateway from Al Khalifa Avenue to Tijjar Avenue is also part of the reference site (fig. 3.3-19). It features a street shading and a historicizing façade intervention on the buildings along the eastern side of the market street. With the exception of the privately owned buildings which the screen façade conceals, the site's buildings are in governmental ownerships. This core area makes up a bit more than half a hectare.

To the north of Bab al-Bahrain lies Bab al-Bahrain Square – originally called Customs Square and later referred to as Shaikh Sulman Square. Bab al-Bahrain Square, which today is a busy roundabout on Government Avenue with the former Customs Square Garden as a greened traffic island, was discussed with several interviewees. The historic Customs House (fig. 3.3-10 to 11), located across the roundabout, had not yet been restored and was still concealed under a screen-façade of the 1970s at the time of the field research (fig. 3.3-28). It therefore played a minor role in the inquiry. Figure 3.3-1 (annex 3.3.1-1) shows the site and indicates the level of intervention for each of its historic buildings.

The site originally developed directly south of the former commercial port of Manama, which emerged as a regional centre and modern, international trade hub at a time of economic transition from pearl trade to the petroleum industry during the late British Protectorate (1919-1971) (fig. 3.3-2 and 3.3.1-4 to 9). Successive land reclamation, highway constructions and the development of new high-rise districts have since separated the site from the shoreline which successively shifted northwards (fig. 3.3-3 and 3.3.1-2 and 3). Remains of the typical whitewashed, one- or two-storied vernacular and transitional fabric which characterized the surroundings of the site in the mid-20th century are now scarce among the commercial and residential buildings that have come up at various scales, heights and architectural features during the decades that followed.



Fig. 3.3-1: Site map of Bab al-Bahrain area. Drawing: Eva Battis



Fig. 3.3-2 and 3.3-3: **Aerial view of the site from the north in the early 1950s and in 2012.**
 Source (left): Belgrave 1975 [1953], 109; Photo (right): Eva Battis

3.3.1.2 Historical origins: mid-20th century state modernization

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, during the global trade boom with natural pearls, Manama advanced from a coastal fishing village to the Gulf's main commercial hub, facilitating exports to India and Europe. Although Manama did not officially become the national capital until Bahrain's independence in 1971, it was in the focus of public investment under British influence since the relocation of the government from Muharraq to Manama in 1923. Manama Municipality, established in 1919, carried out significant modernizations throughout the city. From this time, "the development of business and administration was mainly concentrated in Manama", which "became the entire country's main commercial and service centre" (Wiedmann 2010, 128).

By the late 1930s, the regional pearling economy had collapsed, but revenue from petrol extraction started to kick in. Mustapha Ben Hamouche suggests, that "the strategic location of Bahrain in the Gulf, coupled with the continuous threats from other colonial superpowers, motivated the British to make the small city a regional capital for Arabia, and a model for local societies." (Ben Hamouche 2008, 192) Hence, "Manama became the harbinger of Bahrain's modernity" and the "capital of the region's first modern state and its first 'metropolis' in the making." (Fuccaro 2009, 191)

"New wealth brought modern building materials into Bahrain, particularly cement." (Fuccaro 2009, 193) Imported building materials, like cement and steel, started to be used in combination with the traditional ones like local coral- or limestone, local palm trunks and imported wooden beams. The use of steel beams allowed for wider spans of rooms, stairs and openings and thereby started to gradually change the architectural appearance of buildings and settlements. This process can also be traced on the basis of the historic buildings at the reference site.

From 1925, Sir Charles Dalrymple Belgrave (1894 –1969) played a pivotal role in the state modernization process and thereby in the development of the new representative government district in Manama. Shaikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa (1872–1942) hired Belgrave as his advisor "to deal with matters of reform and development within the national administration" (Jenner 1984, 30). Belgrave continued under Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa (1894–1961) and overall served as Advisor to the Ruler for thirty years. "Urban development and the modernization of urban life became the centerpieces of the new national project pursued

vigorously by Belgrave and by the Government” (Fuccaro 2009, 191). Special attention was paid to the modernization of the waterfront and the port facilities in Manama. “Government investment was concentrated on new custom services, official buildings and landing facilities.” (Fuccaro 2009, 193) (fig. 3.3-2) The investments were carried out by the Department of Land Registration and from 1938 by the newly established Public Works Department (Bahrain Government Annual Report for the year 1365, November 1945 – November 1946, 79).¹ These were controlled by Belgrave until the year 1957 (Fuccaro 2009, 192) when he had to leave Bahrain in the face of pan-Arab and anti-British political movements.

Northern Manama witnessed one of the country’s first major land reclamations (Ben Hamouche 2008, 196). In 1923, a narrow land strip was reclaimed from the sea that would serve as coastal road – today Government Avenue – for four decades. The road led along Customs Square in the northern parts of the reference site (annex fig. 3.3.1-4 to 6). The square linked the harbour with the historic market area of downtown Manama and was “the centre of Manama town” (Bahrain Government Annual Report for the year 1365, November 1945 – November 1946, 80).

In 1933, Bab al-Bahrain Avenue, which leads from the port area into the historic town centre and was then called Barrett Street,² was widened and developed as the market’s main access road (Al-Muraikhi 1997, 89). For the first time, motorized traffic was accommodated in the city, as the provision of car access was among the governmental efforts to develop a modern state. New commercial and public buildings were constructed along the avenue and a central section was shaded with a wooden roof structure (Al Orrayed 2009, 182) (annex fig. 3.3.1-9).

Construction of the Customs House and Customs Square Garden in 1937

In 1937, the harbour pier and Customs Square were functionally and aesthetically upgraded (annex fig. 3.3.1-5 and 6). To improve the harbour operation, including the storage of cargo, the mole was widened and the new Customs House – today the oldest building of the reference site – was built (fig. 3.3-10). Around it, more land was reclaimed from the sea (QDL, Government of Bahrain Administrative Report for the Years 1926-1937, 16). On the inland side, an oval-shaped garden was centrally installed on Customs Square not only to improve the town centre’s appearance but also to regulate the increasing traffic flow. The developments were reported on as follows:

“New Customs. During 1937 several important works were carried out. A new customs house, with a flat above the offices, was built on the shore, immediately east of the pier. [...]

The new offices are light, airy, and convenient, and the building has done much to improve the appearance of the water front.

In the customs square a round garden with a fountain in the centre has been made, where it is hoped eventually to grow evergreen shrubs, grass, and flowering bushes. The circular garden in the centre of the square was made partly as a means of ensuring the one-way traffic rule, which is necessary owing to the large amount of motor traffic in this

¹ The year of the report is indicated according to the Islamic Hijri calendar.

² Bab al-Bahrain Avenue was at the time named after Cyril Charles Johnson Barrett (1884 - 1933) who was Political Agent from 1926 to 1929 and British Chief Political Resident in the Persian Gulf in 1929 (Cahoon n.d.).

neighbourhood, and partly for the purpose of improving the appearance of the square.”
(QDL, Government of Bahrain Administrative Report for the Years 1926-1937, 24)

The new Customs House showed the architectural and structural characteristics that were typical for public buildings of the time (fig. 3.3-10 and annex 3.3.1-8). It was built on a rectangular plan and originally featured rather plain façades. Large verandas in most elevations gave the two-storeyed building a horizontal orientation, which was enhanced by a broad, plain parapet wall with a minimal top cornice and discreet rain gutter tubes. The symmetrical main facade towards Customs Square was structured with regularly spaced columns, pilasters and window



Fig. 3.3-4: Customs Square viewed from the west in the 1940s prior to the construction of Bab al-Bahrain. Source: Bahrain Authority of Culture and Antiquities

axes. The vertical, two-winged windows with sash bars were each paired with a narrow horizontally stretching ventilation window above. The same configuration characterized the interior walls in order to allow for cross-ventilation in a time before the invention of electric air conditioning (annex fig. 3.3.1-16 and 17). The building was plastered and whitewashed, as it was typical for buildings in Manama.

Although new imported building materials had started to be used in Bahrain, the Customs House seems to have been built with traditional materials and techniques. During the building's restoration from 2014, traditional stone masonry walls, gypsum-lime plaster and

wooden *danshal* ceilings were identified. The building hence represents a rather early, conservatively built colonial-style building. The Customs House was extended in 1939:

“A new Passport Office consisting of one large office 24 x 24 feet, a small office, record room and verandah was built on to the western end of the Custom House. The Passport Office resembles the Custom House in style of architecture and it has improved the appearance of the Customs square.” (Bahrain Government Annual Report for the year 1358, February 1939 - February 1940, 42)

Figure 3.3-4 shows the Customs Square and garden in the early 1940s after the construction and extension of the Customs House.

Town improvement plan for central Manama 1946 - 1949

An old import yard shed in Barrett Street, at the site of the later Government Shops and Offices, had become the “chief shopping centre in Bahrain” in the 1930s (QDL, Government of Bahrain Administrative Report for the Years 1926-1937, 24). Plans to construct a line of nine shops in the place of the yard reach back to that time but got delayed with the outbreak of World War II. During the war, the new construction materials, cement and steel, as well as labour started to become scarce and costly (Bahrain Government Annual Report for the year 1361, February 1942 – January 1943, 29). For the early 1940s, it is reported that “no new projects were undertaken [...]” and that “[t]he demand for both skilled and unskilled labour was so great that women and

children were employed, for the first time, on building projects and foreign labour was imported from neighbouring countries.” (Bahrain Government Annual Report for the year 1361, February 1942 – January 1943, 4)

Although shortages in labour and goods continued in the years after the war, a town planning scheme was devised for the centre in 1946, by his own account with some pressure from the British Chief Political Resident in the Persian Gulf of the time, Sir Charles Geoffrey Prior (1896–1972). In March 1946 Prior reported on a discussion with Belgrave as follows:

“Town planning.

Apparently little has been done in the way of town planning beyond a proposal to turn the present import yard into a bazaar when the customs sheds are moved out to the dock that is to be filled in. I drew attention to the extremely unsightly and completely unorganised rabbit warren of a bazaar and stated that what was wanted was a definite plan for the centre of the town by which proper roads would be introduced so that decent shops could be erected. Mr. Belgrave said that the land was in various ownerships but I replied that there was no reason why a plan should not be worked out and the various obstacles overcome. Mr. Belgrave undertook to consider this.” (Gulf Collection, Prior 1946, 4)

Only two weeks later, on April 7, Belgrave reported on the preparation of an “extensive building programme in and around the Customs square” to Bahrain’s Political Agent (QDL, Belgrave 1946a). The new town improvement plan was “approved by His Highness towards the end of the year” and scheduled to “probably take three years to complete [...]” (Bahrain Government Annual Report for the year 1365, November 1945 – November 1946, 80)

The town improvement plan (fig. 3.3-5), started to be implemented in 1946. It included a westward extension of the harbour pier by further land reclamation and the construction of several port facilities thereon (ibid.) The works at the harbour pier were the first to be undertaken. The scheme further involved the construction of the new Post Office and Police Station with flats in the upper floor as well as the widening of Barrett Street and the construction of a line of nine shops in the place of the import shed on the western side of the street with flats or offices above (ibid., 81). Along the entire southern side of Custom Square, opposite the new Customs House, new Government Offices – soon to be named Bab al-Bahrain – were planned. For its construction, the “tire old Customs House”, the old post office, police station and its quarters which are marked in the map of Manama of 1933 (annex fig. 3.3.1-4) and feature in fig. 3.3-4 were demolished (QDL, Belgrave 1946b). According to Belgrave, he himself designed the new, two-storey building in 1945 (Belgrave 1960, 135). It was planned and built as two blocks linked by a bridge across the market street and foreseen to accommodate inter alia the ruler’s personal office, the Land Department, the office of the Superintendent of Police as well as a majlis for public meetings (Bahrain Government Annual Report for the year 1365, November 1945 – November 1946, 81).

Figure 3.3-2 shows the new administrative district in an arial view from the north after the implementation of the town improvement plan. The public buildings, the widened market street and the Customs Square with its central greened fountain space served as a functional and symbolic link between the market area and the port with its jetty to the world. Foremost Bab al-Bahrain, arching over the widened avenue, held a representative function and served as national landmark and icon (fig. 3.3-12 and 13).

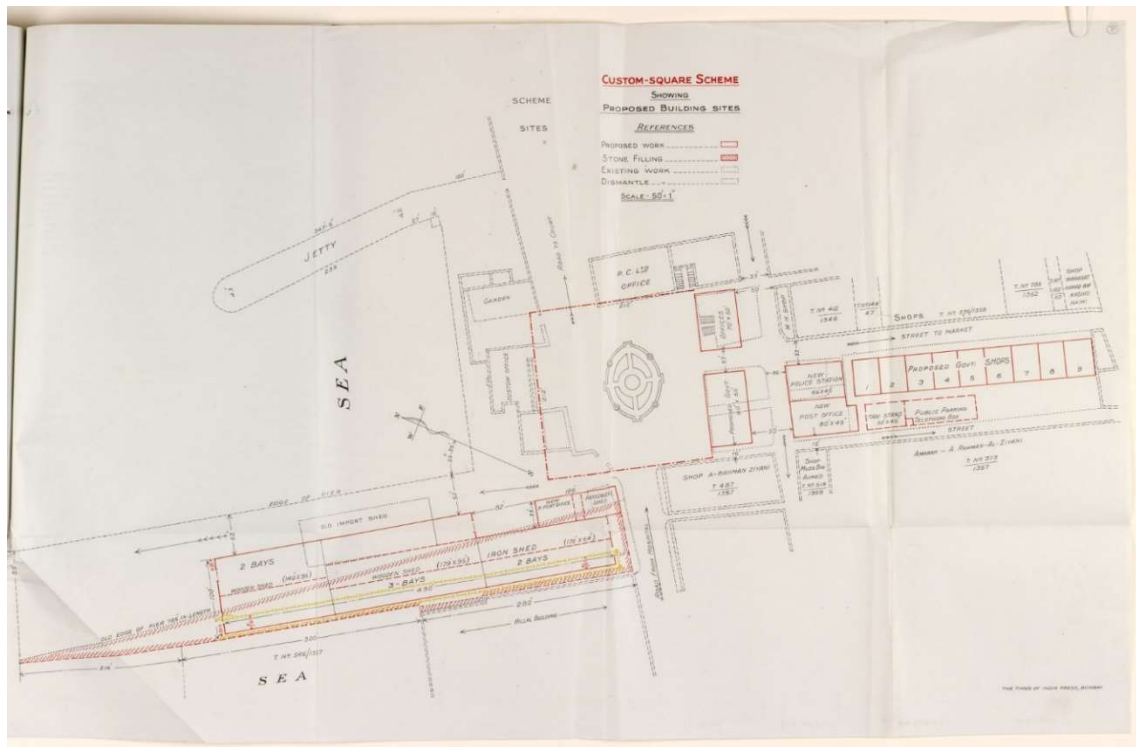


Fig. 3.3-5: **Town Improvement Plan from 1946.** Source: 'Government of Bahrain Annual Report for Year 1365 (December 1945 - November 1946)' [81r] (109/150), https://www.qdl.qa/archive/81055/vdc_100089576648.0x0000a4 (accessed January 21, 2021)

Construction of the Government Shops and Offices

Before Bab al-Bahrain, the new Post Office and Police Station (fig. 3.3-8) and the Government Shops and Offices (fig. 3.3-6) were built in Barrett Avenue. Both buildings were completed in 1948 with some delay and rented out the same year (The Persian Gulf Administrative Report for the year 1948, 11; Bahrain Government Annual Report for the year 1367, November 1947-November 1948, 47).

The long rectangular block of Government Shops and Offices were erected along the western side of what is today Bab al-Bahrain Avenue in the place of the former import sheds. The more compact, rectangular Post Office and Police Station building was built orthogonally to their north in replacement of three shops which had only been built in 1937 “behind the old customs house [...] on the west side of Barrett Street [...].”

Early photographs of Barrett Avenue show the line of nine shops as a single-storeyed structure (fig. 3.3-6). It featured a profiled roof cornice above a row of low vertically stretching mezzanine floor windows and with a light wooden canopy extending along the entire building’s length. Later pictures show the Government Shops and Offices increased by one floor with even more pronounced classicist-inspired design features (fig. 3.3-7). The first-floor gallery is structured by regularly placed, slim rectangular columns. The openings were fitted with wooden railings with diagonally crossed rectangular fields like many other public Bahraini buildings at the time, including the new Post Office and Police Station. Most openings of the gallery contained windows while few were left as open loggias. The façade of the upper floor was additionally structured with pilasters at every fifth opening of the gallery. They extended into the parapet wall and were topped with pyramidal pier caps. Centrally, the classically inspired parapet wall above a second, profiled roof cornice held a triangular pediment. Variations of this parapet

design also adorned the Post Office and Police Station (fig. 3.3-8) and Bab al-Bahrain (fig. 3.3-12 to 13 and annex 3.3.1-21 to 33). It thus constituted a unifying architectural feature of the ensemble.

The town improvement plan (fig. 3.3-5 and annex 3.3.1-7) shows a car parking lot to the rear of the Government Shops and Offices. No historic images or drawings could be found of the block's western façade. Photographic documentations from the mid-2000s, when the building had already undergone significant modifications, suggest that the rear façade was originally regularly structured with columns and niches (Archives of GHE, GHE 2016). It was lower along Al Mutanabi Avenue and stepped towards the east due to the mezzanine floor.

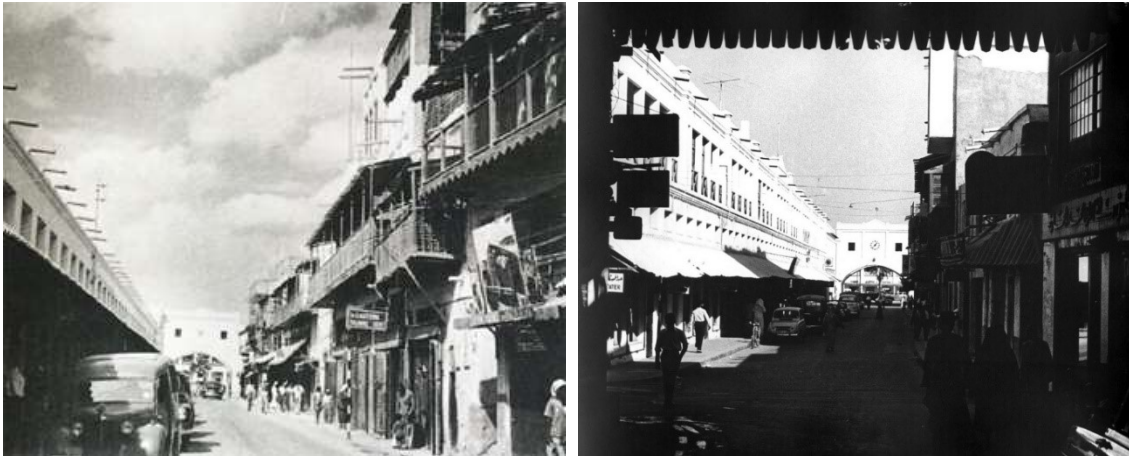


Fig. 3.3-6 and 3.3-7: **View along Barrett Avenue towards Bab al-Bahrain with Government Shops and Offices before and after the addition of the upper floor.** Source: Bahrain Authority of Culture and Antiquities

Construction of the Post Office and Police Station

The Post Office and Police Station (fig. 3.3-8) was “built on the lines’ which were suggested by the [new British] Postal Superintendent” with two “essentially European style” residential flats on the first floor (QDL, Belgrave 1948).³ According to a preliminary construction plan of 1946 (annex fig. 3.3.1-64) the building seems to have first been planned without an upper floor. Moreover, the façade design proposed in the plan is much more conventional than what was actually built (compare annex fig. 3.3.1-64 and 63). However, the basic façade configuration complies with what is preserved to date (fig. 3.3-9 and 3.3.1-65). The preliminary construction plan shows the northern façade with the vertically stretching windows and narrow, horizontal ventilation windows above. Both in the plan and in reality, the façade is symmetrically ordered with two loggias at ground floor flanked by round steel columns that carry a steel beam

³ The two flats of the Post Office and Police Station were rented to the new British Postal Superintendent and to the manager of the Imperial Bank of Iran (The Persian Gulf Administration Reports for the year 1948) and described by Belgrave as follows:

“The one above the Post Office is large, it contains three bedrooms, a dining-sitting room, kitchen, two bath rooms, servants room and boiler room, a large area of veranda and a good flat roof, the flat over the Police Station is on similar lines but is smaller and has only two bedrooms and one bathroom. Both flats have access to the streets at the side of the block of buildings. Garages and Gardens are not provided.” (QDL, Belgrave 1948)

(compare annex fig. 3.3.1-63 to 69). The same applies to the proposed structural characteristics: traditional masonry walls of local stone material and a ceiling structure of rectangular wooden beams on T-section steel beams (compare annex fig. 3.3.1-64, 70, 71). With this combination of traditional and newly available construction materials, both the Post of Office and Police Station as well as the Government Shops and Offices are typical colonial-style hybrid buildings. It is hence quite probable, that the concrete slabs identified in the first floor and ceiling of the buildings during interventions in the 21st century were part of the original structure.

The first floor of the Post Office and Police Station, which does not feature in the preliminary plan, was accessed laterally. It was surrounded on three sides by an open gallery – a typical building feature in Bahrain for its climatic benefits until electrical air-conditioning was introduced. While the ground floor façade features innovative, wide horizontal loggias, the rectangular columns of the first floor's gallery are traditionally spaced. Loggias and gallery feature the same type of wooden railings originally used at the Customs House and in the first floor of the Government Shops and Offices (compare annex fig. 3.3.1-10, 63, 76).

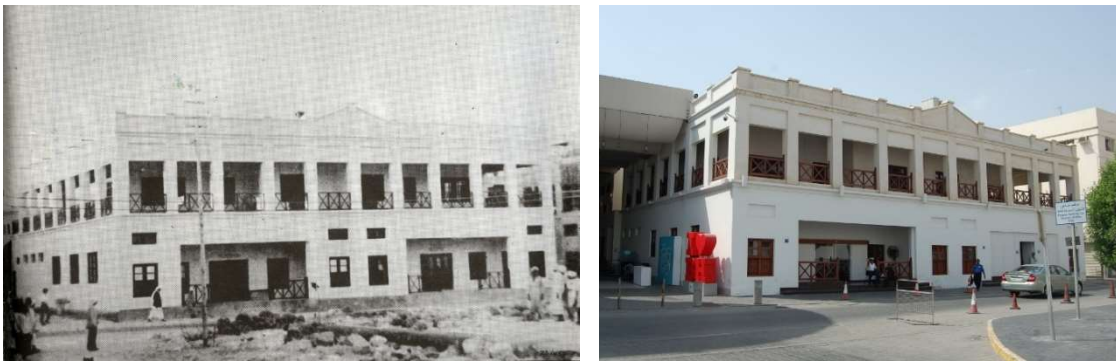


Fig. 3.3-8 and 3.3-9: **The Post Office and Police Station during the construction of Bab al-Bahrain building in the late 1940s and in 2014.** Source (left): Bahrain Directorate of Heritage and Museums 1986, 36. Photo (right): Eva Battis

The galleries of the Post Office and Police Station as well as of the Government Shops and Offices were shaded with wall elements in the upper parts of the openings (annex fig. 3.3.1-63 and 76). This feature was typical for Anglo-colonial buildings in Bahrain and also used in the southern elevation of Bab al-Bahrain (fig. 3.3-13 and annex 3.3.1-23 and 24). The already described uniform parapet design strongly characterizes the Post Office and Police Station because its centrally placed triangular pediment emphasizes the symmetry of the main façade.

Modification of the Customs House in the late 1940s

Further changes to the Customs House were carried out with the town improvement plan in the late 1940s. Repairs like “outside painting” are reported for the Custom House in the year 1949 (Gulf Collection, Hills 1949). Figure 3.3-11 shows that by the early 1950s the verandah at ground floor was closed and fitted with horizontally stretching, tripartite windows. An entrance canopy was added on the entire length of the former verandah. With its four slim columns and a thin roof plate with rounded corners the canopy clearly shows design features of classical modernism. The same is true for the horizontally stretching windows which equally characterized Bab al-Bahrain. In addition, the parapet wall of the Customs House was heightened and its pilasters took up the rhythm of the façade columns. It was thereby made to

better fit the parapets of Bab al-Bahrain and of the other new public buildings. The first-floor verandah of the main façade was however fitted with rather traditional wooden curtains and closed wooden railings. Figure 3.3-11 moreover clearly shows two calligraphic inscriptions at ground and first floor. They indicate the year of construction and function of the building in Arabic: The inscription *Daerat Aljamarik* translates to Customs Services and the building is dated to the Hijri year 1355.



Fig. 3.3-10 and 3.3-11: **The Customs House at Bab al-Bahrain roundabout in the late 1930s and after modifications in the 1940s.** Source: 'Government of Bahrain Administrative Report for the Years 1926-1937' [479r] (37/85), British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/L/PS/12/3890, ff 461-503, in Qatar Digital Library <https://www.qdl.qa/archive/81055/vdc_100089576652.0x0000a0> (accessed January 21, 2021) (left) and Bahrain Authority of Culture and Antiquities (right)

Redesign of the customs Square Garden in the late 1940s

Along with the implementation of the town improvement plan, the garden on Customs Square was reworked, as the director of the Public Works Department, Major Stanely Hills, reported:

“Customs Square Garden.—Although not a major work, this may well be mentioned here as it is an integral part of the Square which has so gained in character by the erection of the Offices.⁴ The old garden has been completely remodelled. The outside wall is now made of Arab panels, with seats provided ; and a blue tiled tank with a fountain has been made in the middle of the garden. The garden was replanted in Shawal⁵ and by the end of the summer it was a very beautiful sight.” (Gulf Collection, Hills 1949, 45)

Figures 3.3-10 and 12 as well as annex figures 3.3.1-10, 21 and 22 illustrate the changes to the Custom Square Garden.

Construction of Bab al-Bahrain building

The prominent gateway building, in official documents referred to as the New Government Offices, but soon “known as Bab al Bahrain” was the last item of the town planning scheme to be completed (Bahrain Government Annual Report for the year 1368, November 1948-October 1949, 5). The building had been designed by Belgrave to serve as the seat of government with a personal office for the ruler (Belgrave 1960, 135). In March 1949, Belgrave noted in his diary, that “the formal garden [was] coming on well, the building rather slow.” (Gulf Collection, Belgrave, Personal papers, March 29, 1949) The ruler, Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, was “most interested and full of admiration for the new Govt building” and showed himself

⁴ The “Offices” refers to Bab al-Bahrain building.

⁵ *Shawal* of the year 1365 of the Islamic Hijri calendar lasted from 26 July 1949 and 24 August.

impressed with its European appearance when it was still under construction (Gulf Collection, Belgrave, Personal papers, February 8, 1949). In the summer of the same year, the building was completed “and almost all the offices of the Bahrain Government, except the Adviserate, were moved to the new premises.” (Gulf Collection, The Persian Gulf Administrative Report for the year 1948, 67) Upon its completion the building was reported on as follows:

“Government Office. –These were completed in Shawal, 6 the final completion being delayed owing to non arrival of certain stores. The Offices consist of two large buildings joined by two arches over the road leading south from the Customs Square. The general design was conceived by the Adviser⁷ and the original constructional plans were prepared by the late Mr. R.C. Tunncliffe.⁸ Some amendments of the plans were prepared by the present Officer-in-charge and much of the finishing details was designed by the Adviser. Salahuddin⁹ was the overseer in charge of the work. The offices follow the traditional local style, with certain local features giving a distinctive touch—for instance, “Arab panels” are used for the balustrades of the verandahs and first floor landings ; windows with semi-circular heads are placed on the south front, and a very fine example of a local double door—beautifully carved—was presented by His Highness the Sheikh of Bahrein and is used as the main entrance to the larger block. Some of the rooms are panelled, certain floors are tiled and the staircases are finished in terrazzo. Up-to-date cloakrooms are provided. A clock, which strikes the hours, has been built into the center of the Arch on the south front.” (Gulf Collection, Hills 1949, 44-45)

In conceiving the building as a “‘gateway’ into modern Bahrain” Belgrave was probably inspired by the Gate of India – a British colonial triumphal arch built between 1913 and 1924 to serve a comparable function in Bombay harbour (Fuccaro 2009, 193). However, its original architectural gesture, which was changed in later refurbishments, differed greatly from the Gate of India (fig. 3.3-12 and 13 and annex figures 3.3.1-21 to 22 and 25):

“Devoid of the orientalist classicism of its counterpart in Bombay, the building introduced to the overseas visitor the new architectural style of Manama, fusing the modernist lines of British colonial public architecture which developed in the interwar period with indigenous features.

Rather than symbolizing metropolitan authority and colonial hegemony, Bab al-Bahrayn affirmed the dynamism and the political primacy of Manama as the new capital of Bahrain.” (Fuccaro 2009, 193)

The gate’s eye-catching centre piece with the arched passage marks the entrance to the market’s main avenue. Originally, a small pediment – reminiscent of a classical temple’s tympanum – discreetly adorned its parapet wall which extends to the two slightly lower side wings and matches those of the ensemble’s other new public buildings. Its pyramidal pier caps also featured on the balustrade that replaced the first wall encircling the Customs Square’s Garden (fig. 3.3-12 and annex figure 3.3.1-22).

⁶ *Shawal* of the year 1365 of the Islamic Hijri calendar lasted from 26 July 1949 and 24 August 1949.

⁷ Referring to Charles D. Belgrave.

⁸ Tunncliffe was officer-in-charge at the Public Works Department before Major Stanley Hills took over in 1948 (QDL, 'File 8/8 VII Annual Administration Report for the Year 1948').

⁹ Salahuddin Ahmed bin Hassan Ebrahim is considered Bahrain’s first local engineer (Salahuddin 2012; Salahuddin 2007).

At first sight, Bab al-Bahrain's main elevations appear to be symmetrical and they are sometimes depicted in such a way (annex fig. 3.3.1-104). In reality, the northern elevation of its eastern side wing is divided into five vertical axes, including a wider central one, while the shorter western side wing contains six axes of which the central three are spaced more narrowly (fig. 3.3-12). In the southern elevation, which contains the building's entrances, both wings are divided into five axes (fig. 3.3-13 and annex figure 3.3.1-24). The outer ones and the ones flanking the central gateway are of the same width and fitted with windows. The differently dimensioned inner three axes contain open stairways that each lead to an internal gallery and a central landing between two columns that stretch over the entire building's height. The staircases are shaded with wall elements in the upper part of the three inner axes.

To the north, facing the port, the gate was originally fitted with two balconies overlooking the Customs Square (fig. 3.3-12 and annex figure 3.3.1-22). Their balustrades had decorative incised panels as fillings, just like those of the oval garden at the square below (annex fig. 3.3.1-21 and 22). Horizontally stretching windows and an overall sobriety constitute modernist stylistic elements that outweigh this reference to the local vernacular architecture as well as those to European or cosmopolitan classicist architecture. At ground floor, the windows were paired with vertically stretching ventilation windows, as were the openings in the interior (annex fig. 3.3.1-55). Clearly, a modern, cosmopolitan image was intended in the Northern elevation that faced the world and welcomed international visitors at the port.

The side elevations and those of the open space between the two separate arches, that linked the two side wings at first floor, were more inconspicuously designed with the same basic features and almost square windows (annex fig. 3.3.1-32).

Towards the old town and its traditional market, a different design language was chosen (fig. 3.3-13 and annex 3.3.1-24 and 25). In the gate's southern elevation, the reference to the local vernacular was therefore more pronounced. Most of its windows were vertically stretching and some were fitted with traditional rounded fanlights. The two open, symmetrically arranged staircases were fitted with ornamental railings. The balustrades of the galleries were adorned with incised panels alike those of the northern elevation.¹⁰

Although modernist influences overall prevailed in the building's original appearance, the integration of design features of the local vernacular and its overall modesty were certainly in line with the Protectorate's policy of "keeping the British presence low profile" in order to mask the imperial dominance as Ben Hamouche suggests (2008, 193).

Particular details that testify to the state building process are the national flag that could be centrally hissed on the top of the gateway and the national code of arms which was integrated into the northern elevation (annex fig. 3.3.1-22 and 27). It was allegedly designed by Belgrave in the 1930s. The southern elevation held a public clock (annex fig. 3.3.1-24 to 26). It was one of the first public clocks in the country and originally had a bell mechanism. Members of the older generation still remember the sound of the clock's chimes (Salahuddin 2012).

¹⁰ None of the original panels are preserved. They were most likely made of gypsum-lime mortar, as are vernacular panels of similar type. An architect who was involved in the survey of Bab al-Bahrain before its refurbishment in the 1980s remembered them to be of gypsum and severely deteriorated (I 21).

Last but not least, the name of the new government building – literally the gateway to Bahrain – was programmatic. The name was conceived by Belgrave and approved by the ruler in 1949 although he suggested to consider Bab Shaikh Sulman as an alternative name according to Belgrave (Gulf Collection, Belgrave, Personal papers, March 29, 1949).

Among the ensemble's buildings, Bab al-Bahrain is the most innovative one – both architecturally and structurally. Site investigations during the latest refurbishment provided evidence that steel and reinforced concrete were originally used in addition to vernacular techniques and materials (I 6). There is however a lack documentation of the original building's structural and material characteristics, as will be further discussed in chapter 3.3.2. No original design or construction drawings of the building could be located apart from the ones reproduced in annex figure 3.3.1-29. In addition, the annex contains survey drawings from 1982, which show the building's state before its first major refurbishment (annex fig. 3.3.1-29 to 33).



Fig. 3.3-12 and 3.3-13: **Bab al-Bahrain on Customs Square and its southern elevation in the 1950s.** Source: Bahrain Authority of Culture and Antiquities

3.3.1.3 Further development and urban revitalization at Bab al-Bahrain

Along with the urban transformation of Manama the site's historic buildings and spaces underwent significant changes throughout the subsequent decades of the 20th and 21st centuries. Both the former Customs Square's including its central garden as well as the northern section of the market street Bab al-Bahrain were reconfigured as described below. The site's buildings were subjected to several refurbishments, partial or complete demolition and/or restorations.

The historic coastal road of 1923 lost its promenade function and turned into an inland road when the coastline was pushed significantly further north at the end of the 1960s (Wiedmann 2010, 127). Especially after revenue from the petrol industry rocketed in the 1970s, urban growth and real estate development went side by side with urban degradation in central Manama. In the mid-1970s, the site was however still adjacent to the buzzing port which a long-term foreign resident of Bahrain described as follows during the inquiry:

"[...] the port was in a kind of – not a U-shape – but looking at it from this way it was built squared off at the end. And the boats came in. Because all the boats that went across to Saudi Arabia – before the causeway – came in there. And the boats coming across from Iran, boats with cargo. All of them. So, it was quite a lot. And it was also quite a smell, because they would recaulk the boats. Like scrape of all the barnacles and apply fishoil, which smelt like rotting fish. It was pretty awful." (I 19)

Soon after Bahrain's state independence, the coast line was entirely redeveloped and the port shifted to its current location at Mina Salman. Further land reclamations pushed the coastline

northwards and with the construction of King Faisal Highway Central Manama was cut off from the sea (fig. 3.3-3). Harbour facilities became obsolete and were removed or reused, as in the case of the new Customs House of the 1930s which was adapted to host Bahrain's main post office (fig. 3.3-29). According to the information provided by one interviewee, a new Customs building was operating further out on the pier in the mid-1970s (I 19).

Around the time when Bab al-Bahrain building was refurbished in the 1980s, Customs Square Garden was closed for pedestrian access and converted into a traffic island with a surrounding side-walk. The former ornamental garden design was modernized. The boundary wall was removed, the vegetation successively reduced, lawn introduced and all trees and palms eventually eliminated. A new, significantly larger fountain was installed in the centre (compare fig. 3.3-12 and 16 and annex figures 3.3.1-21, 22, 28, 34, 35).

On the wide reclaimed land to the north of the reference site, a high-rise district came into being with the construction of Bahrain Financial Harbour.¹¹ The new district is “metaphorically as well as economically [...] intended to be a gateway to Bahrain and an international financial hub, driven by the hope that Bahrain might once again become the financial capital of the Middle East.” (Ben Hamouche 2008, 209) Its two main skyscrapers of futuristic design are a reference to the historic city gate and welcoming icon Bab al-Bahrain (fig. 3.3-28 and 29). Like many other real estate developments in central Manama, Bahrain Financial Harbour is an architectural expression of the country's neoliberal vision which intends to strengthen Bahrain's position within the global financescape as a cosmopolitan and business-friendly state (Gardner 2010, 123).



Fig. 3.3-14 and 3.3-15: **Views of Bab al-Bahrain Avenue from the gate in 2004 and a vernacular building in Al Tijjar Avenue in 2011.** Source: Eva Battis (right) and <https://pbase.com/bmcmorrow/image/31212682>. Photo: Brian J. McMorrow (left)

On the inland side of the reference site, Manama's historic centre remains a vibrant commercial area, although one finds “a mixture of modern shops and junk shops” as a disappointed visitor to the area posted on Tripadvisor in 2012 (TopCatTony 2012). Throughout the 20th century, the old town of Manama gradually turned into a residential enclave for a low-income population of

¹¹ For a description refer to the website of Bahrain Financial Harbour: <http://www.bfharbour.com/financialcentre/dualtowers.htm> (accessed October 1, 2014).

migrant labourers as the original inhabitants – predominantly wealthy families of local and foreign traders – abandoned their once luxurious traditional downtown residences.

The number of historic vernacular and colonial-style edifices keeps successively decreasing as real estate development and neglect continue to devour the remaining historic building stock (fig. 3.3-15). The national heritage authority responded in 2012 by registering several historic buildings and areas throughout down town Manama including the site's remains of the colonial town centre of the 1930s and 40s (Kingdom of Bahrain 2012b).

Unexecuted restoration project of Bab al-Bahrain building of the early 1980s

A plan dated 1981 and subtitled "Restoration of Bab Al Bahrain Building" by the Ministry of Works, Power and Water indicates that a conservative restoration of Bab al-Bahrain was considered in the early 1980s (annex fig. 3.3.1-29). The document seems to be part of a larger reconfiguration scheme as the title "Bab al-Bahrain Project" and the enclosed site map "Proposed Redevelopment Plan (Part)" suggests. The drawings and annotations of the document are summarized in the following as they provide insights into the condition of the building at the time.

The document shows the southern elevation and the ground plans of Bab al-Bahrain building which are annotated as "old records dating back to 1949". The plans are complemented with notes for the planned project: The outer design of the building was to be preserved despite some substantial interventions like "all parapet walls, cornices and copings to be removed and re-executed as per old details" and "internal and external painting" to be provided. As a cosmetic intervention the plan proposes to repair "to correctness" the "curvature of arches". "Cracks in the masonry" were "to be treated and repaired". "All external woodwork like hand rails, balustrades" as well as all windows were to receive new finishes. "Carved & polished doors" would have been cleaned and repolished. All other doors and windows were to be repainted and decorative aluminium grilles were to replace "steel grilles", which had come to shield some of the ground-floor windows. "All external verandahs and balconies" were to be maintained and to receive new "terrazzo tiles". The "front staircases" were "to have their old finish removed and replaced with marble mosaic".

All plaster, interior and exterior, as well as "all old electrical wiring, fittings and fixtures" were to be replaced. Specifications like replacing "all broken glazing of windows" suggest that the building was rather in a neglected state and abandoned. This is also evidenced by photographs dating from that period and was confirmed by a time witness (I 21). It was however planned to restore the building's representative, national function as the specification to provide "ceremonial lighting on all four sides" as well as the installation of two flag poles and additional arrangements for smaller, removable flags suggests. In fact, photographs from the 1970s show that chains of light bulbs had been fixed to the building to illuminate its contours and main façade features (annex fig. 3.3.1-26 and 27). The project specifications moreover foresaw the "ext. clock & bell mechanism to be repaired & revitalized" along with the stairs to the bell post "to work on a regular basis."

Refurbishment of Bab al-Bahrain building 1984-86¹²

Instead of the above-described rather conservative restoration, a more intrusive refurbishment was undertaken by the Ministry of Works, Power and Water a few years later (annex fig. 3.3.1-34 to 42). The project was allegedly initiated by the head of state, the Emir Shaikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa (I 21). The Bahrain-based architect of Iraqi origin, Yousif Daoud Al Sayegh, was put in charge.

According to an architect involved in the project, the task was “not to preserve the building” but to enhance it functionally and aesthetically (I 21). Indeed, the intervention significantly altered the building’s design and architectural gesture which had been preserved despite the apparently fragile condition of many elements (I 21). The gate was to still serve as a national symbol and the explicit aim was to give the building a more “Bahraini” aspect (I 21). To this end, the European and modernist stylistic influences were replaced with abstractions of generic Arab features.

The building’s overall proportions were maintained, but the central piece with its two bridges was partially if not entirely demolished and reconstructed.¹³ At first floor, to the sides of the central fields which contain the crest and clock, arched openings with orientally incised railings were introduced (fig. 3.3-16 and 17 and annex 3.3.1-36, 39, 41). The building’s characteristic horizontally stretching windows were divided, heightened or joined with the upper ventilation windows and arched. The classicist-inspired parapet wall, which was originally built of coral stone (I 21), made space for crenelations of prefabricated concrete elements reminiscent of Arabic fortresses (annex fig. 3.3.1-42). The code of arms – a crucial detail for the building’s symbolic function – as well as the clock were modernized and the chime bell omitted. While the incised decorative panels in the southern elevation were renewed with slightly changed and more uniform patterns (compare annex fig. 3.3.1-24, 45 and 48), those of the balustrades of the northern elevation disappeared with both balconies.¹⁴ The ornamented metal railings of the stairways in the southern elevation made way for arabesque teakwood screens (compare annex fig. 3.3.1-23, 24 and 35, 45). All fittings like doors and windows, both interior and exterior, were replaced. New protective and decorative aluminium grilles in oriental style were introduced on the ground floor windows.

The building was fitted with new facilities including central air conditioning. The ventilation openings, which provided passive climatization in the past, hence became obsolete. Suspended ceilings were introduced in several rooms below the original wood-beamed ceilings to hide the air ducts (annex fig. 3.3.1-38 and 55). Lighter partition walls were removed as the room distribution was slightly amended (compare annex fig. 3.3.1-29 and 37).

According to the drawings of the 1980s, reinforced concrete was utilized for the reconstruction of the central arches at first floor, the dilapidated stairways and the parapet wall (annex fig.

¹² The description of this intervention is based on the analysis of the building’s few reproduced historic plans, the survey, design and construction drawings from the 1980s as well as of photographs. It is also informed by interviews with various professionals involved in this or later interventions on the building.

¹³ Refer to the assessment of the building’s material authenticity in chapter 3.3.3 for details.

¹⁴ The fact that the balconies are missing in the survey drawings of 1984 suggests, that these might have actually been removed before (fig. 3.3.1 – 31).

3.3.1 – 37, 40, 41, 42). The entire building was cement plastered and painted white. It was not documented nor later systematically investigated to what extent the intervention structurally deviated from the proposed plans.

The 1980s refurbishment of Bab al-Bahrain overall attests that the iconic building was valued for its national symbolism at the time. The interventions re-established the use of the offices but disregarded the historic and scientific value of the building's original fabric and design.



Fig. 3.3-16 and 3.3-17: Bab al-Bahrain and Customs Square after the refurbishment in the 1980s photographed in 2011. Source: Bahrain Authority of Culture and Antiquities

Refurbishment of the northern Bab al-Bahrain Avenue 2006 - 2010¹⁵

Plans to revitalize Central Manama and the area around Bab al-Bahrain date back to the 1990s (I 43), if not to the 1980s. The planning authorities devised several plans for the reconfiguration of Bab al-Bahrain's closer and wider surroundings. However, shifts of directorship and lack of political support caused phases of stagnation (I 22). The interventions eventually carried out in the first decade of the 21st century were intended as parts of a larger development endeavour for the revitalization of downtown Manama and its traditional market area. They aimed at triggering an economic upgrade and gradual demographic transformation (I 22). Bahraini families, tourists and particularly Western expatriates were envisaged as potential residents, entrepreneurs, clients or visitors of the area. The reference site with its historic public buildings was chosen for a pilot intervention due to its representative entrance function to Manama's central market and the governmental ownership. The main objective of the primarily architectural intervention was to enhance the trading conditions at the site but also to visualize the government's commitment to the area (I 22).

In 2002, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce called for rejuvenation plans of the historic market and initiated the 'Manama Suq Enhancement Project'. This happened in response to requests for governmental support in coping with the economic downturn of the area which the Chamber of Commerce had presented on behalf of local merchants (I 43). The initiative's main parameters were outlined in a consultant's report produced in 2003/2004.¹⁶ The proposed interventions were based on an analysis of the site including spatial, functional, economic and

¹⁵ The description is based on information gathered from the Gulf House Engineering company archives and personnel as well as on the author's site-analysis in 2011/12 (Archives of GHE, Battis 2012).

¹⁶ The report was authored by Associated Consulting Engineers – ACE Almoayed in association with the Adam Loxton Partnership – ALP, UK (Kingdom of Bahrain 2004b).

social aspects of its urban surroundings. In conclusion, the report recommended the creation of public and shaded open spaces along the northern section of Bab al-Bahrain Avenue, the improvement of the frontages of its aligning buildings (compare fig. 3.3-14 and 19), the adaptive reuse of the Post Office and Police Station and the preservation of the main façade of the Governments Shops and Offices. The measures were to functionally improve, visually harmonize and help revitalize and “re-brand” the site (Kingdom of Bahrain 2004b, 2). An “old image of the Suq as the embodiment of Traditional Life in Bahrain” were to be promoted (ibid.). The consultants however also pointed to the limitations of such physical upgrade:

“At the outset it is important to understand that there is most likely a perfectly understandable desire of the part of the Authorities to see Manama upgraded in straightforward physical terms, so that it becomes somehow “neater” and more welcoming to Western tastes. This “sanitization” of the existing hurly burly and apparent disorder of the Suq has a certain appeal in the context of the Kingdom’s higher international profile, greater number of visitors and long-term aspirations for its emerging tourist industry, but such a programme is unlikely to prove more than superficial in its impact.” (Kingdom of Bahrain 2004b, 6)

In 2005, the initiative’s directorship shifted to the Ministry of Municipalities Affairs and Urban Planning (MoMAA).¹⁷ Based on the previous analyses and recommendations, the ministry commissioned an urban redevelopment design proposal that would link Bab al-Bahrain with the new district of Bahrain Financial Harbour across King Faisal Highway.¹⁸ In 2006, the ministry had further research conducted and planned for holistic urban conservation measures in the old cities of Manama and Muharraq in the context of the United Nations Development Program (Kingdom of Bahrain and UNDP 2006a-c and 2007a). What actually materialized at the reference site between 2006-2010 was limited to the interventions of the following pilot project:

The MoMAA initiated a face lift of the section of Bab al-Bahrain Avenue between Bab al-Bahrain and Al Tijjar Avenue extending across 126 meters south of the gateway (fig. 3.3-18 to 20 and annex figures 3.3.1-79 to 94). The project aimed at creating a modern shopping environment with a traditional feel at the entrance of the historic market and was inspired by similar initiatives in the Gulf region.¹⁹ The project brief called for the replacement of the former Government Shops and Offices with a modern atrium building as well as for pedestrianizing and shading the adjacent section of Bab al-Bahrain Avenue (I 43). The design was commissioned to the local architectural practice Gulf House Engineering.²⁰ As described in chapter 3.2, the company’s Bahraini lead architect Ahmed Bucheery has been dedicated to the revival and reinterpretation of the local vernacular building tradition since the 1990s.

¹⁷ The Ministry of Municipalities Affairs and Urban Planning was later merged with the Ministry of Works and renamed Ministry of Works, Municipalities Affairs and Urban Planning.

¹⁸ Refer to the illustration of the planned “major revamp of Manama souq” online: http://www.tradearabia.com/news/CONS_221655.html (accessed June 3, 2015).

¹⁹ A research group established during the inception phase visited refurbished traditional markets in the Gulf region, including the newly built Souq Almubarakia in Kuwait and the markets of Sohar and Nizwa in Oman as well as markets in Dubai (I 43).

²⁰ Refer also to the project description on the company’s website: <https://www.ghe.com.bh/bab-al-bahrain-bahrain-project> (accessed July 9, 2022).

After another phase of stagnation and further shifts of directorship from and back to the MoMAA,²¹ the project was implemented from 2005 with the involvement of a second interministerial committee which included the Ministry of Culture as national heritage authority. The concerned section of Bab al-Bahrain Avenue was pedestrianized and refurbished as per the design of Gulf House Engineering (fig. 3.3-18 and annex figures 3.3.1-79 to 94). Bab al-Bahrain itself was closed for incoming car traffic from the north. Apart from repainting, which already happened in 2004 (annex fig. 3.3.1-78), no major changes seem to have been made to the gateway building at this stage. The Government Shops and Offices were demolished and replaced by a shopping. The Post Office and Police Station building was restored and reinforced. The latter two interventions are described in more detail below.

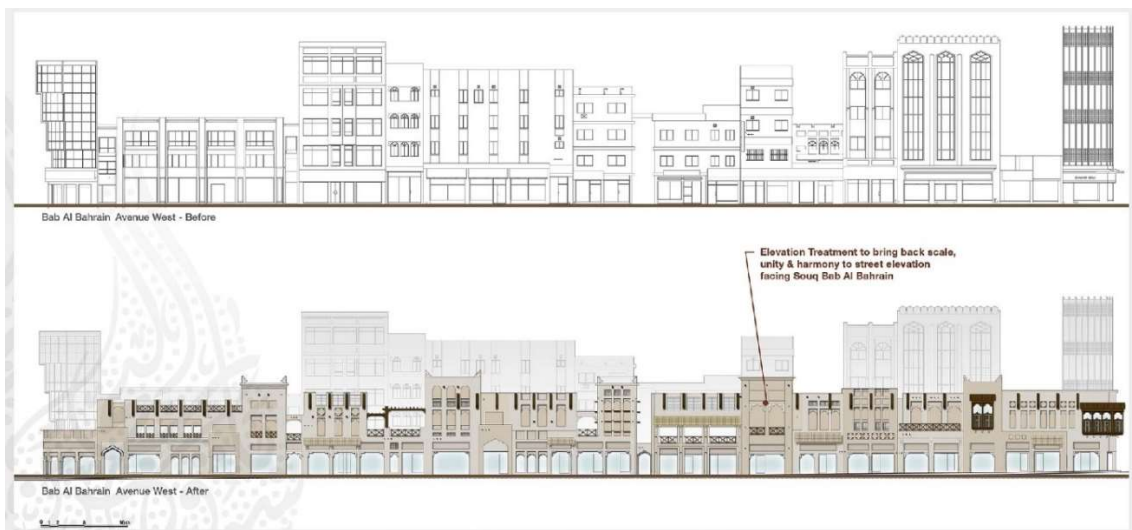


Fig. 3.3-18: Survey and design plans of the eastern elevation of Bab al-Bahrain Avenue.
Source: Gulf House Engineering

On the opposite side of the Avenue, facing the new mall, a row of multi-story buildings of various heights and features had developed in the second half of the 20th century (fig. 3.3-14, 18 and annex figures 3.3.1-79 and 93). Their appearance was considered detrimental to the desired traditional feel of the public space and was therefore subjected to “cosmetic surgery” (I 22). A freestanding gypsum-plastered concrete wall of roughly two floors’ height and with traditionalist façade features was erected at a distance of 60 centimetres to one meter from the shopfronts along the entire length of the pedestrianized stretch of the Avenue (fig. 3.3-19 and 20 and annex figures 3.3.1-80 to 82 and 93). Based on historic photographs of the avenue (fig. 3.3-6 and 7 and annex fig. 3.3.1-74), the screen façade was adorned with wooden shopfronts as well as traditional balconies and other decorative features inspired from the local vernacular. Most of these features were removed again soon after, as described below. The commercial units behind the new screen façade remained operational throughout the construction (I 43). Signboards of the shops were replaced with uniform, traditionally designed ones that were mounted onto the new wall element (fig. 3.3-19 and 20).

²¹ Towards the end of the implementation the Bahrain Real Estate Investment Co. (Edamah) became the client (Archives of GHE, Battis 2012).

In order to conceal this facelift intervention, but more so to hide the high-rise buildings of the neighbourhood, the avenue was roofed approximately above the height of the second floors of the adjacent buildings (fig. 3.3-19 and 20 and annex figures 3.3.1-74, 81, 83). Although different in design, the shading structure is a historic reference, to the so-called “covered market” originally located to the north. (fig. 3.3-2 and 7 and annex figures 3.31-9, 74, 76). The new structure was built as a series of large trussed girders painted dark brown and topped with crème-coloured textile. This type of roof structure is twice broken up by two large tent-shaped sun sails (fig. 3.3-19 and 20). Apart from the visual effect, and the purpose of “bringing back the scale to the street” (I 22), the roofing improves the avenue’s climatic conditions in summer by protecting from direct sunlight.



Fig. 3.3-19 and 3.3-20: **Bab al Bahrain Avenue and detail of the screen façade in 2011.** Photos: Eva Battis

Last but not least, the interventions in the public space came along with granite street pavement and street furniture such as benches and planters as well as atmospheric lighting after sundown. Such measures were also taken in Al-Mutanabi Avenue to the rear of the newly constructed mall building which connects the two Avenues (annex fig. 3.3.1-86 and 87). In a second project phase, a multistorey car park building with partly historicizing façade design was constructed in the vicinity of the reference site.

Demolition and partial reconstruction of the Government Shops and Offices in 2009/10²²

The block of Government Shops and Offices was demolished in 2009/2010, along with several smaller buildings to its south and west, and replaced by a modern shopping mall (compare fig. 3.3-7, 14, 19, 21, 22 and annex figures 3.3.1-76 to 79, 84 to 92, 96).

Structural assessments in 2005 and 2007 found the traditional masonry walls of local limestone relatively intact despite signs of dampness and some cracks which were caused by differential settlement of the deficient coral stone foundations. Concrete slabs of the first floor and roof, which rested on timber joists and in some locations on steel beams, were found to be in critical

²² The description is based on information gathered from the Gulf House Engineering company archives and personnel as well as on the author’s site-analysis in 2011/12 (Archives of GHE, Battis 2012).

condition. Wooden elements, including the wooden mezzanine floor, were found partly damaged (annex fig. 3.3.1-91). The different floor finishes of either terrazzo tiles, PVC tiles or concrete screeds were overall considered worn-out. Overall, the assessment led to the conclusion that a restoration of the building would not be economically viable.

Although the building was not an officially listed monument, the national heritage authority – the Ministry of Culture and Information at the time – was consulted. It gave its approval to the demolition in 2007 due to the poor structural condition as well as loss of architectural integrity and heritage value. Photographs and plans of the building prior to its demolition in fact testify to various architectural changes (compare annex fig. 3.3.1-76, 78, 91). The openings of the mezzanine floor and the windows and loggias of the first-floor gallery of the building's eastern façade had been closed. This is due to the fact, that the first and mezzanine floors served as storage areas for the commercial entities at ground floor along Bab al-Bahrain Avenue. Moreover, none of the profiled cornices nor the original parapet wall design were surviving at this stage. The original canopy along Bab al-Bahrain Avenue had been replaced with a bulkier, tiled one. The rear façade had moreover been partly built upon.

Prior to its demolition, the building was documented in photos, drawings and videos which are located at the company archives of Gulf House Engineering. However, no plan that analyses the different construction and modification phases was ever produced that could give further insights into the development of the building.

The new mall building extends up to Al Mutanabi Avenue in the west (fig. 3.3-1). To the north, it approximates and partly abuts the Post Office and Police Station, omitting most of the narrow passage which originally separated it from the Government Shops and Office (compare fig. 3.3-5 and annex figure 3.3.1-94).

The mall's façade along Bab al-Bahrain Avenue mimics the historic building as it was found in 2005 in volume and proportions (compare annex fig. 3.3.1-78, 80, 92). The subdivision into nine segments and the proportioning of openings and niches follows the design of the predecessor building at large. The commercial units along Bab al-Bahrain Avenue were reinstated and fitted with traditionally-designed wooden shopfronts (fig. 3.3-19 to 20). Between them, entrances to the atrium of the mall were placed and emphasized with oversize imitations of local vernacular palatial portals (annex fig. 3.3.1-84 and 92). The openings of the gallery at first floor were reconstructed as non-functional mock-ups and fitted with wooden railings reminiscent of the original ones. Neither the building's original parapet wall and cornices nor the canopy were reconstructed (annex fig. 3.3.1-92). The surfaces of all interior and exterior walls, which were built in reinforced concrete, were rendered with white lime-gypsum plaster.

The rear façade of the new building along Al Mutanabi Avenue consists of plain glass panes intercepted by a vernacular-inspired entrance portal like the ones in the western elevation. Roof girders of the atrium are extended on the exterior and textile shades spanned between them (annex fig. 3.3.1-88 to 90).

The southern elevation of the new mall building combines glass surfaces with imitations of vernacular residential façade elements (fig. 3.3-22). It is emblematic of the design approach followed by Gulf House Engineering throughout the site and of the company's design philosophy. The aim of combining traditional Bahraini and contemporary elements is to revitalize the local cultural identity (Bucheery 2004). At this site, the architect's aim was to create a traditional feel and place branding while at the same time infusing a sense of modernity and

promoting a future-oriented development of the traditional market. Any reconstructions are subdued to this objective and not intended as accurate recreations of the historic elements. Nevertheless, the creative reconstruction of the main façade of the Government Shops and Office was intended as a tribute to the building’s cultural significance:

“More or less, we have used the same languages and they tried to duplicate it. [...] But we were at the same time in a way bold enough to say: look, this is a glass façade and so on. It is like what Pei did in the Louvre, where he put his glass pyramid.” (I 22)

The same design approach characterizes the mall’s interior (fig. 3.3-21). In order to get to the lofty airconditioned atrium from Bab al Bahrain Avenue one enters low passages which are fitted with false *danshal* ceilings. The atrium is lit by a waved translucent glass roof supported by wood-coloured and curved trussed girders. The latter rest on tall, classically-inspired white columns in front of glass façade with which the atrium opens up to Al Mutanabi Avenue. Escalators and stairs lead to a gallery at first-floor. The atrium’s interior elevation to the rear of the shop units is designed with references to the local vernacular. Before it, is a line of kiosk-type shop units.

The tenants of the old government shops were relocated during the implementation of the project and granted the right of first refusal upon its completion in order to allow them to return to the premises. The commercial complex opened in 2010 with a range of retail shops and gastronomy.



Fig. 3.3-21 and 3.3-22: Atrium and southern elevation of the mall building in 2011. Photos: Eva Battis

Restoration, reinforcement and adaptive reuse of the Police Station and Post Office building²³

Architectural assessments in 2005 and 2007, which were conducted jointly with those of the Government Shops and Offices, found the main features of the Police Station and Post Office building preserved, although partly disfigured. Photographs taken during the survey phase (Archives of GHE, GHE 2016) and survey drawings show considerable but mostly reversible changes to the facades such as blocked-up openings (compare annex fig. 3.3.1-63 to 68). The building’s structural condition, however, was found to be critical due to differential settlement of the deficient foundations. The architectural consultant therefore recommended to demolish

²³ The description is based on information gathered from the Gulf House Engineering company archives and personnel as well as on the author’s site-analysis in 2011/12 (Archives of GHE, Battis 2012).

and reconstruct. Before a final decision was taken, immediate emergency interventions were carried out by the Bokhwa Group as the overall project's main contractor in order to avoid safety hazards from disintegrating parts of the façade's cornices and parapet.

Disagreeing with the demolition of the building, the Ministry of Culture commissioned two additional assessments from a local and a foreign conservation architect in 2008.²⁴ The reports equally attested the building a poor state of conservation, including a critical structural condition and imminent danger from the ongoing construction works of the neighbouring mall building (Archives of BACA Koellisch 2008 and Al-Jowder 2008). Both experts nevertheless recommended a restoration of the building's shell, although the architectural changes on the building's interior and exterior were judged as rather significant.

The restoration and adaptive reuse of the Police Station and Post Office eventually started in November 2008 with EWAN Al-Bahrain Construction and Renovation company as contractor. The scope of the work was to strengthen the building's structure and to restore its outer shell. The provision of internal finishes was the responsibility of the end user. For the eastern part of the ground floor this was to be the Ministry of Interior, as the Police services returned to the building after the intervention. The use of the building's other spaces remained a matter of controversy among different stakeholders for some time until it was decided that the heritage authority will install a museum.

In order to restore the building's exterior design, original openings were reinstated and decorative details like wooden railings reminiscent of the original ones installed. A comparison of the original and restored railings reveals certain deviations in design. The original railings of each opening had three diagonal crosses and were devoid of the decorative wooden knobs that give them a slightly more traditional look today (compare fig. 3.3-8, 9 and annex fig. 3.3.1-63 to 67). Windows and doors were replaced and fitted with replicas of the original wooden ones. The ventilation windows however were not reconstructed but remain as wall niches. The building's two cornices at first floor and roof level were reconstructed with a slightly simplified profile (compare annex fig. 3.3.1-25, 63, 65). The restored, if not reconstructed parapet wall appears very true its original design although the pyramidal pier caps were probably not stepped towards their base originally. The building was rendered with traditional lime plaster and the northern façade fitted with lamps in traditional design.

Structural interventions included the replacement of weak foundations and the introduction of reinforced concrete footings and frames in walls. Damaged steel beams were substituted. At ground floor, the original coral stone floor was discovered, but having sagged, it was replaced by a new concrete slab. All other damaged floor finishes were equally removed. In the first floor and roof, the existing concrete slabs were repaired. Timber-beamed ceilings were restored while maintaining usable wooden members. A new staircase to the upper floor was built in the location of an earlier one.

At the time of the inquiry in 2014/15, interior works were ongoing inside the former post office and first floor premises (fig. 3.3-9 and annex fig. 3.3.1-69 to 72). They were being adapted by the heritage authority to host a museum about the history of postal services in Bahrain. The museum was inaugurated in December 2015. Neither the interior of the former postal offices

²⁴ The Post Office and Police Station was not officially listed in the national heritage register until 2012, but the governmentally owned building was clearly considered a monument at the time.

nor of the police station were subject of the inquiry. Minor modifications to the exterior of the building which had been carried out by the heritage authority by that time are described below.

Interventions in Bab al-Bahrain Avenue by the national heritage authority in 2011-12²⁵

Within two years after the completion of the above-described revitalization measures in Bab al-Bahrain Avenue, the interventions were partly modified in the context of a second refurbishment of Bab al-Bahrain building (see below).

By 2011, the Ministry of Culture (MoC) had taken over the lead in developing the area (I 26). In 2012, in an attempt to reinstate the ensemble's comparatively plain colonial architectural features of the 1940s, the MoC had most non-historic vernacular and Arab-inspired decorative features removed throughout the site (fig. 3.3-23 and 24). Most modifications were made to the screen façade wall along the Avenue. To the statement of a ministry's architect, who was put in charge of the intervention, the task was to remove "all the fake traditional elements" (I 32). The screen façade itself with its vernacular inspired wall niches and the traditionally designed wooden door shutters and name plaques of the shops were maintained. All purely decorative items like mock-ups of wooden balconies, wooden canopies, and traditional rain gutter as well as gypsum mouldings and traditional lamps were, on the contrary, removed. Where possible, plain white surfaces were left instead and discreet lamps provided (compare annex fig. 3.3-19, 20, 23, 24 and 3.3.1-80 to 84, 95 to 102).



Fig. 3.3-23 and 3.3-24: **View along Bab al Bahrain Avenue and detail of the screen façade in 2014.** Photos: Eva Battis

The Avenue's shading structure was draped with crème-coloured textiles which further lowered the avenue's space (fig. 3.3-23). It conceals not only the timber-coloured girder framework but also the upper parts of the screen façade as well as the preexisting buildings behind it.

Changes to the mall building were minor and included replacing the façade lamps (compare annex fig. 3.3.1-84 and 95) and painting white the timber-coloured roof girders of the atrium

²⁵ The description of this intervention is primarily based on the site-analysis after completion of the works and on interviews with professionals involved in this or previous interventions at the site.

(compare fig. 3.3-21 and 31). The replicas of the wooden railings which are reminiscent of the historic Government Shops and Offices were, on the contrary, maintained (compare fig. 3.3-7, 19, 23).

Minor works were also carried out on the exterior of the historic Post Office and Police Station. This included repainting the elevations at ground floor level, replacing the vintage lamps with ones in contemporary design and installing a surveillance camera (compare fig. 3.3-9 and annex 3.3.1-65 and 66). As a restorative measure, the historic calligraphic Arabic and English name inscriptions above the entrances to the police station and the former post office were revealed (annex fig. 3.3.1-73).

The on-site interviews for the field research of this thesis were conducted following these cosmetic interventions. The interviewed site users hence assessed the site after the traditional local and Arab references had been significantly reduced and simplified throughout the recently refurbished streetscape (annex fig. 3.3.1-95 to 103).

Refurbishment of Bab al-Bahrain building in 2011-13²⁶

On the initiative of the Ministry of Culture, Bab al-Bahrain building was refurbished from 2011 to 2013 to host the governmental tourism authority and a tourism information point at ground floor. In 2011, the heritage authority commissioned the Bahrain-based Italian architect and managing director of Plan Architecture & Design - PAD, Davide Chiaverini. The conservation consultant Dr. Alaa el-Habashi and the architect Noura Al Sayeh were advising the commissioned architect from the client's side. The interior design of the tourist information point is the work of the Bahrain based designer Ammar Basheir, but it was not usually visited with the interviewees.

The client's intention was to restore the gate to its original appearance of 1949 on the basis of historic photographs (I 6). By his own account, the commissioned architect expressed his concerns to the client that a reconstruction of the original features was neither desirable nor honest in terms of conservation ethics:

"I mean, if you had this building [the original] – fine, let's preserve it and keep it. We don't have it. It's gone forever. You will never get it back. I mean, if you want to rebuild it as it was, it will be a fake." (I 6)

Judging the original features and fabric of the building irreversibly destroyed since the 1980s, he promoted the idea of redressing the building to better suit its function as representative city gate and state symbol. He considered this function not satisfactorily fulfilled by either of the previous designs of the building (I 6). With this aim in mind, the architect drew inspiration from European triumphal arches, which were presented to the client as reference in the design proposal.²⁷ The design proposal was accepted and implemented with some changes requested from the client's side (fig. 3.3-25 to 27 and annex fig. 3.3.1-43 to 62).

²⁶ The description of this intervention is largely based on data from the company archive of Plan Architecture & Design – PAD, information provided by the design architect Davide Chiaverini and on the author's site-analysis after completion of the works.

²⁷ Among the references were the Arco della Pace in Milano, built in the first half of the 19th century in classicist architecture following antique Roman triumphal gates, which was originally dedicated to Napoleon and commemorates the European peace treaty of 1815 as well as Marble Arch in London of 1827 (Archives of PAD, PAD 2011).

All Arabesque additions such as the crenelated parapet wall were removed. The original parapet design of 1949 was only partly reconstructed (compare fig. 3.3-12, 13, 16, 17, 25, 26). In the case of the side wings, the new parapet rather closely resembles the one that originally capped the building, despite omitting the pyramidal pier caps and being conventionally built in reinforced concrete. The parapet above the gateway, on the contrary, was significantly changed and heightened in order to accentuate the central piece. The vertically stretching window formats of the 1980s intervention were maintained but rounded arches from that intervention removed.



Fig. 3.3-25: Northern elevation of Bab al-Bahrain in 2014. Photo: Eva Battis

In the northern façade, the bridge between the two wings was reconfigured to become a tripart protruding middle risalit. It was built by adding a reinforced concrete structure to the pre-existing elevation (fig. 3.3-25 and annex fig. 3.3.1-56, 58, 59, 60). It is the new middle risalit that constitutes the architectural reference to triumphal gates. It was fitted with two pedestrian passages by means of opening the exterior walls of the rooms flanking the central gateway at ground floor (fig. 3.3-27 and annex fig. 3.3.1-50 and 58).

Inspired from historic crests, a larger code of arms was produced in bronze but eventually painted golden (I 6). It was placed closer to the arch in order to resemble a keystone ornament (I 6) (compare fig. 3.3-12 and 3.3-25). The place, where the previous red and white versions of the code of arms had been, was opened further to become a gallery. This feature is inspired from wall-walks of medieval town gates (I 6).



Fig. 3.3-26 and 3.3-27: Southern elevation of Bab al-Bahrain and western pedestrian passage in 2014. Photos: Eva Battis

The pre-existing structure of the arches was integrated into the new design. The central gateway passage was however significantly changed in character. By dissolving its flanking walls towards the newly introduced pedestrian passages and by widening the openings at first floor, the formerly confined space became much airier (compare annex fig. 3.3.1-36 and 46). Pre-existing columns of the flanking walls to the main gateway and the wooden-beamed ceilings in the pedestrian passages were preserved in the intervention (I 6) (fig. 3.3-27).

Apart from the changes in the central piece and the addition of the pedestrian passages, the gate's southern elevation was less significantly altered in comparison to both former designs (compare fig. 3.3-13, 17, 26 and annex fig. 3.3.1-24, 26, 29, 31, 39, 45, 57, 59). The measures carried out here were more restorative, given the fact that this elevation had already been subjected to fewer changes in the past (I 6). The metal railings that originally adorned the stairways were reconstructed based on historic photographs. Other details such as the original window divisions and fanlights at first floor or the simple rain gutters were not reconstructed. The clock as well as the decorative incised panels of the staircases' balustrades, installed in the 1980s, were maintained (compare annex fig. 3.3.1-35, 45, 48). In order to give the building a historic appearance (I 6) it was rendered with traditional lime-plaster as top screed on cement plaster. These works were carried out by the construction company EWAN al-Bahrain (I 26).

In the interior, additions from the 1980s were removed and all fittings and facilities renewed. As further discussed in chapter 3.3.3, a comparison of the plans suggests that, despite some substantial modifications particularly in the centre piece, much of the pre-existing building's structure was preserved in the refurbishment (annex fig. 3.3.1-29, 32, 33, 37, 40, 41, 58).

Interiors were not usually subject of the interviews with site users. One interior intervention is, however, of particular interest. In this case, a historic photograph inspired particular activism.²⁸ The photo was believed to show the ruler Shaikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa in his office at Bab al-Bahrain. The Minister of Culture requested the office to be reconstructed in Bab al-Bahrain on the basis of the photo (I 6). The architect in charge, when comparing the space depicted on the photograph with the site, was convinced that the picture cannot have been taken inside Bab al-Bahrain and, by his own account, articulated this concern to the client (I 6). He nevertheless undertook to design the interior of one room in the upper floor along the lines of the photograph. Upon its completion, "the office of the late His Highness Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa" was promoted as a special attraction to visitors (Bahrain News Agency 2014). For an assessment of the authenticity of the office's reconstruction refer to chapter 3.3.1.

The refurbishment of Bab al-Bahrain building involved photographic documentations at the outset, during and after the implementation (Archives of PAD). Initial investigations into the existing structure involved some invasive research including core drilling of the high columns in the southern elevation, which were found to be built of local stone with steel reinforcement (I 6). There was also test-chipping of surface cement plaster in various locations (annex fig. 3.3.1-51 to 54). In the course of the project, the architect in charge actually found more original fabric

²⁸ Refer to the image of the Walter Sanders Collection of Photographs for the Life Magazine dated 1952-54 online in the LIFE Picture Collection on Google at: https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/belgrave-of-bahrein/kAEbpV0a5jF_1Q (accessed August 3, 2023). Original ID: TimeLife_image_112167961.

to be preserved than he had assumed during the design phase (I 6). When removing the surface plaster of the 1980s refurbishment, original sea stone masonry as well as original lime-mortar rendering was discovered in various places including in parts which he had believed to be replacements (I 6). So-called archaeological windows in the pedestrian passages of the central gateway now display some of these finds to the public (fig. 3.3-27). The removal of suspended ceilings throughout the building's interior moreover brought to light the original ceilings of wooden beams and concrete joists or T-profiles which are depicted in the reflected ceiling plan in figure 3.3-32 (refer also to annex fig. 3.3.1-30 and 55).

The project's findings however are overall poorly documented. A construction phases plan which would illustrate the building's original structure and the various subsequent modifications was not produced at the time of the interventions. Beyond the site investigations, the commissioned architect seems moreover not to have engaged himself much with the history or the cultural significance of the building.²⁹ Some archival research was carried out by the client who provided some historic photographs, the reproduced original plan of annex fig. 3.3.1-29 as well as survey and design drawings from the 1980s including those reproduced in the annex to this chapter (I 6).

In retrospect, the lack of research and documentation as well as the overall approach, which focused on the new design rather than on the historic building, was criticized by conservation experts of the heritage authority including the conservation architect involved in the project (I 32, I 07). Although the latter considered his suggestions – like for example reconstructing the balconies of the northern elevation – were insufficiently taken into account, he judged the final result improved in comparisons to the initial concept. By his account, in the first refurbishment concept “[t]here were no attempts to show the original features of the building” and the interventions would have been even more intrusive on the “original elements” (I 07). The design architect in turn expressed himself dissatisfied with the final project result due to a lack of decision-freedom. His intention, for example, had been to further strengthen the motive of the triumphal gate with a simpler design of the side wings which he would have moreover left without façade illumination.

In terms of messages conveyed, the nature of the latest refurbishment of Bab al-Bahrain – the symbolism of the triumphal gate and the reconstruction of the supposed ruler's office – could easily be read as an attempt to legitimate governmental power at a time of political turmoil.³⁰ Moreover, it would come as no surprise if the colonial heritage was not heavily promoted in a landmark building chosen as state symbol by a government concerned with its state independence and sovereignty. However, while the refurbishment of the city gate in the mid-1980s explicitly aimed at dissimulating British influence in favour of features considered more Arab, there seems to have been no such intention in the latest refurbishment. On the contrary, the client's intention to restore the original building could be interpreted as indicating an emerging interest in the colonial heritage. In deviating from his assignment of reestablishing the building's original features, the design architect created a gate that is much more monumental

²⁹ The architect was for example not familiar with Belgrave as a historic character and original designer of the building (I 6).

³⁰ In the context of the pan-Arabic protests of the 'Arab spring' sectarian tensions in Bahrain were escalating in 2011.

than the original. The fact that the state's emblematic monument now mimics a triumphal arch – a state symbol of martial victory – could be easily interpreted as politically motivated. However, given that the architectural reference was brought up by the architect, this symbolism is probably not a conscious message. Moreover, the advising conservation architect, made the point that design considerations prevailed and that messages and symbolism were not discussed in the course of the project (I 07).

Although the goal of reestablishing the gate's original outer features was not strictly followed through, the heritage authority has been promoting the colonial heritage through the interpretation provided on the site. Historic photographs dating from the mid-20th century representing historic scenes and buildings have been installed indoors and outdoors throughout the site (fig. 3.3-27).

The client intended the project as a first step for a redesign of Bab al-Bahrain Square (I 6). While the Customs House was restored and extended shortly after, the redesign of the former Customs Square with its former garden was still pending in 2022.

Restoration and extension of the former Customs House 2014 – 2019³¹

The latest intervention at the site was the restoration and thereafter the extension of the former Customs House between 2014 and 2019 (annex fig. 3.3.1-15 to 20). Since these measures were carried out after the field research for this thesis had been completed, they played no role in the inquiry. During the interviews, the former Customs House and its extensions were still covered underneath the screen façade elements that had been added in the 1970s (fig. 3.3-28 and annex fig. 3.3.1-12 to 14).

For more than three decades, the Customs House had hence been hidden underneath ornamentally pierced plywood screens. These were mounted at approximately a meter's distance from the exterior wall onto a metal structure in front of the southern façade facing Bab al-Bahrain and on parts of the eastern and western elevations (annex fig. 3.3.1-12 to 14). The façade elements gave the building a more modern appearance. They were certainly added when the building was adapted and extended to accommodate Bahrain's main post office upon the relocation of the commercial harbour of Manama to Mina Salman in the 1970s. Alterations to the northern elevation were more inconspicuous (compare annex fig. 3.3.1-8, 9, 13). The survival of the historic building amongst the later additions was brought to the attention of the heritage authority which thereupon planned for its restoration.

In 2014, at the end of the field research for the thesis at hand, the heritage authority started investigating and restoring the building by removing all additions (annex fig. 3.3.1-15 to 18). These included the screen façade of the 1970s and a second storey, which had been added onto the western ground-floor extension dating from 1939 (compare annex fig. 3.3.1-10, 11, 15, 28). The latter was maintained and restored with a simplified façade design. The cement rendering of interior and exterior walls was removed and the original calligraphic inscriptions in the southern elevation uncovered and restored (annex fig. 3.3.1-11, 18, 20). Based on historic

³¹ The description of this intervention is based on archival data of the heritage authority (Archives of BACA, BACA 2017a, BACA 2017b, BACA 2015 and MoC 2013) and on interviews with professionals involved in the restoration of the Customs House (I 07 and 32) as well as on an analysis of site photos after completion of the building's extension.

photographs, the building's exterior was hence largely restored back to its original design of 1937. Figure annex 3.3.1-10 of the 1930s seems to have guided the restoration. Its wide loggias are again facing Bab al-Bahrain building and were refitted with wooden railings. The building's first ground-floor extension from 1939 was however maintained. The changes of the late 1940s including the modernist canopy of the closed ground-floor verandah, the wooden curtains of the first-floor gallery and the heightened parapet wall that fitted Bab al-Bahrain's design were not reconstructed. The decision to restore the original design might have been taken consciously. More likely, however, it happened out of ignorance of the changes that were implemented in the course of the town improvement plan in the late 1940s, as certain archival resources "which could have facilitated conservation, were not consulted" in the course of the restoration project (Hasan 2022).

Nevertheless, the restoration of the Customs House involved more historic research, site investigation and documentation of findings and changes than earlier interventions at the site. The project's outcome and documentation show that, in comparison to the earlier projects, the restoration of the Custom's House stands out with a concern for original design features and a strong focus on material authenticity – that is the preservation of historic fabric. According to the architect Suha Hasan "decisions and paths taken in conserving and rehabilitating the Customs House contribute to an emerging debate among architects in the country about conservation practices and around the value of what is being lost through these practices." (Hasan 2022, 216)



Fig. 3.3-28 and 3.3-29: The Customs House in 2014 and after its restoration and extension in 2023. Photos: Eva Battis

In 2018/19, the original western extension was fitted with a second floor in iconic contemporary design of the Dutch architect Anne Holtrop (fig. 3.3-29). Upon the intervention, the country's main post office returned to the building. In 2022, the entire project of the Customs House restoration and extension was shortlisted for the Aga Khan Award for Architecture.

Further projects for the rehabilitation of Bab al-Bahrain's northern setting, including the historic quarters of Suq al-Manama, the former Customs Square and the parking area to its north (fig. annex 3.3.1-2) were still pending in 2022.

Promotion of the site through events³²

Since the refurbishment of Bab al-Bahrain Avenue in the first and second decades of the 21st century, the heritage authority or other governmental institutions have been organizing many cultural and recreational activities that promote the site as a lively urban space and tourist attraction.

In 2011/12, the MoC had organized an international urban design competition for public space design of Bab al-Bahrain Square (Kingdom of Bahrain 2014). In February 2012, the submissions from local and international architects were publicly displayed on Bab al-Bahrain roundabout. For this purpose, the roundabout was closed for traffic and temporarily shaded during several public events under the title “Bab Pavilion” (annex fig. 3.3.1-105 to 108). The events included public podium discussions which “sought to question what a contemporary public space in the Arab World would look like” in the face of the recent political events in the region (Al Sayeh 2012) (annex fig. 3.3.1-105). Public opinion was explicitly asked for: chalk was handed out for passers-by to write statements on the street asphalt and voting boxes were put up for the public to choose its favourite design proposal (annex fig. 3.3.1-106 and 108). However, the voting was more of a symbolic act or perhaps a tentative approximation to participatory planning processes as the actual winners of the competition were chosen by an international expert jury. Neither of the winning projects or any other have to date been implemented.

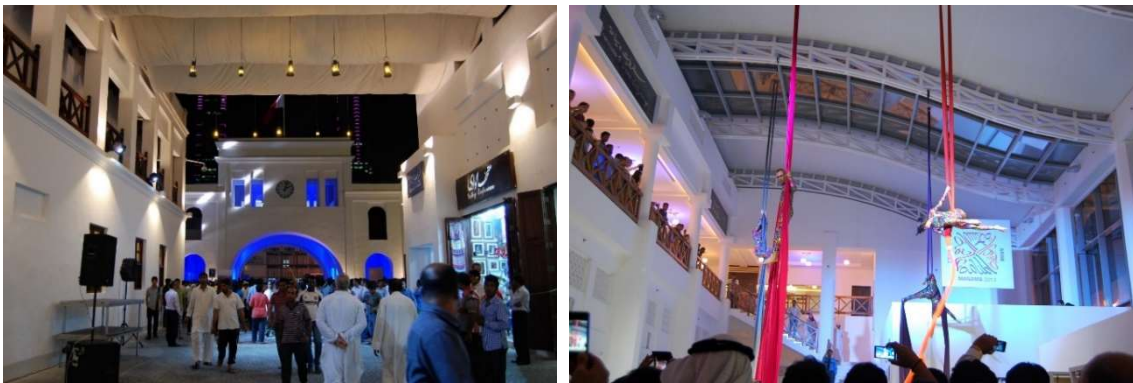


Fig. 3.3-30 and 3.3-31: Cultural event in Bab al-Bahrain Avenue and inside the mall building in 2012. Photos: Eva Battis

Other events were of less political nature. In spring 2012, the MoC for example organized the “Manama City of Joy” Carnival in cooperation with the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce & Industry. During the 8th Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix, the MoC’s webpage promoted the festival with the city’s “traditional market” and its “curious multi-cultural society” to tourists (Kingdom of Bahrain 2012c). In autumn the same year, the refurbishment of Bab al-Bahrain was celebrated together with the choice of Manama as Capital of Arab Culture (fig. 3.3-30 to 31). Even the celebration of the National Action Charter,³³ in February 2014, had a cultural focus although certainly with the aim of fostering social cohesion and affiliation with the government.

³² The description of these measures is based on an analysis of press coverage, social media releases and the author’s participant’s observations (Battis personal archive).

³³ The document marks an attempt at national reconciliation following the 1990s uprisings in Bahrain and return to constitutional rule in 2001.

Since 2012, a regular commercial event, advertised on the authority's Facebook page as an outdoor festival, was Bab Market (Kingdom of Bahrain 2013b). The event was held on weekends in the refurbished section of Bab al-Bahrain Avenue and featured local food, art and crafts. Its declared aim was to revive the site while supporting local creative talent. In 2013 and 2014, it was organized in the context of Manama as Capital of Arab Tourism and Capital of Asian Tourism respectively. The series was continued by the Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority (BTEA) as a weekly Saturday Market in spring 2020 on the occasion of Manama being Capital of Arab Tourism 2020 (Bahrain News Agency, 2020) and in order to "highlight the Kingdom's unique tourism products" (Bahrain News Agency, 2020). The historic site, or what remains of it, serves as backdrop to such events which aim at promoting Bahrain's culture and heritage internationally and locally. Assessing whether the site's refurbishments led to the desired economic upgrade lies beyond the scope of this work. Certainly, the reference site is one of the most lively and iconic public spaces in Bahrain. It is frequented by all segments of the national and foreign society as well as by tourists due to the various promotional activities, but also due to its central location in Manama and the offer of commercial and service facilities as well as for its heritage.

3.3.2 CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE COLONIAL TOWN CENTRE AT BAB AL-BAHRAIN

From the conservationist's perspective as per international heritage conservation doctrine, the key cultural significance of the historic building ensemble in downtown Manama is based on its historic and scientific values associated with the site's origins in the 1930s and 40s. The architectural ensemble's artistic values are subordinate to these value dimensions. In addition, the site bears social values in Bahrain's contemporary society.

The site's urban and architectural heritage from the 1930s and 40s testifies to the early modernization of Bahrain after the discovery of oil. During this phase of the British Protectorate, Manama was a regional port city and residence of the Political Agent in the Persian Gulf. The site with its preserved public buildings is evidence of "the urban impact of this geopolitical role" as well as of the administrative reforms that covered "customs, justice, police, and local management" (Ben Hamouche 2008, 192) and that laid the foundations for today's modern state.³⁴ Nelida Fuccaro described the modernization of the waterfront and of the port facilities, of which the site is evidence, "the most tangible manifestation of the control exerted by the government over the political, economic and social modernization of Bahrain." (2009, 192) The site is also tangible testimony to British influence on the country's development. According to Wiedmann, „[t]he introduction of legal and administrative institutions by the British authorities formed the basis for a new form of urbanism, which step by step became more centralised and administered." (2010, 129) The site's urban ensemble is one of the earliest examples of centralized urban planning in the Gulf. Because oil in the Gulf had first been discovered in Bahrain "it was one of the first countries in the Gulf to enter the oil urbanisation process and thus one of the first to undergo a transformation of the previous built environment" (Wiedmann 2010, 129). The reference site as "a new business district including public institutions" (ibid.) constitutes tangible testimony to this transformation process. Due to the integration of local stylistic features, Fuccaro moreover considers Bab al-Bahrain "a landmark in the process of Arabisation of urban culture" (2009, 193-194).

The site is hence foremost of historic interest. In relation to its history, the reference site is moreover of political and historical symbolism to date. Particularly Bab al-Bahrain building has a strong political symbolism that goes back to its origins in the national state building process. This is most clearly epitomized by the code of arms on its northern elevation although both the building and the crest have been altered and their historic testimony thus impaired. The physical additions and modifications to the site in the 21st century are contemporary testimonies to Bahrain's use of cultural heritage assets for state branding and promotion of cultural identity but it is certainly too early to consider them historic testimony for this.³⁵

Moreover, the site's preserved colonial-style buildings are of art-historical value for their relevance in Bahrain's architectural history. This refers to the aesthetic qualities of the urban ensemble and its individual buildings on the one hand, and on the other, to their structural characteristics. The site's buildings are evidence to the early use of steel beams and reinforced concrete together with traditional materials like sea stone masonry, gypsum-lime plaster as well

³⁴ For more details on Bahrain's modernization refer to Jenner (1984) *Bahrain, Gulf heritage in transition*.

³⁵ The national heritage legislation of Bahrain, for example, stipulates a minimum age of 50 years as one prerequisite for national monument registration (Kingdom of Bahrain 1995).

as ceilings and fittings of wood. The architectural innovations were spectacular at the time. There are anecdotes about local people being frightened to enter spaces with wider spans than those they were used to from the vernacular buildings. The vertically stretching entrance loggias of the Post Office and Police Station (annex fig. 3.3.1-63) and the staircases in Bab al-Bahrain's southern elevation (annex fig. 3.3.1-23 and 24) are examples (see below). The different historic buildings of the reference site, or what remains of them, hence testify to the technological and stylistic transformations in Bahraini architecture within the decade between the late 1930s and late 1940s. When, for example, comparing the more traditional design and construction methods of the former Custom's House with those employed only ten years later for the construction of the other public buildings at the reference site, there is a clear development. More detailed research into the construction history and comparison of the individual buildings, would allow to trace these developments in more detail.

Due to Sir Charles Belgrave's involvement in the design of governmental projects in his capacity as Advisor to the Ruler, the site furthermore witnesses his personal influence on the country's architectural and urban development. In addition, Bab al-Bahrain and the former Government Shops and Offices, along with other colonial-style buildings throughout Bahrain, are locally being promoted as a legacy of the Bahraini engineer Salahuddin bin Ahmed bin Hassan Ibrahim (1919-1957). He was allegedly the first Bahraini architect trained at the Public Works Department in the mid-20th century and "one of the pioneers of the modern architectural school in the Kingdom of Bahrain." (MSCEB 2019) Salahuddin was the "overseer in charge of the work" of constructing Bab al-Bahrain in the late 1940s (Hills 1949, 44-45). According to his son, Yousuf Salahuddin, he was moreover involved in the design of Bab al-Bahrain as well as in charge of the design drawings and construction of the Government Shops and Offices under Belgrave's supervision and guidance of Major Hills, director of the Public Works Department, and the engineer Mohamed Jaafar (Salahuddin 2007 and 2012). Salahuddin's contributions to Bahrain's built environment and the technological and stylistic features of his buildings have been revered in local media.³⁶ The successful Bahraini construction company Mohammed Salahuddin Engineering Consulting Bureau (MSCEB) moreover donates the Salahuddin Engineering Award in its forefather's honour (MSCEB 2019).

Pointing to the innovativeness of the construction methods employed for the construction of Bab Al Bahrain and of the Government Shops and Offices both in Bahrain and in the Gulf region Yousuf Salahuddin describes the impact of his father's works as follows:

"He became an expert in using reinforced concrete, hollow blocks and steel beams which enabled him to build big halls and staircases without the support of many columns - he was no longer limited to the size of the date tree trunk!

But to his surprise the people, not used to this new method of construction, were at first afraid to sleep under roofs or to climb staircases for which they could see no visible support!" (Salahuddin 2012)

³⁶ Yousuf Salahuddin paid tribute to the pioneering contributions of his father to Bahrain's architecture and built environment at least in two local newspaper articles on the 50th death anniversary of Salahuddin Ahmed Bin Hassan Ebrahim in 2007 and again on the occasion of the ceremonial inauguration of the refurbished Bab al-Bahrain in September 2012 (refer to Salahuddin 2007 and 2012).

Yousuf Salahuddin's articles moreover imply, that the constructive features of the buildings from the 1940s might moreover testify to the scarcity of building materials in Bahrain during and following World War II and to ways of coping with it:

"Due to a shortage of steel, following Second World War, Salahuddin had to resort to cutting up Ford car chassis for some of his projects." (Salahuddin 2007)

Due to a lack of research into the mid-20th century transitional architecture of Bahrain in general and into the construction history of the site's historic buildings in particular, it is at present impossible, based on the available information, to have a full understanding of the site's historic and scientific value as architectural testimony to this era. Documentation of the buildings' original design and construction as well as of most of the subsequent changes is unfortunately poor.³⁷ Due to this lack of research and knowledge, the scientific value of the site's buildings might have not always been judged accurately in the past. The rather inattentive approach to the historic fabric in some of the interventions which were described in the previous subchapter as well as various assessment reports are indicative of this.³⁸ The initial intention of the gateway's latest refurbishment in 2012/13 and particularly the recent restoration of the Custom's House however indicate a growing awareness for the historic values of the site.

Despite the above-described knowledge gaps and the fact that the ensemble's architecture and aesthetic qualities have significantly changed, there is no doubt that the site constitutes one of the most important urban and architectural heritage sites of the mid-20th century in Bahrain. Its historic and scientific values have however diminished with the loss of authentic fabric and its embedded historical and technological information. On the other hand, given the fact, that testimony to this type of Bahraini architecture continues to erode, the site's value can be considered to be increasing. As authentic material evidence of this particular era is becoming more and more rare, the documentary value of the site's colonial buildings raises.

The Post Office and Police Station is additionally of relevance to the history of Bahrain's postal service. The building is locally sometimes referred to as Bahrain's first post office, which is not correct. The first post office opened in Bahrain in 1884 as a sub-office of the Indian Post Office at Bushire (Donaldson 1975, 57). The office was most likely located in one of the buildings that were demolished for the construction of Bab al-Bahrain gateway. The building nevertheless testifies to an important stage in the development of Bahrain's postal services. The adjacent new Post Office of 1948, was expressly built for the transferal of the administration of the postal services "from the Government of Pakistan to His Majesty's Government [of the British Empire]"

³⁷ Despite investigations at several archives, the author was unable to locate any further historic design or construction drawings of the reference site's buildings than the ones reproduced in the annexes. However, the construction history of the individual buildings was not the core research objective of this thesis. The search for historic documents could hence still be intensified and might bring to light additional documents. Opportunities to carry out investigations into the construction history, which have rarely been seized in the past, might arise with future physical interventions on the preserved historic buildings.

³⁸ The assessment of the Post Office and Police Station of 2008 by a local conservation architect, for instance, acknowledges the building's historic value for being an example of the "colonial era's style" but seems to base this on design aspects related to the building's outer appearance only (Al-Jowder 2008). Structural characteristics are not referred to possibly for lack of awareness.

and thereby to the supervision of a British Postal Superintendent (The Persian Gulf Administration Reports for the year 1948, 11). According to Belgrave it was the ruler's "most earnest wish" to assume control over the postal affairs. The transferal from British to Bahraini authority over the postal services was hence under preparation at the time (Belgrave 1948). Apart from possibly being the oldest preserved post office in Manama and possibly in Bahrain,³⁹ the building hence testifies to the nationalisation process of Bahrain's postal services.

The Customs House is the oldest building preserved at the site, built when the customs were being reformed with the pearl trade in the late 1930s and hence testimony thereof.⁴⁰ It is also the only remaining built structure of the former harbour and its facilities.

The former Customs Square's Garden – the greened fountain space in the middle of Bab al-Bahrain Square – can be considered Bahrain's first roundabout. Although the system of roundabouts was not formally introduced in Bahrain until the early 1960s according to Ben Hamouche (2008, 200), the garden was installed in 1937 "partly as a means of ensuring the one-way traffic rule" and is hence an early evidence of Bahrain's modern road infrastructure (Government of Bahrain Administrative Report for the Years 1926-1937, 24).

Among the site's intangible heritage assets related to the economic history of Bahrain, are the continuity of commercial functions, including of specific traditional companies and associated family names as well as historic place names.

In Bahrain's contemporary society, as in the past, Bab al-Bahrain moreover serves an important landmark that provides both orientation and identification. Although the relation to the sea and harbour was completely lost with successive land reclamation, the gate still remains the main entrance to Manama's historic market district at least in symbolic terms. The building marks the border between the dense historic market district to the south and the newer urban areas, which were built on reclaimed land.

The reference site is moreover considered part of Suq al-Manama, which is one of the biggest, if not the biggest surviving historic market district in the Gulf region that constitutes a significant heritage asset in its own right. Despite a certain marginalization and evident economic downturn, it remains a vibrant market. Both the pedestrianized market and Bab al-Bahrain building are also among the most important tourist attractions in the country. The various events organized by the government are successful in promoting interaction among the members of Bahrain's diverse society. Customs Square is "considered to be the region's first formal public space" by some according to a social media posting (Courthouselover 2019). While this notion was not further investigated, the site is certainly one of the few truly public spaces in Bahrain in this sense. The reference site and particularly the pedestrianized Bab al-Bahrain Avenue with its commercial entities and public space hence still play an important social and economic role in Bahrain.

The site's national importance was officially acknowledged with the inclusion on Bahrain's heritage register. Bab al-Bahrain and the Old Post Office and Police Station were among the first colonial-style buildings to be listed as national monuments along with the shops on Bab al-

³⁹ The author did not find out if the second postal service that opened in Muharraq in 1946 (Donaldson 1975) is preserved. If so, that is the oldest post office building in the country.

⁴⁰ It is possible but unlikely that remains of earlier buildings are preserved within the adjacent newer buildings at Bab al-Bahrain Square or along the eastern side of Bab al-Bahrain Avenue.

Bahrain Avenue as part of Suq al-Manama. But this only happened in the year 2012 (Kingdom of Bahrain 2012b). This relatively late statutory protection is however not necessarily a sign of lack of appreciation. Much rather it can be considered indicative of a perceived lack of urgency since the buildings were already in governmental ownership, which implicated the authorities' right to exercise control over them.

The site's historic significance as testimony to the mid-20th century state modernization process and example of Bahrain's colonial architecture is, however, not self-explanatory and not legible without historic background knowledge. The provision of interpretation and presentation facilities at Manama Suq for national and foreign visitors and tourists had already been earmarked as an integral measure in early planning documents for the market's revitalization (Kingdom of Bahrain 2004). Nevertheless, few interpretation facilities had been provided by 2015 at the end of the field research and the postal museum had not yet opened. Even after the implementation of most of the revitalization measures the findings of an early assessment of the legibility of the continuously evolving Manama Suq overall still holds true:

“Despite all these changes, there remain enough fragments of the historic urban fabric to ‘tell the story’ and explain the importance of Manama Suq in the life of Bahrain. At present, however, all this raw material exists without explanation. Lacking an older Bahraini as guide, the visitor can make little of the apparently trackless streets and shops of Manama Suq. Bringing out its history and heritage is therefore an important part of the enhancement process.” (Kingdom of Bahrain 2004, 3)

In conclusion, the reference site in downtown Manama has an unquestionable historic, scientific and socio-cultural national significance which is however not yet conclusively explored, documented and disseminated. This significance has moreover – with the exception of the social values – been partly impaired with most of the interventions that have been carried out in the ensemble since the 1970s, as described in the previous subchapter and further elaborated on in the following one.

3.3.3 AUTHENTICITY ASSESSMENT OF THE COLONIAL TOWN CENTRE AT BAB AL-BAHRAIN

Given the above-described historical value of the reference site as a multifaceted testimony to Bahrain's early state modernization process of the 1930s and 40s, the author's authenticity assessment is based on the comparison of the site in its condition at the time of the field research in 2014/15 to its original state in the mid-20th century.⁴¹

The text and table at the end of this subchapter (fig. 3.3-33) assess the authenticity of the urban ensemble as a whole and of its individual buildings within each category of information sources of paragraph 82 of the Operational Guidelines (UNESCO 2021). In the case of the Post Office and Police Station as well as the Customs House, the table differentiates between the buildings' state in 2014/15 when the inquiry was carried out (indicated with the number in brackets) and their state after the completion of works that were still ongoing or forthcoming at the time. The imagery and plans referenced are those of annex 3.3.1.

3.3.3.1 Form and design

The site's authenticity in form and design is linked to the spatial and architectural integrity of the historic urban ensemble and its individual elements – that is essentially to what extent the spatial relations, layouts, volumes, shapes, designs and stylistic details that were introduced with the town improvement plan of the 1940s and that characterized the site in the mid-20th century are still preserved. The assessment hence focuses on the historic buildings, or replicas thereof, and their relation to each other. It also takes into consideration changes to the design of the public open spaces of Bab al-Bahrain Square and Avenue. Changes to other buildings and spaces are assessed below as part of the setting. Moreover – with few exceptions – the assessment focuses on the outer appearance of the buildings, because interior spaces were usually not subject of discussion in the field research.

The site's basic urban configuration in terms of street layout and plots as well as positions and volumes of the buildings are largely preserved. The authenticity in form and design of the individual buildings and public spaces, when assessed against the historic designs, however varies greatly.

The façade design of **Bab al-Bahrain** building was significantly altered with the revamp in the mid-1980s. The refurbishment in the 21st century removed all stylistic features of that interventions and restored some details of the original design as described in chapter 3.3.1. At the same time, it introduced new architectural features and classicist European architectural references which deviate from the original design. Particularly the northern elevation and the entire central part is significantly altered. Overall, the second refurbishment hence cannot be considered having re-established the historic building's authenticity in form and design. One could moreover argue that the comprehensive revamp of Bab al-Bahrain in the 1980s might be

⁴¹ The Venice Charter points to the importance of respecting "valid contributions of all periods" of a monument (ICOMOS 1964, article 11). Later additions should hence only be removed if they are of little interest. The author considers this to be the case for most of the later 20th century additions to the site's buildings. At this point, most appear neither to be of significant artistic nor historic interest. Restorative interventions of the 21st century, such as the removal of non-historic building parts, fittings and fixtures and the restitution of blocked wall openings for example, are therefore considered to be in line with conservation ethics. However, it could be argued that at least traces of some of the major interventions should have been preserved as evidence of the site's development, as discussed below.

of interest to future generations, that traces of its design should have been preserved as historic evidence in line with article 11 of the Venice Charter.

The interior design of the recreated former office in Bab al-Bahrain's upper floor bears some resemblance to the photo that served as basis for the reconstruction (annex fig. 3.3.1-61 and 62). However, this reconstruction is unauthentic in every other regard as explained below with the assessment of the information sources 'material and substance' and 'location'. In comparison to the site's other buildings, the author judged Bab al-Bahrain building to be of intermediate authenticity in form and design.

Of the site's historic buildings, the **Post Office and Police Station** is best preserved in terms of form and design. It most closely resembles its original design and is only marginally changed in outer appearance (compare annex fig. 3.3.1-63 with 69). The Post Office and Police Station is the only building which still fully features the parapet wall design, which was originally a unifying element of the ensemble. Restorative interventions in the 21st century removed and documented insignificant additions (annex fig. 3.3.1-67). Various disintegrating decorative elements and lost fittings such as most windows, the building's cornice and parapet as well as the wooden railings were repaired or reconstructed. These reconstructions deliberately but marginally deviate from the original designs, for example with decorative wooden knobs on the railings. Such minor deviations give the building a slightly more traditional outer aspect than authentic. Changes in the interior are likely to be more significant, although authentic design features are preserved here as well (annex fig. 3.3.1-70 to 72). Overall, the building was categorized as being of high authenticity in form and design.

The new **mall building** (annex fig. 3.3.1-79, 84 to 90, 94, 102, 102) is partly reminiscent in form and design of the historic Government Shops and Offices which it replaced. The mall hence constitutes a partial reconstruction of the historic building but it has a larger footprint and building volume than the predecessor building. The passage between the Post Office and Police Station and the demolished Government Shops and Offices as well as the open spaces to the rear of the latter were eliminated. Towards Bab al-Bahrain Avenue, however, the new building's façade maintained the original scale and height. It is in this façade only, that stylistic features of the historic building were reinstated as they were documented in 2006 prior to the demolition.⁴² Historic photographs document the design of the initially one-storeyed building and also its extension by an upper floor in the mid-20th century (annex fig. 3.3.1-75 and 76). Neither of those historic designs was reconstructed, as could have been justifiable in terms of conservation ethics.⁴³ Certainly, most detailed information was available for the building's condition in the early 21st century, when it was surveyed. However, the design of the reconstructed elevation deliberately deviates from this documentation as well (annex fig. 3.3.1-92). Not only are the few decorative features that were remaining in 2006 slightly amended and the canopy omitted, more significantly, the façade was enriched with oversize portals of local palatial residences (annex fig. 3.3.1-84). This vernacular design element is a deliberate conjecture devoid of any

⁴² The approach reminds of the conservation practice of facadism, in which only facades of a historic building are preserved when refurbished.

⁴³ Article 9 of the Venice Charter 1964 (ICOMOS 1964) and paragraph 86 of the Operational Guidelines (UNESCO 2021) make it clear, that reconstructions of buildings or building parts can under certain circumstances be permissible when based on reliable evidence and to no extent on conjecture.

historical reference in the context of the historic market area. This is even more so the case for the building's interior and its southern and western elevations. The combination of glass surfaces with imitations of vernacular residential façade elements in the southern and western elevations seems to be inspired by the conservation tenet of visually differentiating between authentic historic fabric and new additions.⁴⁴ In this case, as in the building's interior, the design however creates a misleading contrast between historicizing and contemporary design elements of an entirely new constructed building. Overall, the design of the mall building as replacement of a historic building is hence highly questionable in terms of conservation ethics. Given a certain resemblance to the original building of the mid-20th century, the mall was rated on the second lowest level of authenticity for the information source 'form and design.'

The restoration of the **Customs House** after 2015 – most importantly the revelation of the historic building façade on the northern edge of the former Custom's Square – is considered restorative to the building's authenticity and to the setting of Bab al-Bahrain gateway. There are however, certain incongruences in the restoration in terms of form and design. The restoration recreated the building's state as it was constructed and extended in the late 1930s – a state that predates the construction of Bab al-Bahrain and the implementation of the town improvement plan in the late 1940s. Given, that the heritage authority originally intended to restore the original design of Bab al-Bahrain and made efforts to reinstate the mid-20th century colonial style throughout the site, it could have been more consistent to restore the Customs House to the same period – that is including the modifications that were carried out on the building with the town improvement plan. Admittedly, this would have however required significant reconstructions of lost features, such as the modernist canopy. The restoration that was actually carried out was able to rely mostly on the removal of later additions and repair and thereby stronger complied with the conservation imperative of minimal intervention.

The contemporary extension of the Customs House, which was completed in 2019 and facilitated the continued use of the building, is visually subordinate to the historic part despite its extravagant design. This is due to its recessed position, relatively low height and its inconspicuous surface colour and texture (fig. 3.3-1 and 3.3-29). The intervention can therefore be considered to comply with articles 9 and 13 of the Venice Charter, as an "indispensable" addition that is "distinct from the architectural composition" and that bears "a contemporary stamp" (ICOMOS 1964, article 9), "while not distracting" from the historic part of the building (ICOMOS 1964, article 13). At the time of the interviews, this extension had not yet been built and the historic appearance of the Customs House not yet been reestablished. It was still covered underneath the 1970s plywood façade addition and hence significantly deviated from the historic design (compare annex fig. 3.3.1-25, 28, 49 and 57). The table assesses the building's state following the restoration and therefore categorizes the information source 'form and design' as rather high. At the time of the field research, however, the authenticity level of form and design was in fact on low level, which the table indicates with the lower number in brackets.

Both **Bab al-Bahrain Square**, originally Customs Square, and Bab al-Bahrain Avenue underwent considerable changes since their first inception. Obviously, the development of the adjacent built fabric had its visual impact on the site's open spaces, as assessed as part of the 'setting'. As described in chapter 3.3.1.3, the Customs Square Garden was for the first time redesigned with

⁴⁴ Refer to articles 9 and 12 of the Venice Charter 1964.

the implementation of the town improvement plan in the late 1940s. Further refurbishments followed. Besides the garden's central position on the square and the oval shape, hardly any features of any of the two historic designs remain to date (compare annex fig. 3.3.1-6, 10, 12, 20, 21). Decorative details that originally matched Bab al-Bahrain – the incised panels of the garden's balustrades and the building's balconies as well as the pyramidal pier caps of parapet and balustrade – are lost both on the building and the square (compare annex fig. 3.3.1-22 and 43). With a change of traffic flow, a second smaller, circular traffic island with greenery was added to the historic garden. Further additions to the square's design, which was already metallised in the 1940s, are elevated and paved pedestrian walkways and crescent lines of palm trees planted in front of Bab al-Bahrain's side wings (compare annex fig. 3.3.1-3, 6, 7). The information source 'form and design' was rated low for Bab al-Bahrain Square although its basic configuration complies with the original state.

In the case of the refurbished northern section of **Bab al-Bahrain Avenue**, the heterogenous streetscape that emerged since the mid-20th century was concealed with the construction of the historicising façade element along the eastern side of the avenue in combination with the street shading. The screen façade is certainly an extreme example of facadism.⁴⁵ Although the intervention is not very obvious, the façade is identifiable as a new addition to the streetscape when scrutinized (annex fig. 3.3.1-98 to 100). In this sense it complies with article 9 of the Venice Charter 1964. The intervention was never intended to be more than a historicizing design reference only remotely reminiscent of an earlier state. The resemblance to the streetscape of the mid-20th century is restricted to imagery and atmosphere (compare annex fig. 3.3.1-74 to 95, 96). It is based on the seemingly reduced height of the streetscape and on decorations such as mock-ups of traditional local balconies (annex fig. 3.3.1-80 to 82). At the time of the inquiry, parts of these vernacular design references had been removed (annex fig. 3.3.1-95 to 102). The resemblance to historic imagery of the site (annex fig. 3.3.1-74 and 75) was thereby reduced and the pseudo-historic reference dissimulated. Overall, the screen-façade and shading in Bab al-Bahrain Avenue has to be rated low in authenticity of form and design both before and after this purification.

The purpose of the type of stage-set architecture of the screen-façade and the mall building in Bab al-Bahrain Avenue was to create an architectural harmony and semi-traditional atmosphere. This aim was reached. The original architectural unity of the urban ensemble, which made it identifiable as an orchestrated governmental intervention, is lost.

In summary, the only building that still closely resembles its historic state is the building of the Post Office and Police Station. Bab al-Bahrain building bears resemblance to its original design in parts but overall has significantly changed in design. The mall building partly mimics the state of the Government Shops and Offices in 2006 when it had already undergone significant stylistic simplifications. The Customs House, with its added screen façade, was still disguised as a building of the 1970s at the time of the field research. It has since been restored to its state that predates the implementation of the town improvement plan in the late 1940s. Historically authentic unifying design elements such as the joint parapet design of the governmental buildings are only preserved in fragments throughout the site. Instead, a semi-traditional architectural harmony

⁴⁵ Facadism not as heritage conservation practice but as architectural practice in which the façade is designed autonomously from the buildings in scale and style as well as functionally and structurally.

was established along Bab al-Bahrain Avenue. The Venice Charter 1964 makes it clear that generally, for the sake of keeping historic developments legible, “unity of style is not the aim of a restoration” (ICOMOS 1964, article 11). However, in the case of the latest refurbishments of the reference site, neither the original architectural unity was restored nor is the historic development of the site and its individual buildings legible. From the viewpoint of conservation ethics, the architectural interventions of the 21st century throughout the site are uncoordinated and inconsistent. From this perspective, it is lamentable and detrimental to the site’s authenticity as testimony to the mid-20th century modernization, that the architectural unity of the urban ensemble and its specific stylistic features are lost. Given the various degrees of changes to the individual buildings, the site’s overall authenticity in terms of ‘form and design’ is categorized as moderate.

3.3.3.2 Materials and substance

As per the significance statement, the material authenticity of the urban ensemble hinges on the extent to which it preserves historic substance from the initial construction in the 1930s and 40s in the individual buildings.⁴⁶ Material authenticity varies greatly throughout the site. Original fabric has been removed to various extents. Some lost building elements and features were reconstructed. The reconstructions are not authentic in substance and no historic evidence. However, on the basis of the available documentation it is impossible to have a detailed understanding of all changes to the substance and to conclusively judge material authenticity for most of the individual buildings.

The case is clear for the **mall building**. The material authenticity is null since the former Government Shops and Offices were entirely demolished in the first decade of the 21st century and the reconstruction of parts of the historic building’s features does not involve any historic construction material.

Likewise, the **Customs Square Garden** clearly preserves no original substance neither from its first inception in the 1930s nor from its historic revamp in the late 1940 (compare annex fig. 3.3.1-6, 10, 21, 12, 20). Neither do the screen-façade and street shading in **Bab al-Bahrain Avenue** contain any historic fabric.

A total lack of material authenticity is also evident in the case of the alleged reconstruction of the **Shaikh’s office at Bab al-Bahrain**. Its interior design and furniture were designed and constructed without any historic remains or evidence except the historic photo (I 6). The clock on display at the office, to give an example, slightly resembles the clock originally installed on the building’s southern elevation but is by no means the authentic one (compare annex fig. 3.3.1-25 with 61).

As for **Bab al-Bahrain**, the **Post Office and Police Station** and the **Customs House**, it is obvious that all three buildings underwent significant changes since their construction and that these brought about the replacement of all fittings and fixtures as well as surface rendering and most decorative items. The interventions certainly also involved a partial loss of original building structure. Despite these changes, a significant part of the original structure and substance seems to be preserved in all three buildings, including stone masonry, fragments of original surface

⁴⁶ With regard to article 11 of the Venice Charter, the removal of most of the later additions is generally not considered detrimental to the material authenticity for lack of historic interest, as explained above.

plaster and structural elements of steel, concrete or wood.⁴⁷ The preserved authentic fabric is however mostly not exposed to sight. Exceptions are several wooden ceilings in all three preserved historic buildings, original steel or concrete columns in the Post Office and Police Station and Bab al-Bahrain building, as well as the archaeological windows in the pedestrian passages of the latter, that purposefully expose parts of the wall masonry (annex fig. 3.3.1-47). Given a lack of investigation and documentation of many of the past structural changes to the buildings, the material authenticity of Bab al-Bahrain and of the former Police Station and Post Office is however not entirely known. Few original documents of the buildings' first construction could be retrieved and later survey drawings are generally poor in detail. There is hence little documentary baseline data for the assessment of later changes. Some detailed construction drawings of the later refurbishments were accessible, but found to be contradictory at times. Moreover, physical interventions on historic buildings require flexibility and tend to spontaneously evolve as per the conditions found on site. Photographic documentations, if done at all, were accessible only in few cases. Conclusive documentation is hence scarce, and inconstant memories of time witnesses partly contradict the findings of a comparative analysis of plans and photographs. According to a senior business owner, established at the site since 1944, Bab al-Bahrain building was for example twice demolished "to the floor" and rebuilt since its initial construction in 1949 (I 38). Likewise, an architect involved in the survey and refurbishment of Bab al-Bahrain in the 1980s recalled that the building was "nearly pulled down" at the time. According to him, most walls were very fragile and had to be replaced in blockwork (I 21). However, a comparison of floor plans and sections as well as photos of invasive investigations in 2011, which is synthesized the hypothetical plan of construction phases in figure 3.3-32, suggests in that the majority of the structural walls, pillars and columns were maintained throughout the building (refer also to annex fig. 3.3.3-1, 29, 32, 33, 37, 40, 41, 50 to 55). According to the design and construction drawings of the 1980s, concrete blockwork and reinforced concrete elements were introduced only in few places, mostly to divide or narrow the format of doors and windows (annex fig. 3.3.1-37). Photographs of the first refurbishment of Bab al-Bahrain, if existent, were not accessible. It is hence unknown to what extent the actual refurbishment of 1984-86 deviated from the design drawings.

One example, where the intervention deviated from the plans, is the case of the arches in the building's central piece. The design drawings (annex fig. 3.3.1-39, 41, 42) show a slightly different curvature and spring of the arches than photographs of the intervention (annex fig. 3.3.1-34 to 36). It is unclear, if the arches were eventually demolished and rebuilt or partly maintained. The slight difference in curvature could result from the introduction of an additional layer accommodating the down lights that were added in the upper section of the arches. In fact, a hollow construction of concrete on "metal wire mesh" as depicted in detailed design drawings of 1984 (annex fig. 3.3.1-42), was identified during the 2011-13 refurbishment (I 6). The modifications to the flights of stairs above the arches however make it improbable that the arches' structure was maintained. Based on similar considerations, the architect commissioned with the 2012/13 refurbishment expressed his belief that the arches were entirely rebuilt it the

⁴⁷ The judgement on material authenticity of Bab al-Bahrain, the Police Station and Post Office and the Customs House presented in the table is approximative. A reliable judgement would require a systematic investigation and comparison of past material changes for which the information is at present not available.

1980s but did not further investigate the matter (I 6). Since the latest refurbishment did not intervene on the arches themselves, future investigations are possible.

These details are to illustrate that it is difficult to conclusively judge the material authenticity of Bab al-Bahrain and the Post Office and Police Station given a lack of detailed investigation and systematic documentation of the original constructions and later interventions. The categorization on an intermediate level is hence approximative. The case is clearer for the Customs House, where investigations into the construction history were documented during the latest restoration. The table differentiates between the state of the building before and after these works. While material authenticity of Customs House was unknown at the time of the field research, as indicated in brackets, it is now known to be comparatively high.

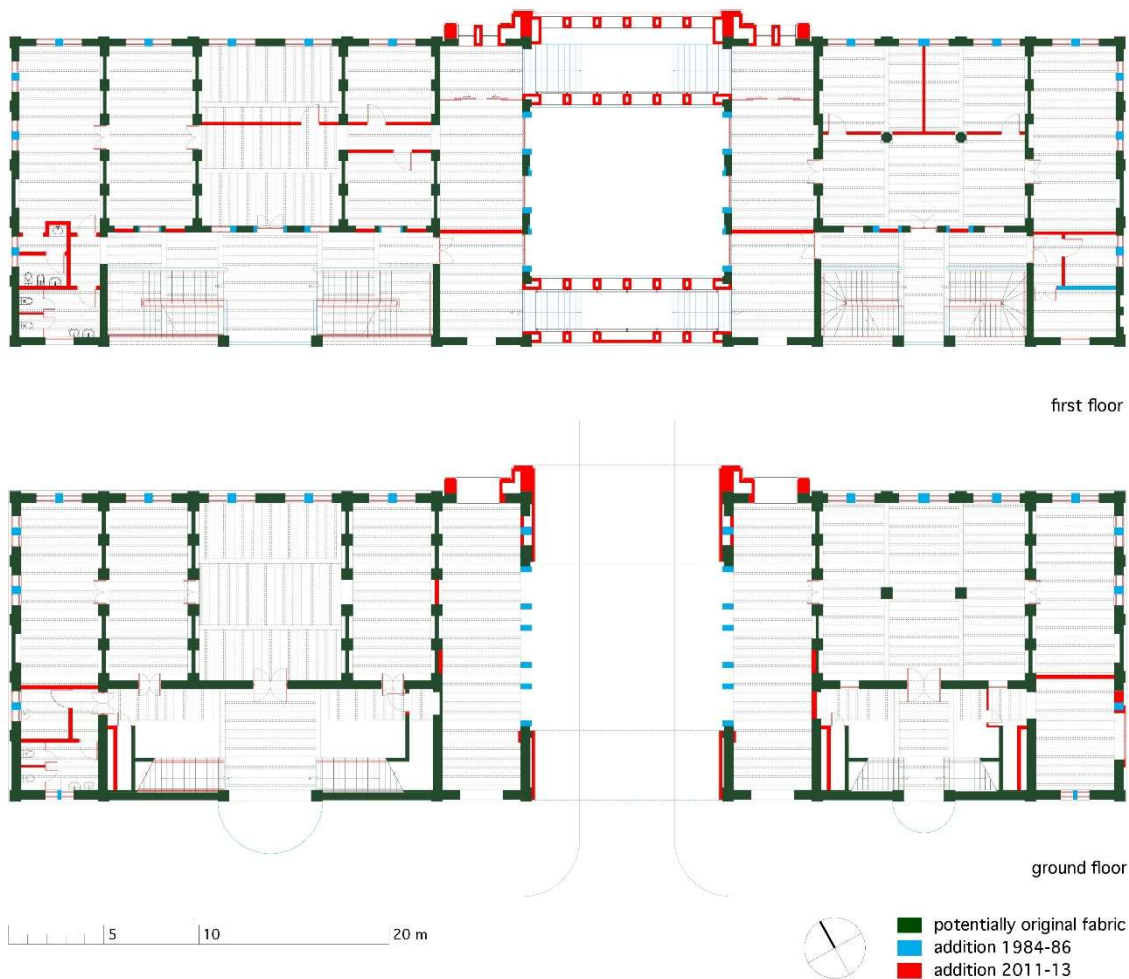


Fig. 3.3-32: **Hypothetical plan of construction phases of Bab al-Bahrain building** (with reflected ceiling plan). Drawing: Eva Battis on the basis of design drawings by PAD and reproductions of plans from the 1940s and 1980s

3.3.3.3 Use and function

Despite significant physical and functional changes which urban development brought about in Central Manama, the site remains the representative town centre of the capital and country. It maintains administrative and trade functions although it is no longer hosts all government offices. Trade conditions and types of commerce changed with the transferal of the harbour in

the 1970s. Retail is moreover being rivalled by new shopping malls throughout the country. With the transferal of the harbour, the site also lost its entrance function for people and goods arriving to Bahrain with ships. It has however maintained a certain entrance function to the historic market area Suq al-Manama, albeit for pedestrians only, since Bab al-Bahrain Avenue has been pedestrianized. Overall, the site remains a vibrant commercial and public place in downtown Manama, where people of all walks of life and different nationalities meet and socialize.

The site's public buildings remain in governmental ownership and are still more or less authentically used. That is, they still fulfil the exact or a similar function as they did when first built. Likewise, the buildings that were covered by the screen façade along the eastern side of Bab al-Bahrain Avenue remain in private ownership with mixed residential/commercial use and shops at ground floor. The public accessibility of the site's open spaces is maintained. All buildings are at least in parts accessible to public in connection with their administrative or commercial uses, which generally corresponds to their original accessibility.

Bab al-Bahrain building has maintained its core function to serve as representative town gate and landmark at the entrance to Suq al-Manama. One of its original functions was to stage the advent of cars in Bahrain by giving them access to the newly widened traffic artery to the market area. The pedestrian passages that flank the central gateway since the 2012/13 refurbishment seem to highlight this original function. But no-entry signs on the sides of the northern arch indicate that it now actually closed for incoming cars. The building is still used for governmental administration and services including a tourist information centre. It however no longer serves as main seat of the government and ruler. The practical use of the public clock on the southern elevation, which was one of the first in the country, has certainly decreased and it no longer chimes the hour. Although the audible feature is lost, the clock is an important detail in function that was maintained. Overall, the authenticity for the information source 'use and function' is rated high for Bab al-Bahrain building. This is also the case for the **Police Station and Post Office**. While the police premises still serve their original function, the postal museum in the remaining spaces is closely related to the building's history.

The authenticity in 'use and function' is considered slightly less in the case of the **mall building** when compared to the historic predecessor building. Although most commercial units at ground floor were preserved and the commercial function expanded with the construction of the atrium, the former administrative functions have been omitted with the offices at upper floor. The gastronomic uses inside the new atrium are an addition, while the parking lot to the rear of the building was eliminated. The mall building and the Customs House are ranked of intermediate authenticity level for this information source. The former **Customs House** lost its function as harbour facility in the 1970s but has since served another governmental service function as the country's main post office.

The representative function of the former Customs Square Garden on **Bab al-Bahrain Square** is certainly reduced as it visually drew closer to the roundabouts that mushroomed throughout the country in the second half of the 20th century. However, it still serves both aesthetic as well as traffic management functions on the site and is hence of high authenticity in this regard. While a pedestrian walkway around the former garden is still in place, the sojourn quality has however certainly decreased not only with the removal of the seats in the balustrade but due to the increased traffic load (compare annex fig. 3.3.1-21, 22, 43).

Lastly, the northern section of **Bab al-Bahrain Avenue**, which was widened in the 1930s to accommodate motorized traffic, is still a commercial street leading to the historic market, but was fully pedestrianized. It is hence ranked of intermediate authenticity in use and function. Overall, the site is considered to have maintained a high level of authenticity in this regard.

3.3.3.4 Traditions, techniques and management systems

Trade and governmental functions are longstanding traditions at the site, which were already addressed above. Governmental ownership could be considered relevant under this information source as part of the site's management system. However, what is assessed here is the structural authenticity of the site's individual buildings – the construction techniques employed for their construction, restoration and modification.

A high degree of structural authenticity would be given if the buildings' structural characteristics and construction methods and materials complied with the ones originally used – in theory regardless of their material authenticity which is assessed separately. However, there is a certain lack of knowledge in this regard. Detailed construction plans of the mid-20th century that would inform about the buildings' original structure could not be located. Detailed and systematic research into the buildings' original structures and construction methods were rarely carried out and insufficiently documented, as were most of the later interventions.

With all due respect to the colleagues and with the reservation that the author has not carried out her own in-depth on-site-assessment of the building's structural characteristics, there are indices, that in the past the structural authenticity of the site's colonial-style buildings might have at times been judged imprecisely due to a lack of background-knowledge of the specificities of the so-called transitional or hybrid buildings. While they are generally considered to testify to the introduction of modern building materials such as steel and cement, there seems to be a prevalent bias among heritage professionals that the colonial-style buildings, or at least those at the reference site, were originally built solely with traditional building materials and methods. In his assessment report of 2008, a foreign conservation architect described the original structure of the **Post Office and Police Station** as consisting of load bearing walls built by marine stone, ceiling structures of wooden beams and planks and load-bearing wooden lintels above openings (Koellisch 2008). The report makes no mention of the building's steel elements – its T-profiles and round columns which already feature in the preliminary construction plan (refer to annex fig. 3.3.1-64, 69 to 72). The architect moreover considered all cement and re-reinforced concrete items to be later additions. This notion was shared by the director of EWAN al-Bahrain, which was involved in the restoration and reinforcement of the Post Office and Police Station in the 2000s. In an interview (I 26), the director described the building's structure as significantly changed and added upon by that time. He doubted any steel items to be part of the original structure. Likewise, he expressed the opinion that **Bab al-Bahrain** was entirely built of stone without the use of steel – let alone reinforced concrete (I 26). The question about materials and techniques originally used in Bab al-Bahrain building was also a matter of controversy between the design architect of its latest refurbishment and the architectural conservation consultant involved on behalf of the heritage authority (I 06). While the latter was allegedly convinced that the columns in the southern elevation of Bab al-Bahrain were pure masonry work, the design architect, to his own statement, believed and proved them to contain steel profiles within the traditional lime stone masonry. He however considered reinforced concrete columns and beams

as additions from the 1980s intervention (I 06). Not only the comparison of the ground plans makes this judgement questionable.

Definite judgements on historic structural authenticity are impossible at this stage in the case of the preserved historic buildings. An exception is the **Customs House**, which has been subjected to more thorough research and documentation during its restoration and extension since 2014. As the table, assesses the Customs House in its state prior to these works, structural authenticity of the building is categorized as unknown, although it is now known to be actually comparatively high. Despite the knowledge gaps, it is clear that evidence of the historic structural characteristics is preserved in **Bab al-Bahrain** and the **Post Office and Police Station**. It is tentatively rated on an intermediate level for both buildings.

With the exception of the later restoration of the Customs House, there have moreover hardly been any attempts to reinstate structural authenticity by employing traditional construction techniques and materials in the interventions of the 21st century. Even without an in-depth structural analysis of Bab al-Bahrain and the Post Office and Police Station it is evident, that additions and modifications were carried out in conventional construction techniques. The Post Office and Police Station building was structurally reinforced with new additions. The use of traditional techniques at Bab al-Bahrain and the Post Office and Police Station was restricted to the restoration of individual building elements, such as the replacement of wooden ceiling beams, where required.

Likewise, all new constructions on the site, including the partial reconstruction of the Government Shops and Offices in the **mall building** and the historicizing screen façade with its vernacular design features along **Bab al-Bahrain Avenue**, were generally built in conventional construction techniques and materials. Wall elements imitating the local vernacular with niches and arches were for example not constructed in traditional stone masonry but in blockwork or reinforced concrete. While the metallic roof girders of the Avenue's shading structure were painted brown in order to evoke the association of wood, some of the vernacular inspired decorations were actually built of wood, as were the replicas of colonial-style railings and windows of both the new and the historic buildings.

All buildings – historic and new – were rendered with gypsum-lime plaster which imitates the traditional local façade rendering in appearance and material composition. The aim of employing the traditional surface render was to give the buildings a traditional, if not historic appearance. Particularly in the case of the new buildings this can be considered a wilful deception. Moreover, the traditional plastering technique was not always strictly followed as the design architect of the latest refurbishment of Bab al-Bahrain described:

“Actually we cheated, because underneath we put cement. You know, the rough one. And then we filled it with this noura⁴⁸ plaster. It was too expensive to do it completely with the original one.” (I 6)

Despite this trick and due to the traditional surface coat, Bab al-Bahrain, like the other buildings, “doesn't look like a modern building. It looks [...] almost like a restoration” (I 6). Because of the semi-traditional surface rendering of all buildings throughout the site,⁴⁹ even the newly

⁴⁸ Local term for the traditional lime-gypsum plaster.

⁴⁹ Again, the restoration of the Customs House is an exception, as the traditional plaster technique was applied as faithfully as possible in this case (I 07).

constructed mall building and the screen façade element in Bab al-Bahrain Avenue were rated on the second lowest level of authenticity in terms of traditional building techniques. Overall, the structural authenticity of the ensemble is rated to on an intermediate level.

3.3.3.5 Location and setting

The urban ensemble and all of its preserved historic components remain in their authentic location. However, given the intensity of the urban development which includes land reclamation, the relative position and relation to the sea has totally changed. The former harbour site has completely lost its coastal location and sea access. Given the fact that the urban ensemble was equally built on reclaimed land, once could credit this process as a continuation of a site-specific cultural tradition.

The site's setting lost all harbour uses with the shift of the port location to Mina Salman. Other functional changes in the setting since the mid-20th century were gradual and less fundamental. Overall, the direct and wider setting of the site retained its role as town centre to the capital and was continuously developed to uphold this function. Particularly in terms of urban morphology – less so in terms of function – the changes to the ensemble's setting since the mid-20th century were nevertheless tremendous.

Functional changes in the setting include, Government Avenue, on which Bab al-Bahrain Square is located no longer being the main east-west traffic artery in northern Bahrain, but one of many. The large empty plots of the former harbour and its landing facilities north of the former Customs House are used as a parking area for the significantly increased car traffic and still await their development. The old town's residential quarters to the south witnessed gentrification. Instead of well-off merchant families, today, "residual members of the citizenry's most impoverished classes live side by side with the burgeoning population of transnational laborers" (Gardner 2010, 98).

Even profounder than the functional changes to the setting are the ones to the **urban morphology**. The typical one- to two-storey vernacular fabric has been replaced with multistorey buildings of various scales and styles (compare annex fig. 3.3.1.-2, 3, 5, 8, 9). The town improvement plan of the 1940s was an attempt for coordinated urban development, at a time when vernacular building traditions were increasingly challenged and their harmonizing effects on the built environment weakened. In comparison, the subsequent developments in the direct setting appear rather poorly orchestrated. Today's urban morphology is much more heterogeneous than in the mid-20th century, with the exception of the planned Financial Harbor district that was developed to the north of the site.

Despite these manifest changes, the authenticity of 'location and setting' is rated at an intermediate level, as the site's geographical location is authentic and many functional and spatial characteristics prevail.

One particular feature that is assessed for authenticity of location is the reconstructed **Shaikh's office inside Bab al-Bahrain**. The analyses of plans and photographs of the building from different decades (refer to annex fig. 3.3.1-21 to 62) suggests that the photo that served as evidence for the reconstruction of the office was not taken within Bab al-Bahrain building. The historic photograph shows an arched window.⁵⁰ The only originally arched windows in Bab al-

⁵⁰ Refer to the image in the LIFE Picture Collection on Google at:

Bahrain were four in the southern elevation. Of the spaces corresponding to those windows, the room in the south-eastern corner of the first floor would be the potential location where the photo could have been taken according to the room dimensions, the light conditions and the position of the visible window. The reproduction of the original design plans and survey plans from 1984 however show the location of sanitary facilities in this place. Moreover, the window depicted in the office photo does not correspond to the ones of Bab al-Bahrain in terms of window division and sash bars (compare annex fig. 3.3.1-23, 25, 61, 62). The photo comparisons hence leave little doubt that the photograph cannot have been taken at Bab al-Bahrain building. An investigation of the photo's provenance gives further evidence. The image, along with additional ones of the same scene, is part of the Walter Sanders collection of photographs for the Life Magazine dated 1952-54. The caption of the photo, when still posted on Getty Images read: "Sheikh Sir Sullman a Sir Charles D. Belgrave (R)".⁵¹ The photograph is also posted on Flickr with the caption "Sheikh Salman discussing state matters with the Bahrain government's adviser Sir Charles D. Belgrave at the latter's office in the Adviserate office building in Manama circa 1952."⁵² According to these sources, the photo hence does not show the ruler's office, but Belgrave's office at the Adviserate building. A note in Belgrave's diary explains why the Shaikh would be seated at the advisor's desk:

"Shaikhs came in. Sulman sat, as his father did, in my chair, a sign of his position." (Gulf Collection, Belgrave, Personal papers, 22 February 1942)

Two further photographs of the same series support the notion that the photo was indeed taken inside the Adviserate. One of the photos is entitled "Exterior view of the Adviserate, office building for Sir Charles D. Belgrave."⁵³ It shows the building in the garden which Belgrave described in his autobiography to enjoy looking at from his office chair (Belgrave 1960, 65). Indeed, another photo from the same series shows the reflection of a garden in a picture hung behind the desk.⁵⁴ Another indicative detail is the telephone exchange machine on the historic office photos which Belgrave refers to in another diary entry: "I have now got rather an amusing little private telephone exchange in my office with three lines, one to the Agency, one to the Customs and one to the Municipal Offices." (Gulf Collection, Belgrave, Personal Papers, 6 October 1930). Lastly, the ash tray hints to this being the desk of the smoker Belgrave rather

https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/belgrave-of-bahrein/kAEbpV0a5jF_1Q (accessed August 3, 2023). Original ID: TimeLife_image_112167961.

⁵¹ The Life Picture Collection (n.d.) "Sheikh Sir Sullman Visiting Sir Charles D. Belgrave (R)." In *Walter Sanders Collection of Photographs for the Life Magazine dated 1952-54*. Getty Images. <https://www.gettyimages.at/detail/nachrichtenfoto/sheikh-sir-sullman-visiting-sir-charles-d-belgrave-nachrichtenfoto/50531432?adppopup=true> (accessed January 20, 2021).

⁵² Refer to the photo on Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/muharraq/26020845220/> (accessed August 3, 2023).

⁵³ Refer to the photo in the Life Photo collection on Google collection: <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/MQGaktW0aSYFxQ> (accessed August 19, 2023). Original ID: TimeLife_image_769680.

⁵⁴ Refer to the photo in the Life Photo collection on Google collection: <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/belgrave-of-bahrein/1gGlczbVWktv4A> (accessed August 19, 2023). Original ID: TimeLife_image_112168372.

than that of the non-smoking Shaikh. Overall, there is hence clear evidence that the image neither shows the Shaikh's office, nor was it taken at Bab al-Bahrain. Although the ruler had an office at Bab al-Bahrain, its recreation on the basis of the photograph has to be considered historically untruthful in its location besides being materially unauthentic and inaccurate in design detail. The architect, who reconstructed the office upon the wish of the client after expressing his reservation, openly admitted the fraud in an interview:

"I made it fake! I made it fake!" (I 6)

3.3.3.6 Language, and other forms of intangible heritage

Intangible heritage associated to the urban ensemble includes the continuity of uses and of traditional construction techniques which were assessed above. An aspect assessed under the information source 'language, and other forms of intangible heritage' are names of places and businesses which survive at the site from the mid-20th century as well as ownership.

English being the lingua franca in Bahrain, English and Arabic place names tend to coexist. Arabic place names are indicated in brackets where known. The programmatic name of **Bab al-Bahrain**, which was conceived by Charles Belgrave by his own account (Gulf Collection, Belgrave, Personal Papers, 29 March 1949), soon replaced the name "Government Offices" by which the building was initially referred to in official documents (Bahrain Government Annual Reports for the years 1924-1956). The name Bab al-Bahrain remains in use and was actually conferred to the surrounding urban area. The former Customs Square (Midan al-Gumruk) – temporarily called Shaikh Sulman Square (Midan Shaikh Sulman) – is now referred to as **Bab al-Bahrain Square** or Roundabout (Midan Bab al-Bahrain/ Aldawar Bab al-Bahrain) and the traffic island is no longer called Customs Square Garden. The market street is today called **Bab al-Bahrain Avenue** (Sharia Bab al-Bahrain). Like other streets in the area, and throughout Bahrain, it carried the name of a British official in the mid-20th century. As the southern part of the reference site is considered part of Manama's historic market area, it is also referred to as Suq al-Manama.

As for the other historic buildings, the **Police Station and Post Office** (Mabna Shurda wa al-Barid) display those names with the historic calligraphic inscriptions on their facades (annex fig. 3.3.1-73) although the postal service is no longer operational. They are commonly referred to by these names, often with the prefix 'Old'. The new **mall building** seems to be mostly referred to as such and certainly not as the Government Shops and Offices as the predecessor building was called in official documents of the mid-20th century. (Bahrain Government Annual Reports for the years 1924-1956) The name of the former **Customs House** (Beit al-Gumruk), on the contrary, is experiencing a revival. The building is commonly referred to as Manama Post Office, given that it has been serving as such for decades. However, since the restoration revealed the calligraphic inscriptions on the building's main façade, its former name and function is certainly returning to public awareness (annex fig. 3.3.1-18 and 20).⁵⁵ At the time of the site interviews, this was not yet the case, and, for consistency, the information source is accordingly ranked on a low level in the table.

In addition to names of places and buildings, the perseverance of specific businesses and associated **family names** is an information source of authenticity. A socio-economic survey of the reference site lies beyond the scope of this work. It is however undisputed that the place,

⁵⁵ The historic name (Old Custom House) was also indicated on the construction sign put up at the site during the restoration works and has since featured in media coverage on the project.

including Bab al-Bahrain Avenue and the mall building, teems with names of families and businesses that established themselves in Central Manama by the mid-20th century. Some of them today count among the most powerful commercial families in Bahrain.⁵⁶ This aspect is positively considered in the authenticity assessment.

In addition, the author assessed **traditional ownership** as part of the intangible heritage. In the case of this reference site, the governmental ownership of the public historic buildings is an important factor of authenticity. Overall, the level of authenticity for the information source 'language, and other forms of intangible heritage' for the site is hence high.

3.3.3.7 Spirit and feeling

Due to its subjective nature, spirit and feeling as a factor of authenticity is difficult to assess without in-depth quantitative research. Emotional ties to the site in its current state are addressed in chapter 3.3.4 on the basis of the inquiry. Two rather obvious aspects which allow for a comparison of the site's sense of place are its national symbolism and cosmopolitanism.

An essential characteristic of the site has long been and still is its **cosmopolitanism** and a certain **social inclusiveness of its public spaces**. With longstanding international trade relations, particularly to the Indian subcontinent and to the Arabian Peninsula as well as genealogical connections to Persia and Saudi Arabia, Manama's port and market had by the mid-20th century long become "a heterogeneous and multicultural trading hub" (Gardner 2010, 36). Belgrave described the colourful and multiethnic bustle of seamen, traders and their goods during his times (Belgrave 1960, 135). Although the port location, the trade, the urban setting and the clientele have since fundamentally changed, the cosmopolitan character prevails as it is frequented by people of most varied cultural and social backgrounds. This is due to the governmental and commercial services offered for various clientele,⁵⁷ but also due to the fact that the old town of Manama has become an enclave for migrant labourers mostly from South-East Asia. Cultural and commercial events are moreover successfully promoting the site for members of Bahrain's diverse national and migrant population. Whereas the separation of "social worlds" is characteristic for Bahrain and the Gulf region in general (Gardner 2010, 81), the reference site of Bab al-Bahrain stands out for at least not excluding the local population of low-income migrant workers even if they are seldom, if ever, explicitly addressed by the activities. Due to this cosmopolitanism, the reference site at Bab al-Bahrain probably constitutes Bahrain's most inclusive public space, as defined by Jürgen Habermas (Habermas 1979). Such explicit invitations for public discourse and expression of opinion as occurred during the event "Bab Pavilion" are however certainly exceptions (annex fig. 3.3.1-105 to 107). The chalk handed out during that event for street graffiti was moreover used by most of the attendees of the event and passers-by of various ethnicities to express their personal attachment to Bahrain and its state symbol Bab al-Bahrain (annex fig. 3.3.1-108). This indicates, that Bab al-Bahrain serves as national icon both for Bahrain nationals and members of the diverse migrant and expatriate population.

⁵⁶ The matter regularly features in local media, was highlighted in several interviews during the field research (refer to chapter 3.3.4) and was also taken up in the on-site interpretation (see below).

⁵⁷ An analysis of user groups and potential target groups was carried out at the beginning of the refurbishment of Bab al-Bahrain Avenue (Kingdom of Bahrain, 2004b).

Bab al-Bahrain's symbolism as national icon can be considered preserved and even augmented with the latest refurbishment. This ranges from the architectural reference of the triumphal gate to the gold-coloured code of arms and even the alleged reconstruction of the ruler's office inside the building. In addition, the conferral of the building's programmatic name to its surroundings extended its symbolism as former welcoming and entrance gate to the entire ensemble. Even the two main towers of Financial Harbor in the wider setting can be considered to augment this symbolism when interpreted as an architectural reference to Bab al-Bahrain as gateway to the country (Ben Hamouche 2011, 209). Last but not least, the continuity of governmental services and the promotion of the associated building names fosters the **state symbolism** of the site.

Based on these evaluations, authenticity in 'spirit and feeling' was rated highest for Bab al-Bahrain and on high or intermediate levels for the other elements of the site. Overall, it was rated high.

3.3.3.8 Other internal and external factors

The evaluation of the information sources 'material and substance' and 'traditions, techniques and management systems' showed how difficult it is to assess the site's authenticity when thorough and complete analysis and documentation is lacking. There has been **research published** on the reference site's history and cultural significance including in various printed and online publications of academic or popular science. Nevertheless, the architectural and structural characteristics of most of the ensemble's historic buildings and their construction history remain insufficiently analysed and documented.

Likewise, the **interpretation facilities** at the site were still marginal and piecemeal at the time of the field research in 2014/15.⁵⁸ The historic name inscriptions at the Police Station and Post Office as well as the Customs House, which were not restored yet at the time of the field research, give hints to the visitors. So do the archaeological windows in the pedestrian passages of Bab al-Bahrain, which expose the historic stone masonry but are not accompanied with any explanations. The historic inscription of the construction date of Bab al-Bahrain was reproduced on the southern arch towards the end of the research. The tourist information installed at ground floor of Bab al-Bahrain following its 2012/13 refurbishment did not even have an English-language signpost indicating this function.

At several places throughout the site, historic photographs of the area were installed, such as in the pedestrian passages of Bab al-Bahrain. These are however not accompanied by any textual information (annex fig. 3.3.1-47). The only interpretive signages which was identified throughout the site at the time of the field research were bilingual (Arabic/ English) plaques accompanying historic photographs inside the mall building. They paid homage to Yousif Khalil Al Moayyed, who opened a small shop on Al Tijjar Avenue in the vicinity of Bab al-Bahrain in 1940 (YK Almoayyed & Sons 2014). From this shop the successful Bahraini company YK Almoayyed & Sons Co developed that contributed as a sponsor to the refurbishment of Bab al-Bahrain in 2012/13 (Salahuddin 2012). The photos and signages were a temporary installation that was later removed.

Overall, research and interpretation were rated on a low level throughout the site. Improving the situation would require significant further research into the history and significance of the

⁵⁸ The postal museum only opened after the field research was completed.

urban ensemble as well as dissemination of the scientific outcome. In the case of the Customs House and the Post Office premises, there was a better level of interpretation and/or research, as indicated in the table.

3.3.3.9 Overall authenticity judgment (summary)

Overall, the assessment results in a higher score for information sources that relate to intangible heritage aspects and the contemporary uses than for factors that are more relevant to the site's scientific and historical values as testimony to Bahrain's state modernization process of the mid-20th century. While the latest refurbishment of Bab al-Bahrain, for example, increased the building's symbolism as national icon, it further reduced its material testimony.

On the one hand, the site's development since the mid-20th century fostered the continued use of the governmental, commercial and public buildings and open spaces of the ensemble. This contributed to the preservation of the site's authenticity in as far as it hinges on functional continuity. On the other hand, many of the interventions since the ensemble's initial construction impaired the physical evidence and thereby reduced its authenticity. Of particular consequence are interventions which impaired the original structural and architectural characteristics of the historic buildings from the 1930s and 40s. However, the full impact of past interventions on the material and structural authenticity is not known for all buildings due to a lack of research. But it is obvious and most regrettable, that much historic information was irreversibly lost with demolished, undocumented fabric throughout most of the site.

The changes to original substance and designs of the buildings blurred the messages that were inherent in the ensemble's original colonial architecture. Most of the rehabilitation measures in the 21st century did not seize the opportunity to restore originally shared architectural features of the ensemble's historic buildings. The ensemble is now hardly legible as such, and few of the buildings retain their original stylistic features. Moreover, many traces of the buildings' development throughout history were deliberately removed or concealed.

Overall, the various interventions at the site since its inception in the mid-20th century did not follow the same objective and therefore appear arbitrary when viewed as a whole. Inconsistencies are not only apparent between interventions that were commissioned by different authorities at different times, but also occur between more recent interventions by the same authority and within the individual buildings. The restorations and reconstructions retrieve conditions of the buildings or parts thereof from various points in time ranging from the late 30s to the mid-2000s and modified them with the addition of vernacular and foreign, traditional and contemporary architectural features. Only few of the interventions can be considered restorative to the original architectural and urban character and historical authenticity of the site. Traditional building techniques, albeit overall few, were moreover employed rather indiscriminately on the site's historic and non-historic buildings in the 21st century.

Since not many of the site's cultural values are self-explanatory – least of all the ones related to historical significance – the generally low level of research was identified as being detrimental to the site's understanding, as was the deficient on-site interpretation. These are important and, as of now, deficient information sources of authenticity for this reference site. From the viewpoint of heritage conservation science, the rehabilitation measures hence have to be overall judged as piecemeal and partly contrary to each other. Despite tremendous differences between the individual buildings and sources of information, the site's overall authenticity at

the time of the field research is rated rather low particularly with a view to the key information sources 'form and design' and 'materials and substance.'

Information sources of authenticity	Site-specific information sources of authenticity	Urban ensemble	Bab al-Bahrain	Police Station and Post Office¹	Mall building	Customs House²	Bab al-Bahrain Square	Bab al-Bahrain Avenue
Form and design	Authenticity of layout and designs of buildings and spaces					(2)		
Materials and substance	Material authenticity of the historic buildings					(0)		
Use and function	Governmental and commercial functions					(3)		
Traditions, techniques and management systems	Building techniques/ structural authenticity					(0)		
Location and setting	Relation to the sea & town/ urban context					(3)		
Language, and other forms of intangible heritage	Names/ ownership					(3)		
Spirit and feeling	State symbolism/ cosmopolitanism					(3)		
Other internal and external factors	Interpretation/ research			(2)		(2)		

¹ The table indicates the state of the Post Office and Police Station prior and after (in brackets) the inauguration of the postal museum.
² The table indicates the state of the Customs House prior (in brackets) and following the restoration and extension in 2015-2019.

Degree of authenticity:

highest	->				lowest	unknown
5	4	3	2	1	0	

Fig. 3.3-33: Tabular assessment of all information sources on authenticity at the reference site at Bab al-Bahrain

3.3.4 PERCEPTIONS OF THE COLONIAL TOWN CENTRE AT BAB AL-BAHRAIN BY THE INTERVIEWEES

This subchapter describes the perception of reference site one by the interviewees. The diagrams that accompany the text illustrate the most important findings of the inquiry and compare the perceptions by architects and non-architects. Although the diagrams quantify comments, they merely serve to illustrate tendencies that were identified by qualitative research means, as described in chapter 3.1. The subchapter is accompanied by the tabular assessment of the interview statements in annex 3.3.4. Imagery referenced is that of annex 3.3.1.

3.3.4.1 The interviews

The assessment of the site's perception is based on 30 interviews with 34 people. Refer to table A of annex 3.1 for more details on the individual interviews. Of the interviewees, 16 were taken on a tour at the site and interviewed about their perception of it. These interviews are marked bold in diagram 3.3-1.

Architects (12/4)			Other professional backgrounds (22/12)		
Eastern (5/2)	East-western (5/1)	Western (2/1)	Eastern (13/4)	East-western (5/4)	Western (4)
16,17,21,30,49	7,22,23,32,33	6,20	4,11,15,18,26,38^{X4},39,40^{X2},41	8,9,10,12,46	3,13,14,19
bold = on-site interview with a tour at the site/ not bold = expert off-site or spontaneous on-site interview Interviews 38 and 40 involved four and two interviewees respectively.					

Diagram 3.3-1: People interviewed about their perception of the reference site at Bab al-Bahrain

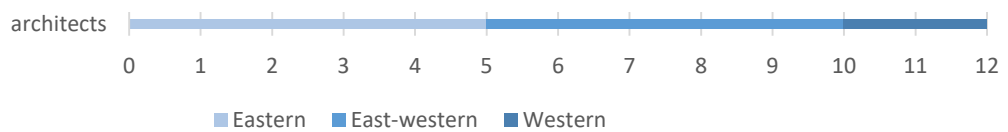


Diagram 3.3-2: Cultural backgrounds of the interviewed architects

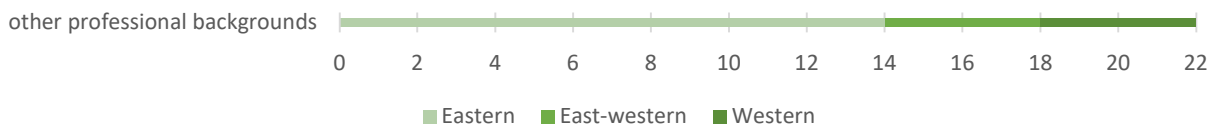


Diagram 3.3-3: Cultural backgrounds of the interviewees of other professional backgrounds

The tour usually started at Bab al-Bahrain Square from where the gate building's northern elevation was assessed. The author then walked each interviewee through one of the gate's pedestrian passages to the intersection with Al Khalifa Avenue from where the southern elevation of Bab al-Bahrain was assessed. The tour continued into Bab al-Bahrain Avenue with a stop at the Post Office and Police Station. At the intersection with Tijjar Avenue the southern elevation of the mall building was assessed. On the way back, most tours shortly led into the mall, entered from Bab al-Bahrain Avenue. During the tour, after a first assessment of the status-quo, the author successively confronted the interviewees with historic mid-20th century photographs of the site and with a photo of the gate building after the refurbishment in the 1980s (annex fig. 3.3.1-21, 23, 63, 76).

Four of the interviewees, who were taken on a tour, were architects, including two employees of the national heritage authority (I 16,33). The other 12 represented various different professional backgrounds ranging from Western archaeologists to an African housemaid.

Additionally, eight people participated in significantly shorter, mostly spontaneous interviews at the site (I 38,39,40,41,46). They included a senior Bahraini entrepreneur who established a business at the site in 1944, a South-East-Asian migrant salesman and three Bahraini taxi drivers stationed at the site. Moreover, off-site interviews mostly with a wider thematic scope were conducted with nine other local and foreign architects, including four employees of the local heritage authority (I 7,30,23,32), of which two had been directly involved in interventions at the site (I 7 and 32). An in-depth interview was conducted with the architectural consultant in charge of the 2012/13 refurbishment of Bab al-Bahrain building (I 6). In addition, an architect involved in the gate's refurbishment of the 1980s was interviewed (I 21) as well as an architect involved in the urban rehabilitation of the site on behalf of the local architectural firm Gulf House Engineering (I 22). Last but not least, the director of EWAN Al-Bahrain, who is not an architect, commented on the site and on the interventions his company was involved in (I 26).

In total, 12 of the interviews about this site were conducted with architects and 22 with non-architects. 18 of the interviewees were Bahraini, 16 were foreigners. 18 of the interviewees were representatives of Eastern backgrounds and 6 of Western origin. Ten additional interviewees of Eastern origin were educated or had lived in Western countries.

3.3.4.2 Background knowledge and personal relation to the site of the interviewees

One of the first questions the author posed during the focused on-site interviews was:

What do you know about the place?

If necessary, more detailed questions about the construction age, original designer, historical context, the use and construction history as well as the personal relation to the site followed.⁵⁹ During most on-site interviews, the author gradually disclosed historical information about the site.

Among the interviewees of both groups there were various levels of familiarity with the site and knowledge of its history (refer to the collection of all related statements in table 3.3.4 – 2 in the annex). Since the author left it up to the interviewees which aspects they comment on, the statements do not precisely reflect the complete background knowledge of the individual interviewees. The statements are however indicative of different knowledge levels. At the same time, the number of mentions of certain aspects also reflects the importance the interviewees attribute to them (refer to diagram 3.3-4).

The **familiarity** ranged from life-long personal connections to the site among the local Bahraini citizens and long-term foreign residents to only few occasional visits particularly among newer and temporary residents of Bahrain. Only one interviewee visited the site for the first time during the interview (I 20). The partners of the spontaneous short interviews 38, 39, 40 and 41 had all been working at the site for years or decades. Among the partners of the expert interviews, some had been involved in past

⁵⁹ The background knowledge of the interviewees was not systematically assessed in the spontaneous on-site interviews and in expert interviews. The interviewed professionals and experts of architectural and urban conservation in Bahrain can however be considered knowledgeable at least of general information of the site's history and development.

rehabilitation and refurbishment works at the site (I 6,7,21,22,26,32). Several interviewees associated personal memories and family narrations with the site mostly related to the market and the administrative functions at the site and in its vicinity.

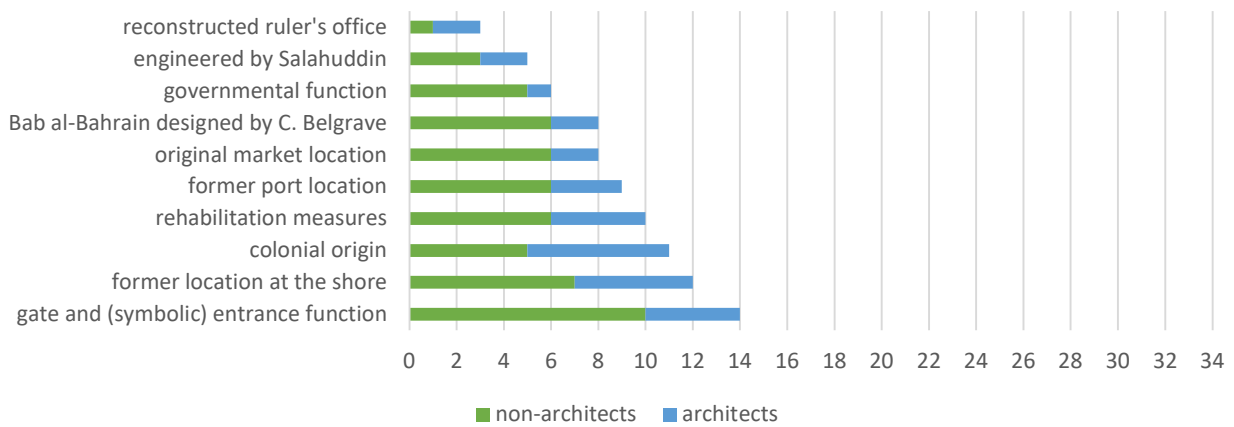


Diagram 3.3-4: **Historic background knowledge of the interviewees**

The level of **historic background knowledge** ranged from no information at all to rather detailed, though not always precise knowledge about the site's history and development among architects and non-architects.

According to the statements, there was most awareness of Bab al-Bahrain's **original entrance function** to the country, town and market (14 mentions: I 3,4,6,8,9,10,11,13,14,15,17,19,33,49) as well as of the **former sea-side location** (14 mentions: I 4,6,12,15,17,32,33,38x3,49). There was a common misconception that the sea and port originally reached Bab al-Bahrain and that the building used to be the first thing travellers and merchants would have seen when approaching the harbour. In fact, most of the building was hidden from sight behind the Customs House and other harbour facilities (refer to annex fig. 3.3.1-8 and 9).

Second most often referred to with 11 explicit or indirect mentions was the site's and particularly Bab al-Bahrain's **British-colonial origin** (I 4,13,15,17,19,21,33,6,20,38,49). Proportionally, this information was referred to more often among the architects (5 mentions). According to the number of mentions, more architects were aware of the site's **origin in the mid-20th century** than non-architects (see below in 3.5.1.3). Usually this was considered a recent origin:

"It's not that old! As a matter of fact. The actual gate was, I think, only built in 1949. It was remodeled quite recently to look more sort of Arab than colonial. But even Bab al-Bahrain road doesn't go back, I think, much beyond that. I don't think it is even 1930s originally." (I 19)

Most interviewees were aware of the fact that the site had been subjected to rehabilitation works. Asked about what they know about the site and its history, ten interviewees (I 6,8,10,11,15,19, 21,33,38,49) explicitly referred to past or planned **rehabilitation measures** at the site, but did not always correctly describe or date these. A senior tradesman at the site, for example, recalled having witnessed Bab al-Bahrain building being entirely demolished and rebuilt at least two times (I 38). A foreign long-term resident correctly described the intention of the 1980s intervention on Bab al-Bahrain but dated it to the early 2000s. He had not noticed that the building was recently changed again (I 19).

Nine interviewees made reference to the **former port location** (I 4,6,10,13,17,19,33,38x2). As many mentioned its **connection to the market** (I 10,11,13,16,17,19,39,40).

Eight interviewees (I 4,15,17,19,33x3,38), including two architects, said that **Sir Charles Belgrave** had or might have designed the building. **Salahuddin bin Ahmed bin Hassan Ibrahim** was mentioned as the building’s original engineer by six Bahrainis, including two architects (I 17,33,38x4).

Several interviewees referred to the **governmental function** of the site’s buildings (I 4,10,17,38,40,41) but reference to its former function as seat of the government was only indirectly made by three interviewees who mentioned the **reconstructed ruler’s office** (I 6,33,19).

The diagrams presented in 3.3.4.3 below are moreover indicative of how many interviewees were aware or not aware of the original construction time of the site’s buildings as well as of the perseverance of the historic Customs House and of the nature of the screen façade in Bab al-Bahrain Avenue. Mostly due to their professional involvement with the site more architects were aware of the buildings and interventions than non-architects.

On average, the level of background knowledge about the site, as per the information disclosed in the interviews, was slightly higher among the architects than among the non-architects. Taking into consideration the fact that the interviewed experts on Bahrain’s urban and architectural conservation were not systematically asked about their background knowledge, the level can in fact overall be considered considerably higher among the architects than the non-architects. Nonetheless, there were very well-informed non-architects and poorly informed architects among the interviewees.

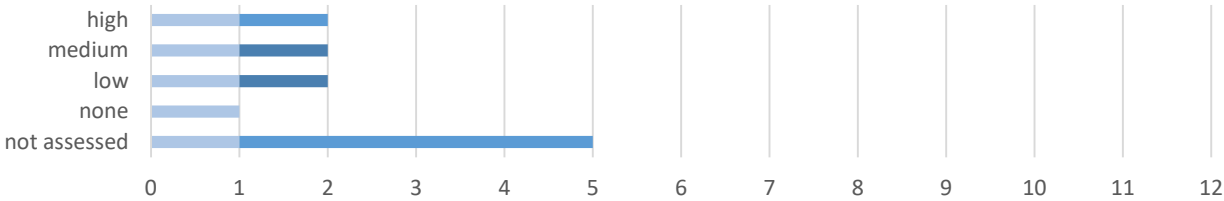


Diagram 3.3-5: Knowledge levels of architects

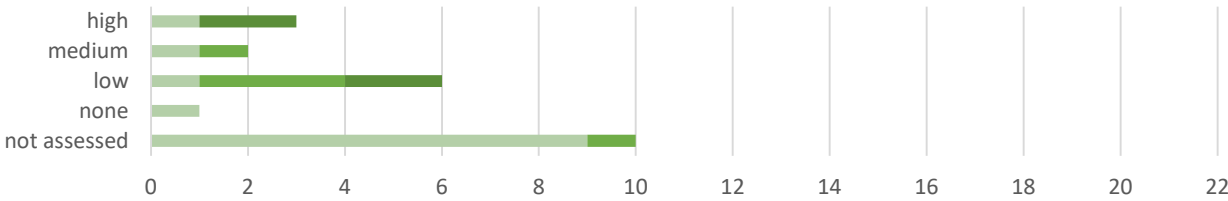


Diagram 3.3-6: Knowledge levels of non-architects

3.3.4.3 Age estimations and assessments of historicity by the interviewees

With the exception of the partners of the expert and some of the spontaneous interviews, most interviewees were asked about the **age of the site’s buildings** (refer to table 3.3.4 – 3 in the annex). The answers were either based on the interviewee’s background knowledge or on estimations during the site visits (refer to annex fig. 3.3.1-43 to 47).

According to the statements, more architects were aware of **Bab al-Bahrain’s** origin in the 1940s (I 6,17,20,33) or classified it as dating from the 1930s to 50s (I 16) than non-architects (I 4,15,19). Six of the non-architects judged Bab al-Bahrain older than it actually is. The building was for example dated to the early 20th century (I 12, 13), the 1920s to 30s (I 8), to be older than 90 (I 41) or 150 years (I 14), or to possibly even be the oldest building of Bahrain (I 11). These misconceptions are certainly partly be due to the historicizing design of the gate’s latest refurbishment. Some of the interviewees gave

rather evasive answers such as “very old” (I 39) or “30s-70s” (I 9). Several of the interviewees corrected their initial age estimation of Bab al-Bahrain to the 1950s after seeing photos from that time (annex fig. 3.3.1-21 and 23).

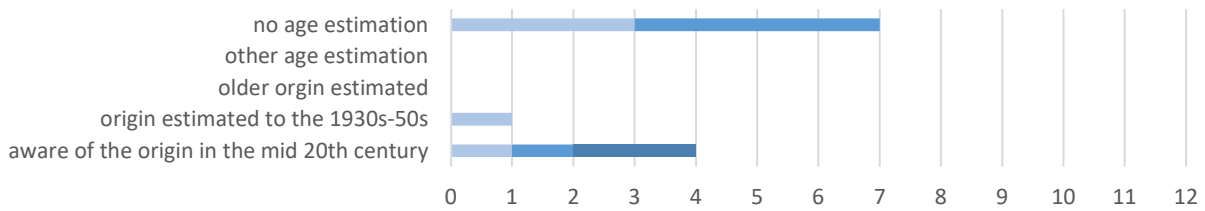


Diagram 3.3-7: Age estimations of Bab al-Bahrain building by architects

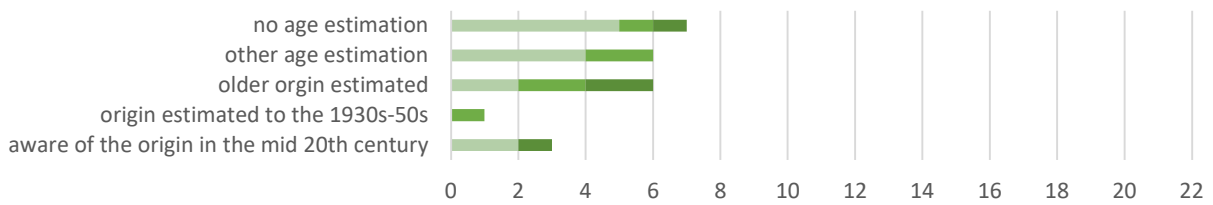


Diagram 3.3-8: Age estimations of Bab al-Bahrain building by non-architects

The **Customs House** overall played a minor role in the interviews because the building’s restoration had not yet started at the time of the field research and it was still hidden underneath the screen façade of the 1970s (annex fig. 3.3.1-12 to 14). In 2014, information about the planned restoration had spread and at least nine interviewees were hence aware of the building’s perseverance (I 6,7,14,32,33,38x2,41,49). Most interviewees of both groups were however not aware of the historic building (I 3,4,8,9,10,11,12,13,15,16,17,18,19,21,30). All these interviewees of both groups, who were asked for an age estimation, dated the Customs House to the 1960s to 80s due to the screen façade element (I 4,8,10,11,12,15,16,17,19,21).

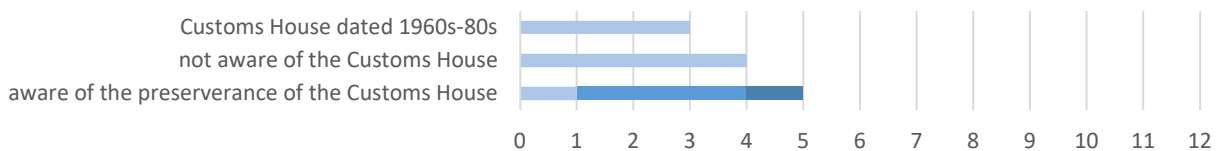


Diagram 3.3-9: Age estimations of the Customs House by architects

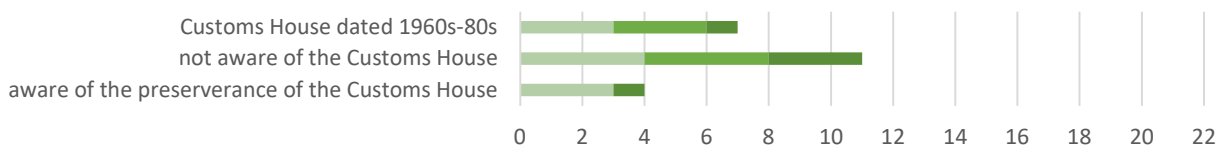


Diagram 3.3-10: Age estimations of the Customs House by architects

Relatively few of the interviewees had or disclosed background knowledge about the **Post Office and Police Station** including of its age (I 7,22,32,33,38x4,49). Most interviewees recognized the similarity to the original design of Bab al-Bahrain building after seeing historic photos of the gate (annex fig. 3.3.1-21 to 23). Most interviewees were informed of the gate’s origin at this point and hence dated

the Post Office and Police Station more or less to the same age or slightly older (I 8,9,10,11,12,13,15,16,17,19). One interviewee associated the age of the Post Office and Police Station to the date of the first establishment of a postal agency in Bahrain in the late 19th century but later revised this conception (I 19). Others dated the building to the 1920s (I 14), to be 10 to 15 years old (I 18), or thought the Post Office and Police Station was younger than Bab al-Bahrain (I 4).

Overall, fewest misconceptions about the age of the site’s buildings surfaced in the case of the Post Office and Police Station, which certainly has to do with its design having least changed, but also with the order in which the buildings were discussed.

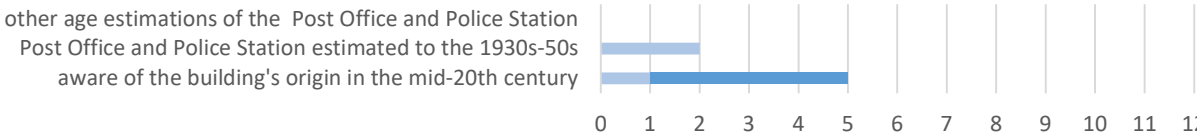


Diagram 3.3-11: Age estimations of the Post Office and Police Station by architects

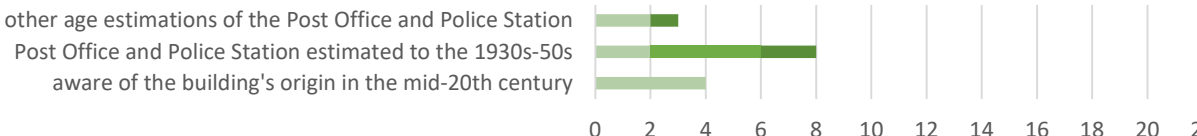


Diagram 3.3-12: Age estimations of the Post Office and Police Station by non-architects

Upon entering **Bab al-Bahrain Avenue**, several interviewees, mostly non-architect, at first mistook the screen façade as well as the façade of the mall building as historic yet refurbished buildings (I 3,4,8,9,10,12,13,14,20). The historicizing architecture and decorative elements, such as the wooden shopfronts, even created the misconception that the buildings in the Avenue are older than Bab al-Bahrain building. At least one interviewee considered the screen façade along the eastern side of Bab al-Bahrain Avenue the oldest structures at the site:

“Yes, this side might be a little earlier. Maybe just based on that more Islamic style.” (I 14a)

A visiting conservation architects described the experience of entering the Avenue as follows:

“I gained the impression to be at a historic place from the configuration of the Avenue, the typology with the shops to the left and right and from the simple way the walls are structured with pilasters and niches. [...] It was foremost these textile shadings expanded from the roof, that gave me the impression that I am entering a newly designed space. They might be reminiscent of older structures, but they gave me the impression that this is new. [...] Due to various elements, I had the impression to be at a site with a history. The discrepancy became very obvious when entering the mall – this glitter-palace.” (I 20, translated from German)

Many interviewees expressed their **uncertainty about the age and historicity of the fabric** in the refurbished section of the Avenue including inside the mall building (I 3,9,11,13,14,15,16):

“I couldn’t tell whether one side is historic and the other not. [...] I would say they were built in the same period. I mean, they could have been built 5 years ago and just mimicking a style from an earlier period or they could have been built 80 years ago. I have no idea.” (13b)

However, while the Avenue evoked associations even of the a “medieval alley” (I 8b), most interviewees considered the site to be of relatively young origin.

Six architects had been aware of the **screen façade** in front of pre-existing buildings along the eastern side of Bab al-Bahrain Avenue (I 7,17,21,22,23,32) prior to the interview. Three interviewees of the

other group had noticed at least parts of it in the past (I 11,15,19). Most interviewees, including four architects, with whom the feature was discussed (I 3,4,8,9,10,12,13,14,15,16,18,20,30,33), were not aware of the nature of the intervention. This included rather frequent visitors to the area, who had never noticed the facadism (I 15,18,8,9,10,12). However, the feature was not discussed during all expert and spontaneous interviews (I 6,26,38,39,40,41,46,49) and a few more interviewees were most probably aware of it. The screen façade was usually identified as a freestanding wall in front of pre-existing building only when hinted to it:

Author: "Have a look up."

33: "Ah, ok, yes. There is double skin. [laughing] Ok. So, did they just hide the old buildings with this façade?"

Eventually, most interviewees identified the screen façade as a relatively new addition (I 3,4,8,9,10,12,13,14,15,16,20,33).

"Well, if I look at this building which is behind this, it is obvious that this is just a façade for a building that is behind. So probably it was built very recently." (13b)

Few had problems to identify the extent of the facadism:

"I don't know. I cannot see. They did it in the right way." (I 8b)

According to the statements, at least nine interviewees – six of them architects – had some knowledge about the former **Government Shops and Offices** (I 6,17,19,21,22,26,32,38x1,49). The majority of interviewees, with whom the **mall building** was discussed, were not aware of its predecessor building (I 4,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,18). Most identified the mall building as entirely or at least partly new, latest upon entering the atrium (I 4,9,10,13,15, 16,18,19,20,33):

"I think it is a new place but old style." (I 18a)

"You can easily spot that it is not old." (I 15a)

"This to me looks all modern but it is supposed to represent a traditional suq area. The stores ... the little luxury is of course the air-conditioning." (I 14a)

Nevertheless, the façade design of the mall building created some confusion (annex fig. 3.3.1-92, 95, 96, 102). One interviewee contemplated that the buildings along the alley must be older than the gate building if the vernacular entrance portals (annex fig. 3.3.1-102) were authentic. Later she realized they are not (I 3). All interviewees, who commented on the portals, eventually or instantly identified them as historicizing but new additions (I 3,8,10,11,13,16,23,33).

Particularly the southern elevation of the mall building, with its combination of facsimile vernacular and contemporary design elements and materials raised questions as to whether its design imitates a predecessor building or vernacular building traditions more generically:

"And this is a new wall. Then this is going to be new. Or maybe, the original one was here, it was old, and then they copied this style for the whole street." (I 4b)

„Now, this one is very confusing to me. Just because there are two different styles used, which makes it look like this is the authentic traditional building, whereas this is just an addition. But if we know that it is new, then they were built at the same time, which is just confusing." (13b)

Most interviewees and mostly non-architects, who were taken on a tour of the site, noticed and pointed out the vernacular building in the vicinity (annex fig. 3.3.1-85 and 86) as an authentic historic building in comparison to the mall (I 4,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,17,18,19):

"I don't know if this one is the real one or not. But that one is old!" (I 4b)

While mostly architects problematized the fact that the historicizing designs at the site created misconceptions about its history (refer to 3.3.4.4), to many interviewees the legibility of the site's

historicity and the age of its building was of little consequence, as the following comment on the atrium of the mall building exemplifies:

14a: "This to me looks all modern but it is supposed to represent a traditional suq area. [...]"

Author: "Does it matter to you if this place is historic?"

14a: "It doesn't really matter."

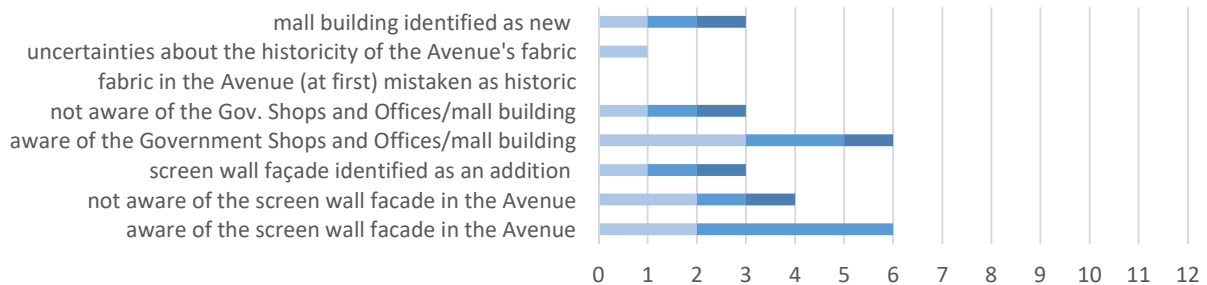


Diagram 3.3-13: Age estimations of the fabric in Bab al-Bahrain Avenue by architects

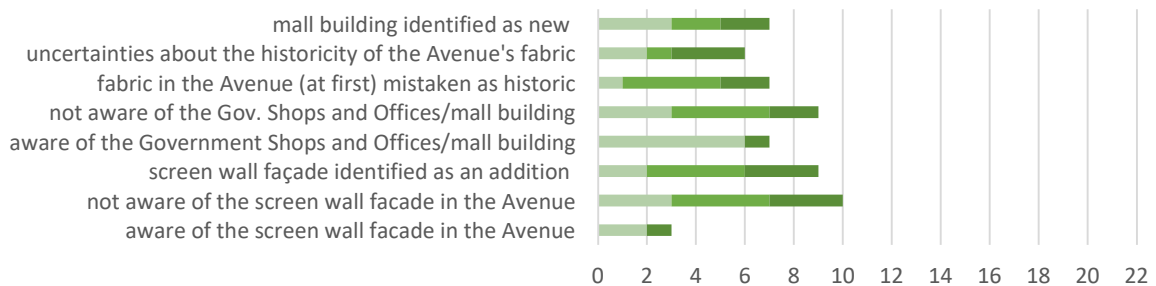


Diagram 3.3-14: Age estimations of the fabric in Bab al-Bahrain Avenue by non-architects

Overall, the historicizing designs of Bab al-Bahrain and of the refurbished section of the Avenue created more misconceptions about the age of the site's buildings among the non-architects than among the architects. The interviewees of other professional backgrounds, however, certainly tended to be not only less trained for the exercise of estimating the age of the built fabric but partly also less well informed about the site's history. It will be further discussed below, that the legibility of the site's historicity and age of the fabric generally mattered more to the architects than to the non-architects.

3.3.4.4 The cultural significance attributed to the site by the interviewees

Throughout the interviews, value attributions were directly or indirectly implicit in many statements. In addition, the author asked the interviewees, who were taken on a tour, about the cultural significance they attribute, if any, to the site and its buildings with questions such as:

What does this place/building mean to you personally?

As a follow-up question the author often asked:

Do you consider the place/building historic?

The significance attributed to the site and its buildings by the interviewees ranged from scientific values related to the historic testimony to values connected to the site's symbolism, use and function. With differing emphasis on the individual value dimensions, the site was overall valued by the

interviewees as “an important and very significant place for Bahraini citizens and its residents alike: socially, economically, culturally and politically.” (I 49)

Overall, interviewees of both groups made it clear that they consider Bab al-Bahrain and the adjacent urban spaces a **historic site** in principle (I 7,8,12,13,14,15,17,20,21,32,33,39,49). However, while most architects linked the site’s historical value to the material testimony, particularly interviewees of other professional backgrounds anchored it often less in the architecture but much rather in the continuity of uses and symbolism and in atmosphere. Moreover, some interviewees considered the site historically important and traditional in design but too young in age (I 4,8,10) or too compromised by past interventions and reconstructions (I 3,11,16) to pass for genuinely historic.

There was rather little awareness of the former **ensemble character** of the site’s buildings and its unifying design features. Hence, view interviewees attached value to the site as an architectural ensemble (I 8,17). The statements however allow for conclusions about the value attributed to its individual elements:

At least ten interviewees valued the **Post Office and Police Station** as a historic building (I 3,4,16,17,49,11,15,8,12,32). One interviewee pointed to its cultural significance in the context of Bahrain’s history of postal services.

Few interviewees had background knowledge of the **Government Shops and Offices** or were even aware of them as a predecessor building to the mall in Bab al-Bahrain Avenue. In the course of the inquiry, interviewees of both groups expressed regret about the demolition of the **Government Shops and Offices** and thereby indirectly expressed their appreciation of the historic building or its original design (I 4,12,14,15,16,32,33,49). The majority of the interviewees however expressed indifference about the demolition and clearly attributed little value to the building, such as the British expatriate who explained:

19: “I don’t think it was of tremendous architectural merit honestly.”

Author: “And as a testimony to the colonial time?”

19: “I mean, some colonial architecture is really nice. In Bagdad they have got lovely colonnaded pavements, which keep the pavement cool. But there was nothing of that here. There was only this awning which had fallen into disrepair.”

The **mall building** was mostly valued as a contemporary shopping facility rather than as a heritage asset. However, at least one interviewee attached value to the fact that the building mimics the former Government Shops and Offices:

“Now, that I know that it is exactly the same design, it has more sentimental meaning to me. Because although it is not the real old building, it looks exactly the same.” (I 15a)

An architect who was more critical of the reconstruction attributed associative historic significance to the mall building as well as to the entire site:

“I mean there are pictures of major historical events that took place here. So, it is a very important place to preserve. If it is not for the building, for the events that took place in the building, I am sure.” (I 33b)

The preserved **Bab al-Bahrain round-about** with the fountain – the former Customs Square Garden – was repeatedly pointed to as an integral historic feature of the site (I 4,8,11,14,17,20,30).

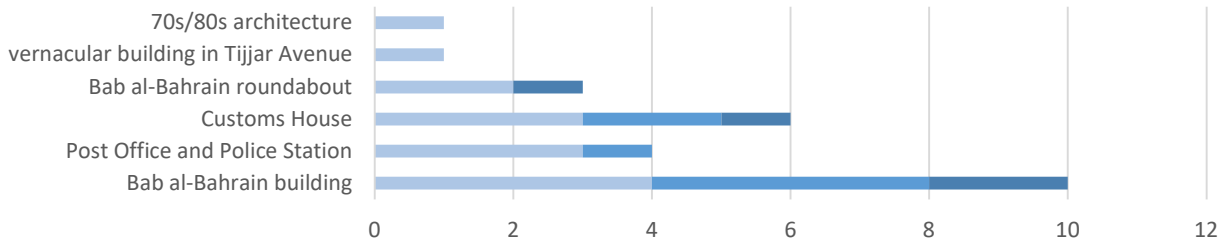


Diagram 3.3-15: Value attributions to individual elements by architects

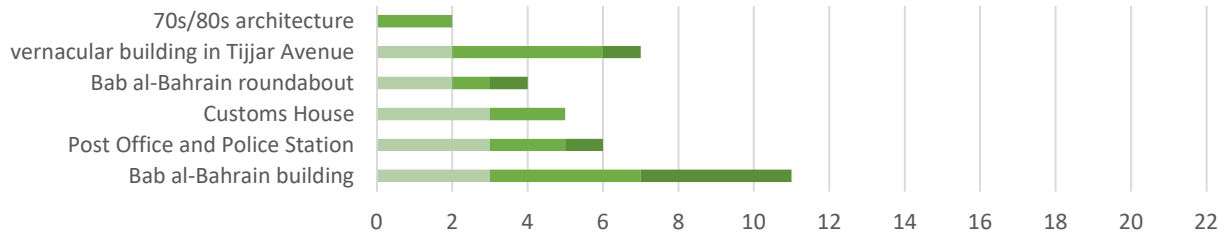


Diagram 3.3-16: Value attributions to individual elements by architects

The site's feature, which the interviewees generally attributed most significance to, is **Bab al-Bahrain building**. The comparison of the value judgments (refer annex 3.3.4 - 4) indicates that the architects with whom the building was discussed – with two exceptions – attribute a **documentary value** to Bab al-Bahrain (I 7,16,17,30,49,23,32,33,20). This group considered the building's fabric and its original design testimony to the historic (colonial) period in which it was first built. This included testimony to the hybrid construction techniques, which combined vernacular and modern methods and materials, as well as to the modernist stylistic influences of the time. Some architects indirectly expressed this value attribution, for example by criticizing the falsification of history with a changed design. The two exceptions among the architects, who attributed little documentary value to the building, were those involved in its refurbishment of the 1980s and 2012/13 respectively (I 6 and 21). Most non-architects did not point to the documentary value. Those, who were asked to comment on it, rated it rather insignificant (I 3 and 12) or explicitly negated it (I 10). It has to be noted, that some of the non-architects acknowledged a potential documentary value of the site's buildings from the scientific perspective, but personally considered this aspect unimportant (I 12) or judged to possibly have too little background knowledge about the concerned era to appreciate the building as historic evidence thereof:

Author: "But don't you think that it is still an important part of the history? Like, the modernization in the 40s and the European influence, which is also the beginning of the oil era and all those changes?"

3b: "Yeah, probably. But then I have to admit, I don't know much about this history."

A possible reason, why some of the non-architects attributed no documentary value to the building is the fact that they perceived it as too young or historically too insignificant (I 3,4,8,10) to be considered historic. The notion that historicity required a higher minimum age was partly shared among the architects:

"What do you mean by historic? Yanni [Arabic: I mean], for me historic is a building that might have been there for a hundred of years." (I 16a)

Several interviewees of both groups nevertheless did explicitly refer to the original gate as a historic building (I 13,15,17,33,39). Particularly non-architects, however, did not anchor the building's and the site's historicity and related documentary value in the original architecture but much rather in the continuity of use and symbolism:

"[...] because it had a specific function and it was built for the purpose of being a governmental building – in that sense a historic building. It's more about the functionality than about the architecture." (I 13b)

Likewise, many interviewees attributed value to the continuity of local businesses and associated names of shops as well as of administrative functions such as the historic police station (refer to 3.3.4.6). In general, non-architects were found to attribute higher documentary value to the comparatively well-preserved Post Office and Police Station and the historic Customs House than to Bab al-Bahrain with its dominant symbolism:

"[...] the fact that it is a monument overpowers any traditional architecture you see in it." (I 8b)

Comparisons were drawn twice to the Gate of India in Bombay (I 3,8,38). Bab al-Bahrain's entrance and state symbolism were generally perceived to extend to Bab al-Bahrain Avenue and to the entire ensemble:

"The purpose is the visitor's first impression of Bahrain. [...] I think as continuation of Bab al-Bahrain, this has to be a powerful looking alley. [...] And its real historical value is in giving that sort of powerful feel [...]." (I 8b)

Bab al-Bahrain's symbolic power was most graphically described by a Bahrain-born resident of Egyptian origin:

"It's like the Statue of Liberty, except for a very small island. And many people who came here, like on a ship or walked through here ... [...] So, this was the first thing they ever saw. And it always served its purpose and it continues to serve its purpose." (I 8b)

When discussing the Post Office and Police Station the same interviewee pinned down the documentary value of the site in its **state symbolism**. The following quote describes the significance of the site as evidence of the early post-oil discovery era. At the same time, the quote is exemplary of the higher value that was attributed to symbolism rather than materiality by many. Lastly, it is also indicative of the **political dimension of the site's symbolism**, which was rarely directly addressed (I 8,20,49).

"I mean the historical building [Post Office and Police Station] is significant also. It's like the modern state before the ... well it was after the discovery of oil, but they didn't realize what the discovery of oil means. So, it was just at the very beginning. And it's purely coincidental that this area was built in this particular time – we are talking about a 10 years period here, or 15 years. They weren't rich, there was still a pearling economy and a trading economy. But they wanted to try and show that they are on the way to becoming a modern state. Which is actually very similar to what the Ministry of Culture is doing now. They are not restoring for the sake of the Bahrainis as much as they are restoring for the sake of international recognition. So, in a way it's the same thing. [...] But this was the exact same purpose they built this. [...] Let's say they would have waited 20 years, until the 60s ... then all of this would be built with oil money and not with merchant taxes. And it would have looked very different and much grander and bigger than people like Charles Belgrave. And that's why you have the Diplomatic Area built in the 60s, where you have massive... So, with whatever they had at the time, they tried to make a powerful state statement. And it worked and it still works today. And in a way I am glad that they didn't build something more expensive than in New York or so. Because that is what the country really is. The country is a pearling economy – a simple country of families and people who know each other and have

traditions. It's not a modern nation. Bahrain is not a modern nation. No matter what they say: 'We are modern!' 'No, you are not. You are a very old country.' And so, the idea of making it look like a modern nation, it's cute. It's been done. It's been done in a nice way. So, let's keep it that way." (I 8b)

Value attributions related to the site's **symbolism, function and use** clearly dominated among the non-architects but were shared by architects as well. One interviewee moreover considered the **emotional value** Bab al-Bahrain building's main significance.

Indeed, emotional attachment to the site and to Bab al-Bahrain in particular as well as nostalgic feelings were repeatedly expressed throughout the interviews. Bab al-Bahrain building was valued by the interviewees as a "landmark" of the former port area (I 11,15), a monumental entrance to the country or market (I 3,4,6,8,9,10,13,14,15,17,33,49) and "a real gate to the sea" (9c). One Bahraini interviewee rooted his affection for the building in its functional and historical authenticity by drawing comparison to purpose-built landmarks in the Gulf region:

Author: "What does Bab al-Bahrain, the building, mean to you?"

15a: "It's a landmark and I really like it, because it is an original landmark."

Author: "In which sense?"

15a: "It is not something they paid so much money for just to make it nice. It is something that was there for a use and they still use it as a gate. Some landmarks being built in the Gulf are just for looks and for tourism. This is not. This looks like this because it was a real gate, it was a real Bab [Arabic: gate] to enter the market facing the sea port. So, whoever comes to Bahrain from this seaport, has to go through this gate. It is a real gate." (I 15a)

Another young Bahraini interviewee appreciated Bab al-Bahrain as a memory marker of Bahrain's historic role as a trading centre and of the island's formerly strong connection to the sea, which excessive land reclamation weakened:

Author: "Does it mean anything to you personally?"

4b: "Maybe it reminds me that Bahrain was an island – ok, it is still an island but not like before. And here was a port and maybe it is the gate for commercial things between Bahrain and other countries." (I 4b)

The value of the site and/or Bab al-Bahrain building as a **tourist attraction** was pointed out by six non-architects (I 3,12,14,15,38,39). Several interviewees outed themselves as regular customers of the site's shops or gastronomy. The site's **economic significance** was highlighted by five interviewees (I 10,18,22,41,49). Likewise, many interviewees alluded to the significance of the site as a market area where people socialize. Four seemed to rate the **social dimension** as the core value (I 11,12,21,46):

"It's a gathering place for people from different walks of life. Tourists, merchants, I go there – there are beautiful restaurants nearby, there are jewellery centres, beautiful carpet shops. It's an attraction, it's located in the heart of that place." (12a)

Value attributions as **testimony to the British colonial history** were more often expressed among the architects (I 17,23,30,33,49), who were often better informed about the site's history, than among the non-architects (I 8,19):

"I mean he [Belgrave] probably got the idea from the Gate of India. Or some other British idea. But this happened, that is history and that is something to cherish even though it might sound like a silly idea to make Bahrain look like a modern country, but ok. There is value." (I 8b)

Generally, very divergent perceptions of colonial heritage were expressed throughout both groups. The interviewed Indian architect who was involved in the 1980s refurbishment of the gate seemed

generally critical of colonial heritage for not expressing “the character of the land” and referred to Goa as a place that was architecturally alienated by the Portuguese colonizers:

“You don’t feel you are in India.” (I 21).

This notion seemed to be shared by a Bahraini woman, who dismissed Bab al-Bahrain’s original design, because if it wasn’t for the code of arms, one would not associate it with Bahrain:

“I can say this is another country, who knows. So, there is nothing unique.” (I 4b)

In contrast, an architect from the Philippines (I 30) described how he gradually overcame anti-Spanish resentments he had been brought up with and how he started to appreciate the Spanish colonial heritage as part of his culture. He – as well as another interviewee from the Philippines (I 11) – considered it important, that Bahrainis accept and preserve their colonial heritage:

“Like in our country. We never change. Same as this, despite the fact that some people hated the colonizers. But it is already part of our culture. Whether you like it or you dislike it, it’s there. You have to accept it.” (I 30)

Two western expatriates (I 3 and 13) suggested that the neglectful attitude towards colonial heritage in Bahrain might have “something to do with the kind of feelings people have toward” it (I 13a) and expressed suspicions that the local colonial heritage might be perceived negatively by Bahrainis:

“It is not something a Bahraini would be proud of, I assume. [...] It would be interesting to see what Bahraini people actually think about this part [of the local heritage].” (I 3a)

In the course of the field research for this thesis, only few resentments towards the colonial heritage were actually identified among the Bahraini interviewees. One of the younger Bahraini interviewees doubted that anti-colonial attitudes from the side of the authorities and planners guided the past refurbishments of Bab al-Bahrain building (I 15). With reference to the tympanum-like parapet detail, which originally constituted a colonial-style design element of the urban ensemble, he stated:

“I don’t think they removed it intentionally. I don’t think they removed it because it represents something. It just came that they thought this is a better design. [...]” (I 15a)

A British expatriate, on the contrary, correctly interpreted the initial reconfiguration of the building as an attempt “to distance themselves a bit from the colonial past” (I 19):

“I mean obviously they must have felt that it didn’t reflect what they thought the Arab style should be like, until they changed it. [...] They obviously felt that it was a bit too colonial for their liking.” (I 19)

When scrutinizing the new design of the building during the interview, he was very surprised to recognize a will for reinstating the colonial-style character:

“What I hadn’t spotted, or had any reason to believe that they would do, was that they changed it again.” (I 19)

The British long-term resident of Bahrain also reported that in the 1990s at the National Museum „they have taken down all the reference to Belgrave” (I 19). In general, he considered Belgrave’s legacy poorly commemorated in Bahrain to date and criticized what he called attempts “to just forget, intentionally forget, all what he had done for Bahrain.” (I 19) Among the Bahraini interviewees, comments that would hint to a negative attitude towards the colonial heritage or Belgrave in person were rare. Belgrave was referred to without explicit valuation as “the English consultant” who “started the whole government” (I 15a), the ruler’s advisor “who did a lot of things” (I 33a), “Al Mustachar” [Arabic: the advisor] who “was running Bahrain for a long time” (I 38), simply “the consultant of the government” (I 17a) but also „the British occupator [occupier]” (I 4b). One of the Bahraini interviewees (I 33), whom the author invited to comment on his attitude towards the local colonial heritage, said

he attached no negative notions. Another felt indifferent to Bab al Bahrain's colonial origin (I 10). On the other hand, the value attributions of several Bahraini interviewees (I 23,33,49) clearly indicated interest in the colonial heritage. One Bahraini expressed his explicit interest and appreciation of the site's colonial heritage after conducting the interview and learning about its history. The appreciation of the site as colonial heritage was particularly common among the Bahraini architects (I 17,33,49).

Several interviewees, including non-architects, attributed **value of rarity** to the site's historic buildings (I 12,15,19,33):

"Yes, in Bahrain we don't have many old buildings. [...] I like to keep those buildings still standing because they demolished so many of them." (I 15a)

With reference to the colonial-style buildings of the mid-20th century a Bahraini architect stated:

"[...] that again, would still be a very interesting period. We don't have a lot of hybrid buildings." (I 33b)

Not only architects, moreover, took interest in the different architectural periods which are represented at the site and in its surroundings:

"You see elements of Bahrain's modern history here, a bit of 60s a bit of 90s. Some of the better stuff that come up in the 80s." (I 8b)

"There are so many stories. You definitely have a contrast of everything." (I 14a)

Most frequently (I 4,8,9,10,11,17,19,12), interviewees appreciatively pointed to the vernacular building on Tijjar Avenue, which is visible from the site (annex fig. 3.3.1-85 and 86):

„That thing I would like to preserve particularly. Pretty grotty. That's an old building which may have been resigned." (I 19)

"This is something you can work with. Something to improve - definitely structurally it has to be assessed. It has a lot of potential." (I 12b)

But newer buildings were pointed out, too, such as the building from the 1980s on the corner of Al Khalifa Avenue and Bab al-Bahrain Avenue with the shop "Bahrain Optician", later renamed "Optica" (annex fig. 3.3.1-65 and 98). The building which the screen façade along Bab al-Bahrain Avenue embraces at ground floor, was hence also valued as testimony to that traditional Bahraini company (I 8b).

Interviewees of both groups expressed their appreciation of the **Customs House** as a historic building of the earlier 20th century (4,8,11,16,17,20,32,38,49). Three interviewees, including one architect, also valued the Customs House prior to its restoration as **testimony to the 1970/80s** (I 17,8,12):

"70s yes. Or maybe it was built before, but if you look at the songs of the 80s, the video clips they all have these buildings. Even the car park. Everything which is here. So, I think it shows the spirit of the 80s." (17a)

When learning that the screen façade of the 1970s conceals the historic Customs House, two of them (I 8,17) therefore suggested that parts of the façade element should be preserved as evidence:

"And that changes everything! I mean, I thought, - and that is very subjective as well - I thought that they should somehow preserve this as a testimony to the crappy architecture of the 70s. But I didn't know that if you remove the façade, you can have the building complement that [Bab al-Bahrain]. So, it changes the value. Or maybe you can combine both in some genius move. Half of it that, half of it that. Maybe you should do this. [...] Make it half Bab al-Bahrain, half oil-money crap. This is oil-money crap. That's what it is. It's part of history. I think the good and the bad should be preserved in a way, it's all part of who we are." (I 8b)

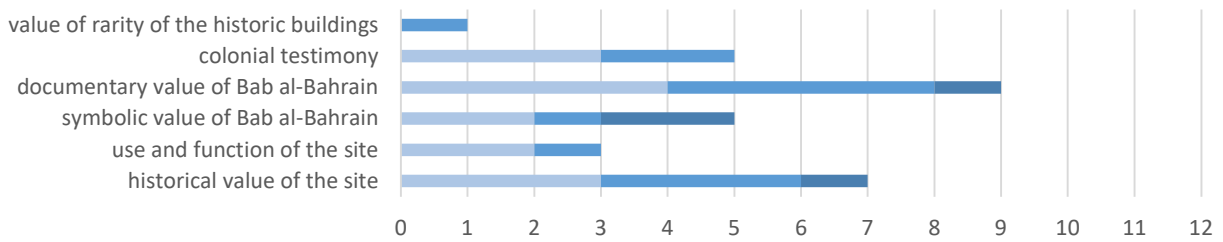


Diagram 3.3-17: Value attributions to the site and Bab al-Bahrain building by architects

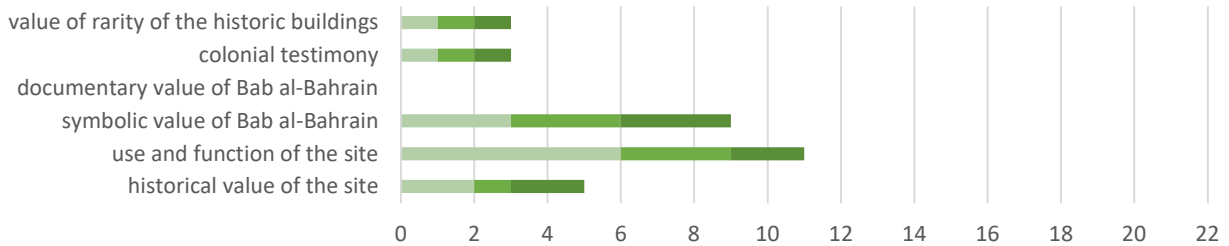


Diagram 3.3-18: Value attributions to the site and Bab al-Bahrain building by architects

The range of values that the interviewees of both groups attributed to the site reflects in the author’s significance statement presented in chapter 3.3.2. Compared to the value judgements of the non-architects, the latter however significantly differs in the importance attributed to the individual value dimensions. By focusing on the documentary value of the site as testimony to the state modernization under British influence in the mid-20th century, the significance assessment on the basis of international heritage doctrine is closer to the value judgements of the interviewed architects. Most non-architects, in turn, attributed more value to the site’s current use and to the symbolic function particularly of Bab al-Bahrain building as a traditional entrance gate to the capital’s historic market and as a national landmark and icon.

Overall, symbolic and use values were rated much more prominently among the non-architects than among the architects, who attributed more value to the original architecture in design and substance. No pronounced differences in the value attributions of interviewees of different cultural background were identified.

3.3.4.5 Evaluation of the architectural and urban interventions by the interviewees

Throughout the interviews, the author invited for evaluations of the various interventions at the site and modifications of its individual buildings and spaces with questions such as:

What do you think about that? How do you like that? Does that make a difference to you?

The majority of non-architects, who expressed an overall judgement of the site’s refurbishment, approved of it (4,9,11,14,15,18,8,10,46,13,19,22,39), while predominantly architects (1 17,16,20,21,3,12,23,6,33,32) were overall rather critical. Opinions were divided not only on the overall architectural design or that of specific elements but also on the site’s atmosphere.

Reasons for appreciation of the various interventions were that they functionally and aesthetically improved the site by making it “more appealing” and “more welcoming” (I 13b). The interventions were thought to have modernized the site (I 11) while preserving the “identity of the place” (I 10a). They were described as creating a traditional feel while meeting standards of contemporary comfort

(I 13,15). Several interviewees specifically appreciated the “Bahraini” character of the refurbished site (I 15,46). This was not only explained with the architectural designs but also with the continuity of functions and local brands in the site’s commercial premises. The refurbishment was moreover commended for maintaining “whether intentionally or unintentionally” the site’s symbolism and thereby its cultural value (I 8b).

Interviewees of both groups expressed their regret about the extent to which the built heritage of Bahrain has been erased and continues to erode. Against this background, several interviewees explicitly said, they appreciate the refurbishment of the site as a substitute means of preserving heritage (I 4,8,19,22):

“Yes, I like it. It is better than nothing.” (4b)

Particularly Bahraini interviewees, but not only, pointed to the magnitude of change in most other areas of Bahrain. They highlighted the comparatively conservative urban development approach taken at Bab al-Bahrain. Moreover, the historicizing architectural designs were by some appreciated a means of reviving the local traditional architecture and thereby preserving heritage and cultural memory.

Contrary to these perceptions, particularly architects were overall critical of the refurbishment mostly for authenticity reasons. **Reasons for criticism** were, that interventions throughout the site were considered not truthful to the place, its history and its heritage and for creating a fake image and atmosphere (refer to 3.3.4.6 for further details). Only architects problematized the historicizing designs at the site (I 6,17,16,20,21,23,32) for created misconceptions about its historicity and age:

“For the outsider, who has no background about the area, it might be a bit deceiving.” (I 33)

Several interviewees expressed the criticism that the site is poorly integrated with the surrounding market area in design, atmosphere or use (I 3,10,12,13,14). With one exception (I 14), this was explained with the artificiality of the refurbished site. Several interviewees pointed to a certain artificiality of the site in terms of the architectural interventions and its use. However, the site’s artificiality was by no means condemned by all interviewees who perceived it so. The predominant approval of the interventions by non-architects proves this.

There was moreover both approval and critique of the way the site is used and managed. Several interviewees commended the Ministry of Culture and/or Shaikha May in her function as cultural minister for the efforts to preserve both tangible and intangible heritage at the site (I 9c,15a,49). This included the preservation of historic buildings but also the promotion of the site through public events and the support for local brands to remain at the site:

“We are lucky that we had Her Excellency Shaikha Mai to save the Police and Post Office buildings and the Customs Building currently undergoing conservation. [...] al Thaqhafa [Arabic acronym for Ministry of Culture] under Shaikha Mai redesigned the interior spaces of the mall, assisted to re-establishing old popular vendors and introduced cultural activities and events throughout the year.” (I 49)

Seven interviewees (8,9,12,14,16,17,49), mostly non-architects, appreciatively mentioned cultural and commercial events organized at the site. Many interviewees also commented on the businesses at the site (I 20,10,12,14,6,49,19,15,38x4). Perceptions thereof were divergent, including approval and criticism of the kind of shops in the commercial premises and the products they offer. Most often, the continuity of local businesses and associated family names at the site was valued as a means of preserving heritage and cultural memory and for augmenting the local character of the site. This extended to the products on offer. On the other hand, the type of businesses and sales products were criticized for either catering too little (I 12,14) or too much (I 3) to tourists and for being commercially

unsuccessful (I 10). Two interviewees (I 10,6) voiced fundamental concerns about the intended commercial upgrade of the area. One considered the envisaged commercial upgrade idle for ignoring the economic and demographic realities at the site and its surroundings:

“It’s all those Indian and Bengali people, because this is what it is. [...] And they wish they can bring brands, but they will never be able to do that. No.” (I 6)

The other assumed only selected kinds of shops were allowed within the refurbished section of the Avenue and criticized that as a result, the site no longer serves as a busy commercial area but rather as a “tourist-picture-taking-place” (I 10a). He concluded:

“I have no objection about the architecture. I object to the way they run the suq. [...] Do you see the shops are not really busy? It’s mostly for passing to the suq and going back to your car and taking pictures.” (I 10a)

Two interviewees (I 8,14) moreover criticized the government’s motive of refurbishing the site, which they considered political in aiming at national branding rather than improving living conditions:

“They are not restoring for the sake of the Bahrainis as much as they are restoring for the sake of international recognition.” (8b)

Lastly, a senior Bahraini architect and urban planner (I 49) pointed to the need for joint strategic planning of different authorities with heritage preservation as an integral part of the physical and economic development of the area. He thereby indirectly addressed the fact that the individual interventions throughout the site in the last two decades were rather poorly orchestrated and inconsistent.

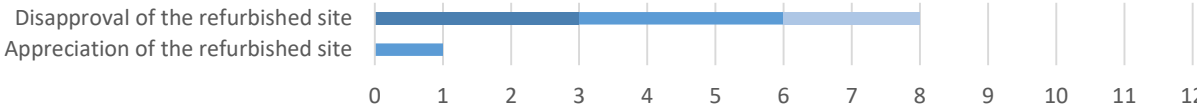


Diagram 3.3-19: Evaluation of the site’s refurbishment by architects



Diagram 3.3-20: Evaluation of the site’s refurbishment by non-architects

Overall, there is a clear difference between the site’s perception by architects and non-architects. A similar divide surfaced in the evaluations of the individual buildings and spaces.

Not all interviewees made an explicit judgement about the way **Bab al-Bahrain building** (annex fig. 3.3.1-43 to 49) was refurbished in 2012/13 (refer to table 3.3.4 – 5 in the annex). Overall, the statements show, that acceptance for the intervention was much broader among the non-architects than among the architects regardless of their cultural background. The architects – with one exception and one who did not comment on the building’s refurbishment (I 22) – disapproved of the intervention mainly for authenticity concerns. The main concern and hence reason for the positive judgements of interviewees of other professional backgrounds was the aesthetics of the building which many considered improved. The rather austere, original design of the governmental building was actually considered unpleasant by several interviewees, particularly by non-architects:

“It was ugly! It feels like a school or a policy station! It was a very governmental building. I think it looks much better now.” (I 15a)

Most interviewees also preferred the new design to the 1980s version of the building:

“I like the new one more. Because it is more traditional. It looks more Bahraini than before. Before it was just a building with a gate in it. Now that they added wooden windows, it feels more old. Plus, the huge crest in the middle represents Bahrain even more.” (I 15a)

Comparing to the original design and to that of the 1980s or both, the new design of Bab al-Bahrain was appreciated for looking “better” (I 33,15a), “more appealing to the eye, more attractive” (I 10a), “beautiful” (I 11a,12b), “welcoming” (I 12b), “more traditional” (I 15a,17a), “more Bahraini” (I 4b,15a,17a), “grander” (I 13b) or “more institutional” (I 6).

From the aesthetic standpoint, several architects (I 16,17,33,6) shared the preference of the new design over the earlier ones. Few other reasons for appreciation were given by non-architects, such as having maintained the function as gate and monument (I 8,13), having made the building stronger (I 11) or improved as a tourist attraction (I 3,39). More architects (I 16,17) expressed their preference for the building’s southern elevation for being closer to the original design than non-architects (I 12). One person of each group expressed disapproval of the new design for aesthetic reasons. One of them was the Indian architect involved in the first refurbishment in the 1980s, who was quite upset about its destruction. He disapproved of the new design for being “standard colonial architecture” which “could be anywhere in the world” and which “doesn’t show the character of the land” (I 21a). The other interviewee simply found the new design “not the most aesthetically pleasing” and “kind of heavy” (I 14a). A second non-architect shared certain concerns about the aesthetics but, overall, strongly approved of the new design for reinforcing the building’s monumentalism (I 8):

“They combined traditional architecture into a modern monument, so the result is a bit strange. But the fact that it is a monument overpowers any traditional architecture you see in it. That is what I think.” (I 8b)

On the contrary, five non-architects expressed their preference for the original design for aesthetic reasons (I 11,12,14,18,19). The wide windows and the balconies in the northern elevation were repeatedly pointed out as particularly attractive features of the original design by interviewees of both groups. Three people moreover expressed preference for the design of the 1980s to both other designs for its Arab stylistic features. These were two western expatriates (I 14,19) and the architect who was involved in the first refurbishment. He considered the 1980s design went better “with the local character” (I 21a). The only interviewed architect who approved of the refurbishment of 2012/13 in principle, was the architectural consultant in charge of it. He however stated not to be “proud of this project” (I 6). He said that due to the interference of the cultural ministry’s heritage consultants and others, it “did not really turn out” what he wanted it to (I 6). The other architects among the interviewees disapproved of the interventions mainly for authenticity concerns. The architect involved in the first refurbishment in 1984-86 criticized the half-hearted restoration in 2012/13 as an artificial imaginary reconstruction which did not even reinstate the original design (I 21). He condemned the attempt to return the building to its previous state as “an artificial thing” which led to the destruction of what he considers a legitimate architectural work by a “a sovereign architect” who improved the original building after it had deteriorated beyond possible repair (I 21a). While regret for the loss of the 1980s design was not shared by the other interviewed architects, the criticism of artificiality of the newest intervention certainly was. The design architect of the 2012/13 refurbishment himself had argued at the outset of the project, that the building was “gone forever” and that it “will be a fake” if it was rebuilt (I 6). He had therefore suggested to deviate from the objective of restoring the original state. The ensuing redesign of the building, which embraces rather few restorative features, was in turn criticised for artificiality and for destroying or even falsifying historic testimony by the other

architects. A foreign architect of the local heritage authority criticized the intervention for destroying the evidence from the mid-20th century while establishing a false association to an early time period:

“Yanni [Arabic: I mean], this building is really nice, the proportion and everything. But it is not the real building. [...] So we did not preserve this era. [...] I believe, yes, we twisted the building to look as if it is really old, or related to the old Bahraini tradition. [...] Even if it looked modern, it has history inside it. So, we should have preserved this history as it is. [...] But if we try to capture the moment and come back and fix it again, I feel, at the end we might end up like, you know, Disneyland. Or that we are just capturing a very old moment in an artificial way. So, the city won't evolve. It will be like a picture of an old city. [...] I feel that we just dressed the building a new dress. [...] We disguised it 1900 instead of 1950. Something like that.” (I 16c)

Other architects, both foreign and Bahraini, equally criticized the refurbishment of Bab al-Bahrain building for destroying historic evidence from the mid-20th century, including the British-colonial and modernist stylistic influences. Several conservation architects of diverse background criticized the refurbishment of the historic building for not complying with conservation ethics. A local architect and urban planner for example expressed his concern that the intervention was “not up to criteria and standards of conservation” and thereby possibly sends a “wrong message” (I 49). Overall, he came to a rather scathing judgement by suggesting that the money for the gate's refurbishment would have been more reasonably spend for small-scale interventions on endangered heritage assets throughout the market (I 49). Several employees of the Ministry of Culture equally criticized the intervention for lack of historic investigation and for being intrusive on the historic building (I 7,23,32,33). It was problematized simply for not being a conservation but a design project by which “a new image from a designer's mind is being forced on the public” (I 32):

“It looks nice but it is not what it was before. So, it is not a conservation project then. It is an upgrade project.” (I 33)

A local architect of the Ministry of Culture argued that monuments of historic significance should persist fashion and personal taste and pointed to the heritage authority's responsibility for ensuring they are preserved in their original state:

“Since this is the Ministry of Culture's project and the whole concept was to remove the additional elements which were imposed to it in the 80s restoration, at least bring it to what it was or keep the ... [status-quo]. Why do a new upgrade now? [...] We set now a precedence. Anyone can come and have a different vision and upgrade it to whatever suits his personal taste at the time. [...]” (I 33)

A foreign architect of the local heritage authority explicitly criticized the loss of authenticity with the latest refurbishment which left the building impaired as a witness of its construction time:

“I mean that is the key question, in authenticity: if something was done at some point in a certain way, it was done because there was a certain influence of the era and so on. So, it is typical of that time. So, if you do something totally different now, the authenticity is lost. Maybe the building looks nicer now. I mean nicer from an aesthetic point of view, from whatever point of view, I don't know. But the authenticity was not...” (I 23)

The loss of scientific value was only theoretically acknowledged by some of the other group's interviewees (I 3,12) but not rated significant, as the following statement exemplifies:

“It doesn't look to me from the 40s. It lost that sense. [...] Does it matter? In terms of research, to check, it does. But for me, no.” (I 12b)

None of the interviewees from other professional backgrounds hence disapproved of the 2012/13 intervention for concerns about authenticity. Solely one expatriate from the Philippines said that she would have preferred the original design being restored because it “feels more like this is it.” (I 11a)

Historic or traditional features within the new design were equally appreciated by interviewees of both groups. Non-architects of various backgrounds appreciated the overall traditional appearance. Interviewees positively pointed out individual features such as the traditional wooden windows (I 3,15), the “very old fashion” (I 11a) and that the building looks “like a traditional gate” (I 14a). Regardless of the elements’ authenticity, two architects explicitly appreciated the decorative features of the staircases in the southern elevation: the (reconstructed) metal handrail (I 17) and the (replaced) carved gypsum panels (I 16). The same applies to the archaeological windows in the pedestrian passages which were appreciated by most interviewees for the information they convey or associations they evoke. Five non-architects and one architect expressed their appreciation of the feature as a memory marker or means of indicating the historicity of the building (I 8,9,10,11,15,17). Five people, including three architects, moreover commended the display of historic photographs of the area in the pedestrian passages (I 16,15,20,33,12). Another interviewee appreciated the wooden ceilings in the same passages for making her “feel this is heritage” (I 11a).

Overall, a traditional atmosphere and heritage-like appearance were clearly judged more important than historical accurateness among the non-architects than among architects. Wishes for the reconstruction of the original design – to “rebuild it back to what it was” (I 33) – prevailed among the latter. Four architects and two interviewees of the other group made explicit statements that they would have preferred the original architectural design to be reinstated (I 17,23,32,33,11) or even expressed the wish that this will happen in the future:

“Still the building is there. Thanks god. We can restore it in the future.” (I 32)

The former balconies of the northern elevation were pointed out by interviewees of both groups as a feature that should have been reconstructed (I 7,10,12). One interviewee of each group moreover criticized the fact that the original parapet design, which constituted a unifying colonial-style design element of the urban ensemble, was not reconstructed (I 15,17). With reference to the parapet detail, one of the Bahraini interviewees rather critically and rightfully concluded that design considerations must have prevailed in the building’s latest refurbishment over concerns about messages and meaning:

“[...] It just came that they thought this is a better design. If they had focused on history more than on design, probably they would have kept it from the start.” (I 15a)

In conclusion, the different evaluations of the interventions on the reference site and its historic buildings reflect the generally divergent value attributions by architects and non-architects. Patterns associated with the different cultural backgrounds of the interviewees could not be identified.

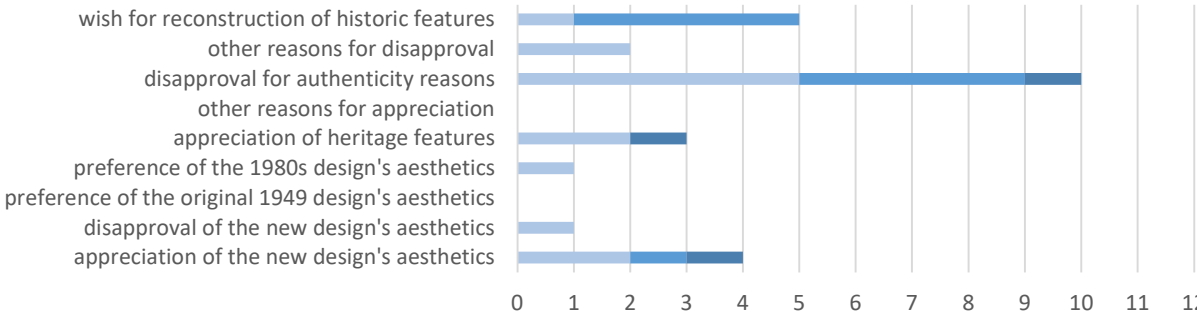


Diagram 3.3-21: Evaluation of Bab al-Bahrain’s refurbishment in 2012/13 by architects

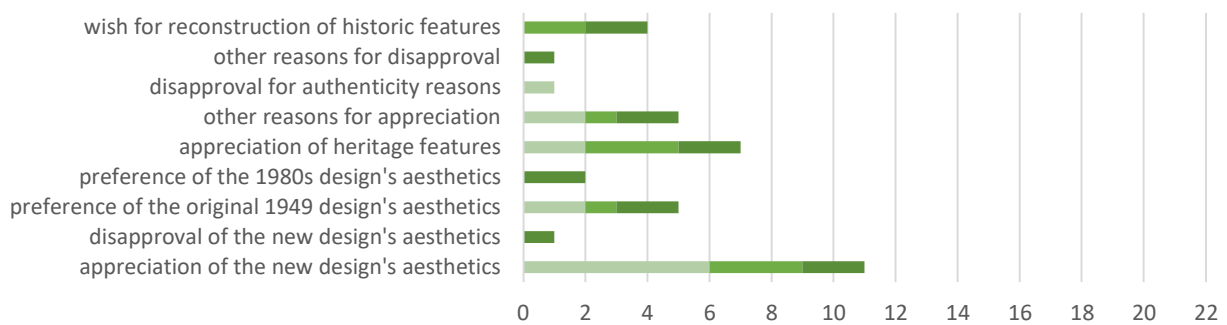


Diagram 3.3-22: Evaluation of Bab al-Bahrain's refurbishment in 2012/13 by non-architects

There was little criticism about the way the **Post Office and Police Station** (annex fig. 3.3.1-69 and 73) was refurbished. Interviewees of both groups who commented on the building in its state in 2014/15 generally appreciated it (I 17,15,8,12,3,16,11) either for its aesthetics but predominantly for its preserved historic design as well as for maintaining part of its original function:

"Now, this building here I love. It has this ... Look at the details! [...] Everything looks beautiful. It's done with taste." (I2b)

"It is still the same building! It's exactly the same. I like this. But I don't know, is it an effective police station or just a demo?" (I 15a)



Diagram 3.3-23: Evaluation of the restored Post Office and Police Station by architects



Diagram 3.3-24: Evaluation of the restored Post Office and Police Station by non-architects

Independent of their overall judgement, interviewees of both groups considered that the interventions in the refurbished section of **Bab al-Bahrain Avenue** (annex fig. 3.3.1-95 to 102) created a coherent, if not even aesthetically pleasing urban space (I 16,20,4,15,18,8,9,11,10,46,14,19,46):

"My first impression when I saw the stuff apart from being an architect: Fine, it looks nice concerning that it is clean, nice, tidy and that stuff." (I6a)

Even interviewees who were overall critical of the intervention, judged that the aim of creating a traditional feel in Bab al-Bahrain Avenue was met:

"I think the plan totally paid off." (I 20, translated from German)

The fact that the street section had been pedestrianized along with the implementation of a coherent architectural design scheme was positively pointed out by four interviewees (15,9,10,19):

"I like it. It's like a promenade." (I9c)

The appreciation extended to the standardized shopfront designs and name boards (I 4,15,19) which were considered an improvement from the previous uncoordinated billboards and other street clutter such as parking meters:

“It has actually made it much more pleasant to walk along because it used to be a narrow street with cars, you had a very narrow pavement, and you had cars parked on either side. It was a one-way street and you just about get a car down the middle of them. Whereas now, that they have removed all that, it looks like a broad avenue, doesn’t it?” (I 19)

Local interviewees appreciated the Avenue’s atmosphere as Bahraini (I 4,46) or oriental (I 15) due to the architectural design and the local brands. At least four non-architects explicitly appreciated the historicizing design as a means of preserving local heritage and cultural memory despite lacking the feel of authentic heritage (I 4,10,11,19). Both architects and non-architects pointed to a certain **artificiality of the Avenue** (I 3,8,16,15,10,11,12,13,33). Several interviewees made a comparison to “Disneyland” (I 3,8,13,33), “Thousand night and one night” (I 16a) and “Aladdin” (I 15a), or described the Avenue as a stage set “for taking pictures” (I 10a) and movies (16):

16a: “The movie? I don’t know. Because I doubt that something like this existed in the past. [laughing] I think this is our fantasy about the past, but it is not the past.”

Autor: “Which fantasy past would that be?”

16a: “Thousand night and one night! That’s a fantasy that never existed. [...] I feel it is not fun walking around something that was built to imitate something that did not exist.”

However, the artificiality was by no means unanimously condemned in either group and often appreciated regardless of the cultural background of the interviewees:

“So, I don’t know, honestly, if something like this, which you could say is a little bit of a Disneyfication, whether it is necessarily bad. Maybe not.” (I 13b)

Contrary to that, mostly architects, though not unanimously, strongly disapproved of the architectural interventions in Bab al-Bahrain Avenue for authenticity reasons (I 6,16,17,20,21,23,32,33):

17a: “The avenue? I don’t like it. I don’t like the avenue at all.”

Author: “Why?”

17a: “Because it does not look the way that this suq looked before. If you see old pictures of it, it is totally different. They just copied elements from traditional architecture and they added a façade. I don’t agree at all with that.”

The criticism focused mainly on the historicizing architectural design which was particularly criticized for being historically untruthful, unrelated to the place and misleading. Interviewees of both groups, in fact criticized the **poor legibility of the architectural interventions** along the Avenue in terms of their origin and historicity (I 4,16,20,23):

“It really looks nice, but I have to do research to figure out what is really old and what is new.” (16a)

A clear divide between architects and non-architects manifested in the different evaluations of the **screen façade along the eastern side of Bab al-Bahrain Avenue** (annex fig. 3.3.1-95 to 101). While architects almost unanimously disapproved of the intervention for authenticity reasons (I 12,16,17,20,21,23,32,33) most interviewees of other professional backgrounds appreciated the screen façade (I 4,8,9,10,11,15,19,22). Some of the interviewees who identified the nature of the screen façade during the interview reacted very surprised:

“Oh, my god! [...] I mean, I’ve been there so many times and I never realized that it is just a façade.” (I 3a)

One of the interviewees who was aware of the screen façade (I 19), in turn, reacted surprised to hear that most people did not easily identify the screen façade as such. Seldom, the discovery of the facadism was met with a certain indignation (I 12,16,33). More often it was met with indifference if not appreciation (I 3,4,8,9,10,15,18,22):

“So it is a façade! Aha! [...] Interesting. [...] Well, the surrounding buildings are pretty brown and ugly and you got plaster, and cement and brick and that. And they got a lot of money – if you want to doll things up around tourism with oil-money.” (I 14a)

“Two years ago?! I am surprised. It’s not a negative surprise. [...] It could have been from the 80s, but now it’s from 2 years. I don’t know what I feel. I don’t feel this, to be cheated, or...” (I 9c)

An architect of the consultancy firm that designed the screen façade described the installation of the screen façade as a legitimate means to improve an unsatisfactory urban configuration. He considered the intervention as “pastiche” which – together with the street shading – “brought back the scale to the street” and concealed the unattractive and insignificant preexisting fabric along the eastern side of the Avenue:

“It is like any cosmetic surgery.” (I 22)

This notion was shared by many non-architects who appreciated the screen façade as a “cost-effective” (I 15a) aesthetic improvement which conceals the unattractive buildings behind it (I 8,19) and which “blends well with the opposite side” (10a), thereby creating the character of the “promenade” (I 9c). The screen façade was also considered a good and adequate means to revive the area in a traditional way particularly for tourism (I 4b). One interviewee, moreover, expressed his appreciation for the design contrast between the traditionalist screen façade and the 1980s architecture of the corner building at Al Khalifa Avenue (annex fig. 3.3.1-98):

“I think it is a nice contrast. It’s strange and its nice. It works. [...] I think they went about this the right way.” (I 8b)

Interviewees of both groups considered that the screen façade was skilfully conceived and executed to improve the spatial qualities:

“If one looks at the overall design, the place gets framed by it. Design-wise it has a certain coherence. But it is confusing of course, because it seems not to be contemporary.” (I 20, translated from German)

While the fact that the screen façade is not easily noticeable as such was generally appreciated, an architect commended that at closer look, it is identifiable as a superimposed, freestanding element (I 20).

Most **criticism of the screen façade** came from architects. They criticized the screen façade for artificiality, namely for its historizing architectural design and for its facadism:

“It is very wrong. [...] It is fake. Just one huge façade added in front of many buildings. Each one had its own texture, its own identity.” (I 17a)

“For an architect it’s a total fail. Because it is a façade that does not express what is behind it. [...] It negates actually architecture as we know it. It is totally non-authentic [...].” (I 23)

Two western archaeologists referred to the screen façade as “Disneyland-heritage” (I 3b) or considered it emblematic of a certain superficiality in beautifying things for the sake of nation-branding (I 14). Despite this criticism of artificiality both had a comparatively indifferent attitude towards the intervention (I 3,14). An interviewee of each group moreover pointed to the negative effect of the screen façade on the interior spaces of the buildings behind it for obstructing some of their windows (I 8,16). A local architect (I 33) – however, without having analyzed the pre-existing buildings behind

the screen façade – moreover found a certain paradox in the concealment of the later 20th-century architecture at the site:

“It’s funny. Because now, what we are moving towards, is preserving those 70s buildings and calling them transitional period. So, we are moving towards preserving them. And there is a bit of inconsistency, I might say.” (I 33)

The **Avenue’s street shading** was seldom criticized, either for its aesthetics (I 12,17) or artificiality (I 3):

“And in Bab they designed this artificial roof which was never there.” (I 3c)

More interviewees commended the street shading for its climatic effect (I 16,4,15,26) as well as for adding to the quality of the space and its atmosphere (I 15,20,22,8):

“But what is really positive is the shading. Functional wise.” (I 16a)

“Now, even in the summer, if you go now, you feel comfortable.” (I 26)

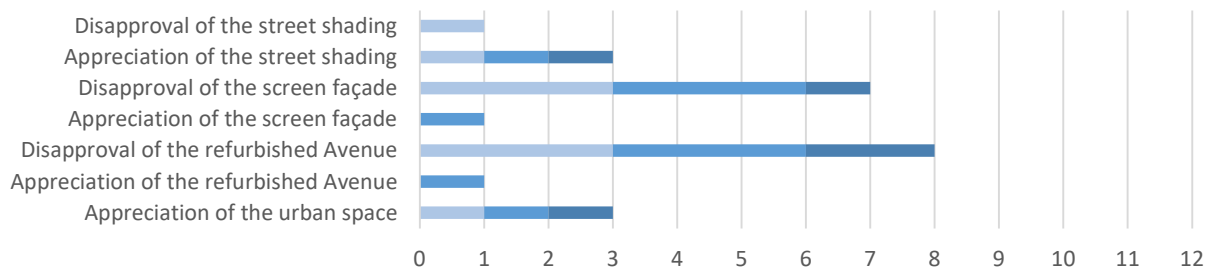


Diagram 3.3-25: Evaluation of the refurbished Bab al-Bahrain Avenue by architects

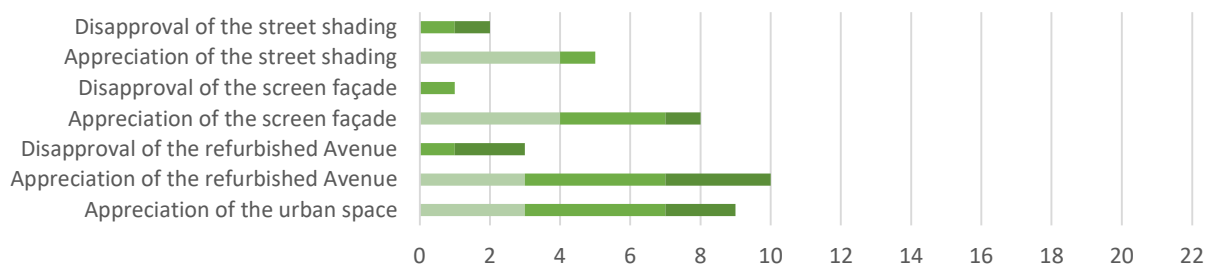


Diagram 3.3-26: Evaluation of the refurbished Bab al-Bahrain Avenue by non-architects

The **mall building** (annex fig. 3.3.1-103) with its air-conditioned atrium was appreciated as a modern shopping commodity in the historic market area by interviewees of both groups (I 3,8,11,4,15,18,38x3,19,13,16,17,49):

“Because people are not going to come to the centre of Bahrain to an un-air-conditioned place when they can go to malls.” (I 19)

„I have seen a lot of new malls, and it’s time to see this old one here.” (I 4b)

Non-architects approved of its semi-traditional design and atmosphere, or were even enthusiastic about it (I 4,11,13,15,18,8,10,38x3,19):

“It’s nice. Very unique, no? The ambience. The ceiling is modern. It was not like that before, no? But see the style? They try to keep it heritage. Very unique design.” (I 11a)

„Well, it looks a little bit artificial. But somehow, I am still ok with that. It looks modern and new with the old elements in it. So that’s ok.” (I 13b)

The atrium was moreover appreciated as a continuation of the outdoor space of Bab al-Bahrain Avenue (I 17,8), for its commercial success (I 38x3) and as a tourist attraction (I 38,15). Local interviewees

appreciated its Bahraini character, which was partly explained with the predominance of Bahraini brands and gastronomy:

“And the shops inside they all represent Bahrain, most of them. There is nothing like international franchises. Even the restaurants are all Bahraini – most of them are. I like it. I generally really like it. If I have some tourist coming to Bahrain, I probably bring them here.” (I 15a)

Contrary to this, mostly architects, but not only, were overall critical of the mall building (I 10,12,16,17,20,21,23,26,32,33,49) and its design or outrightly disapproved of it for authenticity reasons:

“The idea is nice. But, again, this is really not real. It is not real.” (16a)

The mall building as successor of the Government Shops and Offices was disapproved of for artificiality due to its historicizing and merely decorative traditional elements (I 20,16,17,23,32,33) or for being aesthetically unsuccessful (I 12,16,17,33):

“I definitely prefer the old one. It is truer to the place and landscape. This one [the mall building] is imposing, it’s an alien body. Its crude.” (I 12b)

“It is Disneyland to us.” (I 33)

An archaeologist, who was rather indifferent about the mall building, argued:

“It depends what you want to do with this building. So, if you just want to have a nice mall in the suq, then this building is perfectly fine. But if you actually want to tell the story and the history of the place, then this building is definitely not the choice you should go for.” (I 3b)

Three Bahrainis generally questioned the decision to locate the mall in the historic market area, because it was considered not to fit the “spirit of the place” (I 49) and to have “changed the identity of the old suq” (I 26):

„I am not happy about this kind of cold mall in the middle of the suq. [...] It does not blend well with the actual notion of the suq. What’s behind Bab al-Bahrain, that’s how I would like to imagine the suq – not an airconditioned mall.” (I 10a)

Mostly architects (I 13,16,17,23,33) expressed their disapproval of the integration of the **mall’s entrance gates** (annex fig. 3.3.1-102), which imitate vernacular palatial or mosque portals, into the reconstructed colonial-style elevation for authenticity reasons:

“Because you give the impression that all is fake.” (I 16a)

One architect moreover disapproved of the discrepancy between the grand architectural gesture of the gates and the narrow foyer spaces one enters through them:

“As a design itself it is not bad. I like the design of it, the huge door, the gate. But when you go inside it does not reflect the outer look of it. When you go inside, [...] it is just a box.” (I 17a)

On the other hand, some non-architects said they appreciated the portals as an attractive and “powerful” (8b) as well as “Islamic” (I 10,15) if not “Bahraini” feature that improves the Avenue aesthetically (I 3).

The **southern façade of the mall building** (annex fig. 3.3.1-87) is another example where divergent attitudes crystallized, particularly with regard to the combination of historicizing and contemporary features. Three non-architects (I 15,18,19) explicitly commended the southern façade of the mall building.

“It looks better than a modern mall. I prefer the old looks, the traditional look of a building, specially in a place where it is a bit touristy, I really like the idea. And it is mixing old and new. Actually, it is a very nice touch.” (I 15a)

More often (I 4,11,12,13,20,16,17,33), the mall building's southern elevation was however criticized for artificiality or for not bearing any relation to the predecessor building and its surroundings:

"I don't think there is any relation to the historic building. And even the historic components, or the elements, they are almost cartoonist. Because they don't follow any kind of dimension, [...]. It is just superimposing incompatible elements and styles. [...] Just for visual impact and to give some historic feeling? [...] It lacks the detail that those decorative elements require. And this is why I think it is like a cartoon. A caricature. [...] It is just an Arabic house scaled up to fit here." (I 33)

"It looks so clean-cut. It has a fake look. [...] I don't think it was taken into consideration what is next to it and how it will blend." (I 12a)

Some non-architects moreover criticized the combination of traditional and contemporary features in the southern façade of the mall building for aesthetics:

"I don't like the blend of the glass with the concrete. It looks imposed." (I 12a)

"Heritage and modern cannot be mixed. Heritage should be heritage and modern should be modern. It becomes ugly, because you can compare too much the new and the old." (I 11a)

Architects dismissed this approach for authenticity concerns (I 4,11,16,13,20,33):

"Again, the idea itself, that I do something new but chose to make a part of it old and a part of it new... So, it looks like you are making a contrast between what is the past and what is The whole issue is not in the right direction. It's obvious." (I 16a)

Some non-architects said the mall building, like the entire site, should have rather been completely traditional in design (I 4,11):

"Because they chose this area, Bab al-Bahrain area, and they are thinking of building something very traditional style – it should be completely traditional." (I 4b)

Interviewees of both groups (I 4,12,14,15,16,32,33,49) expressed their regret about the **demolition of the Government Shops and Offices** (annex fig. 3.3.1-76):

"Some significant colonial shops and offices were demolished to construct this mall." (I 49)

"How can they demolish historic structures?! You know, in this day and age – tourism – everyone kind of wants to see historic stuff." (I 14a)

"I get it. They needed to build a mall, so something had to go down. Sadly. They could have removed this part [the eastern side of the Avenue]. [...] We paid for that mall with a heritage building. It did cost us a very nice building that we lost. I don't feel comfortable about it. [...] Whatever they built is nice. But it would have been way nicer if they kept the old one." (I 15a)

"I definitely prefer the old one. [...] I'm sad it was structurally unsound." (I 12b)

Interviewees of both groups (I 15,16,33) considered that at least the outer skin of the Government Shops and Offices with the historic façade along Bab al-Bahrain Avenue should have been preserved:

"And even if we succeeded to keep the façade and did a total renovation on the inside, it is worth it. [...] You can do whatever you want behind it. So, yes, it would have been worth saving, of course. Actually, it would have added to the value of the place." (I 16a)

Three local senior gentlemen explicitly approved of the demolition of the Government Shops and Offices to make space for the mall:

"It was good, but not that much. The government change it to this. Now, it is very nice. All the people going there for food or drink or anything. Very clean. Service is very nice. And prize is not expensive. People come. Always full. I hope if they can make two, three like that. Good for foreigner, when they come to Bahrain." (I 38)

Three young Bahrainis (I 4,15,17) expressed their appreciation of the **facsimile reconstruction of the Government Shops and Offices** (annex fig. 3.3.1-95 and 96, 102):

*„It’s good to rebuild the same - almost the same. So, people will know there was something here.”
(4b)*

One of them, however, considered the purely decorative, non-functional features such the gallery at first-floor augmented the inherent artificiality of the reconstruction (I 17a). Several interviewees generally criticized the decision to reconstruct (I 16,32,33), or the manner in which the reconstruction was executed (I 3,4,26,33). Several interviewees considered the Government Shops and Offices should have rather been reconstructed more faithfully to the original in design (I 3,4) or to its original construction techniques (I 26,33). Architects argued, the reconstruction should have rather been contemporary in design (I 16,32,33):

“So, we actually took the decision to demolish it. So why did we rebuilt it again instead of any other stuff that will match nicely with the place and have a different vision?” (I 16a)

“Haram! [Arabic: God forbid] I would go back to 2010 to not demolish the building. Or I would build something totally new: a contemporary architectural reminder of the traditional architecture without just pasting elements.” (I 32)

Few interviewees were aware that the heritage authority had removed folklore decorative features throughout the refurbished section of Bab al-Bahrain Avenue in 2011-12, as described in chapter 3.3.1. Neither did the author usually bring up this intervention. However, one interviewee appreciatingly mentioned that the heritage authority redesigned the interior of the mall (I 49). Some interviewees, on the other hand, were irritated about “odd” architectural details without being aware that they resulted from the purification (I 19). Given that the reference to historic photographs of the Avenue is no longer comprehensible after all replicas of traditional balconies and canopies have been removed, the screen façade was criticized for not bearing any resemblance to anything that previously existed in its place (I 33). Moreover, the Ministry’s modifications of the screen façade reduced the legibility of its facadism (compare annex fig. 3.3.1-74, 75, 80 to 82, 95 to 102). A Bahraini interviewee hence criticized the purification for those reasons (I 17). He considered the removal of the typical “mashrabiya” [traditional balconies with trelliswork] “the biggest mistake” that worsened the initial lapse of installing them as non-functional features in the first place.

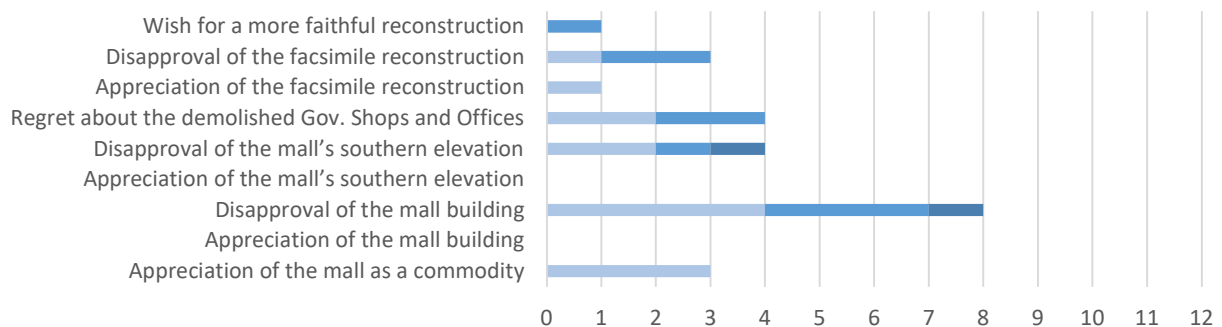


Diagram 3.3-27: Evaluation of the mall building by architects

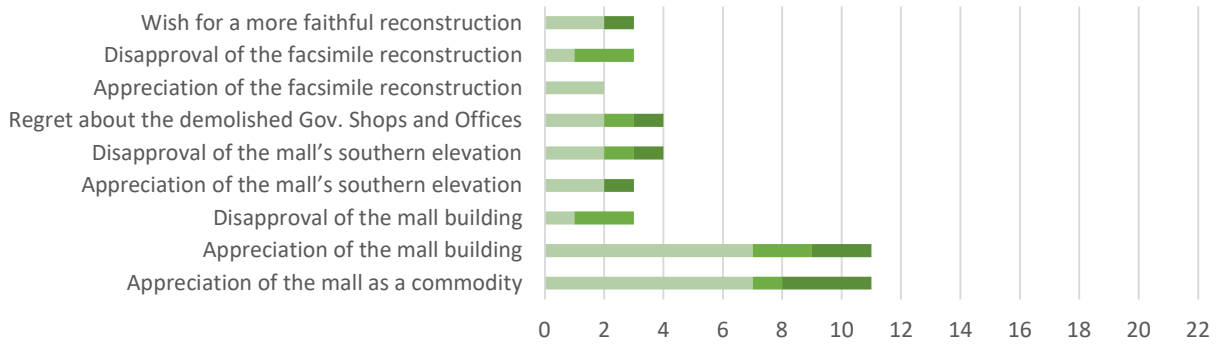


Diagram 3.3-28: Evaluation of the mall building by non-architects

The author did not systematically assess the perception of the **Customs House** in its unrestored state during the field research (annex fig. 3.3.1-12 to 14), nor did she incite an evaluation of the remains of the former Customs Square Garden. However, interviewees of both groups appreciatively pointed to **Bab al-Bahrain round-about** (annex fig. 3.3.1-12): for its fountain, for being an attractive urban feature or as a preserved historic element of the site (I 4,8,11,14,17,20,30). Five interviewees moreover expressed their appreciation of the planned restoration of the Customs House in principle (I 4,16,49,32,38x2).

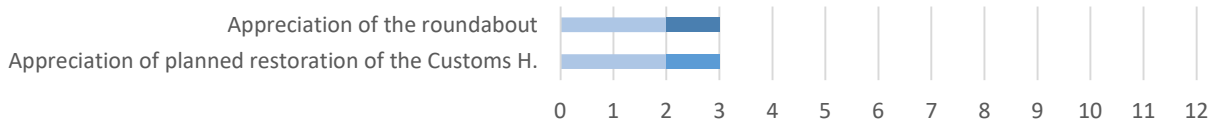


Diagram 3.3-29: Evaluation of the Customs House and Bab al-Bahrain roundabout by architects

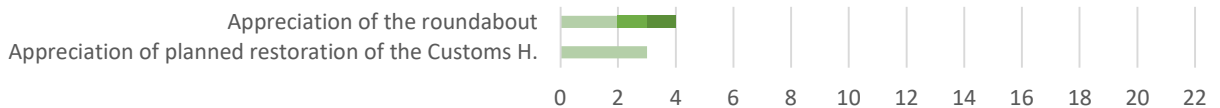


Diagram 3.3-30: Evaluation of the Customs House and Bab al-Bahrain roundabout by non-architects

In summary, the evaluations of the refurbished reference site show a clear divide between architects and non-architects in the case of most interventions. Authenticity considerations that played into the evaluations are further discussed in the next subchapter.

3.3.4.6 Authenticity judgements by the interviewees per information source

The following subchapter further analyses the perception of the changes to the site by the interviewees as per the individual sources of information on authenticity as listed in paragraph 82 of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention. A consistent assessment of the complete findings makes a certain redundancy of information already pretended above as well as repetitions across the individual information sources unavoidable.

Form and design

During the on-site interviews, the author asked for comments on the urban and architectural characteristics of the site. The author invited the interviewees to point out and assess the changes to the site and its buildings from memory as well as in comparison to historic photographs. The

assessments were usually limited to the outer appearance of the buildings and to the outdoor spaces. This section, moreover, summarizes how interviewees judged the historicizing design language that which the refurbishments introduced.

Changes of form and design were discussed in most detail on the basis of **Bab al-Bahrain building**. Among the architects, Bab al-Bahrain's latest design was almost unanimously considered to differ significantly from the building's original appearance (I 6,16,17,21,20,23,32,33,49). All architects – with the exception of the one in charge of the refurbishment in 2012/13 (I 6) and one who did not comment on the building's refurbishment (I 22) – disapproved of the design changes for authenticity reasons as described in 3.4.4.5. One architect moreover lamented that already the redesign in the 1980s had “changed the authenticity of the building” (I 30b).

The other interviewees were divided in their judgement about the differences between the original and the new design but approved of the changes almost unanimously. Six non-architects considered the changes major (I 4,11,15,12,13,19), seven considered them minor (I 18,39,40,41,9,10). A slight majority hence perceived the building as insignificantly changed, such as a senior taxi driver who was spontaneously interviewed at the taxi stand at Bab al-Bahrain Square and asked if he witnessed any changes to the building in recent years:

41: “No, it did not change much.”

Author: “So, when you were a kid, it looked more or less the same as this?”

41: “That’s right.” (I 41)

Others pointed to specific differences, particularly after comparing the building to the historic photographs of the 1950s (annex fig. 3.3.1-21 and 23), but nevertheless considered the changes insignificant:

“I think the essence has been kept as it is. I mean the configuration of the windows changed a bit. But that is all that there is, really. [...] I don’t think there has been any significant changes. [...] It still keeps the same concept. The purpose, the function, the idea of the monument.” (I 8b)

The notion that the building's identity was preserved despite the changes (I 17) or even enhanced (I 6) was also shared by two architects:

“This building has been through many changes, but still it’s showing the identity of Bab al-Bahrain. So, that is what I mainly like about it.” (I 17a)

Proportionally, as many architects as non-architects considered the southern elevation less changed and evaluated this positively (I 11,12,15,16,17,19). One of the architects concluded that the dominance of the preserved staircases distracts from the modification, which the southern façade has in fact been subjected to (I 16). Interviewees of both groups pointed out the clock as a maintained feature (I 10,11,15,33).

The changed architectural detail that was pointed out most frequently among both groups were the windows (I 33,20,4,11,15,18,8,12,19). Second most mentioned, predominantly among non-architects, was the modified code of arms (I 4,10,11,12,17). Three interviewees pointed to the modification of the code of arms from memory before being shown historic photographs of the building on-site. This points to the particular attention this feature seems to get. Other features mentioned repeatedly were the removed balconies (I 7,10,12,15), the added pedestrian passages (I 3,14,17) as well as the modified parapet design (I 15,17).

The only architect, who considered the new and the original designs similar, did not take part in a site visit and made his judgement by comparing a historic photograph of the original building to how he

remembered the new version. Most interviewees however revised a first judgment they made from memory when scrutinizing the building on site and comparing it to historic photographs (I 11,12,17,19,33). Three of four non-architects, who remembered the building as little changed since the first refurbishment, revised this judgement, too, when shown a photo of the 1980s version on site (I 11, 10,12,19).

A local architect of the national heritage authority, who had not been directly involved with the refurbishment of Bab al-Bahrain building, reacted very surprised when shown the photo of the building from the 1950s. He was obviously influenced by the authority's narrative about the project and hence believed the building had been restored to its original appearance in line with the project's initial objective. Prior to comparing the building to the historic photograph of the 1950s, he considered the façade design to be true to the original appearance but then realized his misconception:

33b: "I think it's nice to bring back the original image. Because what it would look like after the 80s renovation, I think it looked very post-modernish. But now, it has a sort of colonial style, which I think, it was built at. So, it retained that feature this renovation."

Author: "I will show you a picture now of 49, yes?"

33b: "Yes. Oh, it is very different!"

A British expatriate living in Bahrain since 1974, in turn, had not fully taken note of Bab al-Bahrain's second refurbishment. He was irritated, when scrutinizing the building, to find none of the "more Arab style" design features which he remembered as having been introduced relatively recently (I 19). Shown historic photographs of the previous designs he exclaimed:

19: "Is that extraordinary! Really, they have gone back to the colonial!"

Author: "Do you think they went back to the colonial?"

19: "Well, it is different again. But I would say it is closer to the original. [...] They got rid of all these rounded arches. Isn't that extraordinary?! I wonder why they did that. [...] Yes, there are three completely different stages. But the newest one is very much closer to the original one than that one [1980s]."

Given that he had been quite fond of the 1980s design, the British expatriate was the only non-architect among the interviewees who rather disapproved of the latest design changes.

Conclusions about the effect of the changes differed among the interviewees of both groups. The notion that the latest design of Bab al-Bahrain as well as of Bab al-Bahrain Avenue simulates an earlier construction date than the real one was expressed by three interviewees (I 8,11,16) and problematized by the architect among them. Three non-architects (I 4,11,15) and one architect (I 17) moreover considered that the new design changed the building from originally colonial-style to a more traditional Bahraini style due to features such as the wooden windows, the wall niches and the larger, golden code of arms:

"It has more to do with the traditional architecture of Bahrain." (I 17a)

Rather contrary to these perceptions, two interviewees of each group considered the colonial character more pronounced in the new design of Bab al-Bahrain compared both to the 1980s version and the original one (I 13,19,20,23):

"What it looks like now is much more colonial-style than it actually looked like when it was built." (I 13b)

In both groups, one interviewee perceived Bab al-Bahrain's significance as colonial heritage or testimony to Belgrave's legacy impaired if not annihilated (I 30,19) due to the changed design.

19: "Essentially, he [Belgrave] set up the government. The ministries."

Author: "And this is the architectural testimony to that."

19: "Well, that is true. Except it is not. Because it is different. There we go."

An architect who valued the historic building foremost as testimony to the evolution of Bahrain's architecture, regretted that in comparison to its previous state, the building had been stylistically "Europeanized" and lost some of this "hybrid feel" (I 23). The reduction of the modernist stylistic influences was moreover pointed to by three interviewees (I 8,16,20) and criticised by the two architects among them. One interviewee of each group associated the new design with Mussolini's fascist architecture:

"You know what it reminds me of? It reminds me of fascist architecture. You know, like Mussolini's architecture. He used old Italian materials and elements of Roman times, but he did it with very straight, geometric figures, like tall windows, that signify power of the state." (I 8b)

The architect among the two problematized the political notion of this change:

"With the horizontal window format, the building had a rather modernist architectural language from the 1940s. With the narrow vertical window formats, it now appears much more like Italian colonial – that is fascist – architecture. The building gets a completely different character thereby: less modernist and more imperialist. I don't know if they are aware of it, of this political connotation." (I 20 translated from German by the author)

Those interviewees who based the historic testimony on the building's symbolism and function rather than on its architectural design or substance did not seem to consider this value dimension impaired with the new design. Despite prevalent approval of the new design among the non-architects, some of the interviewees of that group pointed to inherent inconsistencies and wondered why the original design was only partially reconstructed (I 15,19):

"It's confusing. Some of the stuff they kept exactly the same, some of it they changed." (I 15a)

Overall, visual appearance and aesthetics were found to be a matter of high priority among the interviewees of all professional backgrounds. However, the architects were generally more critical of the design changes, which they often considered a matter of falsification. Comparing the statements of architects and non-architects, it is clear, that the latter attached little importance to form and design as factors of authenticity in terms of accuracy in likeness to original designs. The following comments on the changed design of Bab al-Bahrain building exemplify this:

"For an architect it probably is a problem. But for me, no. I still see it as serving the same function." (I 8b)

"I think it looks fine like this. I mean it serves the same purpose, doesn't it?" (I 13b)

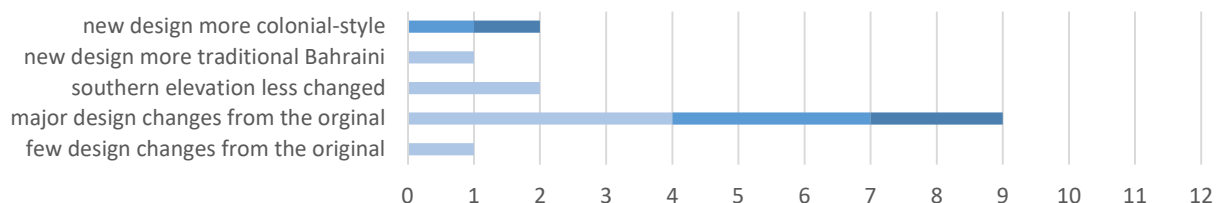


Diagram 3.3-31: Assessment of design changes to Bab al-Bahrain building by architects

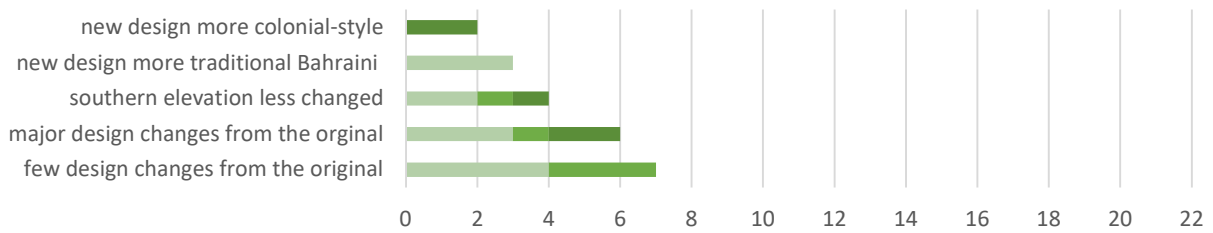


Diagram 3.3-32: **Assessment of design changes to Bab al-Bahrain building by non-architects**

Similar conclusions and further divides in the perceptions and evaluation of spatial and architectural changes can be drawn from the comments on the site’s other spaces and buildings. The **Customs House** had not yet been restored and extended at the time of the field research. Changes to it between the mid-20th century and 2015 were described by two senior gentlemen who had run businesses at the since that time:

38-2: *“The building in front, it was the custom. Bahrain custom.”*

38-1: *[...] Custom. It was not like this. It was only one story. It was old type. Room was very small. One Indian, I don’t know what his name, I don’t remember now, he the director of customs and people go by walk. Now they go to Mina Salman to clear the goods. Before it was all here. From here, up to the sea, about 100, 200 meters. The old custom here.” (I 38-2)*

Perceptions of the design of the **Post Office and Police Station** were the most congruent ones across the groups. The building was unanimously appreciated for being rather unchanged in terms of its outer appearance (I 16,17,21,32,33,4,11,15,38x3,8,10,13,39) by all interviewees who commented on this from memory and/or by comparing to historic photographs (annex fig. 3.3.1-63). Nevertheless, some interviewees pointed to slight changes, for example to the wooden elements. Most frequently, interviewees commented on the preserved parapet detail (I 12,13,16,14,15) which was sometimes pointed to as a colonial feature (I 13,15).

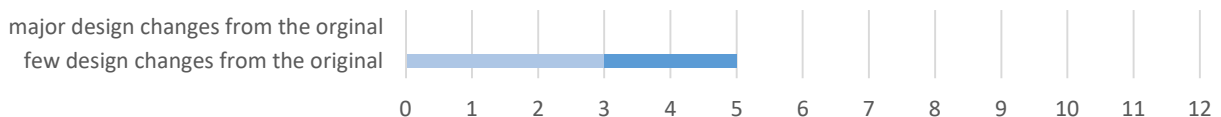


Diagram 3.3-33: **Assessment of design changes to the Post Office and Police Station by architects**

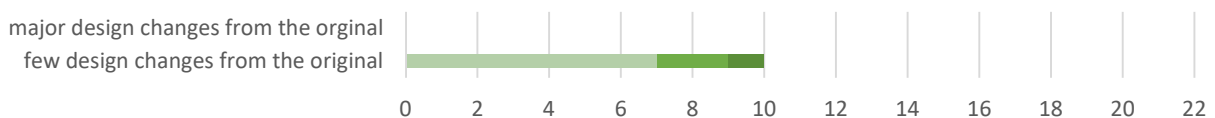


Diagram 3.3-34: **Assessment of design changes to the Post Office and Police Station by non-architects**

Few interviewees had seen or remembered the **Government Shops and Offices** in their original or later conditions:

“I know the shops but I never paid attention to the buildings.” (I 15a)

When comparing to a historic photograph (annex fig. 3.3.1-76), most interviewees (I 4,22,11,15,33,39,10,13,14,22,19) considered the eastern façade of the mall building similar to the design of the predecessor building.

“It’s pretty much the same. It’s just that this one looks newer. [...] I mean, the shaded area is all new. There are no windows here. I don’t know if the wooden parts and the windows are the exact same design, but it looks very similar. Ya, pretty much the same.” (I 10a)

“They rebuilt it, I think, to the same. More or less. But it doesn’t look as impressive as this one [the historic building]. Something is off-putting about it. [...] It looks very fake.” (I 33)

Although individual changes, such as the added portals and the missing parapet design, were identified by many, only one interviewee of each group judged the design of the mall building’s eastern elevation to be overall rather different (I 16,18). Interviewees of both groups, who identified the mall building’s entrance portals to be neither part of the canon of vernacular commercial buildings nor of the colonial-style, had authenticity concerns, as they considered them untypical of the market lane:

“I even doubt that the arches of the entrances are related to the old Bahraini architecture. I doubt it at this point. I am not sure.” (16a)

“I don’t remember seeing such a decoration in the houses, but maybe in the mosques it’s common to have that.” (I 10a)

Mostly architects (I 13,16,17,23,33) hence criticized them for being disconnected from the site’s history:

“Yes, this is why it is off-putting. They merged different traditional elements into what was there. They infused a different style. Whereas this is harmonious and consistent [the original Government Shops and Offices].” (I 33)

Three interviewees assumed that the historic parapet detail of the Government Shops and Office had been reconstructed and is hidden by the textile shades in the Avenue (I 10,17,19). This is probably the effect the designers had in mind, when they refrained from reconstructing that element. Two, however, pointed out the missing parapet detail (I 4,16).



Diagram 3.3-35: Assessment of similarities of the mall building with the Government Shops and Offices by architects



Diagram 3.3-36: Assessment of similarities of the mall building with the Government Shops and Offices by non-architects

The **loss of the original ensemble character** was seldom commented on, although several interviewees (I 10,11,15,16,17) pointed to the former similarities between the historic buildings – usually with reference to the parapet design. One Bahraini architect (I 17), said he regretted that Bab al-Bahrain building was not restored to again better match the Post Office and Police Station:

“If they were able to show this [the Post Office and Police Station] as it looked before, why didn’t they do the same with the gate?” (I 17a)

Few interviewees were aware of or commented on the **reinstatement of colonial-style features** throughout the site apart from Bab al-Bahrain building. One interviewee, clearly condemned this as a falsification of history. Having been involved in the refurbishment of Bab al-Bahrain building in the 1980s, he was however certainly biased in his judgement:

21a: “In Bab al-Bahrain what is done now, is very artificial.”

Author: “The whole thing?”

21a: “Yes, to promote it as what was there in the colonial days. It is lying.”

There were very divergent perceptions of the overall changes to **Bab al-Bahrain Avenue** both in quantity and quality. Most interviewees pointed to various changes, ranging from architectural interventions to the changed traffic management and pedestrianization of the Avenue (I 41,49,15,9,10,19). Four interviewees, however, said they found the Avenue insignificantly changed with the refurbishment (I 10,39,40,41). This included three local seniors who were spontaneously interviewed at the site and one younger Bahraini who participated in an in-depth on-site interviewee. All had known the site for decades:

“No change. Only making new shop up there [the mall], from this way.” (I 40-2)

“No, only painting. Painting only change. Little. All there old. Same this street, post office also old designs. So many years old they designed it. Also, Bab al-Bahrain, the gate.” (I 39)

“The street behind they call it Bab al-Bahrain Shop. There is the same thing before. Same as before. Nothing changed. Except, we have some malls. [...] Before we only had these local shops.” (I 41)

“It was a one-storey suq. It wasn’t like two stories that you can go upstairs and shop or anything like that. And it wasn’t as stylish and “blinky” as this one. That’s all.” (I 10a)

These statements indicate that some non-architects attributed hardly any significance to changes in form and design. For most interviewees, however, the appearance of the site played a major role. Assessments of authenticity in this regard however differed greatly. Most architects were concerned with truthfulness of forms and designs in terms of accurately complying with the historic originals. To most interviewees of other professional backgrounds different factors mattered more. Apart from atmosphere and aesthetics – that is beauty – it was found to matter whether the architecture reflects the local culture and character of the place and whether it integrates itself in the setting. Several non-architects were equally concerned with truthfulness to history in the way the reference site is presented, but they assessed this differently. Rather than compliance with original forms and designs or materials and legibility, the architecture’s effect was found to matter for most non-architects:

13b: “I think they achieved that, to create a traditional feel, but the consequence is that you cannot tell which part is historic and which is not.”

Author: “But that not such a big deal?”

13b: “It depends on whom you ask. For me, no.”

Most non-architects hence seemed to consider the architectural interventions not to impair the site’s authenticity for retaining the character of the site and its use and function, by employing locally-inspired designs and by not changing its symbolism. The latter included not simulating greater wealth or geopolitical importance than those that originally shaped the site. In this context, three local non-architects (I 8,10,15) drew comparisons to Suq Waqif in Doha,⁶⁰ which will be presented in chapter 3.5.

⁶⁰ Refer to the introduction of the project in chapter 3.2.

Two interviewees – a western and a national resident of Bahrain (I 4,19) – moreover compared the site to the refurbished historic market of Dubai, which actually served the initial refurbishment of Bab al-Bahrain as reference project (I 43). The western resident argued that in the face of the great loss of authentic heritage, the **historicizing, locally inspired designs** in the avenue contribute to the preservation of the Gulf’s architectural heritage and building tradition, despite the obvious deviation from their original appearance:

19: “Well, it has been built to look as if it was old. The same as in Dubai, where they have this new old suq. [laughing]”

Author: “What do you think of that?”

19: “Well, it is all very nice. If people want to see what they think it used to look like.”

Author: “So it does not matter if it looked like that or not, as long as people like it?”

19: “Ya. I mean it is a shame that so much of the old here has gone. The old wind towers. There is only one left. The old balconies. You have to now search for them around Manama. But given that most of the old houses are gone, I think, it is quite nice that they are now finally interested in what their heritage used to be, which they have actually destroyed. It is a pity that they destroyed it. But they did. Actually, they are trying their best to make up for it.”

The Bahraini, shared this notion, although she no longer considered Bab al-Bahrain Avenue a traditional Bahraini market:

“Because, you know, it wasn’t like this. I was only one storey, not two storeys. And there were no gates like this, the shading also... Still, they are trying to.” (I 4b)

She referred to the reference site as a “replica” of the refurbished market in Dubai but nevertheless seemed to consider both sites rather genuine representatives of the traditional regional architecture:

Author: “What kind of architecture is that, you think? Or what is it supposed to be?”

4b: “Gulf architecture. Because when I went to Dubai, they had the same thing. [...] In old Dubai Suq. There are some differences, I mean, but they have the same style, with the wooden things and the lights. [...] Actually, I saw it in Dubai first. [...] And then in Bahrain they had this idea. And then we said, oh, they had a replica of that idea. [...] But it is not necessarily a replica. In the Gulf we have the same style of building with some differences. So, of course if they renew it, then it’s the same.

Author: “Is it the same traditional style, or the same modern style?”

4b: “Traditional style. [...] The style is traditional but the building is new.”

Author: “What do you think about that?”

4b: “I like it. Because if they just keep it, then it will fall or nobody will ask about it. But if they renew it, it will stay. At least in the minds of kids.”

With reference to the combination of historicizing and contemporary design features, an architect of the company who designed the initial refurbishment of the Avenue in the 2000s, argued along the same lines. He said that the designs visually “kept the memory” of the site, while paying tribute to the fact that “culture is always subject to change” (I 22). Apart from him, two non-architects pointed to the historicizing design as a substitute means of preserving heritage (I 4,19). The notion seemed to be shared by other non-architects (I 8,10,11,13,15,18) who appreciated the architecture as more or less traditionally Bahraini. The following quote on the atrium of the mall building illustrates this:

“It’s doesn’t look like anything is historic. I mean they have recreated elements, like different patterns, and the woodwork, and the balconies. But it’s all recreation. And I think it is a good place to recreate this. It’s nice. [...] Even the glass. To let in light from the top is a good idea. Because it is a sunny country and that is part of its identity. I mean this whole place is about the identity of the

country. I'm talking specifically this square, this building and the buildings behind it. The rest of the suq is a different matter, like I said, but as long as it showcases an identity of the country it's more important than whether a wall is old or new." (I 8b)

In fact, the reference to the local vernacular seemed to constitute a certain degree of authenticity for many interviewees for establishing a link to the local culture and history. However, the terms "authentic" and "traditional" were sometimes used rather indiscriminately:

19: "It looks authentic, but it wasn't there before. [laughing]"

Author: "When you say authentic, what do you mean exactly?"

19: "It's nice this stucco over the arch. That is quite traditional."

Moreover, concerns about potential misconceptions about the architecture were seldom shared among this group of interviewees:

13b: "I think they were trying to mimic traditional elements."

Author: "Are you happy with that?"

13b: "Yes, I am happy with that. It is not trying to give an impression of a really old place.

Although, it may be does for some people... I don't know, if some people come and think it is a historic area?"

Along those lines, three interviewees (I 8,19,22) argued, that different conservation ethics are applicable at Bab al-Bahrain than at other historic sites where more valuable, historic fabric remains, as further elaborated below in 'Materials and substance.' For example, a non-architect who was very aware of conservation ethics and criticized a creative reconstruction of the historic Riffa Fort,⁶¹ appreciated the historicizing architectural language introduced at Bab al-Bahrain because he considered a different standard applicable:

19: "Well, [at Riffa fort] it's sometimes difficult to know whether they have reconstructed something to such an extent that it bears little relation to what might have been there before – whether it is sort of fantasy land that they have reconstructed. But if they have got pictures of what it looked like and they have managed to reconstruct it like that, I think that would be good, yes. [...] But, you know, when something has completely disappeared, you don't know whether it is really worthwhile doing anything. Unless they have got any pictures or anything to authenticate it. Maybe they did, maybe they didn't."

Author: "So if it is 'fantasy land', you mind that?"

19: "It's all rather artificial, isn't it?"

Author: "But you don't feel like that about Bab al-Bahrain area?"

19: "I think that is something else, actually. They have not tried to preserve it as it was. You know, they have actually made it to look quite attractive. With all those lights and it wasn't covered to start with. No, I think that has been quite successful."

Contrary to these perceptions, most architects vehemently criticized the historicizing architectural language that prevails in the case of Bab al-Bahrain Avenue and the mall building (I 6,17,16,20,21,23,32,33). Like others of this group of interviewees, a visiting architect found the "pseudo-oriental historicism" of Bab al-Bahrain Avenue and the "imaginary reconstruction" of the mall building "problematic for simulating older architectural styles, which did not exist at the site in that way," and for insinuating "historicity in a wider sense" (I 20, translated from German). In the case of

⁶¹ Refer to the introduction of the historic fort in chapter 3.2.

the Avenue, this included the two architects who were involved in the reconfiguration of Bab al-Bahrain building in the 1980s and in 2012/13 respectively:

“They are trying to make it to look like what it is not. It can never be like before.” (I 6)

“They are copying things! There is no evolution in things. It is copying! Fake plaster. Things should develop. Use modern technology! Develop your traditional architecture with the technology that you have!”

Author: Even the forms? Or you keep the forms?

21a: “No, it is not putting an arch that makes it traditional.” (I 21)

A Bahraini architect (I 33) explained that in his eyes the historicizing designs are deficient as a means of heritage conservation for not employing traditional crafts and materials:

33: “Well, I think of it as a style. As a traditional style.”

Autor: “Ok, this is what they meant to do.”

33: “As a traditional style it is not really executed very well. If it was maybe traditional plaster used, or traditional materials, so you still have the real material, not just concrete and shape it in a traditional style. Because I think, to build in traditional style is not just the language. Also, the material is key to it. If you have both, in my opinion, it would be ok to build in the traditional style. But if it is just to have niches and those arcs, it’s...”

The same interviewee considered that if somebody took the interior of the mall for old fabric, it would be “the same way that someone would go to Disneyland and see the Wall Disney Palace and think it is old” (I 33) and considered this unlikely to happen:

“Maybe some people are not aware of these things. But I think it is clear, that this is new.” (I 33)

Contrary to this assumption, the findings presented in 3.3.4.3 proved that the historicizing architectural language does create certain misconceptions about the site and its building’s origin and age. However, most interviewees eventually identified the new additions. A Lebanese architect of the heritage authority summarized his criticism of the historicizing designs as follows:

“Bab al-Bahrain [area] is merely a way to recall a heritage, let’s say. To recall heritage in a way that pleases the popular imagination about what heritage was and what should be. [...] So, it gave an image of heritage without being truthful to the location or truthful to the history or the actual real heritage, the real architectural language. For me, it was a really unprofessional way of giving the place an image. And the problem is, that it can be transposed anywhere. It is not specific. It makes a place which is actually very authentic in its use... [...] it makes it look like a place that could be anywhere else. Like a suq in City Centre⁶² has the same kind of architectural fake language.” (I 23)

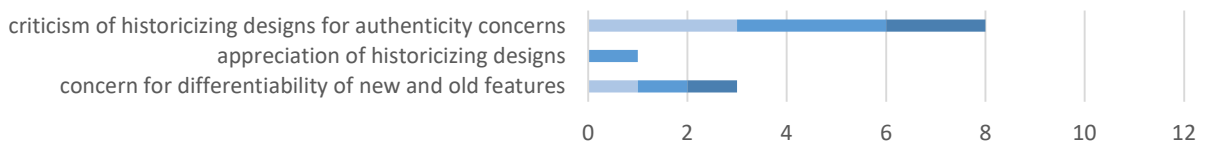


Diagram 3.3-37: Comments on historicizing designs and differentiability by architects

⁶² Bahrain’s main shopping mall is called City Centre.

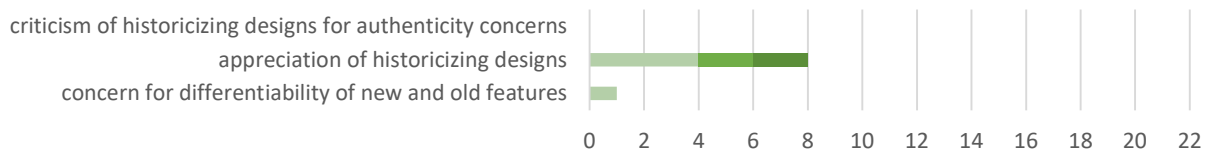


Diagram 3.3-38: **Comments on historicizing designs and differentiability by non-architects**

Overall, most architects (I 6,17,16,20,21,23,32) were critical about historicizing designs throughout the site, which almost exclusively non-architects valued as an alternative means of heritage preservation (I 22,4,8,10,11,13,15,18,19). Three architects (I 16,20,23) and one non-architect (I 4) expressed explicit concerns about differentiability of historic and added elements at the site.

With regard to reconstructions, architects and non-architects likewise judged differently. Only architects (I 16,32,33,6,21,20) were critical about reconstructions in principle – yet more so in the case of the mall building than in the case of Bab al-Bahrain. Many interviewees (I 17,7,23,32,33,4,11,15,10,12,3,26), including many architects, wished to see Bab al-Bahrain reconstructed to its original design or wished for a more faithful reconstruction in the case of the mall building. Some interviewees of both groups appreciated certain reconstructions – be it the royal office at Bab al-Bahrain (I 33) or the mall building (I 17,4,15).

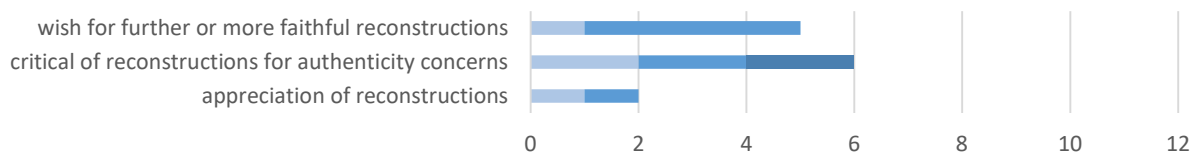


Diagram 3.3-39: **Comments on reconstructions throughout the site by architects**

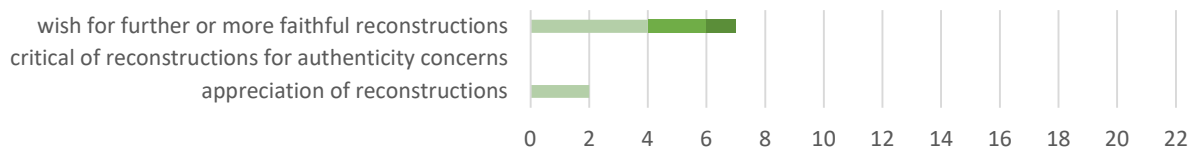


Diagram 3.3-40: **Comments on reconstructions throughout the site by non-architects**

In summary, the statements showed that most architects attributed greater significance to historical accuracy in form and design and readability of the age of the buildings. What many non-architects described as more important to the site’s authenticity was the impact of the architecture in terms of aesthetics, use and function, symbolism and whether it reflects the actual historical circumstances of its origins in principle rather than in detail.

Materials and substance

Material authenticity — the survival of historic material and substance from the original construction time — was much less discussed during the field research than issues related to design, function and symbolism. Material authenticity was seldom directly addressed by the interviewees, for example when asked if they considered the buildings new or old.

Both groups seemed rather divided in their judgment on **material authenticity of Bab al-Bahrain building**, which – as has been discussed in chapter 3.3.3 – is admittedly not very obvious. With the exception of the architects who had more detailed insights into the building’s latest refurbishment (I

6,7,32), the interviewees had to base their judgement on the appearance of the building in comparison to historic photographs. The archaeological windows in the pedestrian passages that display parts of the building's stone masonry were found to be an important source of information in this regard (annex fig. 3.3.1-47).

Particularly among the non-architects, the notion prevailed that material authenticity was rather low or lost. Based on what they observed during the on-site interview or on background knowledge, six interviewees of this group considered the building entirely or at least to a large extent demolished and rebuilt (I 3,4,11,15,18,38). This notion was shared by two architects (I 33,49). Five non-architects (I 10,15,19,39,41) and two architects (I 20,32) made comments that suggest they rated the building as essentially preserved in substance. One interviewee refused to make a judgement and said she had "no clue" if the building was historic in substance or not (I 13). One interviewee, who believed the building had shifted location, revised his initial judgment during the interview while scrutinizing the southern elevation:

"The stairs are still there. And judging from the size of the building, it seems like the same building. They did not tear it down. So, I guess it is the original building. [...] Thank you for correcting my information." (I 15a)

Among those who witnessed the development of the building in time, there were strong discrepancies in the perceptions of the changes. Statements ranged from the building having been twice demolished "to the floor" and rebuilt (I 38) to just having been painted (I 38,41).

At least one of the Bahraini architects seemed to consider the building's overall authenticity rather compromised despite the survival of the stone structure:

"I think there are old walls. I have seen some pits that they have done. [...] There is the stone structure. It is there. But I guess the elements are changed. Even the windows changed. [...] No, it is a different building now, seeing this." (I 33b)

Contrary to this conclusion, another Bahraini architect of the heritage authority, who had more closely followed the latest refurbishment, anchored the building's authenticity primarily in the preserved substance:

"So, it is authentic because the building is still there with makeup kind of." (I 32)

According to the design architect of the 2012/13 refurbishment, the building's authenticity, including in substance, was largely lost with the intervention in the 1980s:

"We don't have it [the original building]. It's gone forever. You will never get it back. I mean, if you want to rebuilt it as it was, it will be a fake." (I 6)

None of the non-architects made any such significance statement related to the historic fabric. On the contrary, several interviewees disclaimed any major importance particularly with a view to the rather young age of the building, as the following statement by a civil engineer exemplifies:

"I mean at the end of the day, this is very subjective, but I personally believe that a building from the 1940s or 50s should... The material doesn't have much value.... If you are going to preserve it, it is for other values, like location, what it was built to serve..." (I 8b)

When explained the hybrid construction techniques, the same interviewee somewhat relativized this statement with reference to the archaeological windows:

"To have a little look-out-window suffices. There is value in that. But the value of the building's purpose overshadows the value of its materials." (I 8b)

In addition to assessing the building's overall substance, interviewees of both groups commented on the historicity of individual traditional building elements. Mostly, such features were appreciated even

when the interviewees doubted their material authenticity. Two architects (I 16,17) wondered about the historicity of the incised decorative panels in the railings of the staircases in the southern elevation (annex fig. 3.3.1-45 and 48):

“I am not sure if they are old or what, but I like them.” (I 16a)

Likewise, the wooden beams of the traditional ceiling in the pedestrian passages (annex fig. 3.3.1-47) aroused doubts about their historicity with two interviewees (I 14,17):

“These wooden beams cannot be original.” (I 14a)

In addition to the architect who worked on the reconstructed ruler’s office (annex fig. 3.3.1-61 to 62), the feature was brought up by two interviewees who partook in a tour of the site (I 33,19). Both were aware that the historicizing interior design lacked material authenticity but neither questioned the truthfulness of the associated narrative nor the location of the reconstruction and hence approved of the feature. One of the two suggested the furniture might be original (I 19).

“The room on the west, in the upper level, that is where the king’s, the ruler’s office was when Belgrave was his advisor. And there is an old picture of him at his table and in front of him Charles Belgrave. And based on that picture, they rebuilt that room. [...] I think it’s new, because you can see that it is all new. But built as the old picture. Again, maybe that relates to the authenticity. I think it is a nice feature, although it might not be authentic.” (I 33b)

The archaeological windows in the pedestrian passages of Bab al-Bahrain (annex fig. 3.3.1-47) were discussed with all interviewees who were taken on a tour of the site. None of the interviewees explicitly disapproved of the feature and six expressed their appreciation as a memory marker or means of indicating the historicity of the building (I 8,9,10,11,15,17). Both architects and non-architects among them found it important “to show people what this building is made of” (I 17a):

Author: “So what do you think about the window showing the coral stone or sea stone?”

8b: “I think it is a good idea. It’s a brilliant idea. You know exactly what this window means and I think it’s important. There is another one over there, right? It’s really cool.”

However, not all understood the didactic purpose without explanation, as will be elaborated when discussing interpretation and presentation below. At least four interviewees (I 4,11,15,17) doubted the material authenticity of the archaeological windows and considered them purpose-built rather than didactic means of indicating the original materiality and historicity of the building:

“I don’t know if it is real or not. Maybe it is just decoration. Maybe it is a part that they left to show how old the building is.” (I 15a)

“I thought of the same thing. But something else came to my mind - that they added it as a fake part of this façade.” (17a)

Despite the relatively few explicit judgements on material authenticity, it can be concluded that perceptions of the originality of Bab al-Bahrain’s materials and substance were divided with a slight majority of interviewees who tended to rate it low. The findings also indicate that material authenticity of Bab al-Bahrain building was rated more important among architects than among non-architects.



Diagram 3.3-41: Comments on material authenticity of Bab al-Bahrain building by architects

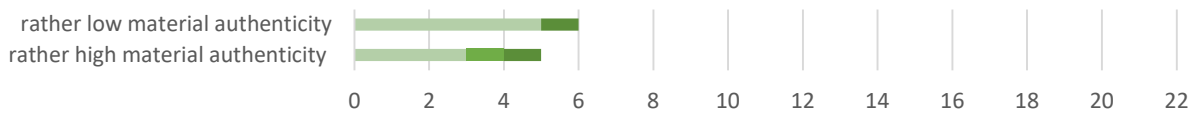


Diagram 3.3-42: **Comments on material authenticity of Bab al-Bahrain building by non-architects**

Most interviewees of both groups who commented on the **material authenticity of the Post Office and Police Station**, or rather on the historicity of the building, assumed that it is largely preserved in substance. The judgements were more often based on the outer appearance of the building (I 16,17,4,11,15,8,10,13,39) than on background information (I 21,38x3,49,32,33):

“No, the mall is obviously 2 or 3 years old. But that [the Post Office and Police Station] is probably the original structure just restored and some elements added to it.” (8b)

An architect who visited the interior of the building during the interview, while interior refurbishment works were ongoing, revised his previous judgement:

“I think only the façade may be what remains, and the internal layout was different.” (I 33)

Three interviewees voiced doubts about the authenticity of the parapet wall (I 4,16) or about the wooden details (I 9):

“I might have thought that this is an old building. But definitely the wood is new. I see from here that the wood is too smooth and it’s like new. [...] But the upper part is not the historic. I could tell that it has been made to look like historical.” (I 9c)

The upper floor was perceived as an historicizing addition to the ground floor by two interviewees (I 9c,14a). This perception might on the hand be related to the difference in surface colour between the two floors, given that only the ground floor had been recently painted (refer to annex fig. 3.3.1-69). On the other hand, it is the ground floor with the vertically stretching loggias that shows modernist features while the upper floor is in fact more traditionally designed:

“The second floor looks like it is an addition. Although it almost kind of looks older, they need to paint it.” (I 14a)

While there were hardly any comments on how important the interviewees rated the material authenticity of the building, this aspect probably played into the overall positive evaluation of the building by both groups of interviewees and into statements like the following:

“I like that this building was almost preserved as it is.” (16a)

One architect explicitly said she considered the Post Office and Police Station authentic for its preserved substance (I 32). In summary, the perception of material authenticity of the Post Office and Police Station hardly differed among the groups according to the comments on it.

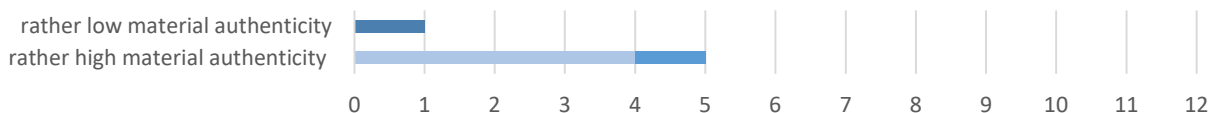


Diagram 3.3-43: **Comments on material authenticity of the Post Office and Police Station by architects**

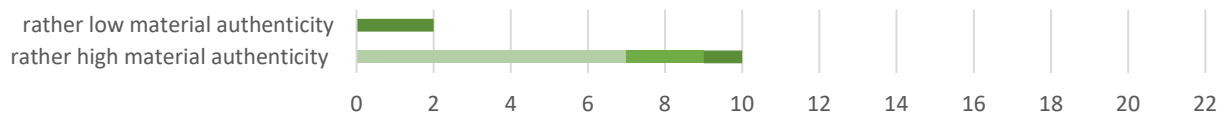


Diagram 3.3-44: **Comments on material authenticity of the Post Office and Police Station by non-architects**

The **screen façade in Bab al-Bahrain Avenue** was eventually identified by most interviewees as an entirely new addition, despite certain initial misconceptions with regard to its historicity. Material authenticity was hence no further discussed in this case. With regard to the **mall building**, perceptions were divided. An archaeologist, whom the author asked upon entering Bab al-Bahrain Avenue if the mall building is historic, answered:

“I would say so. Unless they’ve just redone it to look like the front part, like the Police Station and Post Office. They could have done it to match if it is not historic.” (I 14a)

Comparing the building to historic photographs she concluded that at least the elevation of the mall building along Bab al-Bahrain Avenue was preserved:

14a: “It is still those store-fronts. So, this was already here but they cleaned it.”

Author: “They demolished it.”

14a: “They must have left one wall remaining.”

The notion, that at least the façade of the Government Shops and Offices along the Avenue was preserved was shared at least by four interviewees (I 18,12,14,19). Six interviewees were uncertain if the mall building – including the fabric in the atrium – contains historic fabric or not (I 3,16,10,13,14,19). The architect among them eventually concluded the mall building is new upon comparing to the historic photographs (I 16). Three non-architects among them said, that it makes no significant difference to them, if part of the fabric is historic or not (I 3,10,14).

Interviewees, who had witnessed the refurbishment works, either remembered that the plot of the mall had never been entirely empty and that hence historic fabric remains (I 12) or thought to remember the opposite (I 10,15):

„I think they started from an existing structure. I don’t recall having seen this demolished. But there is no hand of historic. It is completely renovated, without a trace.” (12b)

“I think they tore down most of the building and built a new one.” (I 15a)

As in the case of Bab al-Bahrain building, the perceived young age, modest historic significance of the building and its poor state of conservation by the early 2000s, certainly played into the fact that non-architects overall attributed less significance to material authenticity than architects:

8b: “I think as continuation of Bab al-Bahrain, this has to be a powerful looking alley. And its real historical value is in giving that sort of powerful feel, even if it is a medieval powerful feel. So, if the solution is to have it all made of modern materials, then ok. [...] But I am talking only about the gate and this alley. Because, as I said, it serves a purpose. The purpose is the visitor’s first impression of Bahrain. That is the purpose it should serve at all times. [...] Once you get to this point [beginning of the historic Manama suq], then the idea of restoration should be a bit different.”

Author: “Why?”

8b: “Because you are in the networks of the suq. There is something old worth preserving the way it is, more like adding new materials. But here, the idea is power. And I think it should stay this

way. [...] That is more important than retaining materials. And again, it's 50 years old. It's not something that is so old."

Author: "60 if it was 40s."

8b: "Oh, ya, 60. By middle eastern standards it's nothing."

Along the same lines, an architect of the consultancy in charge of the initial refurbishment of Bab al-Bahrain Avenue (I 22) argued that the site and its buildings had been impaired beyond repair by continuous urban development. Pointing to the poor state of conservation of the site and its buildings, he reasoned that the Avenue's refurbishment is truthful in keeping the memory of the site while at the same time visualizing change and paying tribute to the economic dimension of the site's refurbishment and operation (I 22). Like him, two non-architects (I 8,19) argued that **a less conservative rehabilitation approach** is justifiable or even desirable in the case of this reference site.

Contrary to these perceptions, other interviewees of both groups rated material historicity of the mall building as testimony to the Government Shops and Offices very important. A Bahraini architect, who based authenticity primarily in materials and substance, concluded:

"The authenticity is gone. It is only a reminder of the boundaries of the buildings. The buildings are not authentic. The fabric is lost." (I 32)

A Bahraini layperson similarly judged the mall building as follows:

"It's a new place. [...] I know it is not original. As long as it is not original it cannot be authentic." (I 15a)

Although he had no objection to the mall building or its design, the same interviewee described why he would have preferred the original Government Shops and Offices had been preserved:

"Because it is the real history. If you burn the Mona Lisa and repaint it, it's not the Mona Lisa, even if it's the same technique, the same colours exactly, but it is not the same." (15a)

An architect argued similarly:

Author: "If this building could have been saved, the Government Shops and Offices. Do you think it would have been worth to preserve?"

16a: "Yes of course."

Author: "Why?"

16a: "I think the architecture is real. It is of its time." (I 16a)

The above quoted statements and comparable ones are indicative of the notion that non-architects attached foremost sentimental value to the historic fabric and building, if any, while most architects pointed to a scientific value. In addition, there were more misconceptions about the historicity of the mall building among the non-architects than among the architects. However, fewer architects commented on the matter and there was more background knowledge in that group.

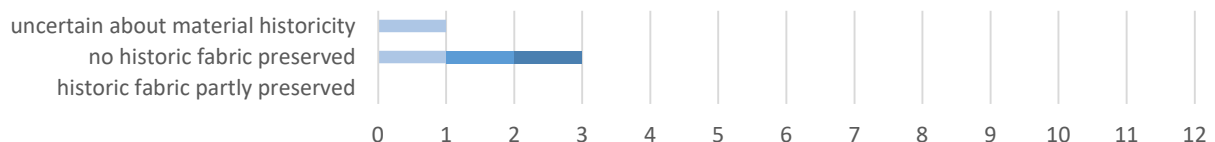


Diagram 3.3-45: Comments on material authenticity of the mall building/ Government Shops and Offices by architects

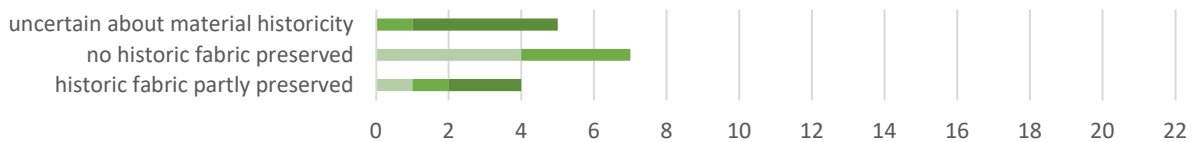


Diagram 3.3-46: **Comments on material authenticity of the mall building/ Government Shops and Offices by non-architects**

In summary, there were clearly more misconceptions about material authenticity of the individual elements throughout the site among non-architects. This was found to be the case foremost with the historicizing elements. In the case of the gate building, there was about the same level of uncertainty about material authenticity. Both groups were almost equally divided in tending towards a high or a low material authenticity. Likewise, both groups almost unanimously judged the Post Office and Police Station to be authentic in substance.

Use and function

Corresponding to the high importance foremost non-architects attached to the site with Bab al-Bahrain building as a monumental entrance gate and national landmark, use and function proofed to be important sources of information of authenticity in particularly in that group. Apart from the symbolic entrance symbolism as core function of the site and Bab al-Bahrain building, foremost non-architects commented on the continuity of traditional uses – the survival of the commercial and administrative functions at the site within the historic market area – as a crucial element of the site’s authenticity. A Bahrain-born Egyptian resident, for example argued that he anchored the site’s authenticity in the continuation of trade and state symbolism and considered that perfectly preserved:

“This is what this place meant to be, when Manama decided to be the capital of Bahrain. And, so, it retains that. [...] There is a lot of identity here, a lot of interaction and trade. The keyword is trade. And state. It’s what it’s supposed to be and it stays that way. It will never change. Ok, so we have a glass façade and a modern mall. And the windows of Bab al-Bahrain have changed and so on, but it’s still the same function.” (I 8b)

Similarly, at least three non-architects (I 8b,13b,15a) anchored **Bab al-Bahrain’s** historical authenticity in the continuity of its function. The following quotes from two interviews illustrate this:

Author: “Bab al-Bahrain? Is that authentic for you? The gate itself?”

15a: “Yes.”

Author: “Even though it is changed?”

15a: “Even though it is changed and renewed! [...] So, this building went through stages of change. But it still represents the same thing. As a building of bricks and stones it’s changed, but as a building of purpose and meaning it is still the same.” (I 15a)

“It’s the gateway to Bahrain. [...] And it always served its purpose and it continues to serve its purpose. [...] It was built to serve a certain function and it’s a state function. [...] And it’s excellent. There is nothing that can be said about it. It’s serves exactly what it was built do be.” (I 8b)

The building’s representative function was hence considered preserved if not enhanced by the latest refurbishment, as per the intentions of the design architect in charge:

“So, I think it is a little bit more institutional. It looks more of a city gate.” (I 6)

While the governmental origin and various administrative functions of the Bab al-Bahrain building were referred to by several interviewees, nobody commented on it no longer serving as seat of government. Probably few interviewees knew about this original function.

The closure of the gate for incoming cars to the market area was somewhat critically commented on by one of the non-architects (I 15) and sharply criticized by a senior local architect and town planner who saw the symbolic value of the historic gate as an entrance impaired (I 49). The pedestrianization of the Avenue, on the other hand, was exclusively positively pointed out (I 15,9,10,19).

Several interviewees, moreover, appreciated the continued use of the police premises of the **Post Office and Police Station** (I 9,13,15) and one pointed to that as a reason why the building is well-preserved (I 21).

The loss of functions related to the former port location was frequently addressed (I 4,6,10,13,17,19,33,38x2). Interviewees of both groups (I 3,20,10,12,14,15,49,19) considered the **commercial use** essential to the authenticity of the site (refer also to ‘Language, and other forms of intangible heritage’ as well as ‘Spirit and feeling’). The perceptions of the site’s authenticity in this regard were divided. While some criticized the kind of businesses and products as inadequate to the value of the site (I 12,14), or criticized the lack of commercial liveliness (I 20,10), others explicitly appreciated the kind of the kind of shops and the continuity of local brands for retaining part of the heritage (I 4,49,15,8,19,38x3). The site was, moreover, either considered not to sufficiently cater to tourists (I 12,14) or to be over-commodified for tourism (I 3,10) and hence criticized as unauthentic:

3b: “It is ridiculous actually. Because they made something out of the place which it was not – never was, never is.”

Author: “In which sense IS it not?”

3c: “Because it’s somehow unreal. It’s meant to be the traditional suq, whatever. But there is nothing which really reminds you of a traditional suq. It’s not that people go there to do their daily shopping. That is what a suq is actually for. It’s just for the tourists. That’s what I think.”

Events, both cultural and commercial, which are regularly organized to foster the site’s attractiveness and encourage visits were appreciatingly commented on by seven interviewees among both groups (I 8,9,12,14,16,17,49). They mentioned art exhibitions, concerts, the monthly “Bab market” and the series of public discussions which were held in 2012 under the name “Bab Pavilion.” While these might not be traditional uses of the site, they were perceived as adding to the site’s authenticity for increasing its liveliness (refer also to ‘Spirit and feeling’). Moreover, several statements confirmed that it matters not only how the site is used but also who uses it. Two Bahraini nationals (I 4,10) stated that the **predominance of foreign visitors and clientele and the lack of Bahraini site users** alienated them from the site. One interviewee – a Bahrain-born resident of Egyptian nationality – on the contrary, pointed to the international and to large part Asian clientele as a continuation of the site’s historic cosmopolitanism (I 8b).

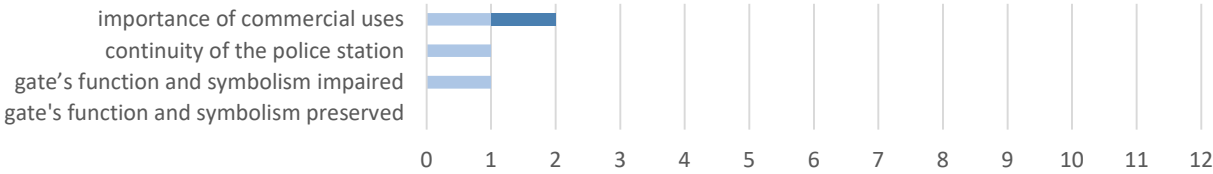


Diagram 3.3-47: **Comments on use and function of Bab al-Bahrain and Post Office and Police Station by architects**

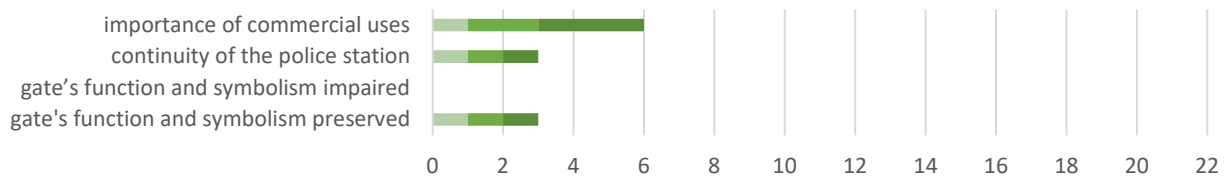


Diagram 3.3-48: **Comments on use and function of Bab al-Bahrain and Post Office and Police Station by non-architects**

In summary, non-architects among the interviewees more often commented on ‘Use and function’ than architects. Non-architects rated use and function more important for this reference site than other sources of information of authenticity, such as design and materials, which mattered more to architects. The following quote by a non-architect exemplifies this:

“To me it doesn’t matter whether it is built up from the ground, or if whatever was here was renovated, because the value here is in the function more than in the elements and materials.” (I 8b)

Traditions, techniques and management systems

Several interviewees commented on traditions that can be considered relevant to the site’s authenticity. These include issues related to ownership, use, and names which are discussed in the context of other sources of information of authenticity in this chapter, as well as building traditions. The latter will be discussed in this section.

The **structural authenticity of Bab al-Bahrain building** was not assessed by any of the interviewees beyond the judgements presented in the discussion of material authenticity above. However, particularly the archaeological windows and wooden ceilings in the pedestrian passages (annex fig. 3.3.1-47) aroused discussions about building techniques originally employed at Bab al-Bahrain building. The archaeological windows triggered astonishment and doubts about the building’s structure and construction time among some interviewees (I 4,8,14,17) as well as interest in the hybrid construction methods (I 20):

“Was it really built like that? Was it really built with these rocks? [...] I didn’t know that. I thought it was built of concrete.” (I 8b)

„But I didn’t know that they used this material. If it’s this material I would definitely say [Bab al-Bahrain was built] even before the 50s.” (I 17a)

“It is of course interesting to see that in the 1940s – the time the still standing gate building dates from – traditional construction materials were used, despite the fact that it would have already been possible to use concrete. It might have been additionally used anyway.” (I 20, translated from German by the author)

As described in chapter 3.3.2, structural details about the hybrid colonial-style buildings including Bab al-Bahrain are of art historical and building-technological interest but in fact not well researched. This is something most interviewees, particularly non-architects, were not aware of:

“But we have records of how this thing was built. But the knowledge is there, and it’s not that old, and the material isn’t that different than what we use today. Ok, it’s interesting, but there is concrete in there, at the end of the day. I don’t think there is as much value in the material, the idea of value is different. The idea of value in this thing is in the fact that it’s a monument.” (I 8b)

The archaeological windows were not only a source of information about the building’s structural characteristics but also of misconceptions. Interviewees of both groups concluded that the windows’

purpose is to illustrate that the building's exterior walls were originally devoid of surface plaster (I 10,11,17). Two interviewees (I 4,14) moreover took them as reference or testimony of predecessor buildings to Bab al-Bahrain. One tended to think that the exposed stone masonry was a purpose-built "sample" (I 4b) to remind of vernacular predecessor buildings at the site. She seemed to exclude the possibility that the governmental building of that time would have been built in the same manner:

"It's not like the old houses we have seen before. I don't know. It's a government thing. They will pay money to build, not like those built by hand. This is like to show that it was used, maybe not for Bab al-Bahrain, but for other buildings here... no?" (I 4b)

The other – an archaeologist – correctly interpreted the archaeological windows as a means "to give a little glimpse to history for people that might take notice of it" and to illustrate that the building is "architecturally genuine" at the site. However, she also entertained the idea that "the British" might have refurbished a preexisting building at the site (I 14a).

The wooden ceilings in the pedestrian passages were interpreted as testimony to the hybrid nature of Bab al-Bahrain at least by three interviewees who commented on the feature (I 13b,14a,17a). One considered it an adaptation of the vernacular building techniques. Two interviewees doubted the material authenticity of the wooden beams (I 14,17). The architect among them came to that conclusion because the beams deviate from the local vernacular type:

"In a way it looks fake a little bit. The colour and the type of wood used. I think it was danshal at the beginning." (I 17a)

One interviewee moreover noticed the traditional surface rendering of the building and commented on it as if he considered it almost contradictory to the overall design intention:

"Ok, it might look hand-plastered and not smooth, but it is a powerful monument." (I 8b)

The design architect in charge of the latest refurbishment refuted the authenticity of the traditional plastering technique with the comment:

"Actually, we cheated, because underneath we put cement." (I 6)

Overall, more misconceptions about the structural authenticity of Bab al-Bahrain surfaced in the interviews with non-architects (I 4,8,10,11,14) than with architects (I 17). The hybrid construction techniques originally employed at Bab al-Bahrain moreover aroused more enthusiasm among the architects than among the interviewees of other professional backgrounds. However, not all interviewees in that group reacted to information about the Bab al-Bahrain's structural characteristics as uninterested as this:

"Well, for me, I am not an architect. So, what matters for me is how the buildings looks." (I 10a)

The authenticity of employed building techniques was even more seldom addressed with reference to other buildings or elements of the site. The **structural authenticity of the Post Office and Police Station** was rarely addressed. However, as in the case of Bab al-Bahrain building, the ceilings of the loggias and gallery, but also other semi-vernacular vernacular features, attracted attention:

"There is an element of traditional architecture, I'm guessing: the wooden ceilings. It is not exactly the same, but it has an echo to it. The gallery. It's a beautiful feel. The square shaped windows and openings are not very Bahraini but there is this element of recess which you can see in the Bahraini buildings. But definitely this building I find very interesting." (I 12b)

A Bahraini interviewee argued that the local construction techniques and materials used for the construction of the Post Office and Police Station is what makes the building Bahraini in essence, despite its British-colonial style (I 15). The same interviewee voiced the common local opinion that the vernacular buildings are short-lived and costly to maintain:

15a: *“I do appreciate what the Ministry of Culture is doing by protecting this place. But I think it costs them a lot to maintain it. Because the building itself is weak from the foundations all the way up.”*

Author: *“What makes you think that it is weak?”*

15a: *“Because the way they built these buildings, they were not supposed to live for that long.”*

Moreover, the matter of construction techniques played some role in the case of the mall building as a **facsimile reconstruction of the Government Shops and Offices**. The director of EWAN Al-Bahrain Construction and Renovation company (I 26), which is specialized in building with vernacular construction techniques pointed to the fact that the knowledge of the local construction methods and materials is available. He considered that the reconstruction would be less problematic from an ethical point of view if it was done in traditional techniques and materials:

“Even if you are going to demolish this one... to build something near the old one. Because you want to save something! [...] We have the original method. We have everything. It is all there.” (I 26)

This notion was shared by a Bahraini architect of the local heritage authority (I 33):

33: *“If it was actually built with the same material, same method, using the same techniques, that would be deceiving as well, but you will at least be preserving the crafts that went on with building this. That would be ok, I think. Maybe the building is not old, but the method that it was built in is old. And it’s the continuation of that method that is important. It is not just the material.”*

Author: *“Even if that method has been abandoned for, let’s say, they stopped working with coral in the 50s, and now they start again. That is not a big deal?”*

33: *“They did not stop building with coral! There is a reduction. Maybe they stopped for a while... But the original builders are still there. So, the craft is still there, it is not lost, it didn’t become extinct. So why not preserve it while building new things? [...] I think one of the heritage sites in Japan,⁶³ I think, there is a temple that is constructed entirely of wood, and I don’t know how many years they completely rebuilt it.*

Author: *“I think every 20.”*

33: *“Yes, because it is listed because of the craft. Not because of the material. So, the craft is as important as the material and the stone.”*

Lastly, a Bahraini interviewee seemed to suggest that, despite an inherent orientalism, the **Bab al-Bahrain Avenue’s shading** with textile bands was somewhat authentic for referencing a local traditional practice:

“And they covered the ceiling with white mats. So, it feels like Aladdin. But the same technique is still used in Bahrain. If you go to the old markets, they cover it with white sheets.” (I 15a)

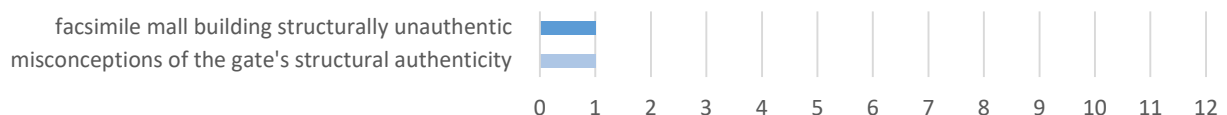


Diagram 3.3-49: **Comments on structural authenticity of Bab al-Bahrain and the mall building by architects**

⁶³ The interviewee meant the Ise Shrine in Japan which were mentioned in chapter 2.

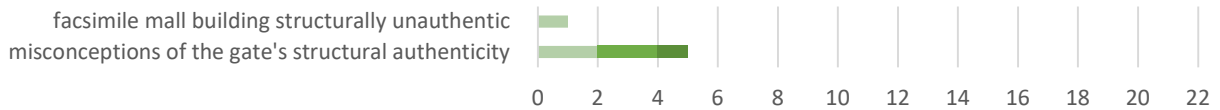


Diagram 3.3-50: **Comments on structural authenticity of Bab al-Bahrain and the mall building by architects**

In summary, building techniques and structural authenticity were addressed by interviewees of both groups but overall played a minor role in the interviews. Again, there were more misconceptions in this regard among the non-architects.

Location and setting

The interviewees were not explicitly asked to evaluate the location and setting of the site or its individual buildings. Nevertheless, these sources of information were often commented on by interviewees of both groups. This indicates their importance.

Authenticity of location was seldom questioned. Only one interviewee believed that Bab al-Bahrain was demolished at its alleged original sea-side location and rebuilt further inland in the 1960s:

"I always thought it was there [at the site of the former Customs House] and they tore it down to build the new post office. Thank you for correcting my information." (I 15a)

This misconception is most likely a result of the shared narrative that Bab al-Bahrain was originally located directly at the shore. The loss of the sea-side and port setting was often brought up particularly among non-architects (I 3,4,12,13,15,16). Locals and foreigners, said that the gate was originally located directly at the port and the first thing to be seen when approaching Bahrain from the sea (I 4,8,12,13,15). One interviewee believed the "sea stranded actually almost to the entrance" (I 13b) of Bab al-Bahrain building. Another said she had seen historic photos "on which the sea was just adjacent" to the Post Office and Police Station (I 4b). While the shoreline originally approximated the site of Bab al-Bahrain, the building in fact never stood directly on the shoreline, as it was built after the first land reclamations of the early 20th century. The importance of Bab al-Bahrain and of Bab al-Bahrain Square at their location was stressed in one interview:

"[...] even though it might be a very valuable plot right now, there should be nothing else here except Bab al-Bahrain. And there should even be an empty space in front of it." (I 8b)

One interviewee doubted the new mall building being in authentic in its location:

"I don't think there was an old mall here?" (16a)

Certainly, none of the interviewees were aware of the fact that the Government Shops and Office had been built at the site of an old import yard shed which had become the "chief shopping centre in Bahrain" in the 1930s (Government of Bahrain Administrative Report for the Years 1926-1937, 24). One interviewee pointed to the fact that the refurbished Bab al-Bahrain Avenue mimics the originally roofed traditional market lane actually located south of the site (annex fig. 3.3.1-74 and 76). Devoid of criticism, he concluded that neither the image nor the location of the traditional market which Bab al-Bahrain Avenue insinuates are authentic:

19: "Because now they have done all sorts of things to make it look authentic. But it probably isn't at all, but... [laughing]."

Author: "What do you mean, to make it look authentic?"

19: "Well, I mean they have kept most, they have kept all of the old shops. But they have just given them new shopfronts, that people might think were the original style of shopfront when it was a

covered suq. But of course, as we know, this is not where the covered suq was. And, of course, it is nothing like what they did look like. But it is nice actually!” (I 19)

Both architects (I 16,20,22,49) and non-architects (I 4,8,12,19) who were familiar with or had personally witnessed the **urban development of the site and its setting** commented on the changes:

“Many things changed. Everything changed. From now till tomorrow you will see something change.” (I 41)

Three architects problematized the uncoordinated urban development (I 22,32,49). One said she considered the authentic historic feel of the site compromised as a result.

“Yes, it is lost. Because there are many huge buildings, ugly.” (I 32)

The loss of heritage assets (I 12,19) and the challenge of preserving them in the face of development pressure and land value (I 8,49) was lamented by interviewees of both groups (I 8,22,49):

“The urban fabric of Manama Suq has been disfigured, by roads and so on.” (I 22)

“Most of Bab al-Bahrain area has been rebuilt in the last 4 decades. Many of the earlier rebuilt buildings now stand sore for the eye. But there are some, very few heritage buildings aged 90-100 years and some other colonial buildings aged 60-70 years. I hope some can be saved despite their bad condition, although the value of land here and function would be a real tough challenge to tackle.” (I 49)

No feature in the setting was in fact as often pointed to as the vernacular building in Tijjar Avenue (annex fig. 3.3.1-85 and 86), which was the only visible vernacular building in the neighbourhood at the time of the field research (I 4,8,9,10,11,17,19,12,18). Historic photographs of the area on display in the pedestrian passages of Bab al-Bahrain triggered similar nostalgic, including regretful comments (I 12,16) about the changed urban morphology and fabric:

“Look at all the buildings. All are historic buildings. What a pity, eh? It’s really sad that all that disappeared.” (I 12a)

With reference to the same photos another interviewee commented on the land reclamation practice:

“And photos from the really old site, which was facing the water one day, which is amazing. Bahrain keeps on growing. Whenever you think you are on the shore you’ll never be there for a long time. But it is interesting.” (I16a)

Few interviewees of both groups commented positively on the setting. A visiting architect described the urban configuration particularly of Bab al-Bahrain Square as “impressive” (I 20). An expatriate resident (I 11) said:

“I like to sit here. Or maybe because of the view also, the fountain, the stores next to it.” (I 11a)

The round-about of former Customs Square Garden with the fountain in Bab al-Bahrain’s direct setting was often positively pointed to by interviewees of both groups as a preserved historic element (I 4,8,11,14,17,20,30). One reason for this is certainly that it features prominently in the historic photograph of Bab al-Bahrain which the author showed during the interviews (annex fig. 3.3.1-21).

Lastly, five non-architects (I 3,10,12,14) of various backgrounds raised concerns about the site being poorly integrated in its setting:

“It seems detached.” (I 12a)

“I really wonder how many tourists come here because the rest of the area can look pretty daunting.” (I 14a)

Four of them considered the site less authentic than its setting for being artificial in architectural design and/or use. The fifth, on the contrary, found the refurbished Bab al-Bahrain Avenue to better meet

her expectations of a traditional suq than the wider market area due to the cheap plastic products which she found to proliferate in Suq al-Manama:

„I get a historic feel down here. But not in the other areas. [...] This kind of reminds me of a suq of a medina. But, again, this is such a small part. As soon as you get out in the back, to me that is like plastic alley – yes, all the surrounding streets. [...]” (14a)

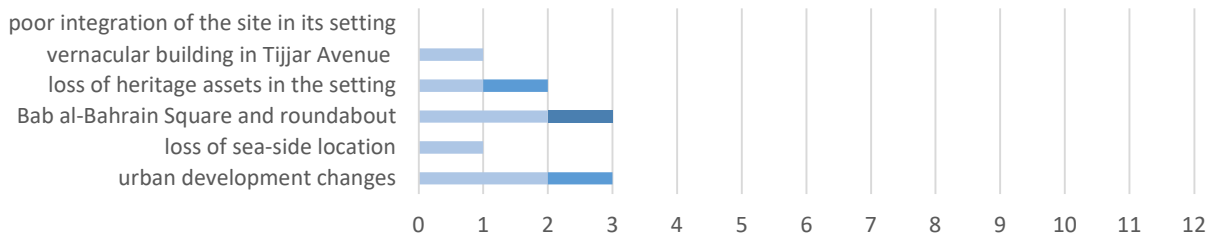


Diagram 3.3-51: Comments on setting and location by architects

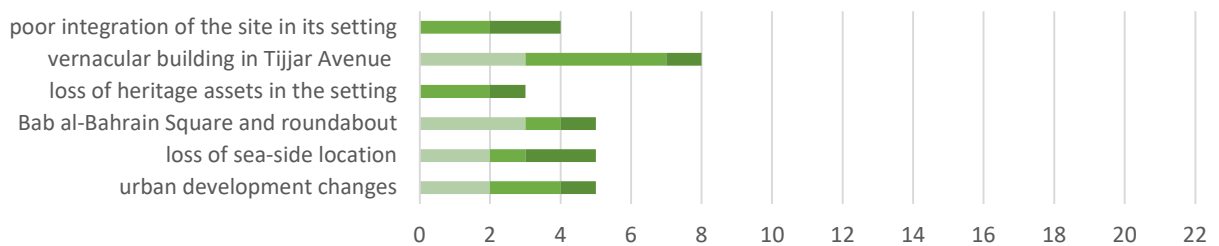


Diagram 3.3-52: Comments on the setting and location by non-architects

In summary, authenticity of location was a matter of minor concern at Bab al-Bahrain. The setting was more often commented on, particularly by non-architects. According to the number of statements this group also showed significantly more interest in the sole vernacular building in the vicinity.

Language, and other forms of intangible heritage

The author did not initiate discussions about intangible heritage assets of the site, but several non-architects commented on names of places and businesses, in addition to the continuity of uses which was discussed above.

The **name Bab al-Bahrain**, its meaning and perseverance, was commented on thrice by non-architects. One pointed to the name’s symbolism:

“[...] it serves exactly what its name is. It’s the gateway to Bahrain.” (I 8b)

A senior Bahraini, who considered the building entirely rebuilt several times, suggested that the name was essentially the only surviving characteristic of the original building:

“Only by name like this much.” (I 38)

A third highlighted that the places around Bab al-Bahrain are all named after it (I 15). None of the interviewees made reference to the colonial origin of this name nor to any of the other colonial place names, including Customs Square or Barrett Avenue, which are no longer in use. The **continuity of family names related to the local businesses**, on the contrary, was often pointed to and considered to contribute to the site’s authenticity.

The fact that many shop owners remained at the site or returned after the refurbishments, was considered to augment the local character of the site, particularly because the businesses include many traditional local brands:

„I like that they kept the same shops. [...] Those are very old shops in this exact street.” (15a)

“Like there are big Bahraini family names now, like perfume shops, and gold smiths who came from India or Indonesia or Yemen” (I 8b)

“I think that is good actually. It does preserve an element of the old.” (19)

A Bahraini shop that was repeatedly commented on (I 4,8,15), was a traditional ice cream manufacturer re-established inside the mall building:

“Here at least you have Naseef – people who were sweet-makers in Bahrain for a long time.” (I 8b)

“I appreciate they brought Naseef back, since 1920s, that is a very nice touch. [...] They closed, I think, in 95. It is a good thing the Ministry brought it back. It is a Bahraini brand. And it’s good to take care of it.” (15a)

Appreciation of traditional local brands extended to those of expatriates, such as the jewellers of Indian origin inside the new mall building as in the following quote:

“There are some old shops in here, some gold makers, Indian. They have been here for a very long time.” (I 15a)

In total, eight interviews (I 4,49,15,8,19,38x3) commented on the continuity of local brands and gastronomy and the related family names, including one long-term British resident and seven interviewees of Bahraini origin.

The group of senior tradesmen who were spontaneously interviewed at one of the old businesses at the site discussed names and locations of traditional merchants at the site:⁶⁴

“And then, Ashraf is a very known name. Old merchant, also he comes there until now. And I am here from 70 years. But this building is new. They demolished the old one, they built it new. I took same places they had. [...] For my office and my pharmacy.” (I 38-1)

The senior tradesman clearly valued the continuity of traditional businesses at the site more than the historic premises. Asked how he likes the fact that his business premise, as well as those of other merchants, had been rebuilt, he replied:

“It is better than before.” (I 38-1)

One interviewee moreover pointed to the practice of bargaining as a living heritage that survives at the site and in the wider market area of Suq al-Manama:

“Let’s put it this way: the number one reason why I come here is not because I want to keep the tradition but because things are cheaper here - many times. Number two is that it is just one of the few places, like here and Muharraq, where you enjoy the experience of shopping. You can bargain, you can tease the guys. I don’t think I can do that in a shopping mall.” (I 10a)

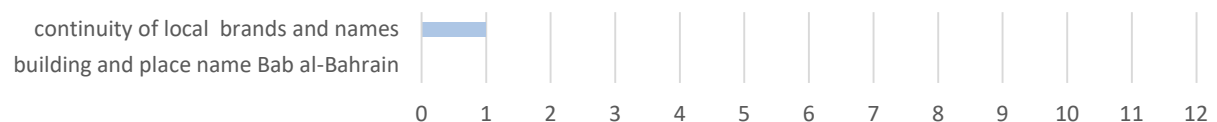


Diagram 3.3-53: Comments on intangible heritage by architects

⁶⁴ Family names mentioned were Zayani, Ajaji, Kanoo, Ashraf.

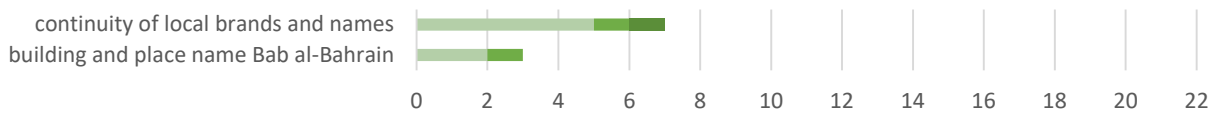


Diagram 3.3-54: **Comments on intangible heritage by non-architects**

In conclusion, the fact that almost exclusively non-architects commented on the continuity of names and businesses at the site might indicate that these aspects tend to matter more to them than to architects, who focused more on architectural aspects in the interviewees.

Spirit and feeling

The site's original sense of place in the mid-20th century is something that few of the interviewees personally witnessed and an aspect that was seldom commented on. More frequent were non-comparative comments on the site's atmosphere at the time of the field research or on how the sense of place changed with the refurbishments in the past two decades. Particularly interviewees who were taken on a tour of the site often described feelings and associations. In addition, the author incited statements about emotional attitudes to the site and its sensual characteristics that result from the urban and architectural interventions with questions such as:

What do you feel about that? Does that remind you of something? Is this typically Bahraini to you? Does this feel like a historic place/building?

The site's feature with the strongest sentimental appeal is **Bab al-Bahrain building** due to its iconic power. In the value statements about Bab al-Bahrain particularly non-architects – foreign and local – explicitly expressed **emotional ties** to the building (I 11,12,15,17,19,39). In line with this, one interviewee of that group considered Bab al-Bahrain's emotional value its main significance:

"I think it is more of sentimental reasons that people would run to it." (I 19)

Apart from biographical family anecdotes and personal memories which some interviewees associated with the building and the site, Bab al-Bahrain's emotional value was found to be linked foremost to its **symbolism as entrance building to the country, the town and the market**. Clearly, the building in its current state evokes extraordinarily strong associations of a traditional town gate. An interviewee, who was rather critical of the new design for aesthetic reasons, conceded:

"But it does look like a traditional gate to an old part of the city, the suq." (14a)

While one local interviewee (I 15) contemplated whether the gate might have had a closing mechanism, another said she remembered such in form of a wooden gate:

"Well, I think there was a big wooden gate inside this arc. I am not sure. But that is what I remember." (I 4b)

Both architects and non-architects described Bab al-Bahrain's **monumental symbolism** as almost awe-inspiring and often rooted this in the historical authenticity of its function. Comparisons were drawn to famous national entrance symbols such as the Statue of Liberty and the Gate of India but also to Bahrain's new symbolic financial district north of the site:

"Bab al Bahrain, the gate building, is very symbolic for an entrance from the sea to the city, [...]." (I 49)

"Besides it is very old, but it was the main gate of Bahrain. So, it is something very important. Like much more important than the Financial Harbour, which is supposed to be the gate to Bahrain [...]." (17a)

“Some landmarks being built in the Gulf are just for looks and for tourism. This is not. [...] It is a real gate.” (I 15a)

“It is a powerful monument and it has to stay that way.” (I 8)

The latest refurbishment aimed at increasing the monumental symbolism (I 6). According to the statements of most interviewees, this was achieved. Only one architect considered the entrance symbolism compromised due to the closure of the gate for incoming cars:

“[...] the spirit of the gate wasn't kept. When you go there, you will see no-entry-signs which are not up to the value and spirit of the entrance.” (I 49)

As described above, the majority considered the refurbished building more attractive (I 10,11,33,15), “welcoming” (I 12b), grander (I 13b), “more striking” (I 13b) and “more imposing” (I 19) as well as more colonial (I 13,19,20,23). One interviewee, who associated the new design with Italian fascist architecture, even saw “architectural brilliance” in the way the new design maintained and enhanced the building’s function as a monumental gate (I 8b). No interviewee, except the foreign visitor who had the same association and problematised the imperialist gesture (I 20), brought up the political message this might imply.

Some interviewees who had the respective background knowledge commented on the British colonial origins of the buildings. But one interviewee explicitly said that the refurbished gate’s architecture did not trigger any associations of the British colonial power:

“No, I wouldn't come to Bahrain for the first time, see this building and think: ‘Oh, the British were here’.” (I 13b)

Many interviewees, however, associated **state symbolism** with Bab al-Bahrain (I 4,9,10,11,15) which was moreover found to extend to the entire site:

“It reminds me of a mansion, a big castle. It reminds me of the kingdom. The style, the design. Kingdom Bahrain.” (I 9c)

“This whole place is about the identity of the country.” (I 8b)

The code of arms and the national flag on its roof (annex fig. 3.3.1-44) were pointed to by several non-architects (I 10,11,15) as important features which increase the building’s state symbolism. A local interviewee furthermore interpreted the golden-painted code of arms as a reference to Bahrain’s renown jewellery market in Suq al-Manama.

“So, it is the gate for the Gold Suq.” (I 4b)

The architect who designed and commissioned the new version of the code of arms criticized that it was eventually painted golden. In a strive for material authenticity that would to give the new detail more authority, he originally had the crest fabricated in bronze. He lamented that the paint made it look “like plastic” and considered it to impair its authenticity (I 6). Referring to a photo of the crest taken before it was painted, he stated:

“It's more authentic. Even though it is a fake.” (I 6)

In addition to the code of arms and the flag, several interviewees – not only Bahrainis – found the historicizing architectural design to give the building a somewhat **traditional Bahraini character**. This seemed to foster their appreciation of it (I 4,11,15,17).

Moreover, the fact that the lost port and sea-side location featured dominantly in the statements particularly among non-architects, indicates that Bab al-Bahrain is an emotionally powerful **memory marker of the former shoreline**. The extensive land reclamation practice is a matter of great public interest in Bahrain and was also the theme of its national contribution to the 12th Venice Biennale in

2012 (Kingdom of Bahrain 2010b). Asked about her personal relation to the site, a young Bahraini architect said, that especially in winter, when the wind blows, she imagines the sea close-by (I 32). Such nostalgic associations were found to be reinforced with the display of historic photographs at the site.

On the other hand, many interviewees of both pointed to a certain artificiality of Bab al-Bahrain building (I 11,16,21,23,30,32,33). Despite the strength of Bab al-Bahrain's symbolism, interviewees of both groups hence made comments that indicate a **lack of aura** (I 3,4,10,12,16,17). While some interviewees considered the building too young to even be considered a historic monument (refer to 3.5.1.4), the building's refurbishment seems to be one reason for the lack of historical appeal:

"I feel it is a new building. If you want my impression. I was trying to relate it to what I know about the old architecture. But for me, I can see it is a new one. I can feel this." (16a)

Another interviewee plainly concluded about the refurbished gate building:

"It doesn't have a feel." (I 12b)

Likewise, an architect who considered Bab al-Bahrain historic for being "part of the history", said it does not feel so (I 17a) and tried to explain the issue as follows:

Author: "So why does it not feel historic then?"

17a: "I don't know. When you compare it to some historical place, like Arad Fort, or Bahrain Fort. You feel like it is different. People do not pay attention to this building. Maybe because of the traffic, because of cars moving in the building. You don't feel the importance of it. You don't see some protected walls. Anyone can go inside. And specially when there are some special occasions, you see people having food in there dropping whatever waste they have."

This statement suggests that the lack of an historical aura also has to do with the way Bab al-Bahrain building is presented and interpreted.

The notion of a lack of emotive and historical appeal extended to Bab al-Bahrain Avenue and the mall building. Most interviewees described them as being traditional in style but not genuinely historic (I 4,11,12,17,18,20) and/or commented on their artificiality (I 3,10,12,13,14,16,17,21,33,23,32,20):

"Even inside in the suq [Bab al-Bahrain Avenue] it was not like that. But they rebuilt again to become like heritage look. Since I came here, they changed how many times the picture of this site? They preserve it for being heritage look. If you come here from Bab al-Bahrain you feel: 'Wow, this is Bahrain heritage area'. But they already renovated it." (I 11a)

Several interviewees sharply criticized **the lack of emotive and/or historical appeal of the refurbished Bab al-Bahrain Avenue and/ or the mall building** as:

"I cannot feel the history of the place. It is lost." (I 17a)

"It [the mall building] doesn't talk to me at all." (I 12b)

„Not a single nostalgic feeling there [in the mall's atrium].“ (I 10a)

Some interviewees explicitly pointed to the refurbishments as the reason for the site's lack of an aura. This is exemplified by the following answer of a long-term resident, whom the author asked if he considered the site historic:

12a: "Well now? Now it doesn't seem to me historic."

Author: "Before it was?"

12a: "Before it used to be an old place to visit, it had its own history, ya."

Author: "Why is it that it is not historic anymore?"

12a: "There is something invading from the modern refurbishment. That is pretty visible. [...] The whole place is not impressive. I wouldn't say ugly, but definitely it doesn't touch."

The lack of genuine historicity, however, seemed to affect the emotional attitudes towards the site to very different degrees and it was by no means unanimously criticized. While most architects were somehow put off by the site, most non-architects appreciated it:

„I really enjoy coming into this part. Especially every month there is the Bab al-Bahrain, they have the music with that. This kind of reminds me of a suq of a medina.” (I 14a)

“What we have now is more unique. Now everything is modern, more comfortable for shopping. I like this.” (I 11a)

“Aside from the Bab [al-Bahrain] I don’t feel this is historic, but I really like it, because it applies the same concept. It still has the touch of the past but in a modern touch – like air-conditioning.” (I 15a)

„When I came here the first time, I didn’t exactly think: ‘Oh my god, this is a historic area.’ But then it did give me an idea of what a suq could look like. It was a little bit perhaps too clean and tidy but that’s ok.” (I 13b)

The **atmosphere in Bab al-Bahrain Avenue** at the time of the field research was usually described as more orderly, less lively or artificial by those who knew the site from the past and who drew comparisons to its state prior to the interventions:

“For me, as much as I remember, I feel that the place was in a mess. I can’t remember exactly architectural features. But because it was really old. You know like any other old market that you feel it is so busy and there is no order. But what I think what they tried to do, is to put it a bit into order.” (I 16a)

“It’s Friday, so most shops are closed, that doesn’t help. But it has this artificial aesthetic to me. It looks like a mall. It’s very pretty. Like cookie-cutting. There isn’t a personal feel. [...] Again, they made it more comfy for shoppers with new shops... [...] I think this makes it a more pleasant walk, but I believe it lost its earlier feel to it. [...] It used to be kind of real souq like in Muharraq, where you have these shops open etc. Now, it became more formal, I would say.” (12a)

In addition to the sensual and atmospheric qualities that arise from aesthetics, the improved climatic conditions were repeatedly pointed to as a factor of well-being in the case of the shaded Avenue and the air-conditioned mall. The sole comments on lighting conditions referred to the natural lighting of the mall’s atrium. Most interviews were conducted at daylight so that the effect of artificial lighting was never directly addressed. The lamps suspended from the Avenue’s textile shading were hence only pointed to as decorative feature. Finally, there was one comment on improved olfactory characteristics of the site, by an interviewee who went back to his memories of the 1970s, when the site was still characterized by the buzzing adjacent port and smelt of “rotting fish” (I 19).

Several non-architects of various cultural backgrounds (I 8,11,15,14) commented positively on **the site’s orientalism** – such as the fact that “it feels like Aladdin” (I 15a) or like an Arab medieval lane (I 8) – or specifically to orientalist design of the suspended lamps (I 15,11). Contrarily, two architects – one of western, one of eastern origin – expressed rather explicit criticism of the inherent orientalism of the site’s design and presentation. The first, a German, problematized the “pseudo-oriental historicism” for being ahistorical and misleading (I 20). The second, an Egyptian, in addition, criticized Bab al-Bahrain Avenue in its state in 2014 as an example of western orientalism and of its global impact.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Refer to Edward Said, 1978, who argues that the western romanticized view of Arab Culture is being internalized and hence reproduced by Arabs.

16a: *“Thousand night and one night! That’s a fantasy that never existed. Usually in the movies, specially the European or American movies, they are talking about the area – Egypt, or the middle east – the Gulf area, they usually figure out that it should look like that. I think so.”*

Author: *“But it is a Bahraini firm that did this.”*

16a: *“Yes, I know. But, you know, now it is difficult to say who did this and who did that. We have this global influence.”*

A western archaeologist (I 14) expressed contradictory judgements about the site’s orientalism and spirit of place. On the one hand, she appreciated, that the site gives her a stronger “historic feel” of an Arabic old town than the neighbouring un-refurbished market areas. On the other hand, she somewhat critically pointed to the facadism in Bab al-Bahrain Avenue as a superficial means of nation-branding, which she identified as a typical phenomenon in the Gulf region:

“Well, to me, it kind of sums up what I have seen in 10 months. Maybe not here as much. I just went to a conference in the Emirates. You know, it is like shopping malls and pretty buildings that are disguising the desert. Like this whole place [the Gulf region] is kind of a façade. It is just amazing to me. [...] To me it tells a story where they came from and how they want to be projected to the world. [...] But underneath it all... All of a sudden you are in shanty town.” (I 14a)

The following comparison of the mall building to the historic vernacular building in its vicinity (annex fig. 3.3.1-85 and 86) illustrates the importance of **traces of use and time** as a communicative and emotive factor in architecture:

[...] it [the mall building] gives you the feeling of tradition... heritage... but if it looks old it doesn’t mean that it is old. And, also, the fact that it is clean and all white, I mean, the one behind it, you see, is old. The colour makes a big difference, the cracks, all the wearing out of the building gives it... while here you can see no single crack in the building. So, the [mall] building gives me that feeling [of being new].” (I 10a)

Socio-economic aspects, such as the kind of shops and sales products were pointed out as important to the site’s atmosphere, although opinions about them differed. While at least two interviewees considered the site over-commodified for tourists (I 3,10) at least two others considered the traditional atmosphere would improve with more tourist-friendly products:

“When I think of going to a Suq or a Medina, I think of maybe a more traditional... I mean it is traditional, but most of the stuff here is made in China – plastic.” (I 14a)

“You need souvenir shops, coffee shops, carpets, silver, gold. But Bahraini made, or even Indian or Persian, but something from the place. Something that allows tourists and visitors to experience what it is like to be in a suq.” (I 12b)

At least one interviewee found the discrepancy between the posh architectural makeup of the Avenue and the low-quality sales items to take away from the site’s atmospheric authenticity:

“With the doors here, it looks commercial in a way - like pretty. For selling Chinese watches... It doesn’t give the feel of the suq.” (I 12a)

Many interviewees pointed to the **Bahraini character** of the site, either for its historicizing design or the continuity of local businesses (I 4,8,10,11,15,16,46). Both aspects seemed to foster emotional ties and add to the atmospheric authenticity of the site in the eyes of the non-architects among them:

15a: *“If you compare it to any other mall, it is the most Bahraini mall.”*

Author: *“What is the Bahraini thing in it?”*

15a: *“I know they tried to make it still look like a market on the outside. But I like the doors, they are very traditional Bahraini. Even the colours. The merlons are Bahraini. The fence of the balconies... And if you notice the shops, none of them are international franchises. Most of them are Bahraini. It starts with Nassif the ice-cream shop, Safron, which is a new Bahraini restaurant*

selling authentic Bahraini food. The ministry of social development shop, they sell what Bahraini families make. [...] Everything here is made by Bahraini families. [...] No offence to any other shop, but you don't see Zarah, or Massimo Dutti, which do not represent anything of this area. That is why I like this place."

At least one Bahraini explicitly said she attached a feeling of home with the site (I 46). But again, perceptions thereof differed:

Author: "Is it Bahraini to you?"

12a: "Artificial Bahraini. Wanna-be Bahraini."

Moreover, the **level of liveliness** but also the type of clientele, the people who use the site, were repeatedly addressed as significant for the site's appeal. At least three interviewees (I 10,12,20) perceived a lack of liveliness. Others pointed to the positive effect when public events are organized at the site (I 8,9,12,14,16,17,49):

„I would have liked to see more liveliness in the Avenue." (I 20)

"It is the extension of Bab al-Bahrain. This is where you would like to have a very touristic place for people to gather." (I 12b)

A Bahraini interviewee (I 10) considered the strong presence of migrant labourers to take away from the Bahraini character of the site:

"All the Bahrainis, all the locals are not doing shopping here anymore. It's mostly tourists who come here and the majority of the real frequent shoppers are the labour expats. I don't like that. If somebody foreign comes to my country and he wants to see some landmarks and he doesn't see locals, I don't think that is a good image." (I 10a)

Another Bahraini (I 4) even described a state of alienation due to the foreign, non-Bahraini clientele:

"There are shops, maybe, but [...] now it's occupied by Indians, it's not ours anymore." (I 4b)

Contrarily, at least two interviewees (I 8,15) pointed to the **site's cosmopolitanism** as a factor of authenticity. A Bahrain-born Egyptian resident, appreciatingly pointed to the international and to large part Asian traders and clientele as a continuation of the site's historic cosmopolitanism:

"This is an Asian market, this part of Manama always had trade with Asians and so on." (I 8b)

The same interviewee (I 8) praised the site as a **socially integrative and democratic space** due to its public use. He pointed out that particularly during cultural events, the site assumes the role of a public space where people of all social and ethnic backgrounds of Bahrain's population, including the usually discriminated migrant workers, gather and meet:

"For example, when the Bab Market started and for the first time ever there was a street musician playing modern guitar music, there were like thousands of Asian labourers standing in front of it – and this is here, in this alleyway – and looking at something these people have never seen in their life. These people are used to working 12 hours a day. Going home, the height of their moment is maybe seeing a movie with their friends once a week. – The probably condition. There is no excuse for that. – But they saw something beautiful and they really liked it. They interacted with it. They had never seen something like it before. And I think this is the perfect setting to do something like that. You know, the state is changing, this is something very unique to Bahrain, that the social classes are diminishing a little bit, and everyone has a right to beauty and art and things like that. This happened here. Some of the artists were like: 'Wow, we didn't mean this as our audience here.' But you made lot's of people very happy! [...] That was an excellent use of a space like this!" (I 8b)

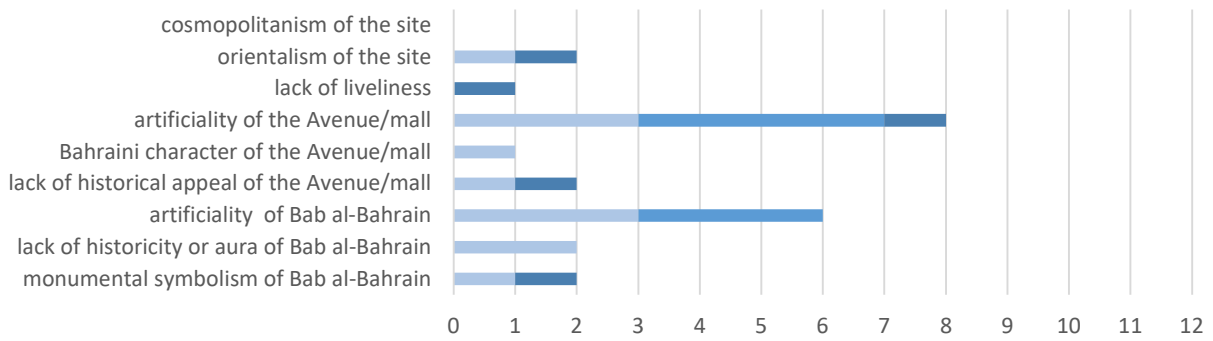


Diagram 3.3-55: Comments on spirit of place by architects

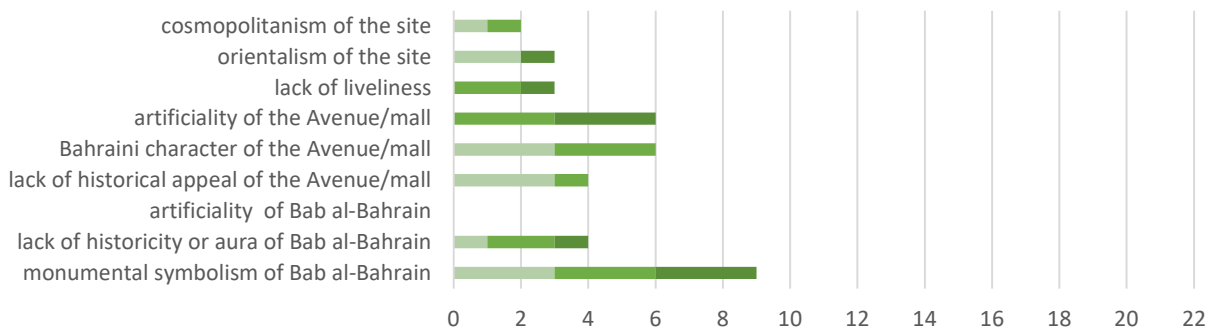


Diagram 3.3-56: Comments on sense of place by non-architects

In summary, spirit and feeling seldom directly related to historical authenticity but the spirit of place was often commented on in a non-comparative way. Perceptions thereof were found to differ greatly among the interviewees regardless of their cultural background. The perceived artificiality of the site ruined its atmosphere for many architects. Non-architects, who tended to be more lenient about this, on the contrary often appreciated the symbolic power of the site and its references to the local culture which included socio-economic aspects.

Other internal and external factors

Comments by several interviewees of both groups point to the importance of the way in which the site is presented and interpreted, so that messages and meanings are understood. Interpretation and presentation, as well as research on which both should be based, were hence identified as important factors of authenticity for this reference site.

Several statements pointed to the **importance of background knowledge** as a prerequisite for the understanding and appreciation of the site and its buildings, particularly with regard to historic and scientific values. One interviewee for example admitted she had too little background knowledge to appreciate the site's buildings as historic testimony to the colonial era (I 3). The following discussion about the mall building exemplifies this:

Author: "You said that you couldn't figure out at all what is old, if anything, in that building. How do you feel about that fact?"

3b: "Mhm, I'm ok with it, I guess. I mean it would be nice to know more about the building if the building was really important. But if the building was not of major importance..."

Author: "What makes a building important?"

3b: "It's function, or the story behind it. The people who used to occupy it. A lot of things."

Author: "Could the architecture be important?"

3b: "The architecture as such?"

Author: "Yes."

3b: "Could be. If the architecture tells a story."

Author: "Now, I think, that that building used to tell the story of the first-time use of modern materials – first time use of concrete together with coral stone – and of the shift from vernacular..."

3b: "Well then you need interpretation, because a normal, ordinary person would never realize that."

One interviewee pointed to a generally low knowledge level about the site among the local public and linked this to a lack of interest:

"Very few people go there. Not many people know the importance of this place." (I 17a)

The few **interpretation facilities** the site provides were often positively pointed out. Several interviewees commented on or explicitly appreciated the historic photographs (I 12,16,15,20) and the archaeological windows (I 8,9,10,11,15,17) in the pedestrian passages of Bab al-Bahrain (annex fig. 3.3.1-47). Particularly in the context of the archaeological windows, the need for more interpretation facilities was repeatedly highlighted. One interviewee more generally lamented the lack of commemoration of Sir Charles Belgrave's influence on the country (I 19). A Bahraini non-architect said he would appreciate "a picture gallery of how it was before and how they changed it, or a description of the place before" (I 10a):

"There is much information that you told me today that I was not aware of. And a passer-by would not even be bothered to go and investigate. Probably it is freely available to the public this information, but it would be nice to have that somewhere in Bab al-Bahrain." (I 10a)

Reactions and nostalgic comments (I 16,15,20,33,12) on the **historic photographs on display** in the pedestrian-passages, which no textual information accompanies, suggest that the images certainly convey an idea about the general nature of the former urban morphology. They also remind by-passers of the former sea-shore location. While they do not seem to be a source of more specific information, they clearly add to the somewhat traditional atmosphere at the site.

The same applies, to the **archaeological windows**. One interviewee pointed to them as one of the features that make the building "more Bahraini" (I 4b). Statements by eight interviewees of both groups (I 4,8,9,10,12,16,18,33) – including three who were familiar with this means of presentation from a previous interview at the other reference site – made it clear that they generally understood its didactic purpose:

"I note that they kept a window here to see that this is an old structure." (16a)

However, as described above, the archaeological windows were not always interpreted as evidence of the original construction method, material authenticity and historicity of the building. Seven interviewees of different professional and cultural backgrounds (I 4,10,11,13,14,15,17) were not able to make sense of the archaeological windows or misinterpreted them at least partially. Asked what their purpose might be, one interviewee for example replied:

13b: "I have no idea. To show what it looks like without the plaster?"

Author: "Yes, to show the construction material."

13b: "I don't think that works. Because if I come here and I see it, it is not clear to me why it is there. I would think: 'Oh, there used to be door here or a window and then they closed it.' That would be my first association."

Several interviewees hence challenged the effectiveness of the archaeological windows as a didactic means and pointed to the need for additional information (I 15,17,20):

“They are not convincing. I am not sure they are even necessary. They are arranged side-by-side with those wall niches, in which historic photographs are on display, which nicely show how the site looked in the past. In conjunction with those, the additional layer of material samples and windows to the past is rather irritating. Particularly since no information accompanies them. So, you don’t know what it is about.” (I 20, translated from German by the author)

The archaeological windows at Bab al-Bahrain were repeatedly interpreted as a design feature and as such sometimes met with indifference:

Author: “Why do you think that ‘window’ is there?”

12b: “Just to show. It is an architectural finishing more than anything else.”

Author: “What do you think about it?”

12b: “No opinion. It’s ok.”

One interviewee expressed his appreciation after being told that the feature is not merely decorative:

“Oh, now I appreciate it way more! It has a meaning to it. But it has nothing written to it that this is the original. I thought it was only a piece of decoration. I did not know it is the real stones.” (I 15a)

One of the interviewees, who passed the archaeological window without noticing them, pointed to the need to bring the by-passer’s attention to them (I 3). However, even though the archaeological windows were not always correctly interpreted they were effective in triggering interest in Bab al-Bahrain’s constructional characteristics as discussed above. Clearly, additional information could augment their educational benefit. There were more misconceptions about the archaeological windows among the non-architects. That group also showed more interest in the feature, while architects were paid more attention to the displayed historic photographs.

Prerequisite for the provision of interpretation is the availability of background information which relies on **scientific research**. In this context it has to be mentioned again that one of the interviewed architects explicitly criticized the lack of studies prior to and during the latest refurbishment of Bab al-Bahrain building (I 32). Another local architect and urban planner moreover pointed to the general **need for awareness-raising and public participation in heritage conservation**. To this end he wished to see “creative ideas” and installations in the public realm also at the site (I 49).

Moreover, cultural and commercial **events** which interviewees of both groups appreciatively commented on (I 8,9,12,14,16,17,49) are mentioned here once more as part of the site’s presentation. Lastly, various **biographical connections** to the site were commented on. Personal memories can certainly foster the appreciation and play into the factor of spirit and feeling. But as long as they are incidental and limited to individual people, they are not to be considered sources of information of authenticity of a wider scope.

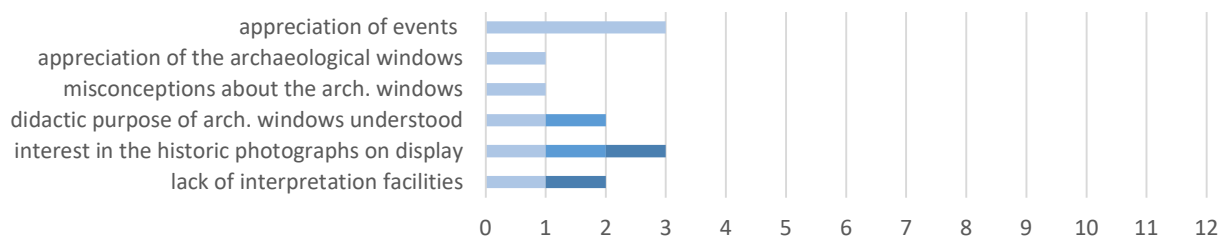


Diagram 3.3-57: Comments on interpretation facilities by architects

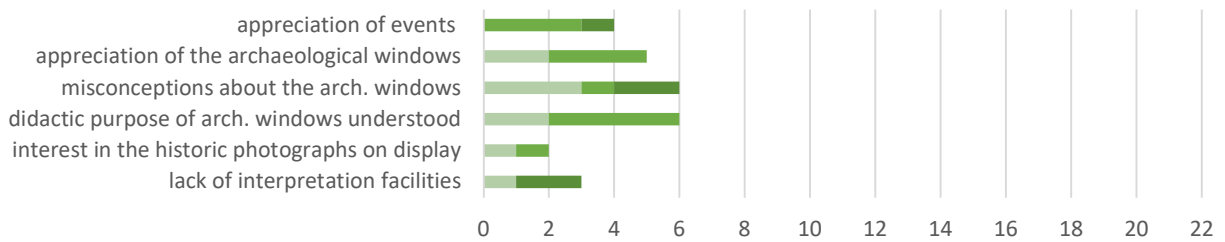


Diagram 3.3-58: **Comments on interpretation facilities by non-architects**

In summary, interpretation was found to be a matter of high concern to interviewees of both groups. The few provided interpretation facilities were appreciated in principle but found to be little effective in conveying background information. Both architects and non-architects pointed to the need for additional on-site interpretation as a basis for appreciating and understanding the site and for judging its authenticity. No other internal or external factors of authenticity than the ones described in this chapter were identified for this site during the interviews.

3.3.4.7 Overall authenticity judgements

This subchapter summarizes the main findings on how the interviewees perceived and rated the site's overall authenticity. It has to be mentioned that not all interviewees made comments that allow to conclude if they rated the site's authenticity or that of individual building on a low or high level. Of those who did, not all used the term authentic (refer to table 3.3.4 – 7 in the annex).

For various reasons, the majority of the interviewees (I 3,11,12,13,19,16,17,20,21,23,32,33) rated the site's authenticity rather low. While the group of non-architects was divided in this regard, architects almost unanimously had fundamental authenticity concerns. These were the main reason why most architects disapproved of the site's refurbishment. Contrary to that, most interviewees of the other professional backgrounds appreciated the refurbished site even if they did not consider it authentic. This correlates with the higher value attributed to the site as a historic document among the architects. With few exceptions, architects hence tended to be more critical about changes in design and material than non-architects. Architects were usually also more attentive to such changes.

Interviewees of both groups pointed to a lack of historical appeal and high level of artificiality. This was a matter of severe critique mostly to architects, who considered the historic testimony impaired and history falsified. Among the interviewees of other professional backgrounds such concerns were seldom shared. Rather, the interventions at the site were perceived as a legitimate, alternative means of preserving local heritage, culture and tradition in the face a regrettable loss of cultural heritage throughout Bahrain – despite a certain artificiality. Mostly non-architects valued the refurbishments for contributing to the continuity of building culture as well as of commercial and public uses, commercial brands and place names. It was also argued, in that group of interviewees, that the site's refurbishment, as a means of nation-branding, is truthful to the historical circumstances that originally shaped it and to the character of the country.

Hence, three non-architects (I 8,39,46) more or less explicitly expressed the opinion that the site is overall authentic. These interviewees found the site and its buildings insignificantly changed or their identity preserved despite the changes. This correlates with a stronger concern for values related to use and function, including the site's symbolism and commercial and social dimensions among this group.

Four interviewees (I 9,10,14,22) considered the site neither particularly authentic nor unauthentic, or expressed contradictory judgements.

The young age and the modern type of heritage as well as the compromised state of conservation that resulted from continuous urban development, seemed to be a reason, why predominantly non-architects attested the site and its buildings rather little authenticity and historical value. Buildings of older age and construction techniques were on the contrary often attributed historical value in that group. One evidence thereof is that almost all non-architects who were taken on a tour at the site appreciatingly pointed to the unrestored vernacular building in the vicinity (annex fig. 3.3.1-85 and 86). Due to this perception of the site several interviewees considered it should not be assessed against the same conservation ethics as older and more canonical heritage sites. Three interviewees (I 8,19,22) explicitly expressed this opinion and it seemed to be shared by others.

The findings are very similar in the case of Bab al-Bahrain building, which was preponderantly considered not very authentic, particularly among architects (I 3,11,12,19,6,16,21,23,30,33,49). As in the case of the overall site, architects were by far more critical of the refurbishment than non-architects. Only one architect attributed such significance to materials and substance that she seemed to considered the building rather authentic for its preserved historic fabric. While material and structural authenticity was a matter of concern primarily to architects, most of them rated authenticity in form and design at least equally important. For most non-architects, in turn, the preservation of the building’s representative symbolism was paramount. Several interviewees of that group hence considered the building little changed or well preserved in its identity despite all modifications (I 15,17,32,39,8,9).

There was hence a prevalent divide between the two groups in the way they assessed Bab al-Bahrain building and Bab al-Bahrain Avenue. Judgements about the Post Office and Police Station were more aligned. Regardless of their professional background, most interviewees rated the various factors of authenticity rather high for the site’s least changed building. The same is true, in the reverse sense, for the mall building and the screen façade along the opposite side of Bab al-Bahrain Avenue. They were generally considered new and hence devoid of historical authenticity. However, their historicizing architecture was the ground for refusal among architects while it was appreciated by most non-architects for facilitating some sort of cultural continuity.

Moreover, interviewees of both groups pointed to the **lack of interpretation facilities** at the site and to the fact that these would be the basis for better-founded value and authenticity judgements as well as for raising appreciation of the site and its heritage.

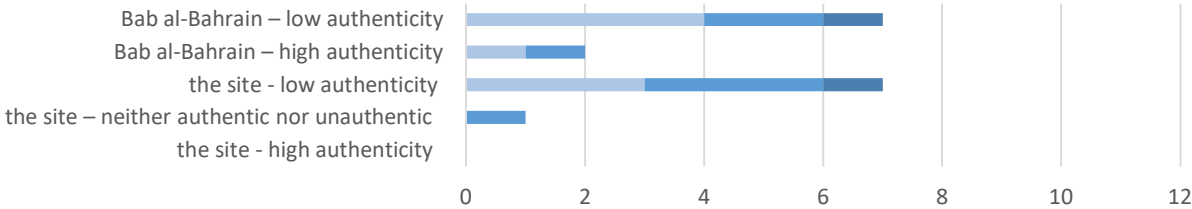


Diagram 3.3-59: Overall authenticity judgements about the site by architects

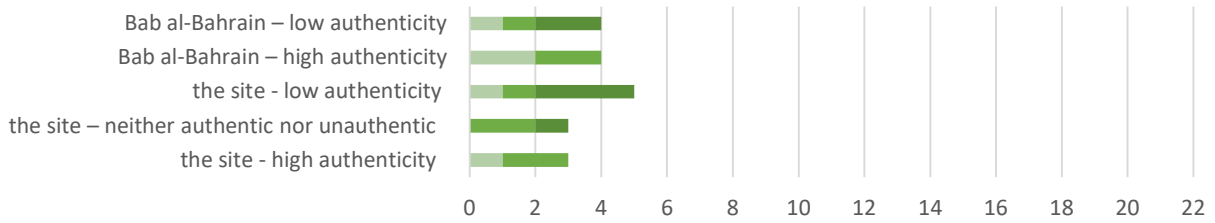


Diagram 3.3-60: **Overall authenticity judgements about the site by non-architects**

In summary, fundamental disparities were identified in the way architects and non-architects perceived and evaluated the several factors of authenticity at this reference site. Of course, there were some interviewees who disclosed untypical opinions within their respective group. This is expected given the inhomogeneity of the groups. With regard to cultural backgrounds, no clear patterns were identified. An exception is that visitors and recent residents generally possessed less detailed knowledge about the site, if any. Comments by local interviewees, in turn, often disclosed greater familiarity and stronger emotional ties to the site and its Bahrain-specific characteristics.

3.4 REFERENCE SITE TWO: THE VERNACULAR SIYADI SHOPS IN SUQ AL-QAISARIYA

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3.4.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE SIYADI SHOPS AND THEIR CONSTRUCTION HISTORY

This subchapter introduces the second of the two main reference sites and likewise focuses on its development up to the years 2014/2015. All photos and plans depicted in this subchapter, as well as all additional ones referenced, are included in Annex 3.4.1 (annex fig. 3.4.1-1 to 89).

3.4.1.1 Location and scope of the reference site

The second reference site is embedded in the dense fabric of the historic market and former harbour of Bahrain's second largest town Muharraq, which is located on a separate island to the east of the mainland. Urban development since the second half of the 20th century has turned the town's historic quarters, including the market, into somewhat neglected and deteriorating urban enclaves – a trend which governmental and non-governmental rehabilitation initiatives are trying to reverse. Among the remains of the market's historic fabric are the Siyadi Shops, which serve this study as reference site. They are two blocks of vernacular shop units of the late 19th and early 20th centuries which are separated by a narrow residential lane and located between Bu Maher Avenue to the east and Tujjar Avenue to the west (fig. 3.4-1). The shops form part of the monument-protected market section called Suq al-Qaisariya. Because of their association with the grand pearl merchant family Siyadi they are part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site Pearlina, Testimony of an Island Economy, which was introduced in chapter 3.2. Members of this family still own most of the shop units. Other parts of the reference site are in private or governmental ownership or belong to a pious endowment (Arabic: *wagf*). Of main interest to the field research were the previously abandoned and dilapidated shop units and spaces, which were restored, partially adapted and complemented with new commercial structures and a public outdoor space in the course of governmental rehabilitation works from the end of 2010 to early 2012. Since their rehabilitation and adaptation, they have been hosting retail and gastronomy outlets.

Like in the case of the Central Manama, the historic site is located within a rather significantly changed setting (compare annex fig. 3.4.1-2 to 4 and 7). The formerly adjacent harbour shifted away with the seashore. With an area of approximately 500 m² the reference site in Muharraq is considerably smaller than the one in Manama. Nevertheless, the site equally displays an array of different types of architectural interventions ranging from conservative restorations to reconstructions, adaptations and contemporary additions. Conservative restoration works on its small-scale commercial vernacular architecture were pioneering in Bahrain at the time. Overall, the site represents a different stance of heritage conservation than the first reference site.

The western block consists of a cluster of back-to-back shop units partly with mezzanine storages and a central storage space at ground floor as well as residential premises at first floor (fig. 3.4-7, 8, 17, 18). The typical vernacular, white-washed commercial building remained in comparatively stable physical condition and in commercial use by Siyadi family at the time of the inquiry in 2014/15 (Archives of BACA, Battis 2012). It had not been subjected to any significant conservation works and was hence of minor interest during the interviews. Only two simpler, previously abandoned and decayed one-storey shop units to the rear had been conservatively restored (fig. 3.4-8, 19, 20 and annex fig. 3.4.1-80 to 82). Together with the eastern block across the lane, these constitute the core of the reference site and main subject of discussion during the field research.



Fig. 3.4-1: **Site map** (annex fig. 3.4.1-1). Drawing: Eva Battis

The eastern block consists of five vernacular one-storey shop units along a narrow, sloped alley connecting Bu Maher Avenue and Tujjar Avenue (fig. 3.4-3, 9 and 10, 21 to 22 and annex fig. 3.4.1-67 to 70). A sixth formerly ruined unit to the rear was adapted to host a café (fig. 3.4-10 to 12, 14, 16, 23, 24, 25, 26 and annex 3.4.1-83 to 85). They constitute the remains of a larger complex of shops and storerooms, of which the southern ones are not preserved. On the temporarily barren land, the former block's contours were partly reconstructed to contain an open outdoor space where some archaeological finds are displayed. To the south, the eastern block moreover features a newly added one-storey building volume with sanitary facilities and two additional shop units (fig. 3.4-27 and 28 and annex fig. 3.4.1-75 to 77). Most of the shop units and the café were operational at the time of the field research.

The restoration and adaption of the eastern Siyadi Shops between 2010 and 2012 served as a pilot project including capacity building for further urban rehabilitation works throughout Suq al-Qaisariya and wider Muharraq. Some of those works were ongoing at the time of the field research, others had not yet started. The interviews focused on the restored shop units and on the new interventions throughout the eastern block, including the open space and the interior of the newly installed café.

3.4.1.2 Historical origins: the market of the pearling town and harbour Muharraq

The historic market of Muharraq developed during the 19th century pearling boom up to the 1930s, when the town was the Gulf region's main pearling centre and seat of the ruling Al Khalifa family. The market stretches north to south along Muharraq's western coast and was originally peripherally located (fig. 3.4-2 and annex fig. 3.4.1-3 and 7). The borders of the market area called Suq al-Qaisariya are not clearly defined. Its core – a commercial lane between two blocks of shops built back-to-back between Bu Maher Avenue and Tujjar Avenue – however lies directly north of the reference site. Suq al-Qaisariya is allegedly the site of the first market established in Muharraq by the ruler in the beginning of the 19th century (Waly 1990, 124).

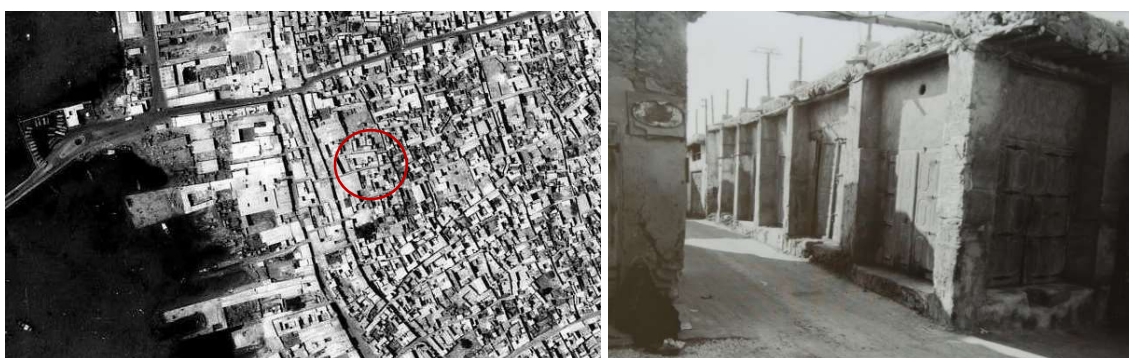


Fig. 3.4-2 and 3.4-3: **Aerial views of Muharraq market and harbour in the 1950s** (location of the reference site highlighted by the author) and **historic view along Bu Maher Avenue with the eastern Siyadi Shops**. Sources: Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities; Abdullah M. Al-Khan, *Muharraq: The Sea Rose*. Manama: Abdullah M. Al-Khan 2007, 90.

The entire market area developed as the western-most of several so-called *fūrjān* (sing. *farīj*).¹ These quarters had grown around the island's elevated centre since the Al Khalifa had established their residences there at the beginning of the 19th century (Wiedmann 2010, 120). By 1914, Muharraq's ethnically varied population was estimated to have grown to about 20,000 inhabitants (Ward, 1988, p. 91). When urban expansion reached the coastline in the later 19th century, the market extended into the western intertidal zone in four historic phases of land reclamation described by John Yarwood (1988 and 2005) and illustrated in fig. 3.4.1 – 7 in the annex. While the residential quarters were organized along family and tribal affiliations, sometimes coinciding with economic specializations, the market was a common public area. Muharraq's market was a rather simple example of an oriental suq, and a rather untypical one in some ways, according to Yarwood (1988). Due to its simultaneous harbour function the market is peripherally rather than centrally located in the town. In addition, it did not have a guild system as other suqs in the Islamic realm. However, it too, was subdivided into different sections by the type of items produced and/or sold. These often corresponded with ethnic or family affiliations. For example, groceries and bakeries were often run by Iranians predominantly from the town of Qarash according to Yarwood (2005, 180). These shared the bulk of production

¹ There are different ways of delineating and counting the traditional urban blocks of Muharraq. Ward speaks of "twenty-seven family or tribal blocks" around the central block (1988, p. 91) while Al-Nabi writes it were "perhaps nineteen zones" (2012, p. 92). Fuccaro presents a plan with seventeen areas for the 1960s (2009, p. 32). The current delineation of administrative blocks named in numerical order was introduced by the government in the 1960s (Fuccaro, 2009, p. 33).

and sale of sweets with Omanis particularly from Muscat. Herbal medicines tended to be offered mostly by the Yemeni Nasr family while goldsmiths were primarily of Bahraini or Indian origin (ibid.).

Figure 3.4-4 shows a retrospective mapping of the market's segregation in the 1930s. According to Yarwood's analysis (1988), Bu Maher Avenue formed as a coastal road along the natural shoreline which was moved westwards in a first phase of land reclamation. At the reference site, this first phase is marked by the pedestrian lane between the two blocks of the Siyadi Shops. Urban growth and the expansion of the market and harbour propelled during a period of political stability and economic wealth based on pearl harvest and trade between 1890 and 1925. In a second phase, up to about 1890, Tujjar Avenue hence formed as new coastal road. It too, became an inland market street with two further historic reclamation phases and westward shifts of the harbour up to approximately the years 1920 and 1940 respectively (annex fig. 3.4.1-7). The market streets and lanes that ran parallel to the coast were interconnected with perpendicular streets and lanes, thus forming a relatively regular network which exists to date. The narrower lanes were covered with light roofing structures for shading.

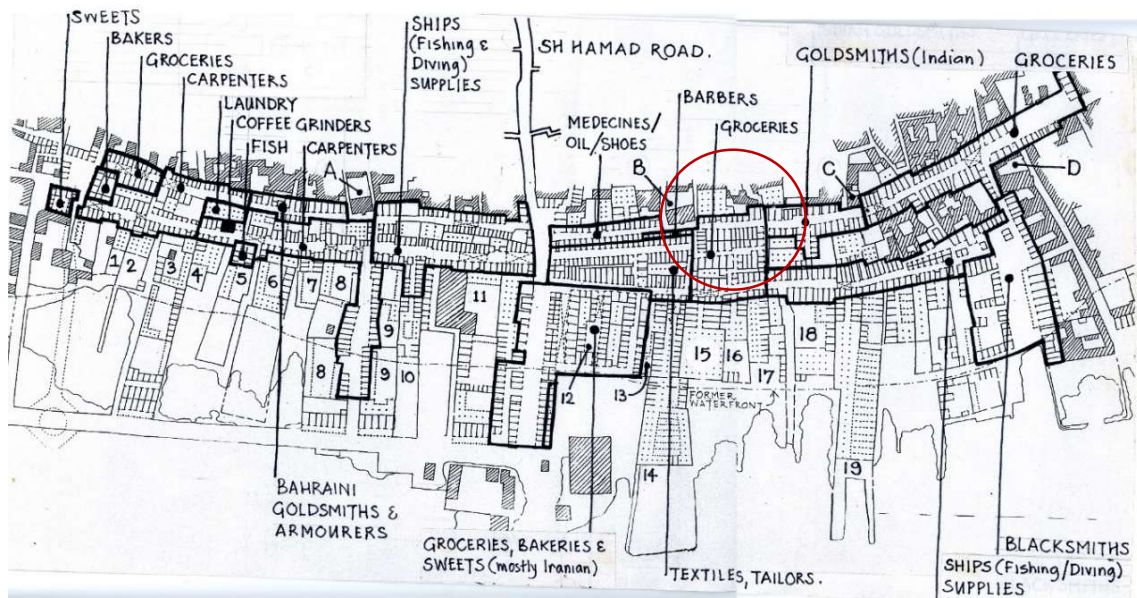


Fig. 3.4-4: Retrospective mapping of the historic market structure in the 1930s (location of the reference site highlighted by the author); Source: Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities. Drawing: John Yarwood, 1988.

The parts of the market located along the seashore served Muharraq as harbour. It consisted of storehouses, so-called 'amārāt (Arabic: building, storehouse; sing. 'amārah), which were built perpendicularly to the shoreline with jetties to serve as landing facilities for boats (fig. 3.4-2). They facilitated the unloading and storage of goods for the pearling society like "mangrove, bamboo, fishing equipment, clothes and so forth from Basra, Iran, India (Bombay and Karachi), Zanzibar and elsewhere." (Yarwood 1988, 201) The estimate of the town's stock of boats, amounted to 700 in 1914, of which approximately half were used for pearling (Ward, 1988, p. 91).

Retail trade, which included comestibles and other supply goods for the local society, was accommodated in smaller commercial units along the streets and lanes of the market. The shop units were mostly built back-to-back and formed two main spines parallel to the coastline.

Higher units included a mezzanine for storage. On average, the shop units were three meters wide, three to ten meters long, and three to five meters high. However, there is a great variety which the reference site exemplifies: the interior dimensions of its shop units vary roughly between 1,5 to 3,5 meters in width, 2,5 to 8 meters in depth and 2 to 4 meters in height (annex fig. 3.4.1-33 to 36). Wooden folding doors served as shopfront and stood open during business hours. Above the door, a horizontally stretching wooden window frame with metal bars typically provided ventilation. Only corner shops were fitted with two shopfronts (fig. 3.4-3 and annex fig. 3.4.1-8). Some units accommodated workshops or coffee shops for an exclusively male clientele. Some were used for storage as per the current needs. According to Tarek Waly (1990), many buildings used to have two storeys, sometimes with residential functions in the upper floor. Such is the case in the reference site's western block. Particularly during the annual pearling season, lasting from June to early October, pearl divers and other seasonal labourers from the wider region occupied the lodgings (Arabic: *khan*) in the market area (Yarwood 2005, 176). Functions and building structures were adapted repeatedly to changing requirements. By 1930, Muharraq market counted some 435 businesses, many consisting of one or two men, amounting to a total of approximately 900 men of which one third would have not been Bahraini (Yarwood 2005,180).

The different typologies, warehouses, *khans* and shop units, were built in variants of the regional vernacular tradition (Yarwood 1988; Hawker 2008). All employed sea stone masonry with clay and lime-gypsum rendering, wooden mangrove poles for roofs, ceilings and stairs, as well as wooden door shutters and ventilation grills in wooden window frames. Decorative features resembled those of the residential fabric and included ornamental arches, coloured glass fanlights, profiled support brackets as well as merlons. Interiors of the first-floor apartments would feature carved gypsum panels and friezes like those of the residential buildings.

The western block of the Siyadi Shops was built on the land reclaimed in the second phase. According to interviews with Siyadi family members, carried out in preparation of the site's nomination for World Heritage, the block was built around 1860 by the grand pearl merchant Yousif bin Mohamed al-Siyadi. According to the same source, it was extended in 1880 by his sons Ahmad and Jassim (Kingdom of Bahrain 2010c, 136-138). Certainly, the two simpler and lower shop units to the rear were added later, but as of now it is unclear when exactly. As per the oral testimony of Siyadi family members, the vernacular shop units of the eastern block were built in around 1905 (Kingdom of Bahrain 2010c, 136-138) on the narrow strip of land, which Yarwood (1988) described as the initial phase of land reclamation along Muharraq's eastern coast.

The Siyadi family originally owned further historic shop units and warehouses in Suq al-Qaisariya north of the reference site across the sloped alleyway. These were purchased by the government in the mid-2000s in preparation of a governmental rehabilitation project (Kingdom of Bahrain 2006 d). Restoration works however only began towards the end of the field research for this thesis. Those buildings were not discussed in the interviews.

Yarwood's (1988) retrospective mapping of the market's segregation in the 1930s indicates that groceries were at that time sold in the section of the market in which the reference site is located (fig. 3.4-4). This corresponds to the oral testimony of the Siyadi family, who said that the Siyadi brothers "sold grocery items, specifically dates, rice, sugar, tea and coffee, during periods when there were no important pearl merchant visitors interested in inspecting their collection" (Kingdom of Bahrain 2010 c, 133). The engagement in this sort of trade, which was certainly less

lucrative than the trade with pearls, allowed the Siyadi brothers to partake in the market's daily business and social life (Kingdom of Bahrain 2010c, 136-138). As a matter of fact, this habit continues up to the present times: at the time of the field research a senior member of the Siyadi family, Abdullah bin Hassan Siyadi, was still daily present in one of the shops of the western block. During the pearling era, the grand pearl merchants used the premises of the upper floor to receive clients and had their mid-day break and meal there (Kingdom of Bahrain 2010c, 136-138).

Archaeological investigations at the reference site and in its surroundings in the course of various rehabilitation initiatives of the past decade largely confirmed Yarwood's theory on the urban growth of Muharraq but also brought to light evidence of various earlier development phases (Archives of BACA, Ministry of Culture 2014; Kingdom of Bahrain 2010c, 38-40). The finds include remains of previous configurations of the market area in the 19th and early 20th centuries as well as traces of a settlement of the early Islamic period of the 7th and 8th centuries (Carter and Naranjo-Santana 2011; Naranjo-Santana et al. 2010). Moreover, several layers of traditional date syrup presses² (*al-mdābis*, singular: *al-mdbasah*) were discovered up to 1,6 meters below the current ground level at the reference site and in its surroundings (Archives of BACA, Ministry of Culture 2011/2012) (annex fig. 3.4.1-38). This indicates that this part of the market used to be specialized in the production and sale of date syrup although Yarwood made no mention of this in his retrospective mapping (1988). Some of the lower lying date syrup presses do not coincide with the floor plans of the vernacular shop structures and hence testify to earlier development phases than the one evidenced by the buildings. Beginning and end of the construction and use of the date syrup presses were not scientifically dated (I 7). Archaeological digs in coastal warehouses of the late 19th and early 20th centuries to the west of the reference site across Tujjar Avenue revealed similar finds. There, date syrup production ended "allegedly in the 1940s" (Naranjo-Santana et al. 2010, 54).

Historic documents, archaeological investigations and the difference in ground level between Bu Maher Avenue and Tujjar Avenue moreover suggest, that the reference site and the core of Suq al-Qaisariya to its north might have featured a sort of gated historic city wall which protected the market area in the 19th century (Kingdom of Bahrain and UNDP 2006 d, 4). Nevertheless, the market's main protective barrier during the pearling era was certainly the shallow intertidal zone which was later entirely reclaimed and built upon.

3.4.1.3 Further development and urban revitalization in Suq al-Qaisariya

Muharraq's historic market, including Suq al-Qaisariya, remains a buzzing market and one of the best-preserved traditional areas of Bahrain to date. However, with the decline of the pearling economy Muharraq lost its economic and political importance to Manama by the 1930s. It was

² Date syrup presses used to be a common feature in buildings across Bahrain for centuries and millennia. Date syrup (Arabic locally: *dibs*) used to be produced for local consumption and export. Before industrial production of the product emerged, individual rooms in vernacular buildings were dedicated to this purpose. The rooms were equipped with sloped conduits on which ripe dates were stored. The emerging syrup was collected in a clay jar placed at the lowest point at the end of the conduits. In the vicinity of the reference site there are archaeological remains of many further date juice presses, which indicates that this was an important business in this section of the suq up to the mid-20th century (Carter and Naranjo-Santana 2011). The oldest date juice press so far discovered in Bahrain is located within the Kassite palace from the middle of the 2nd millennium B.C. within the fortress on the tell of Qal'at al-Bahrain (Lombard 2015, 52).

therefore less exposed to development and modernization pressure thereafter. An administrative report of the year 1937, cited by Jenner (1984, 44-45), describes the sharp contrast between the “airy showrooms” that had emerged in Manama and the congested, backward market of Muharraq. Nevertheless, the historic fabric and morphology of the town and market suffered immense urban, economic, social and architectural transformations throughout the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Business types and trading conditions gradually changed. This included the separation of production and sale as well as demand for larger and airconditioned sales areas and parking spaces. Land reclamation, real estate development, street widening and successive replacement of most of the historic fabric brought with them the loss of sea access, of related functions and of the market’s homogeneous appearance. An important event was the opening of the swing bridge that connected Muharraq to the main land in 1942, replacing the former connection to Manama by ferries. The bridge landed at the entrance of the market, where it triggered the first urban developments along Shaikh Hamad Avenue. Subsequently, streets were widened and straightened to accommodate car traffic throughout the town and market. Such was the case of Bu Maher Avenue at the reference site. However, until the 1960s most urban development occurred along the new motorway to the north, while the southern and eastern edges of Muharraq were less affected (Pini 2006). A turning point was in the 1970s, when the shallow intertidal zone that surrounded Muharraq was reclaimed from the sea and developed as new urban areas. The new quarters with residential, commercial and public uses broke with the urban and architectural principles that previously determined Muharraq’s growth. Khalifa Al Khabeer Highway was built as a ring road on the fringes of the reclaimed land and formed an additional barrier along the shore. The market was entirely disconnected from the sea and the harbour – which had long lost its function as pearling hub – relocated (fig. 3.4-5 and 6; compare also annex fig. 3.4.1-2 to 3).



Fig. 3.4-5 and 3.4-6: **Aerial view of Muharraq from the south in the 1960s (left) and in the 2000s with the map of 1931 overlaid** (location of the reference site highlighted by the author). Source: Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities

The encapsulated historic quarters of Muharraq, including the market, turned into neglected, low-income areas. The historic fabric dilapidated and was successively replaced with foremost low-budget new constructions that clash with the vernacular fabric and traditional urban morphology in scale, materials and design. The social structure changed with an outmigration of Bahraini families to new districts and the influx of low-income bachelor migrant workers and expatriate Arab families. Although the percentage of national residents is said to be higher in most neighbourhoods of Old Muharraq than in Old Manama, the presence of a large Southeast Asian migrant community is today strongly felt in the market area.

Imagery of the market from the second half of the 20th century documents an architecturally still homogeneous but rather ill-maintained built environment (fig. 3.4-2 and 3). In the mid-1970s, James Hamed Dacre Belgrave – Sir Charles D. Belgrave’s son – still described the town and harbour of Muharraq as “one of the most genuinely Arab of the Gulf’s sea ports” with “[m]assive-walled buildings, sparkling white, great carven teak doors, attractive mosques, all sights worth seeing before they give way to the concrete block buildings and Danish ready-made doors of today.” (Belgrave 1975) However, increased oil revenues in the 1970s propelled the urban transformation (Pini 2006) which is still ongoing, despite growing urban rehabilitation endeavours since the 1990s.

By the early 21st century, most of the vernacular fabric throughout the historic market had been successively replaced with inconspicuous conventional buildings or reconfigured. A cacophony of colourful advertisements and heterogeneous shopfronts characterize the streetscapes. Nevertheless, representatives of the market’s various vernacular typologies remain at the reference site and in its wider vicinity. This includes various pearling warehouses which share the World Heritage status. Most vernacular fabric however survived only in an advanced state of decay or transformation. Formerly typical decorative features had become rare and the market’s former architectural homogeneity was lost. The annexed plans and photos illustrate the state in which the Siyadi Shops were found when surveyed in in preparation of their rehabilitation (fig. 3.4.1-10 to 30 and 33 to 36).



Fig. 3.4-7 and 3.4-8: **The western Siyadi Shops on Tujjar Avenue and the one-storeyed shop units to their rear before rehabilitation in 2008.** Photos: Eva Battis

The western block of the Siyadi Shops on Tujjar Avenue was in relatively sound condition despite some signs of deterioration and various modifications (fig. 3.4-7 and 8 and annex fig. 3.4.1-10 to 11 and 24 to 30). It maintained most of its retail and storage functions at ground floor and accommodation on the upper floor. The built fabric had been subjected to minor changes including the addition of non-traditional advertisements and canopies. Most shops still had four-leafed wooden shutters with padlocks and some were supplemented with additional glass fronts in aluminium frames. A few wooden doors had made space for metallic rolling shutters instead. The spatial and architectural qualities of the upper floor were found more disfigured with non-vernacular additions in concrete blockwork and provisional light-weight constructions. Like many residential spaces in the old town of Muharraq, the first-floor premises had been rented out as accommodation to migrant labourers. The typical room disposition including an originally open portico space (Arabic: *liwan*) and vernacular features such as decorative incised gypsum

panels and wall-bound wind catchers (Arabic: *badgir*) were hardly discernible among the additions but preserved in substance.

Only the simple two one-storeyed shop units to the rear of the western block were in an advanced stage of deterioration and disfigurement despite still being used as storage space (fig. 3.4-8 and annex fig. 3.4.1-26 to 28). The fabric was no longer subjected to maintenance and had started to disintegrate. The masonry walls were bulging. Most of the original lime-gypsum plaster and later cement repairs had disintegrated and fallen off the coral stone masonry. The traditional roofs of mangrove beams were sagging. The eastern shopfronts had both been blocked-up with concrete block masonry. Provisional plywood shutters in the western shopfront gave access to the interconnected units. A provisional canopy of metal sheets had been added to it and become unstable.



Fig. 3.4-9 and 3.4-10: The eastern Siyadi Shops viewed from Bu Maher Avenue before the rehabilitation in 2008. Photos: Alaa el-Habashi and Eva Battis

Likewise, the shops units of the eastern block had fallen out of use, except for storage, which accelerated the decay and partial loss of the fabric (fig. 3.4-9 to 12 and annex fig. 3.4.1-10 to 23, 33 to 36). There is photographic evidence that the entire block, including the plots adjacent to the south, was still completely built up with vernacular shop units in the 1970s (fig. 3.4-3 and annex fig. 3.4.1-9). In 2008, only the five units along the sloped alley, which were used as storages, and the sixth abandoned and partially collapsed unit to their rear remained. All other units had in the meantime been levelled, leaving an open fallow land which bore only archaeological traces of the former shops.

Masonry cracks, sagging ceilings and disintegrating surface plaster indicated an advanced state of structural decay in the case of the five preserved shop units. Additions that disfigured the vernacular architecture included cement surface plaster and façade paint, canopies of corrugated metal sheets and plywood, metallic pipes serving as rain spouts, uncoordinated electrical wiring, entrance steps of concrete as well as large name boards advertising businesses that were no longer operational at the site. Despite these structural and architectural deficiencies, the five vernacular shop units along the sloped pedestrian alley maintained a relatively high degree of architectural integrity and authenticity (fig. 3.4-9 and 10). The sixth shop unit, on the contrary, was ruined and filled with debris and garbage (fig. 3.4-11, 12 and annex fig. 3.4.1-18 to 22). Its rear wall had collapsed. The side walls were bulging and parts of the masonry had crumbled. Their interior niches had been filled with concrete blocks. The mangrove beams of the ceiling remained in place but the upper layers of the roof had disintegrated.



Fig. 3.4-11 and 3.4-12: **The sixth shop unit before rehabilitation in 2008.** Photos: Eva Battis

Historic wooden shutters and traditional canopies remained in place in the western elevation of the sixth shop unit and in three of the five shops units along the sloped alley (fig. 3.4.1 – 10). All other shutters and canopies had been substituted. A wide horizontal vernacular ventilation window remained in the case of the sixth shop unit and a smaller one was preserved in one of the five units (fig. 3.4.1-19, 13, 33). Apart from the profiled wooden panels of the door shutters, the only humble decorative feature in the eastern block were two ornamental gypsum brackets in the upper corners of a recessed façade field of one shop in the alley (fig. 3.4.1-16 and 33).

The fallow land to the rear of the historic shop units was used as informal car parking ground until rehabilitation works started at the site in 2010 (fig. 3.4-10). On neighbouring plots to the South-East, two simple conventional buildings with retail premises at ground floor had been constructed in the late 20th or early 21st century: a four-storeyed residential building with pinkish firewalls facing the reference site next to a narrow two-storeyed building with a shop at ground floor (fig. 3.4.1-18 and 41). Particularly the tall building clashes with the vernacular fabric in typology, volume and design. Most other buildings in the site’s direct and wider setting do not exceed three floors. The historic Ebrahim bin Yusuf Mosque located across Bu Maher Avenue was rebuilt as a concreted structure in the later 20th century. Its low minaret and abstracted Arabic merlons that top the plain exterior façade is a distinctive non-vernacular feature in the direct setting (fig. 3.4.1-51 and 70).

Unexecuted development and World Monuments Watch listing of Suq al-Qaisariya in 2010

A note in a travel guide of the late 1980s indicates that urban renewal plans for the market area reach back to that time. The author of the guidebook at the time praised the “picturesque suq” (Ward, 1988, p.91) but warned that it would be a great shame if it was “to give way to an all-electric, all-push, air-conditioned emporium as exemplified by Manama’s gold Suq” (Ward 1988, 102). Development plans for parts of Muharraq’s historic market concretized by the mid-2000s and put a significant part of the historic fabric and urban structure at Suq al-Qaisariya at stake. The blocks between Bu Maher Avenue and Tujjar Avenue that abut the reference site to the north across the sloped alleyway were to be developed into a new commercial complex reaching up to Shaikh Hamad Avenue. In 2006, the Ministry of Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture (MOMAA) published its own plans for the prestigious project (fig. 3.4-13 and annex fig. 3.4.1-31 to 32). It aimed at introducing contemporary amenities for a Bahraini and tourist clientele in an

architectural design that referenced local culture and history (Kingdom of Bahrain and UNDP 2006 d). While few historic structures, including the adjacent Siyadi Shops of the reference site, were to be preserved, most of Suq al-Qaisariya was to be replaced. Dominant architectural features would have been a reference to the historic city wall and replicas of traditional wind-towers as well as sail-shaped structures reminiscent of the boats which used to harbour at the market.



Fig. 3.4-13: **Visualization of the unexecuted project design for Suq al-Qaisariya** (Siyadi Shops on the right in the lower images). Source: Kingdom of Bahrain and United Nations Development Program (2006d), 23.

The well-intentioned initiative was planned as one of the first urban rehabilitation programs in Bahrain and developed out of the before mentioned initiative for urban conservation measures in the old cities of Manama and Muharraq (Kingdom of Bahrain and UNDP 2006 a-c). The plans were backed by the Municipal Council but in 2007 evoked a public controversy about how to rehabilitate the market. The Ministry of Culture played a prominent role in arguing for the preservation of the historic testimony. Rumours have it that Shaikha Mai bint Mohammed Al Khalifa – Assistant Undersecretary for Culture and National Heritage at the Ministry of Information at the time – personally stopped the bulldozers. At any rate, the heritage authority prevented the implementation of the project with an application to the Watch List of the World Monuments Fund (WMF) in 2010. The registration of Suq al-Qaisariya as a national monument followed in 2012 (Kingdom of Bahrain 2012b). In consequence, the national heritage authority was put in charge of conserving and developing Suq al-Qaisariya. In parallel, the authority had since 2006 been preparing the nomination of the Siyadi Shops for UNESCO World Heritage along with other testimony of the pearling economy (refer also to chapter 3.2).

Nomination of the Siyadi Shops for World Heritage as part of the Pearling Testimony

In the process of preparing the nomination dossier, both the eastern and the western block were conventionally surveyed and documented starting in 2008. The open space that was used as informal parking lot at the time, was not part of the World Heritage nomination but integrated into the subsequent rehabilitation project. In parallel to the work of the architectural survey team, anthropologists documented the oral history of the site in interviews with Siyadi family members (Kingdom of Bahrain 2010c).

Moreover, both blocks were registered as national monuments by the name Siyadi Shops in 2010, along with the other serial properties of the aspiring World Heritage Site (Kingdom of Bahrain 2010a). For the first time in Bahrain, private ownership was maintained when the

selected buildings and ensembles were designated as monuments. Memoranda of Understanding were signed with the owners or tenants (Kingdom of Bahrain 2010d, 55) in order to grant the heritage authority a say in the maintenance and operation of the historic buildings. The nomination documents were submitted to UNESCO in 2010. In June 2011, upon a standard evaluation cycle, the World Heritage Committee referred the site back to the State Party due to concerns regarding the planned conservation approach and doubts about the availability of skills for the immense task of conserving the partly fragile buildings of the nominated site and its setting:

“The World Heritage Committee,

[...]

*2. Refers the nomination of **Pearling, testimony of an island economy, Bahrain**, back to the State Party in order to provide a more detailed conservation approach for the urban buildings that sets out how the conservation of original fabric will be optimised, how the necessary skills will be put in place for the restoration of decorative woodwork and plasterwork, and how the overall conservation work will be phased and implemented.”*

[...] (UNESCO 2011b)

In response, Bahrain acknowledged to share the concerns and reported on how the State Party addressed the issue in an update to the nomination (Kingdom of Bahrain 2012a). The document aimed of reassuring ICOMOS and the World Heritage Committee that the works on the Pearling Testimony will be carried out along more conservative lines than most previous heritage initiatives in Bahrain. As described in chapter 3.2, architectural and urban conservation practice was only poorly developed in Bahrain at the time. Systematic architectural conservation projects in compliance with international standards of conservation ethics were only starting under the auspices of the heritage authority. The document described the various capacity-building initiatives which had started at the time and included the rehabilitation of the Siyadi Shops.

The Pearling Testimony, including the Siyadi Shops, was consequently inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in June 2012 under the name Pearling, Testimony of an Island Economy.

Rehabilitation of the Siyadi Shops by the national heritage authority in 2010-12

The Siyadi Shops of the eastern block and the two dilapidated shop units of the western block were among the first buildings of the Pearling Testimony to be subjected to conservation measures under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture while the nomination for World Heritage was still ongoing. Due to their small scale and simple type of architecture the ensemble of one-storeyed shop units lend itself as a pilot project for building capacities for architectural conservation in Bahrain. The project was led by the Ministry’s Egyptian conservation consultant Dr. Alaa el-Habashi who cooperated with the Lebanese architect Jenan Habib for the interior decoration and furnishing. The detailed design was commissioned to the local architectural firm Al A’ali Engineering. A local building contractor carried out most works. Archaeological investigations and fine conservation of plasterworks and archaeological finds were carried out by an in-house team of the Ministry of Culture.

The project team struggled with the typical lack of resources and experience in the field of architectural conservation that were described in chapter 3.2 (Kingdom of Bahrain 2012a, 52). In addition, there was a certain time pressure to complete the works on time for an ICOMOS expert mission in 2012 which was part of the evaluation of the Pearling Testimony’s nomination

for World Heritage. Despite such challenges, the team went to great lengths in applying international conservation ethics. In accordance with the Venice and Burra Charters, the design and conservation approaches were based on the principle of minimal intervention for the sake of maintaining the remaining historic fabric while enhancing the site's cultural significance that relates to the pearling narrative and other socio-cultural value dimensions. The project hence aimed at enhancing the material, visual and functional integrity of the historic market buildings while preserving associated tangible and intangible heritage. Architectural interventions took place on various levels ranging from the conservation and repair of the historic fabric, reconstructions of missing elements, to the integration of new additions.

The project started with the removal of debris and non-vernacular additions which were considered of no cultural significance but harmful to the site's visual and material integrity. This was accompanied by investigations into the history of the site including archaeological digs. Following the conservation and repair of the vernacular elements new additions were introduced. All project stages and interventions were continuously documented (Archives of BACA, Ministry of Culture 2010/2011).

Preparatory works started on-site in December 2010 and the implementation lasted just over one year (Archives of BACA, Ministry of Culture 2010/2011). The works were completed in January 2012 (Kingdom of Bahrain 2012a, 10).



Fig. 3.4-14, 3.4-15 and 3.4-16: **The eastern Siyadi Shops during archaeological investigations in 2011 and exposed finds in 2012.** Photos: Alaa el-Habashi, Ministry of Culture and Information, Kingdom of Bahrain (left) and Eva Battis

The project design had to be adjusted several times during the process.³ Archaeological discoveries were made which included the remains of missing shop units, filling material used in early land reclamation, as well as several historic date syrup presses (annex fig. 3.4-14 and annex fig. 3.4.1-38). Some of the date syrup presses were integrated into the design and exposed (annex fig. 3.4-15 to 16 and annex fig. 3.4.1-49 and 50). In order to ensure that the introduction of new building elements does not harm the archaeological remains and to accommodate the display of some finds, the design had to be adapted. This required also to omit a tree which was initially planned in the outdoor space. Moreover, the site was extended in the course of the project to include the southern most parts of the barren land. Further changes were stipulated

³ This is why no accurate design plans were available and only survey plans as well as one floor tiling plan are included in the annex (annex fig. 4.3.1-33 to 37).

by some owners who were only identified after first works had begun. The design details were hence negotiated and revised throughout the process between the client, owners and planners. The final project scope encompassed: the consolidation and repair of the two one-storeyed shop units to the rear of the western block; the restoration of the five shop units of the eastern block along the sloped alleyway between Tujjar Avenue and Bu Maher Avenue; the conservation and adaptation of the ruined sixth unit to their rear, which was integrated into a new structure for gastronomic use; a public outdoor space; as well as a new one-storeyed building with two shop units and public sanitary facilities in the southern extremity (annex fig. 3.4.1-1, 38 to 85). In addition, the works involved some visual and functional upgrading of the surrounding public spaces and infrastructure, such as improvements of street paving, lighting and electricity cabling.



Fig. 3.4-17 and 3.4-18: **The western Siyadi Shops on Tujjar Avenue after the façade works in 2012.** Photos: Eva Battis

Minor façade uplifting was administered to the **western Siyadi Shops** and other immediately neighbouring buildings. This involved the repainting of façades and restoration of some wooden door shutters (fig. 3.4-17, 18 and annex fig. 3.4.1-24 to 30, 78 to 79). Only the **two one-storeyed shop-units** to their rear were thoroughly but conservatively restored in order to halt further decay and to reinstate the basic vernacular features (fig. 3.4-19, 20 and annex fig. 3.4.1-24 to 30, 78 to 79). No contemporary features or appliances were added to the shop units at that stage, as they continued to be used for storage. The installation of an ice cream shop was under discussion but their final use had not been determined yet. The interventions were hence limited to consolidating and repairing the surviving vernacular fabric such as its coral stone masonry, traditional roof and ceiling. The lost traditional wooden shutters were reinstated. All shopfronts were fitted with restored or new wooden shopfronts in traditional design and a replica of a traditional ventilation window was installed above the door in the western elevation. The consolidated coral stone masonry and coral stone slabs were left without surface rendering both in the exterior and interior, which makes the simple shop units stand out within their setting. Conservation techniques like the injection of mortar (deep filling) and repointing of disintegrating coral stone masonry were pioneered in Bahrain on these two shop units (annex fig. 3.4.1-63 to 66).



Fig. 3.4-19 and 3.4-20: **The one-storeyed shop units to the rear of the western block during and after restoration in 2012.** Photos: Eva Battis

The works on the **five northern shop units of the eastern block** reinstated their historic character by removing encroachments such as provisional shading and by restoring the vernacular fabric and features (compare fig. 3.4-3, 21, 22 and annex fig. 3.4.1-8, 9, 12 to 17, 23, 39 to 42, 67 to 70). All non-historic additions such as advertisement boards, canopies and provisional shopfront shutters were removed. Non-vernacular rain spouts were replaced with replicas of traditional wooden ones. All cement plaster was chipped away and surviving patches of historic plaster were consolidated along with the coral stone masonry. Lacunas in the surface rendering were filled with traditional lime and gypsum plaster which was colour-treated in order to approximate the brownish remains of historic plaster in appearance (annex fig. 3.4.1-59). The traditional roofs, including preserved vernacular canopies, were repaired and waterproofed. Preserved historic folding doors were restored and shopfronts with inferior replacement shutters fitted with traditional replicas. Only the corner shop on Bu Maher Avenue was fitted with additional interior shutters with glass panes that serve as display windows (annex fig. 3.4.1-67). In the façade of the western most shop atop the front door along the sloped alleyway, a so-called archaeological window was created in the plaster. It exposes the wall's coral stones slabs in a rectangular field (annex fig. 3.4.1-69 and 70).



Fig. 3.4-21 and 3.4-22: **The eastern Siyadi Shops viewed from Bu Maher Avenue during and after restoration in 2011 and 2012.** Photos: Eva Battis

In the interiors of the five eastern shop units, the vernacular features such as the *danshal* ceilings with bamboo mats on palm frond grid and wooden mezzanines were repaired and maintained (annex fig. 3.4.1-44). Electrical appliances that date from the first electrification of Muharraq in the 1930s (Nabi 2012, 23) were maintained as historic evidence both in the exterior and interior of some shops (annex fig. 3.4.1-45). New amenities like electrical wiring were integrated into

the fabric but air-conditioning units were left exposed to sight. The five shop units reopened for retailing in 2012 with the smaller units serving as storage spaces. Throughout the site, the heritage authority promoted the installation of tenants that offer traditional, local or regional products like Arabic perfumes. This extends to the café to the rear of the five shop units, where a local company by the name Saffron started to offer variations of traditional Bahraini food and drinks.

The **café** was installed in the remains of the sixth shop unit which was conserved and extended for this purpose (fig. 3.4-23, 24 and annex fig. 3.4.1-84 to 85). The café consists of a lower sitting area in the ruined shop unit which connects via a few steps to an upper sitting area with a small kitchen and sales counter. There is also a small sitting area in the southern outdoor space from where the café is entered (fig. 3.4-23, 25, 26 and annex fig. 3.4.1-71 to 74).

Like in the case of the two shop units of the western block, the surviving historic elements of the **sixth shops unit** were conserved and consolidated. Restoration works were however largely limited to the removal of few non-vernacular features and structural repair (annex fig. 3.4.1-46 to 49). The disintegrating masonry of the containing side walls was structurally repaired (compare fig. 3.4-11, 12, 14, 25 and annex fig. 3.4.-20, 22, 48, 57). Historic plaster was retained and consolidated both in the interior and exterior. New plaster complements the historic one on the exterior. Areas of missing plaster on the inside were left unrendered in order to expose the coral stone masonry. The former shopfront with wooden shutters and the ventilation window above were restored and maintained although they offer poor thermal insulation during the summer months, when the café is airconditioned. The shutters are usually kept closed as the entrance to the café is located in the upper room. The *danshal* beams of the shop's ceiling and roof were cleaned and maintained. The disintegrated upper layers of the ceiling/roof were removed and not reconstructed. Likewise, the shop's rear wall was left missing except for a small, low section that serves as parapet in the upper room. The corner masonry, where the rear wall used to connect, was left unplastered (fig. 3.4-24 and annex fig. 3.4.1-84 and 85). In fact, some stones were intentionally placed so as to stick out and indicate the missing rear wall (Archives of BACA, Ministry of Culture 2010/2011). The ruined character of the dilapidated, yet consolidated shop unit was thus maintained. A fair-faced concrete ceiling in a casing of steel profiles spans across the lower and upper room of the café. It rests on round columns of sandblasted steel at about half a meter's distance above the historic layer of *danshal* beams in the lower room. The new roof is thus statically independent from the historic fabric. The side gap to the masonry walls is closed with glass panels in aluminium frames that match the steel elements in colour. The same structure extends into a glass façade in the upper room.

The transparent façade of the upper café space features a two-wing glass entrance door from the outdoor space (fig. 3.4-23, 25, 26). The eastern exterior wall of the upper room is a coral stone masonry wall which was reconstructed on the basis of historic photographs in traditional techniques. It extends into the outdoor space along Bu Maher Avenue up to the neighbouring four-storey building. The wall mimics the four shops which formerly stood in this location in volume and structure (compare fig. 3.4-3, 21, 22 and annex fig. 3.4.1-8, 9, 12, 21, 51 to 52, 67 to 68). To ease differentiation from the preserved historic fabric, the wall's off-white surface plaster was not colour-treated. Wooden poles that stuck up from the individual shop units in the past were not reconstructed. Neither were the former shopfront opening and shutters reconstructed. Instead, three of the four sections hold vertical windows with wooden grills of

contemporary design. The ones in the café are glass paned. One segment features a full-size shopfront opening that serves as entrance from Bu Maher Avenue to the site's outdoor space and café (fig. 3.4-23 and annex fig. 3.4.1-73).



Fig. 3.4-23 and 3.4-24: **The café after completion of the works in 2012 and 2014.** Photos: Eva Battis

The furnishing of the café and the outdoor sitting area was the final intervention and involved some last-minute changes to the spatial arrangement (I 25). The furnishing combines local traditional tables and benches, which were purchased in Muharraq market (I 25), with high-end products of international designers like armchairs, poufs, cushions and curtains. All textures and colours were carefully chosen to discreetly match and complement the historic fabric and character. Traditional decorative features such as a gramophone, a historic radio and some oriental brass coffee pots are references to the market's history. Modern facilities such as air-conditioning units, lights and ventilators were suspended from the ceiling. A special feature in the café's upper room is an archaeological window in the ground where remains of date syrup presses (Arabic: *al-mdābis*) are exposed underneath a glass flooring (fig. 3.4-16 and 24).



Fig. 3.4-25 and 3.4-26: **The outdoor space of the eastern block during and after construction in 2012.** Photos: Eva Battis

The **outdoor space** is located on the sloped open land between the southern pre-existing building and the newly added building and the café (fig. 3.4-23, 25 to 26 and annex fig. 3.4.1-71 to 73). It is semi-enclosed by the above-described reconstructed wall along Bu Maher Avenue and by a second free standing wall to the west (fig. 3.4-21, 22, 26 and annex fig. 3.4.1- 51, 56, 67, 68). Both walls delineate the historic street lines. For lack of photographic evidence of the original western street elevation, the new wall in its place constitutes a rather abstract historic reference. It is partitioned into three segments that mimic vernacular shopfronts in size and

proportions. But its straight contours and edges as well as window openings with non-vernacular wooden grilles give it away as a new addition. Like the southern building, it was built in reinforced concrete and concrete block masonry and rendered with white plaster and paint. A gap between the northern extremity of the wall and the sixth shop provides even access to the outdoor space from the south. Additionally, three steps lead up to the enclosed open space at the southern extremity of the wall (fig. 3.4-28 and annex fig. 3.4.1-57 and 76). A ramp provides barrier-free access between the upper and lower-level areas of the outdoor space (fig. 3.4-25). At lower level, the doors to the sanitary rooms are located. At upper level, in front of the café's southern elevation, there is an outdoor sitting area. It is bounded on two sides by a low parapet wall which follows the foundations of a previously existing shop unit. This wall was constructed in coral stone masonry and rendered with the same traditional crème-coloured plaster as the restored walls of the sixth shop unit (fig. 3.4-25 to 27).

In the south-eastern corner, the upper outdoor space features further remains of historic date syrup presses (fig. 3.4-15, 26 and annex fig. 3.4.1-72). They are exposed in an open archaeological window below ground level which is delimited with a railing of simple steel pipes. This area is roofed with a fair-faced concrete roof in a steel frame on sandblasted steel columns which resembles the similar additions in the café space. Up to the height of the roof, traditionally proportioned and rendered walls were erected along the pre-existing neighbouring building (fig. 3.4-26 to 27 and annex fig. 3.4.1-55, 72, 73).



Fig. 3.4-27 and 3.4-28: **The two shop units in the southern part of the site during and after construction in 2011 and 2012.** Photos: Eva Battis

In 2011, stone tiling had first been installed in the outdoor space, which demarcated the foundations of the former shop units and further finds of dates syrup presses (fig. 3.4-14 and annex fig. 3.4.1-54). However, for aesthetic concerns, the flooring with somewhat vivid pattern was redone in a more homogeneous manner with crème-coloured concrete tiles at the expense of the didactic feature. References to the underlying archaeological remains were minimized in the new floor tiling as per the revised layout (fig. 3.4-25 and annex fig. 3.4.1-37).

Two bi-lingual (Arabic, English) interpretation panels were installed within the outdoor space (fig. 3.4-26, 28 and annex fig. 3.4.1-72 to 73, 76, 77), which provide some details about the site's urban development and former usage.

The narrow strip of land in the **southern part of the eastern block** next to the four-storey building was included into the project in the course of the implementation. There is archaeological evidence that it was originally built up with shop units. During the rehabilitation the area was built upon with a simple one-storey building which mimics the vernacular shop

units in volume, façade structure, surface material and traditional wooden shopfront shutters (fig. 3.4-27, 28 and annex fig. 3.4.1-53 to 55, 75 to 77). It was conventionally built with a plain reinforced concrete structure, flat roof and concrete blockwork which was plastered and painted white. The building hosts two shop units along the western residential lane as well as sanitary facilities that are accessible from the café's outdoor space.

Public events, like at Bab al-Bahrain, are not usually organized in the smaller-scale project area of this reference site. Albeit, the Siyadi Shops are equally branded as traditional Bahraini not only by the link to the pearling narrative but with the sale of traditional Bahraini food and local crafts which the heritage authority subsidized (Kingdom of Bahrain 2012a, 52). Waiters of South-East-Asian origin are moreover dressed in traditional Bahraini costumes (annex fig. 3.4.1-83).

At the time of the inquiry in 2014/15, all these works had been completed. The two conserved shop units of the western block were still used as storage at the time. The restoration of the remainder of the western block of the Siyadi Shops was still pending in 2022. In 2014, repair and maintenance works were ongoing at the eastern block during the interviews. Rising humidity and salt crystallization is a common pathology of vernacular fabric in Bahrain, given the high level and salinity of the ground water combined with a strong capillarity of the coral stone masonry. Hence, particularly the lower parts of the surface plaster on coral stone masonry proved to be short-lived in several places. During interviews in 2014, parts of the masonry were hence exposed (annex fig. 3.4.1-86 to 87).

Further urban rehabilitation works in the market area

Since the completion of the above-described project at the reference site, the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities, as successor institution of the Ministry of Culture, has implemented several architectural conservation and urban rehabilitation works in the site's direct and wider vicinity. This includes the restoration of several vernacular warehouses, some of which are constituent parts of the Pearling Testimony and the addition of new commercial and visitor facilities. The Swiss architect Valerio Olgiati designed a brutalist architectural work as visitor centre for the Pearling Testimony. It has high-rising modern wind towers and a massive, pierced fair-faced concrete roof across Tujjar Avenue to the west of the reference site. The visitor centre was completed in 2019.

The rehabilitation works in the core of Suq al-Qaisariya directly adjacent to the north of the reference site were completed in 2021 and opened for customers with a two-day market event in May. The Dutch architect Anne Holtrop designed the modern shop structures which replaced non-vernacular fabric in Suq al-Qaisariya. Rather than employing historicizing designs inspired from local traditional forms and features, as suggested for Suq al-Qaisariya in 2006 (fig. 3.4-13), the architect introduced fair-faced concrete structures in brutalist design with large glass surfaces. These contemporary additions referenced the vernacular shop units and warehouses in a different manner and maintained the urban structure of the *suq* (compare annex fig. 3.4.1-31 to 32, 88 to 89).

3.4.2 CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SIYADI SHOPS

The cultural significance of the Siyadi Shops in Suq al-Qaisariya partly consists in their contribution to the World Heritage Site Pearling, Testimony of an Island Economy. They contribute to the site's Outstanding Universal Value⁴ as typical market structures that were built and used by a family of grand pearl merchants (Arabic: *tijār al-lū'lū*). Together with the Siyadi's residence, reception building and public mosque, the shops at Suq al-Qaisariya were included in the World Heritage Site to represent the highest economic level within the hierarchy of Muharraq's pearling society. The pearling heritage, foremost its associated narratives and memories, are important anchors of cultural identity for Bahrain's national society to date. However, the significance of the Siyadi Shops, including their architectural, urban and archaeological heritage, goes beyond their contribution to the pearling narrative. Like other preserved historic structures and spaces in the market area, they are evidence of Muharraq's urban history including phases that predate or followed the late pearling era.

The reference site's simple vernacular commercial structures within the historic urban setup of the market area are foremost an architectural testimony to a particular traditional market typology that emerged throughout the Arabian/ Persian Gulf in the 19th century as a result of the pearling boom (Hawker 2008). Authentic testimony, which truthfully illustrates the spatial and functional organization and growth of such markets and their former appearance and atmosphere has become rather rare in Bahrain and in the Gulf. In this context, the site has an educational value with regard to the local history and culture.

The archaeological finds at the reference site include evidence of the early, so-called *samāda* land reclamation practice, which "entailed the dumping of rubbish and clearance spoil behind retaining walls on the sea shore" (Naranjo-Santana et al. 2010, 6). These finds are a document to the first urban expansion of Muharraq's market into the intertidal zone (annex fig. 3.4.1-7). The archaeological remains of date syrup presses, in turn, are tangible testimony of an important local tradition which over millennia constituted an economic base besides pearling.

Intangible heritage dimensions that contribute to the cultural significance of the reference site and the wider market area are the collective memories and narratives as well as the ongoing commercial and social practices. The latter include the traditional ownership and use by Siyadi family. A joint report of the Bahrain Government and United Nations Development Program rightfully states that Suq al-Qaisariya "features a living memory of the daily life of a vibrant city" (Kingdom of Bahrain, Ministry of Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture and United Nations Development Program 2006 d, 1). The site and its buildings are hence memory markers that have mnemonic and emotional value particularly to the local community.

The site's cultural heritage significance was formally acknowledged when the Siyadi Shops were designated national monument in 2010 as well as UNESCO World Heritage as part of the Pearling Testimony in 2012. The late monument designation is indicative of a rather recent valuation as heritage asset in the case of this previously neglected site.

Beyond the cultural significance, the rehabilitated buildings and spaces have economic value to their owners and tenants. Moreover, the café at the reference site had become a popular social

⁴ Outstanding Universal Value refers to a site's significance to humanity at large and is one of the prerequisites for UNESCO World Heritage listing as described in chapter 2. Refer to chapter 3.2 for an introduction to the Pearling Testimony.

gathering point and landmark in the market area for people of different social backgrounds from around Bahrain.

3.4.3 AUTHENTICITY ASSESSMENT OF THE SIYADI SHOPS IN SUQ AL-QAISARIYA

In this subchapter, the author assesses the Siyadi Shop's authenticity as historical testimony to the heyday of the Gulf's and Bahrain's pearling economy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This involves the site's urban, architectural and archaeological testimony as well as intangible heritage dimensions including ownership structures, uses and narratives that relate to the pearling era. The authenticity assessment hence focuses on the comparison of the site in its condition at the time of the inquiry in 2014/15 to its state in the early 20th century before the decline of the pearling economy. The original state during the pearling boom is hence the benchmark for the authenticity assessment. It has, however, to be taken into consideration that later transformations, such as evidence of the economy's decline, are of value as part of this or other narratives which contribute to the site's cultural significance.

The authenticity assessment – alike the field research on the perception of the site – mainly focuses on the elements that were subjected to rehabilitation works from 2010 to 2012. Nevertheless, all elements of the urban ensemble are included in the tabular assessment of figure 29 at the end of this subchapter.

3.4.3.1 Form and design

The site's authenticity in form and design is linked to the spatial and architectural integrity of the vernacular urban ensemble and its individual elements – that is essentially to what extent the spatial relations, layouts, volumes, shapes, designs and architectural details of the late 19th and early 20th centuries are preserved or reinstated. The assessment includes both the exterior and interiors of the restored and adapted historic shop units. Changes to surrounding buildings and spaces are assessed as part of the setting.

Although limited photographic evidence is available of the exact historic appearance of the site's vernacular buildings for comparison (annex fig. 3.4.1-8 to 9), they can – with some reservations – be considered of high authenticity in form and design because their main vernacular features are preserved while non-vernacular additions and modifications have been reversed in the case of the restored shop units. Such additions still somewhat impaired the original form and design of the **western Siyadi Shops** as described in chapter 3.4.1. At the time of the inquiry, they had been subjected only to minor upgrading works and deviated from their original appearance due to non-vernacular additions (annex fig. 3.4.1-78 to 79). The metallic windows in the upper floor premises are for example typical of the urban transformations in Bahrain's old towns in the 1950s and 60s. Some shopfronts, in turn, had already been restored to their original appearance (compare annex fig. 3.4.1-79 and 28 to 30). Overall, the two-storeyed part of the western block was rated on an intermediate level of authenticity in form and design in 2014/15.

Following their restoration, the **two one-storeyed shop units to the rear of the western block** probably deviate from their original appearance due to their exposed coral stone masonry (annex fig. 3.4.1-61 to 62, 82). It is most likely that the exterior and interior elevations of the two units were plastered when they were first built. Disintegrated and missing surface renderings – as a sign of deterioration – can be associated with the decline of the pearling economy, which is part of the narrative. Another deliberate deviation from the original appearance is that the newly installed shopfront shutters are rather plain in design for lack of evidence of their exact

detailing. No modern elements or appliances had been added to the shop units at the time of the field research.

The fully replastered **five shops shop units of the eastern block** upon their restoration probably look much more like when they were built in the early 20th century. However, instead of exposing freshly white-washed walls the brownish colour of the new façade rendering imitates the stained historic plaster remains (annex fig. 3.4.1-67 to 70). This was done for the sake of a more homogeneous and overall pleasing appearance. The façade areas of historic and new plaster are nevertheless slightly distinct. Other variations in design are minor: The location of some replicated rain spouts is not the original, as the sloping of the roofs were changed to improve the drainage. With the exception of the electrical appliances that were left as testimony to the initial electrification of Muharraq in the 1930s, all non-vernacular additions were removed. New appliances such as façade lamps in contemporary design and air conditioning units in the interior are discernible as modern additions but rather inconspicuous. Few non-vernacular additions are historicizing in design, such as the display windows that complement the traditional shops fronts of the eastern corner shop, wooden railings of mezzanine floors as well as name boards on the shopfronts. Another feature that deviates from the original appearance is the archaeological window in the façade of the western corner shop (annex fig. 3.4.1-69 to 70). The rectangular façade area atop the door would have originally been fully plastered. Lastly, due to the restoration works on the surface plaster throughout the site in 2014, further areas of masonry were unintentionally exposed during the period the interviews were taking. Overall, the restored shops units of both blocks can be considered overall authentic in terms of form and design both in their exterior and interior and were hence rated on the second highest level.

Authenticity in form and design is multifaceted in the case of the **sixth adapted shop unit of the eastern block** (annex fig. 3.4.1-57, 83 to 85). The western elevation, with its preserved shutters and ventilation window, repaired vernacular canopy as well as the replastered southern elevation almost give the impression of an intact, typical vernacular shop unit, were it not for the contemporary, slightly recessed roof structure above. The interior of the shop unit, on the contrary, stages the ruined character with the fragmentary traditional roof of mangrove beams, the exposed coral stone masonry and traces of the missing rear wall. These historic features steal the show from the new additions, although these are strikingly modern. Among the few exceptions is the semi-traditional furniture. The sandblasted steel columns, fair-faced concrete roof and glass façade elements were intentionally designed to be as unobtrusive on the vernacular character as possible. Nevertheless, the interior of the sixth shop significantly deviates from its original appearance due to its ruined character and adaptation as café sitting area. Overall, the shop unit is therefore rated on an intermediate level of authenticity in form and design.

The remainder of the eastern block – **the upper café space, the outdoor space and the new building to the south** – significantly differ in form and design from the vernacular shop units which stood in their place during the pearling era. First of all, the plot, which now features an open space, had originally been entirely built up. However, essential features that existed during the late pearling era were reinstated. Most importantly, the containing walls to the east and west of the outdoor space and the southern building restored the former street lines and contour of the eastern plot. They also reinstate essentials of the market's street elevations in form and design despite intentional deviations in details for sake of differentiability (compare

annex fig. 3.4.1-8 to 9, 67 to 68). The archaeological floor windows display remains of date syrup presses from various development stages. Despite the fact that the new additions and reconstructions in the eastern block hence restored some historic features, they are rated on a low level of authenticity in form and design when compared to the site's appearance during the pearling era.

Together, the **urban ensemble** of both blocks of the Siyadi Shops and the contemporary additions are rated on an intermediate level, given that the street layout and urban morphology is rather well preserved and partly reinstated and that authenticity of form and design of the individual buildings differs greatly.

A factor of authenticity that has to be additionally assessed when discussing form and design is whether historic and non-historic elements are differentiable and identifiable as products of their time. According to the progress reports (Kingdom of Bahrain 2011/12) and interviews with the lead conservation architect (I 7) great concern was given in the design process to compliance with the Venice Charter's premise that restoration "must stop at the point where conjecture begins" and that new additions "must be distinct from the architectural composition and must bear a contemporary stamp" (ICOMOS 1964, article 9). To this end, the new roofs and southern elevation of the upper café space were constructed in steel, fair-faced concrete, glass panes and aluminium frames. These additions stand in sharp contrast with the vernacular fabric but are subtle enough not to compromise the traditional character of the site. Repairs of the preserved vernacular structures were in turn carried out identically to the original, or subtly different as in the case of new surface plaster. Reconstructions of vernacular structures, in turn, were carried out with different degrees of abstraction. New or replicated wooden shutters are for example of simpler design and they lack patina. All new containing walls of the open space and the new building in the southern parts of the eastern block were built more or less reminiscent of vernacular shop structures in form and design but include subtle contemporary design features like the non-vernacular wooden window grills (annex fig. 3.4.1-71 to 72, 75 to 77). Such design abstractions also feature in the eastern containing wall, despite photographic evidence of its historic appearance being available, and although this was advanced as an argument for reconstructing the wall in traditional building techniques and materials (annex fig. 3.4.1-67 to 68, 73 to 74). The construction of the low parapet wall of the outdoor sitting area in coral stone masonry was in turn justified with the archaeological evidence. It was built onto preserved foundations of a former shop units (annex fig. 3.4.1-38, 53, 57, 71). Such considerations were carried through to the level of new furnishings and appliances.

For the sake of differentiating between reconstructions and the preserved historic elements throughout the site, the surfaces were additionally color-coded. Walls built in concrete blocks, such as the southern and western containing walls of the open space and the southern building but also the traditionally built eastern wall of the open space are plastered and painted off-white (annex fig. 3.4.1-72 to 73, 76 to 77). The historic shop units of the eastern block stand apart from those reconstructions with a slightly or even distinctly more brownish surface colour. The low reconstructed wall of the outdoor sitting area however does not stand apart from the restored historic fabric in colour. The colour coding is relatively subtle for the sake of an overall homogeneous appearance. Moreover, it will successively fade out as plaster surfaces quickly get stained in Bahrain's climate and frequent sand storms. Lastly, the colour code was not applied in the minor façade upgrading works administered to the two-storeyed western Siyadi Shops.

These maintained their stained, off-white façade paint along Tujjar Avenue, while their rear façade was repainted blueish (annex fig. 3.4.1-78 to 79). Whether the different levels of abstraction, colour coding and archaeological windows actually made the interventions and historicity of the individual elements legible for site users was assessed during the inquiry and will be discussed in chapter 3.4.4.

3.4.3.2 Materials and substance

As per the cultural significance statement, the material authenticity of the urban ensemble and its individual buildings hinges on the extent to which they preserve historic substance from the late pearling era – that is from the late 19th century up to the 1930s. In addition, the site's archaeological remains from earlier phases, such as the traces of the 19th century land reclamation, are considered valuable. Later additions, particularly if they are architecturally, structurally or chemically not compatible with the historic remains are, on the contrary, not considered “valid contributions” that “must be respected” (ICOMOS 1964, article 11). Likewise, all reconstructions and new additions that were built during the rehabilitation works are not historic and not considered authentic in substance in this sense.

As opposed to the first reference site, the level of material authenticity is rather well investigated and documented in the case of the Siyadi Shops. Respect for material authenticity was given highest priority during the rehabilitation works of 2010 to 12. Overall, the historic shop units of both blocks maintain a significant amount of historic fabric (annex fig. 3.4.1-1).

Only such repair and reconstruction works that were necessary for reinstating the structural and architectural integrity of the vernacular features while maintaining the maximum possible amount of original fabric were administered to the historic shop units. This included the removal of any cement surface plaster and mortar which is chemically not compatible with the lime-based vernacular materials (annex fig. 3.4.1-60 to 61), the filling of lacunas in the coral stone masonry in traditional technique including the reintroduction of wooden ties, deep filling of instable masonry with lime-gypsum mortar, grouting and repointing of joints (annex fig. 3.4.1-63 to 66) and – not in all cases – traditional replastering with lime-gypsum plaster (annex fig. 3.4.1-42). The repair of vernacular ceilings and roofs involved the cleaning and oiling of wooden beams upon which bamboo strips and palm frond mats were placed and new layers of lime-gypsum screed reapplied. In some cases, original bamboo strips and palm frond mats could be reused. The traditional lime-gypsum surface plaster is a particularly fragile feature. Most of it has disintegrated or successively been replaced with cement plaster throughout the site, leaving only fragments of historic surface rendering. These remains were cleaned and consolidated and partly integrated with new traditional plaster. Unfortunately, no systematic mapping of preserved and new plaster on the historic shops' exterior and interior elevations seems to have been made. Although the new plaster was colour treated to visually blend in, the aim of the works was that historic plaster remains would be identifiable as such at close look even by laypeople (I 7b). Whether they are, was further investigated during the inquiry.

In the case of the **two-storeyed Siyadi Shops of the western block**, cement rendering is among the various non-vernacular additions that had not yet been reversed. Nevertheless, the block is overall of rather high material authenticity (refer to the plans indicating non-vernacular building parts in annex fig. 3.4.1-1, 10 to 11).

Given their advanced deterioration, works on the **two one-storeyed shop units to the rear of the western block** were in fact not as minimal as they appear when viewing the result (compare

annex fig. 3.4.1-26 to 28, 80 to 82). Despite the careful conservation and reintegration of historic fabric, the repairs required the use of a fair amount of new, albeit traditional materials. The masonry had to be backfilled and newly grouted, the individual roof layers rebuilt and new shopfronts and a ventilation window installed. Overall, the two shop units' material authenticity is nevertheless high.

The **five shop units along the sloped alleyway of the eastern block** were in better structural conditions but likewise required some repair (compare annex fig. 3.4.1-12 to 17, 23, 67, 69 to 70). Lost vernacular features were fully reinstated, including new surface plaster. New wooden shopfront shutters where required. New additions, such as railings for mezzanine floors in the interior (annex fig. 3.4.1-44), are minimal. The maximum possible amount of authentic fabric and features was maintained – this extends to flooring boards and a wooden ladder in the case of the mezzanine floors, to stay with the same example. Material authenticity of the five shop units is therefore likewise high.

In the case of the **sixth adapted shop unit of the eastern block** which was partially collapsed, the ruined character was maintained by limiting the intervention on the historic fabric to consolidation works in line with the principle of minimal intervention (compare annex fig. 3.4.1-19 to 22, 71, 84 to 85). In this case, the disintegrated fragments of the upper roof layers were removed and not reconstructed. Surface plaster was reapplied only on exterior surfaces. The adapted shop unit moreover retains one of the three sets of historic shopfront shutters that were preserved and repaired throughout the eastern block. The sixth unit was therefore rated on the highest level of material authenticity despite having been complemented with new building parts. These are considered additions and assessed separately. Given the fact that most authentic brass hinges and locks got lost during the works, similar ones were bought at a local flea market and installed throughout the site (Kingdom of Bahrain 2010/11). Strictly speaking, these are authentic in substance but not in location.

The exposed date syrup presses are authentic in substance but were consolidated and subjected to minor repairs. In order to ensure their long-term preservation, protective features include a railing and ventilation of the glass covered floor window in the café (annex fig. 3.4.1-49 to 50).

According to the progress reports (Kingdom of Bahrain 2010/11) all new additions were conceived structurally independent not to harm any historic elements. Their design was moreover continuously revised as per the archaeological discoveries. Most **archaeological remains** were reburied as a means of optimal protection and the foundations of new additions redesigned so as not to harm the finds. It is however, doubtful, whether massive additions such as the concrete foundations for the added roof structures could be removed without harming the fragile vernacular structures, such as in the case of the sixth shop unit (annex fig. 3.4.1-46). Evidence of the structures' fragility is for example, that cement plaster had to be chipped manually with chisel and hammer during the rehabilitation works, as the use of a jack hammer almost made one of the vernacular shop unit walls collapse (Kingdom of Bahrain 2010/11). The principle of minimal impact and reversibility (ICOMOS Australia 1999, articles 21.1 and 15.2) might therefore in fact not have been paid full respect.

The material authenticity of the **urban ensemble**, including the newly designed parts of the eastern block, is overall rated on an intermediate level due to the significant proportion of new or reconstructed elements. The eastern wall of the open space was reconstructed in recycled Bahraini sea stones. Although the stones are historic, they are no authentic material evidence

of this site. It shall however be mentioned, that some of the reconstructed elements were built onto historic foundations and hence do feature authentic fabric under-ground. It shall also be highlighted once more, that the interventions on the vernacular elements at this reference site were carried out with considerable care for the surviving historic materials and substance which reflects in the high material authenticity of the historic elements.

3.4.3.3 Use and function

Muharraq's historic market remains a vibrant commercial area but trading conditions and practices have been changing since the decline of the pearling era and parts of the reference site had lost their original commercial use and function.

Best preserved with regard to use and function are the **two-storeyed Siyadi Shops of the western block**. Up to date, the shops and central storage space at ground floor are used for retail of basic consumables. At the time of the field research, a senior member of a Siyadi family kept attending the corner shop on Tujjar Avenue on a daily basis as a means of keeping business contacts and socializing, just like during the pearling era. The upper floor is still being used for accommodation and was even expanded for this purpose. However, the upper floor is no longer used by Siyadi family for representation and recreation. It had been rented out as accommodation for migrant labourers.

The one-storeyed vernacular shop units to the rear of the western block and those of the eastern block had on the contrary been degraded to permanent storage areas, abandoned or even made space for an informal parking lot on fallow land. The 2010-12 rehabilitation works reinstated retail functions in the **five restored shop units of the eastern block** and complemented them with gastronomy in the **adapted sixth shop** unit. The **two shop units to the rear of the western Siyadi Shops** remained storage areas at the time of the field research. The display of the historic date syrup presses in two archaeological windows reference a former use that has long stopped at the site.

According to oral history there has never been a coffee shop at the site in the past (Kingdom of Bahrain 2010a). Historically, a large number of coffee shops were dispersed throughout the market. They formed fundamental institutions for the traditional operation of the market and sustained its social and business functions. According to Yarwood, there were about 20 coffee shops in the 1930s (2005, 178). Their number has probably reduced to date, but the clientele of those that remain still tends to be primarily male. The newly installed café at the reference site, on the contrary, equally attracts women and families of most varied cultural and social backgrounds including Bahraini nationals and foreigners. Albeit, low-income migrants from South-East-Asia, who constitute an important section of the local community in number, make their appearance at the site rather exclusively as sales, cleaning or security personnel.⁵

Formalized public open spaces did not exist in historic Muharraq, nor did public toilets. The 2010-12 rehabilitation works established both at the site as they support the commercial uses and are in demand today. So are parking spaces, which were severely lacking at the site at the time of the field research.

Traditional ownership was maintained throughout the site, where possible. Nevertheless, the heritage authority exerted a right to influence the choice of tenants and products within the

⁵ The assessment of the clientele at the site and the wider market area is based on the author's participant protocols of the time of the field research. No survey was carried out.

rehabilitated spaces and subsidized their rents. As a means of site-branding, businesses that offer local or regional products were given preference. These include Bahraini handicraft products and Arabic perfumes (annex fig. 3.4.1-69, 87). The display of such goods is visually pleasing and adds to the traditional atmosphere but is not necessarily historically authentic as groceries were originally sold at the site during the pearling era (annex fig. 3.4.1-5). Products more typically for sale in Suq al-Qaisariya are imported, low-quality items. That is why the choice of tenants proved to be only partly successful as the project's lead architect self-critically stated in an interview in 2014 (I 7b). Some of the shops' business models had turned out as not economically viable. Those shops were seldom open or permanently closed by the time of the inquiry. In consequence, some of the original tenants returned to the restored shops some years later.

Overall, the usage of the site after its rehabilitation can be rated rather high in terms of authenticity for being similar, or at least related, to the site's original 'use and function'.

3.4.3.4 Traditions, techniques and management systems

The traditions of trading and date syrup production as well as traditional ownership are addressed in other sections of this chapter. The focus of the information source 'Traditions, techniques and management systems' is, as in the first reference site, on structural authenticity – that is the perseverance and employment of vernacular building techniques at the site.

Most of the surviving vernacular fabric of both blocks of the Siyadi Shops exhibits a high structural authenticity. The most common deviations before their restoration were cement surface plaster and provisional door shutters. As referred to when assessing the information source 'Materials and substance', great attention was paid to the employment of original building techniques and materials in the restoration of the site's vernacular shop units between 2010 and 2012. In addition, traditional building techniques and materials were used for some reconstructed elements – namely the reestablishment of the eastern street line of the eastern block with a wall that was traditionally built of plastered coral stone masonry with pieces of palm trunks as tie beams and lintels (annex fig. 3.4.1-41, 51 to 52), as well as the low, traditionally plastered coral stone wall on historic foundations in the outdoor sitting area (annex fig. 3.4.1-53).

The works on the Siyadi Shops between 2010 and 2012 served Bahrain's heritage authority as capacity building for ensuing architectural and urban conservation initiatives throughout Muharraq and beyond. Experience with architectural conservation in the country was scarce at the time. This caused several challenges. Not only was there a general lack of understanding for the benefit and requirements of architectural conservation. There was also a lack of human skills and resources for the labour-intensive restoration work and no practical experience among the contractors in that field. The principles of minimal intervention and in-situ preservation of historic building elements as well as the requirement to document all works steps were new to contractors and labourers.

Moreover, the project struggled with a poor availability of required materials and tools (Kingdom of Bahrain 2011/12; I 7b). This ranged from formerly imported mangrove beams to sea stone, mud and sand which used to be locally sourced. The remaining coral reefs are today protected and cannot be quarried anymore. Coral stone hence had to be recycled from derelict vernacular buildings. Lime, which had been made for millennia by burning desert lime stone in so-called *kilns*, is no longer produced locally and has to be imported. Imported materials, which

also include sand, however tend to have different characteristics than the local ones that were traditionally used. Moreover, their steady supply had yet to be formalized. This extended to chemicals and tools required for the fine conservation works on decorative and plaster elements such as consolidates, epoxy resin, colour pigments and syringes. Retail of the latter is for example restricted in Bahrain.

The members of the project team, too, had to familiarize themselves with the specificities of Bahrain's vernacular fabric and how to restore or replicate it. As one of the first steps, laboratory analyses were made of historic material in order to experiment with the replication of mortar and plaster compositions. The process involved trial and error as the intensive maintenance and repairs works that were necessary in 2014 illustrate (annex fig. 3.4.1-86 to 87). One of the main challenges is the crystallization of salt from ground water that rises in the traditional masonry walls and destroys masonry and surface plaster.

The project team profited from past local experiences of rehabilitating or replicating vernacular buildings – particularly from the experiences of the Bahraini firm EWAN-Al Bahrain, which started recuperating the disappearing knowledge of the tradition in the 1990s. However, cooperation between the heritage authority and EWAN seems to have intensified only after the 2010-12 rehabilitation works of the Siyadi Shops (I 7b). The contractor which was engaged in the shops' rehabilitation previously had no experience with the local vernacular heritage. An additional challenge for the project and the capacity building endeavour was that the team of labourers was unstable (Kingdom of Bahrain 2011/12). Its members often changed as the contractor engaged the workers at various construction sites. Moreover, they were foreign migrants who planned to stay in Bahrain only temporarily. The training of Bahraini nationals was minimal in this project but intensified in later ones (I 7; Kingdom of Bahrain 2012).

Despite these challenges, the restoration and above-mentioned reconstructions aimed at staying close to the specificities of the vernacular building tradition. A number of deviations were however embraced for structural or functional reasons. Among these are an experimental ventilation system of in the historic shop units aimed at reducing the rise of ground water in the walls. It consists of ventilation trenches of approximately 50 cm width which were dug inside the shop units along their exterior walls. The trenches are bound by hollow cement blocks, filled with pebbles and covered with concrete tiles that harmonize with the remaining floor surface in colour and texture (annex fig. 3.4.1-43, 47). In order to minimize interference with the historic fabric and load bearing systems, the ventilation trenches were additionally used to accommodate modern technical infrastructure such as electrical conduits. Moreover, concrete floors reinforced with steel framework were installed throughout most of the eastern block, both indoors and outdoors, in order to improve stability and longevity. Equally in deviation from the vernacular technique, waterproofing membranes were included when reconstructing the traditional roofs. Moreover, light weight concrete tiles were placed loosely atop the uppermost layer of the traditional gypsum-lime screed. Onto these, the engines of the split air-conditioning units were placed. Elements of the traditional ventilation system, such as window grilles or ventilation holes in the upper store fronts were maintained but hence complimented with such modern appliances. Electrical ventilation, too, had to be provided in the case of the exposed date syrup press in the floor window of the café in order to avoid damage from condensation of evaporating ground water.

Overall, the site's historic buildings exhibit high structural authenticity with regard to preserved and restored vernacular materials and structures. Given that most new additions and reconstructed elements were built in contemporary techniques and materials, the urban ensemble's authenticity is rated on an intermediate level in this regard.

3.4.3.5 Location and setting

As in the case of Central Manama, all buildings of the reference site within the historic market of Muharraq remain in their original location. But their relative location to the sea has changed. The site is entirely built on land that was reclaimed from the sea during the early phases of this practice. With further subsequent land reclamation, the port in the site's vicinity has ceased to exist and related trade practices, including those of the pearling economy, stopped. The socio-economic structure changed and the area somewhat impoverished although it remains Muharraq's main market. Despite the advent of modern shopping malls throughout Bahrain, trade persists at the market and both functional and urban changes were less profound in this reference site's setting than at the other. This is mostly due to the fact that Muharraq attracted less investment and development. Moreover, a historic mosque remains operational in a new building in the site's direct vicinity.

Although most of the historic fabric has been replaced throughout the neighbourhood, the urban structure with its small-scale plots is maintained and the average height of buildings remains at one to two storeys. Therefore, a certain traditional character persists throughout the neighbourhood, despite the loss of the harmonizing effect of vernacular building style and the dominance of colourful clutter of modern commercial advertisement boards on heterogeneous shopfronts (annex fig. 3.4.1-79). Although car traffic, including stationary traffic, significantly increased since the early 20th century, street widening has been of minor consequence to the urban fabric in the neighbourhood.

The rehabilitation works at the reference site as well as some of the heritage authority's interventions that preceded and followed them in their direct and wider setting contributed to repairing the urban morphology. Reintegrating the surviving but neglected vernacular buildings into their contemporary socio-economic context involved not only the reinstatement of their architectural features but also reestablishing their commercial usage. Some of the more recent iconic architectural interventions in the neighbourhood certainly had a less restorative effect on the urban morphology but are possibly effective in promoting the area and boosting tourism as a new commercial function.

Although the functional, architectural and urban changes in the site's vicinity were less in this reference site than in the one in Manama, the information sources 'Location and setting' was likewise rated on an intermediate level of authenticity.

3.4.3.6 Language, and other forms of intangible heritage

The Siyadi Shop's rehabilitation works between 2010 and 2012 was conceived on the basis of a holistic understanding of cultural significance as per the Burra Charter (ICOMOS Australia 1999).⁶ The physical interventions were hence designed with consideration for intangible heritage dimensions. Among the obvious intangible heritage assets associated to the site apart from trading traditions, addressed above, are place names, traditional ownership and date syrup

⁶ At the time of the rehabilitation works, which preceded the field research, the updated version of the Burra Charter of 2013 was not yet published.

production. Moreover, various other intangible heritage expressions are used for branding purposes at the site.

Suq al-Qaisariya is the traditional name of the wider market area which links to a regional tradition that is significantly older than the market itself. The name stems from a loan word which was derived from Latin *caesārĕa* via Greek *kaisáreia* (Kiegel-Keicher 2005, 184-191). It designates historic typologies of roofed market areas in the Oriental-Islamic cultural realm, reaching from North Africa to the Middle East. They were originally primarily dedicated to luxurious goods and usually do not offer accommodation (Scharabi 1985, 64). There are however multiple variations. The name reference to the Roman/Byzantine emperor indicates that these markets most likely followed the model of byzantine markets which were under imperial administration. Several market areas in Islamic contexts are today still called *Qaisariya*, including parts of the markets at Isfahan in Iran, Al Hofuf in Saudi Arabia and Erbil in Iraq.

The vernacular shops units at the reference site were officially named the Siyadi Shops only in 2010 when they were registered as monuments under this name in the course of nominating the Pearling Testimony for UNESCO World Heritage (Kingdom of Bahrain 2010a). The name references the link to the local pearl merchant family Siyadi which built the shop units but does not seem to be commonly used. Since its rehabilitation, the site seems most commonly referred to by the brand name of the newly installed café, Saffron, as per the author's observation. It is also name tagged on the website [googlemaps.com](https://www.google.com/maps) as such.

When designating the vernacular buildings as national monuments and rehabilitating the site, traditional ownership was maintained where possible. This is one example of how the project sought to comply with the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO 1972, Article 5a). Previously, the heritage authority had purchased all buildings when registering them as monuments. In this case, and for the first time, the heritage authority negotiated memoranda of understanding of rights and duties on a one-to-one basis with the owners (I 7b). The fact, that the ownership of parts of the fallow land was unclear at the outset of the project in fact caused some delays in the rehabilitation process (Kingdom of Bahrain 2010/11). Eventually, the Siyadi family remained the owners of the historic shop units and parts of the newly-built up land. The western parts of the open land were identified as property of a religious endowment (Arabic: *waqf*)⁷ and remained such. Only the most southern parts of the barren land were identified as property of another Bahraini merchant family and had to be purchased by the Ministry of Culture for the construction of the new facilities. Continuity of traditional ownership of the historic shop units is an important factor of authenticity in this reference site, particularly with regard to the link to the former pearl merchant family. In the assessment, Abdullah bin Hassan Siyadi's daily presence at the western Siyadi Shops at the time of the field research is acknowledged as a sign of continued traditional ownership with the highest authenticity level.

Archaeological investigations brought to light a multitude of traditional date syrup presses throughout the wider area and at the reference site. Date syrup production and its export are a millennia-old tradition in Bahrain, which was traditionally referred to as the country of one million palm trees. The production has been fully industrialized and had stopped at the reference site latest by the mid-20th century. This heritage is now tangibly evidenced and showcased at the site with the two exposed date syrup presses (annex fig. 3.4.1-37, 49 to 50).

⁷ According to Yarwood, 20% of Muharraq's historic market were waqf property in the 1980s (1988, 200).

Lastly, the heritage authority promoted the choice of tenants who sell locally produced handicraft, clothes, Arabic perfumes and traditional Bahraini food. The government subsidised their rents as a means of supporting intangible heritage expressions on the one hand and with the aim of place branding and economically upgrading the area on the other. As described above, this attempt was not fully successful. The café however succeeds in using the local culinary heritage for its corporate branding and extends this to dressing the waiters in traditional Bahraini gowns, playing traditional Arabic background music from tape and putting up traditional decorative items like oriental brass coffee pots. However, these are examples of “staged authenticity”, as Dean MacCannell (1973) first called it, rather than authentic intangible heritage expressions.

Overall, the urban ensemble and the individual vernacular buildings were rated on a high level of authenticity with regard to the above-described intangible heritage expressions.

3.4.3.7 Spirit and feeling

Emotional attitudes of site users towards the rehabilitated site were assessed in the interviews and are further discussed in chapter 3.4.4.

In the past, Suq al-Qaisariya was a commercial area and as such primarily of use value and of social value for a male clientele. Spirit and feeling hence can be considered to constitute a slightly less intrinsic source of information of authenticity of this reference site than in the case of the national icon Bab al-Bahrain with its strong symbolism. However, from the author’s experience, for example when asking directions in the market area in 2014, the rehabilitated site, precisely the café, had turned into a landmark, too. It is also evident, that as the site and its vernacular buildings acquired historicity and value of rarity for some, feelings of nostalgia and cultural attachment play some role. This is exemplified by the following translation of an Arabic note from the visitor log book at the café:

“The spirit of the past sneaks out from the walls filling the atmosphere with nostalgia. The environment is pervaded with authenticity... [It] is a brilliant embodiment of the history of Bahrain. Only few places have succeeded in reviving the spirit and the heritage of Bahrain in such a manner.” (visitor’s comment dated July 2012, quoted in el-Habashi 2015)

The site’s - or more precisely the café’s – atmosphere described in this quote is certainly fundamentally different from the hustle and bustle of the pearling town’s market in the late 19th and early 20th century. The market however remains buzzing with trade. Olfactory and acoustic characteristics surely changed with the products on offer and with the increase of motorized traffic in addition to the noise from electrical air conditioning. The prayer call from the adjacent mosque, however, still resonates five times a day, albeit from tape. And although the traditional atmosphere and gustatory experience at the café may be staged, they do equally play into the site’s spirit of place.

With regard to the clientele, which is an important factor of spirit of place, the site’s social characteristics have significantly changed since the pearling era. A certain multiethnicity which characterized the pearling town’s market remains, while the presence of women at the reference site has certainly increased. As other governmental and private urban conservation initiatives carried out in Muharraq since the 1990s the site’s rehabilitation aimed at increasing the town’s attractiveness for a national audience and for tourists. In order to reverse the economic downtown of the area gentrification was intended. The local community of migrant

labourers from South-East Asia were hence no target group and largely excluded as customers. Product prices moreover seem to determine a predominantly middle-class clientele as per the author's observation. The reference site in Muharraq can hence not be considered as socially integrative as the one in Manama, although the author observed customers of varied cultural and social backgrounds at the site.

Given that the traditional market atmosphere is rather well maintained or reinstated, the authenticity level in terms of 'Spirit and feeling' is overall rated high for the urban ensemble and its individual elements.

3.4.3.8 Other internal and external factors

The importance of research and dissemination of historic background knowledge for the assessment of a site's authenticity was discussed in the context of the first reference site. Research and considerations of interpretation and truthful presentation of the site were integral to the rehabilitation works at the second reference site, which were carried out in the context of a UNESCO World Heritage nomination and hence strived to comply with international conservation ethics. Nevertheless, there are certain shortcomings with regard to research, documentation, presentation and interpretation.

Since the preparation to the completion of the works the project involved intensive multidisciplinary research ranging from oral history documentation to archival research and site investigations. A "range of oral and written information, material remains, traditions, and meanings attributed to [the] site" were taken into consideration in the project design (ICOMOS 2008, article 2.2). As stipulated in the Venice Charter (ICOMOS 1964, article 16), the finds and physical interventions were documented and archived. Regular project reports were produced (Kingdom of Bahrain 2011/12). However, for several reasons, not all interventions were thoroughly documented. On the one hand the design was continuously adapted to new discoveries or requirements. Some interventions were therefore executed without detailed plans being produced beforehand or afterwards. Moreover, the findings were not always sufficiently analysed with a view to understanding the historical development of the site. There was for example no attempt to date the archaeological date syrup presses. Such deficiencies are partly due to the intense time pressure under which the pilot project was implemented within a UNESCO World Heritage nomination and to lack of human resources and skills.

With regard to interpretation and presentation, the communicative power of all architectural works ranging from conservation to new construction was given utmost attention in the project design in line with the recommendations of the Ename Charter (ICOMOS 2008) and other charters.⁸ The legibility of the architectural interventions and historicity of individual elements was a priority. To this end, historic, reconstructed and added buildings and building parts are presented in distinct designs, ranging from clearly contemporary to traditional vernacular features and color-coded surface plaster. It also included the display of archaeological finds and the presentation of historic construction techniques which are usually concealed from sight by surface plaster (annex fig. 3.4.1-70, 80 to 82, 84 to 85). The floor tiling of the outdoors area in the eastern block subtly depicts reburied date syrup presses and foundations of former shop units. Likewise, the preservation and display of building elements and accessories from various

⁸ Refer to an article by the author of this thesis and the lead conservation architect for a detailed analysis of the project's compliance with the ENAME Charter 2008 (Battis and el-Habashi 2014).

historic phases, such as derelict electrical fittings, has a didactic dimension to it. To what extent these interpretive design features are successful and truthful will be further assessed in chapters 3.3.4 and 4.

Striving to optimize physical and intellectual access (ICOMOS 2008, article 1), the design includes a barrier-free ramp that links the upper and lower spaces of the eastern block. Two interpretive panels in Arabic and English moreover address both the local and the foreign audience. One panel is dedicated to the date syrup presses which were discovered during the site's rehabilitation and describes their former functioning. The panel includes photos from the archaeological finds at the site that were later reburied (annex fig. 3.4.1-72 to 73). The second panel provides some information of the urban development of the market area with a focus on the shift of the shoreline (annex fig. 3.4.1-76 to 77). Reference to the Pearling Testimony is however minimal and the linkage of the Siyadi Shops to the former pearl merchant family and their role within the economy is not explained at the site. Its contribution to the World Heritage Site's pearling narrative and Outstanding Universal Value is hence not made clear. At the time of the field research, there was also little online information available about the rather newly inscribed World Heritage Site and its individual components. The heritage authority later improved online interpretation on its own website (<https://culture.gov.bh/en>) and set up another for the Pearling Pathway (<https://pearlingpath.bh/en/>).

The site's interpretation and presentation extends to the choice of tenants and products on offer. As described above, these promote local Bahraini traditions and thereby the "idea of 'homogenous' national culture and political community" as in the case of the first reference site (Fuccaro 2009, 3). At the time of the field research, "reflection on alternative historical hypotheses", as stipulated for example in the Ename Charter (ICOMOS 2008, article 2.2), had not been provided for in the overall still rather basic interpretation facilities.

In conclusion, research and particularly interpretation certainly still have room for improvement in the case of this reference site. However, in comparison to earlier rehabilitation works, including most of those described in the case of the first reference site, research and interpretation as 'Other internal and external factors' of authenticity, can be rated rather high. Given that the western Siyadi Shops were still awaiting rehabilitation works including further research in the course of the planned physical restoration, this part of the site was rated slightly less authentic in this regard.

3.4.3.9 Overall authenticity judgment (summary)

Overall, the reference site in Muharraq exhibited a rather high authenticity level at the time of the field research. Particularly the restored shop units of both blocks had a consistently high level of authenticity across the various information sources in the author's assessment.

This is partly due to the state of conservation at the outset of the works. Although the decline of the pearling economy and the oil-era developments took their toll on the reference site and its setting, essentials of the market's urban morphology, its atmosphere and its trade function were maintained. The eastern block of the reference site was in fact one the most neglected spots within the market area but the remaining fabric maintained a very high level of authenticity. On the one hand, the abandonment and neglect of the historic buildings caused the decay of some of the vernacular shop units and the complete loss of others. On the other hand, the neglect prevented intrusive interventions on the remaining historic fabric. Only the two-storeyed parts of the western block were continuously used and maintained which included

some modifications. This is reflected in their intermediate to high level of authenticity despite having been subjected only to minimal restoration works at the time of the field research. An intangible asset of the western block which was rated highest is the continued ownership and use of by the pearl merchant family, Siyadi, who originally built the shops during the heyday of the pearling era. New additions and reconstructions naturally feature as the least authentic elements in the assessment. They do however have positive effects on the site's overall authenticity.

Overall, the rehabilitation works carried out in Suq al-Qaisariya between 2010 to 2012 had a quite restorative effect on the authenticity of the urban ensemble of the so-called Siyadi Shops. The works preserved or reinstated the original architectural features of the remaining vernacular buildings and repaired essentials of the urban characteristics by reconstructing some elements and by introducing new facilities. Not less importantly, the buildings and spaces were functionally reintegrated into the market area. The project team had a clear focus on maintaining material authenticity and hence achieved to preserve testimony of various historic phases. The project design was moreover repeatedly revised in order to accommodate the protection and display of archaeological discoveries made during the works. Nevertheless, there seem to be shortcoming with regard to the reversibility of some interventions. In addition to the focus on material authenticity, intangible dimensions ranging from traditional ownership and uses to vernacular building techniques were given much thought. Some of the attempts to support and stage intangible heritage expressions, such as the installation of preselected tenants selling traditional items, however, were critically assessed for authenticity. Last but not least, multidisciplinary research preceded and accompanied the works which were documented as much as the available capacities allowed.

Serving as pilot for capacity building for the conservation of Bahrain's vernacular built heritage, the use of traditional construction techniques played an important role. This was at a time when conservative architectural rehabilitation practices were only starting to emerge in Bahrain. Given the lack of experience with conserving the local vernacular building and scarcity of human and material resources required for the task, the project faced significant challenges and naturally relied on trial and error to some extent. This also applies to some of the innovations which were introduced for functional or structural reasons in deviation from the vernacular building tradition. The introduction of ventilation trenches in order to reduce the rise of ground water in the stone masonry was for example clearly not as effective as imagined.

With regard to interpretation and presentation, the architectural design was very ambitious, maybe over-ambitious, in making the various levels of interventions legible. From the author's perspective, the attempts to make historic, restored and added elements differentiable throughout the site are slightly overwhelming and inconsistent, such as in the case of the color-coded surface plaster. Another shortcoming in the site's presentation and interpretation is that the two informational boards that were installed at the site, make no reference to Siyadis and their role as pearl merchants during the pearling era. The site's contribution to the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site Pearling, Testimony of an Island Economy was hence still poorly communicated at the time of the field research.

Despite such limitations, the historic assets of the reference site in Suq al-Qaisariya display a rather consistently high level of authenticity. This is at least partly a result of the rehabilitation works of 2010 to 2012.

Information sources of authenticity	Site-specific information sources of authenticity	Ensemble of the Siyadi Shops	western block		eastern block		
			two-storeyed parts	one-storeyed shop units	five shop units along the alley	sixth ruined shops unit	new additions and reconstructions
Form and design	Authenticity of layout and designs						
Materials and substance	Material authenticity of the historic buildings						
Use and function	Commercial functions						
Traditions, techniques and management systems	Building techniques/ structural authenticity						
Location and setting	Relation to the sea & town/ urban morphology						
Language, and other forms of intangible heritage	Names, traditional ownership						
Spirit and feeling	Traditional market atmosphere						
Other internal and external factors	Interpretation/ research						

Degree of authenticity:

highest	->				lowest	unknown
5	4	3	2	1	0	

Fig. 3.4-29: Tabular assessment of authenticity information sources of the Siyadi Shops

3.4.4 PERCEPTIONS OF THE SIYADI SHOPS IN SUQ AL-QAISARIYA BY THE INTERVIEWEES

This subchapter describes the perception of the second reference site by the interviewees. Again, diagrams serve to illustrate the core findings of the inquiry and compare the perceptions by architects and non-architects. The subchapter is accompanied by the tabular assessment of the interview statements in annex 3.4.4. Imagery referenced is that of annex 3.4.1.

3.4.4.1 The interviews

The assessment of the site's perception is based on 33 interviews with 34 people (refer to diagram 3.4-1 below and to table 1.3. A in the annex). 16 interviewees were taken on a tour at the site and interviewed about their perception of it. These interviews are marked in bold in diagram 3.4-1. The focus of attention was on the eastern block of the Siyadi Shops together with the two restored shop units of the western block.

The tour usually started in the sloped alleyway that connects Bu Maher Avenue and Tujjar Avenue (annex fig. 3.4.1-1). From there, the five restored shops of the eastern block were assessed. Most interviewee were then walked along Bu Maher Avenue past the reconstructed eastern wall into the block's open outdoor space. The visits continued in the western pedestrian passage from where the restored shop units of the western block as well as the newly added shops in the southern parts of the eastern block were viewed. Most commonly, the author took the interview partners into the adapted sixth and extended shop unit with the café at the end of the interview. Several stayed there for a joint drink during or after the interview. While the interior of the café with the adapted sixth shop unit was part of all on-site tours, the interviewees visited and assessed the interior of only few of the other shop units, if any. The on-site interviews took place at various daytimes and lighting conditions. While the café and outdoor space was open and accessible during all interviews, only some of the newly restored shops were usually open to customers. For comparison, the author showed the photograph of the site from the 1970s (annex fig. 3.4.1-9) a photo of the archaeological remains found during the works (annex fig. 3.4.1-38) as well as pictures of the survey in 2008 (annex fig. 3.4.1-12, 28, 20, 22) during the interviews.

Five of the interviewees, who were taken on a tour, were architects, including two employees of the national heritage authority (I 16,30). One of the two had been involved in follow-up repair works at the site (I 30). The other 11 interviewees represented various different professional backgrounds.

Additionally, seven people participated in significantly shorter, mostly spontaneous interviews at the site (I 28,29,34,35,36,37,45). These include three Bahraini female customers of the site's café (I 36,37,47) and four male Bahraini passers-by with whom the author engaged in a short discussion at the site or in its direct vicinity (I 34,35,45). An incidental recording of a commentary by a site visitor was counted as an eighth spontaneous interview (I 47). Moreover, the author spontaneously talked to a security guard (I 28) stationed at the site's outdoor space and to a waiter of the café (I 29) – both migrant workers from Bangladesh. The author additionally conducted two short off-site interviews with a Bahraini artist who had visited the site and café previously (I 46) and with a Bahraini lady from Muharraq's conservative community who is a regular customer of the café (I 50).

Moreover, interviews with a wider thematic scope were conducted with seven local and foreign architects. Most were employees or consultants to the local heritage authority (I 7,16,23,24,25,30,32,33). Three of those were involved in the site's rehabilitation of 2010-12: the Egyptian lead conservation architect (I 7), a Lebanese conservation architect (I 23), and a Lebanese

architect/ interior designer (I 25). Last but not least, an architect of the consultancy firm Gulf House Engineering, who was involved in rehabilitation schemes for Suq al-Qaisariya commented on the site. In total, 12 of the interviews about the perception of this reference site were conducted with architects and 21 with a total of 22 people of other professional backgrounds. 15 of the interviewees were Bahraini, 19 were foreigners. 19 of the interviewees were representatives of eastern backgrounds, 11 were people of eastern origin who were educated or had lived in Western countries, and four were people of Western origin.

Architects (12/5)			Other professional backgrounds (22/11)		
Eastern (5/4)	East-western (6/0)	Western (1/1)	Eastern (14/4)	East-western (5/4)	Western (3/3)
16,17,21,25,30	7,22,23,24,32,33	20	4,11,15,18,28,29,34,35^{x2} , 36,37,45,47,50	8,9,10,12,46	3,13,14
bold = on-site interview with a tour at the site/ not bold = expert off-site or spontaneous on-site interview Interview 35 involved two interviewees.					

Diagram 3.4-1: **People interviewed about their perception of the reference site in Suq al-Qaisariya**

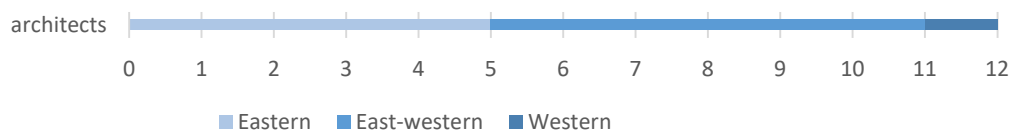


Diagram 3.4-2: **Cultural backgrounds of the interviewed architects**

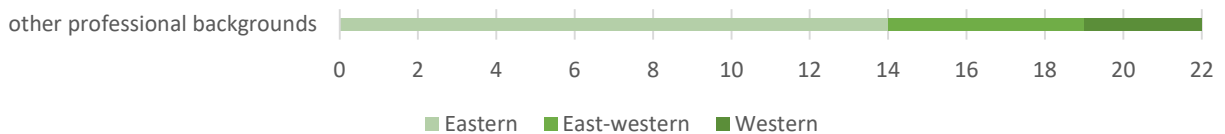


Diagram 3.4-3: **Cultural backgrounds of the interviewees of other professional backgrounds**

3.4.4.2 Background knowledge and personal relation to the site of the interviewees

The author asked most interviewees about their personal connection to the site and their knowledge of it. Moreover, such information was disclosed in the course of many conversations. According to the statements made, the level of familiarity with the site and its history and development differed greatly among the interviewees (refer to annex 3.4.4.2).

While most partners of the spontaneous and shorter interviews were not asked about their background knowledge of the site (I 34,35,45,46,47,50), the site’s security guard said he was “not informed” about the site (I 28). This also seemed to be true for the waiter who was interviewed at the café (I 29). While most interviewees had been to the site prior to the joint visit, eight saw the rehabilitated Siyadi Shops for the first time during the interview. Nine interviewees said they were regular or at least occasional customers at the café (I 17,15,36,37,50,8,10,12,13). Two of the regular visitors (I 3,12), whom the author asked to describe the site and how it changed from memory, admitted that they had never paid attention to the architecture and space during previous visits:

“I go to this restaurant to eat. And I have been there a couple of times but not examining the place closely. Maybe if we go there now, I will be able to tell you if it has changed a lot in the last 20 plus years.” (I 12a)

At least four interviewees had heard of the café or had seen photos of it online before visiting the site (I 16,17,4,14):

“Safroon, the restaurant? I have heard from a lot of people that they have visited this. And it’s a popular restaurant so it will be in your list to visit. And it has traditional food.” (I 4a)

All, except three of the architects (I 16,20,21) had visited the rehabilitated site before the interviews (I 17,21,25,30,7,22,23,24,32,33). One of them had been to Suq al-Qaisariya only before the rehabilitation (I 21). In the group of interviewees from other professional backgrounds, four visited the site for the first time during the interview (I 4,11,18,14). Among the Bahraini interviewees were at least five who had a life-long connection to Muharraq and the wider market area in which the site is located (I 15,34,45,50,10), as the following interview expert with a young Bahraini exemplifies:

10b: “I grew up there. All my primary school happened there. My schools are there. I had to walk back and forth to school and I did shopping there and I still do shopping sometimes for certain things, mostly sweets, I would say.”

Author: “And do you know this exact block where Safroon is?”

10a: “Yes.”

Author: “Do you remember how it looked before they did whatever they did during the past two years?”

10a: “The building? No. But as far as I remember it was shops that were closed, stores that were not used.”

Author: “And if you had to describe what is there now?”

10a: “I mean kind of like a renovated ... They renovated that small building and put some shops. I think they chose some sales that can represent Bahrain. Like the perfume shop and a sweet shop and there is some handcraft stuff and ‘Safroon’. And what they also did are the mudbasas. I had never seen mudbasas before that. So, either they existed and they were inside the building but I couldn’t see them or they were covered because they were not using them anymore.”

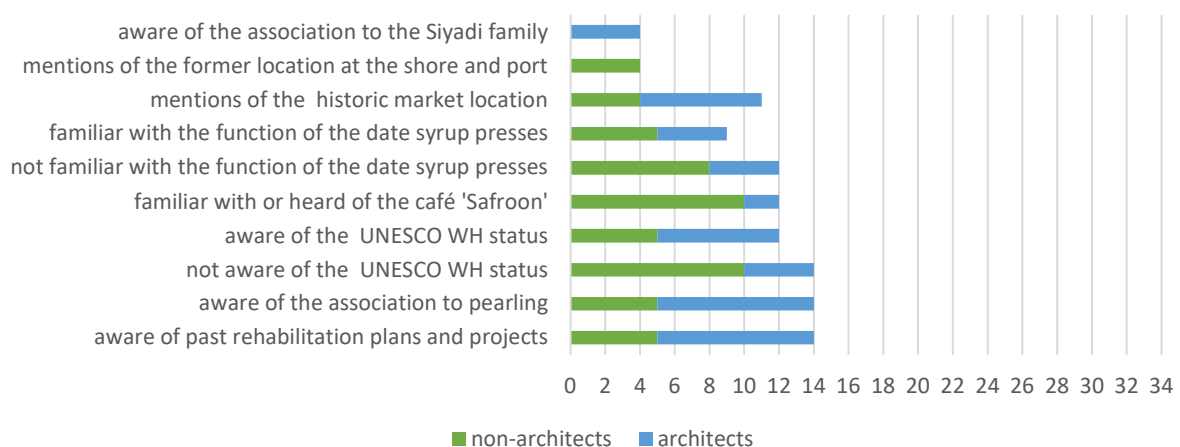


Diagram 3.4-4: **Background knowledge of the interviewees**

The site’s café, but also other **commercial facilities** like the perfume shop (I 9,10), were often referred to when discussing background knowledge or impressions from previous visits to the site. Five

interviewees mentioned the **date syrup presses** when discussing the site from memory prior to the visit or during off-site interviews (I 17,25,33,3,10). The archaeological feature was discussed in most but not all interviews. Overall, nine interviewees proved to be familiar with their former function (I 17,30,7,33,15,37,10,3,13), including four architects and a high proportion of Bahrainis (five). More interviewees were not familiar with the original function of the date syrup presses, including four architects and two Bahrainis (I 16,21,25,20,4,11,18,29,8,9,12,14).

When asked about their familiarity with the site, many interviewees in both groups referred to it as a part of the historic market (I 16,17,7,22,23,24,33,4,15,8,14). Fewer referred to the former sea-side or port location (8,9,10,3):

Author: "What do you know about Qaisariya?"

3a: "I know it was a suq area. And probably developed during the time when the pearling was a very important economic factor. And it was located at the shore back then, right? Which is strange, because normally a suq area would be in the centre of a town. But it's not. It's located at the shore. That's basically it."

Rather loose reference to the **pearling history and heritage** was made twice (I 8,3,13) when assessing background knowledge:

"The whole of that area of Muharraq is linked to pearling. Directly or indirectly. If there was no pearling industry there would not be a market there. So, it's linked with it. Even if it's to support the pearling merchants somehow. I can't say what the shops were... Nobody knows. Was there a pearl trader who had his shop there, or was there a guy who sold fishing supply or whatever?" (I 8a)

Four interviewees directly or indirectly pointed to the **UNESCO World Heritage Status** (I 24,8,34,13):

"I don't know much about the suq itself. I guess it is one of the houses in the pearling route.⁹ But I really don't know anything about it. I don't know who it belonged to or why it's considered a historic house, or it isn't." (13a)

Throughout the interviews, most of the architects (I 25,7,22,23,24,32,33) proved to know that the site is protected as part of the UNESCO World Heritage site Pearling, Testimony of an Island Economy. Four architects, including one Bahraini, were neither aware of the status nor of the link to the Pearling Testimony (I 16,17,21,20). One was aware of the pearling association but uncertain if the Siyadi Shops are part of the protected site (I 30). Awareness of the World Heritage status was comparatively low in the other group. Five non-architects (34,8,10,3,13) were aware of it, eleven were not (I 4,11,15,18,28,29,37,9,10,12,14). Finally, with the exception of a few architects of the heritage authority (I 7,23,32,33), none of the interviewees seemed to have heard about the site's **association to the Siyadi family** and its exact contribution to the World Heritage site.

Background knowledge about the site's **architectural and urban development** including its rehabilitation was generally higher among the architects. This extended to those who had not been involved in the site's rehabilitation. But interviewees in both groups had heard or read about the site's rehabilitation or witnessed it (I 25,30,7,23,17,22,24,32,33,11,34,37,8,10):

"This is the project of Shaikha Mai? I see! I heard about that. [...] I heard that she prepares old Muharraq and she is renovating old houses in Arab fashion, you can have a tea... One of my friends is working here. But I have never been here." (I 11c)

⁹ The interviewee is referring to the visitor pathway of the Pearling Testimony.

One interviewee in each group, referred to the media coverage of the controversies about Suq al-Qaisariya’s redevelopment plans and its World Monument Watch listing in 2010 (I 17,8). One of them hence had the misconception that the site had been entirely demolished and reconstructed (I 17). The other was aware of its rehabilitation:

“I know that this place was about to get torn down and then it was due to the efforts of the Ministry of Culture that they stopped it at the last minute before being torn down. And they renovated the whole thing into what it is today. [...] And I think, they reached some sort of compromise that made everybody happy. Which is what I hope for. So, I hope everybody is happy, but in the end, I really don’t know.” (I 8a)

Although the familiarity with the **local vernacular building tradition** was not systematically assessed and was certainly higher among the architects, some interviewees of both groups disclosed considerable background knowledge in this regard (I 21,11,8).

Overall, the level of background knowledge was ranked high in the case of the two architects who were involved in the entire rehabilitation process (I 7,23), while it was mostly ranked medium in that group (I 17,25,30,22,24,32,33) and trice low (I 16,21,20). In the group of various professional backgrounds, medium (I 8,10) and low (I 4,11,15,28,29,37,9,12,3,13,14) levels of background knowledge prevailed. In one case of that group, the level of background knowledge was rated null (I 18). In both groups there were interview partners with very little and others with considerable background knowledge about the site.

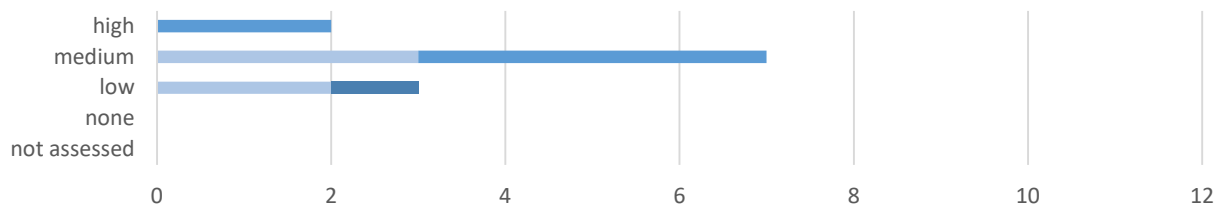


Diagram 3.4-5: Knowledge levels of architects

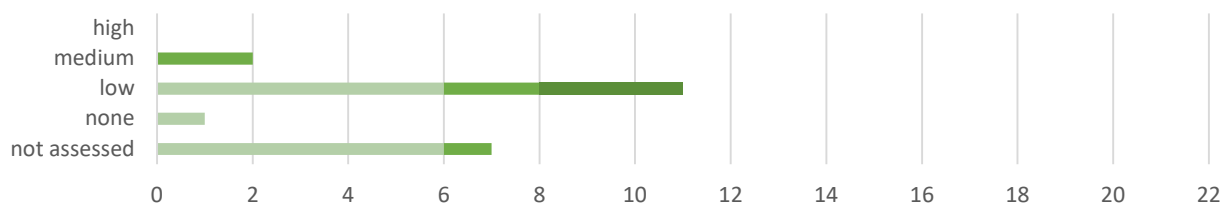


Diagram 3.4-6: Knowledge levels of non-architects

3.4.4.3 Age estimations and assessments of historicity by the interviewees

Throughout most on-site interviews, the author asked about the vernacular building’s age or about the **historicity of the site’s individual elements**. Most commonly, the buildings were dated to the early or mid-20th century with a minimum of 50 years of age (I 10,11,13) or to approximately 100 years (37,4,15).

“I guess those buildings originally are much older than 50 years old. Like maybe a 100 years.” (10a)

While many architects implicitly dated the buildings to the pearling era, three non-architects explicitly did so (I 15,8,3). One interviewee dated the buildings to 100 to 200 years of age (I 8). However, it seemed that a shop sign in the northern elevation of the eastern shops, which indicates the year 1762

certainly in reference to the brand, seems to have influenced this judgement. A second interviewee dated the site between the 1870s and 1890s apparently based on her knowledge of Muharraq's urban history (I 14). In 17 interviews, particularly with architects, no construction dates or years of age were indicated (I 16,21,25,30,7,23,24,20,33,32,35,28,29,36,45,47,50). The waiter and security guard, who were interviewed at their work place, said they had "no idea" (I 29) how old the buildings are:

"I am not informed. Only security company." (I 28)

Two interviewees moreover made contradictory statements with age estimations between 15 and 300 years (I 18,34).

The **two shops units of the western block** with their exposed traditional structure (annex fig. 3.4.1-80 to 82) were repeatedly dated older than the **six historic shops of the eastern block** (annex fig. 3.4.1-67, 69 to 70). The youngest age estimations for the latter went up to the 1950s and 60s. Several interviewees considered that the **date syrup presses** constitute the oldest elements at the site (annex fig. 3.4.1-49 to 50) (I 4,8,9,12,13). Due to their low position in the ground, some believed all of them testify to earlier development phases of the site (I 16,17,10,13,3,14). The lead conservation architect dated their archaeological remains tentatively to the "1920s all the way to the 1960s." (I 7b)

When asked to compare the two reference sites, five interviewees including one architect, highlighted that the vernacular buildings in Suq al-Qaisariya are older than the colonial-style buildings in Manama (I 33,11,15,18,10,14) and considered this a factor that increases the site's cultural significance:

"This is very much older than the ones in Manama, in age and construction style." (I 10c)

The age estimations were partly based on historical knowledge and partly on intuition:

"Maybe Qaisariya Suq is older. I am not sure, to be honest." (I 33)

„I feel like this is older." (I 14b)

When viewing the two conservatively restored shop units of the western block a local interviewee analysed:

"Because Muharraq was the old capital of Bahrain, so, I assume the place is much older than Manama. But the buildings themselves I cannot tell how old they are. Judging from the stone structures and the wooden ceilings, I would say early 20s. I would say they are older than the 30s and 40s because it is a very basic way of construction." (I 15c)

When informed about the construction dates 1880 and 1905, which the nomination file of the Pearling Testimony's indicates (Kingdom of Bahrain 2010 a), several interviewees (I 17,18,11,4,12) who had dated the site's buildings younger expressed their positive surprise:

"Wow, a hundred years!" (I 4a)

"Mhm, very old!" (I 17b)

"Old! But I did not think this one 100 years!" (I 18b)

One reason why interviewees reacted surprised about the buildings' age is clearly the bias that the local vernacular buildings have a very poor durability for structural reasons:

17b: "So the notion that old buildings don't last for more than 50 years is totally wrong. I did not believe it in the beginning. [...]"

Author: "Who says that?"

17b: "Many people. That is why, when you ask anyone why do we demolish our buildings, they say it does not stand for so long."

Possibly due to this widespread believe, most interviewees, who took a guess on the buildings' age, estimated them to be younger than they are.

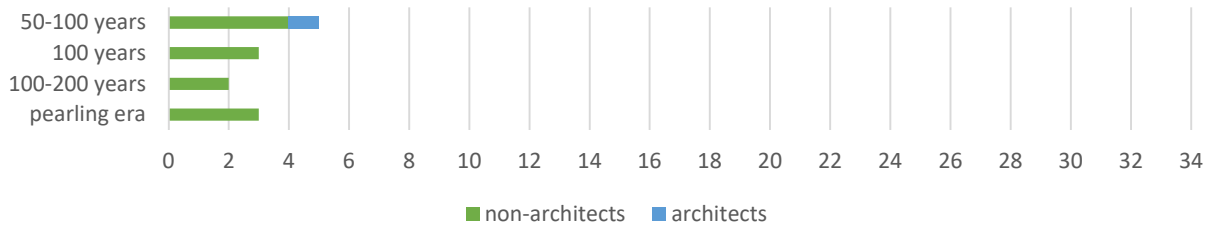


Diagram 3.4-7: Age estimations of the Siyadi Shops

Aside from construction dates, the author asked most interviewees about the **historicity of the individual parts of the site**. As discussions tended to arise around the term historic, the author usually instead asked questions such as:

“Can you tell what is old, what is new?”

The contemporary design features in glass and steel (annex fig. 3.4.1-71 to 74, 84 to 85) were unanimously identified as new additions (I 16,17,21,20,4,11,15,18,9,10,12,13,14). The eastern block’s southern building with the two shop units and sanitary facilities (annex fig. 3.4.1-75 to 77) was identified as a new addition (I 16,17,21,20,4,15,10,3,13) except by two non-architects who tended to interpret all plastered elements as restored pre-existing fabric (I 9,14). The interviewee of the following quote regretted the lack of certainty:

14b: “These ones don’t look so old. I guess because the lines are so straight. It looks like a mould again.”

Author: “So that could have been added, or just restored?”

14b: “Restored, ya. So, you don’t even know what the original was, unless they left something for us.”

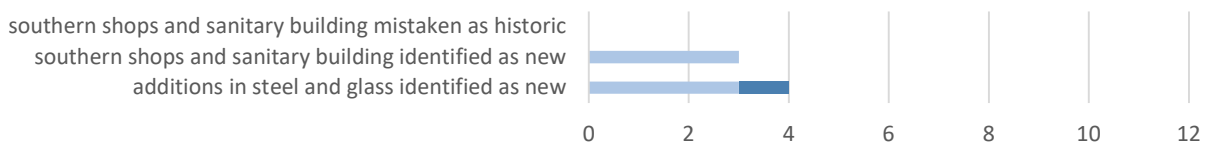


Diagram 3.4-8: Judgements on historicity of new additions by architects

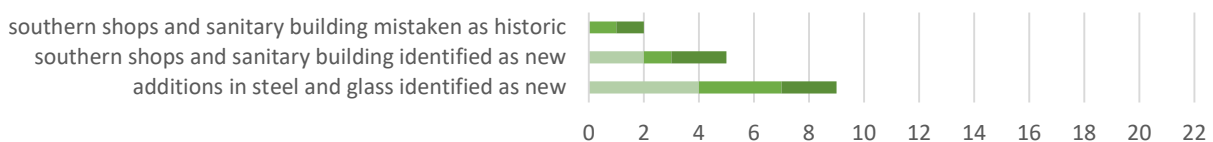


Diagram 3.4-9: Judgements on historicity of new additions by non-architects

The majority identified the southern building as new by its regular features and finishes despite the subtly historicizing design which is reminiscent of the vernacular shops that originally stood in its place in the past. The same is the case for the outdoor space’s free-standing **western wall** (annex fig. 3.4.1-71 to 72, 76) with the wooden window grids. Nine interviewees (I 16,21,20,15,18,3,13) identified it as

a new addition or reconstruction of the former street line (I 17,8). Only two non-architects mistook it as a restored historic wall (I 4,9).

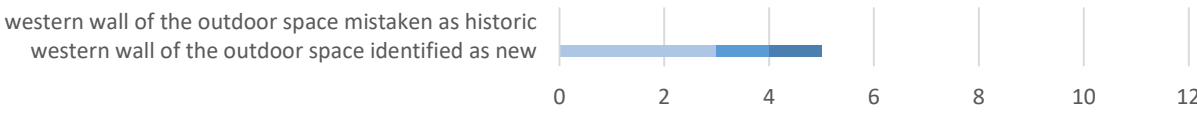


Diagram 3.4-10: Judgements on historicity of the western wall of the outdoor space by architects

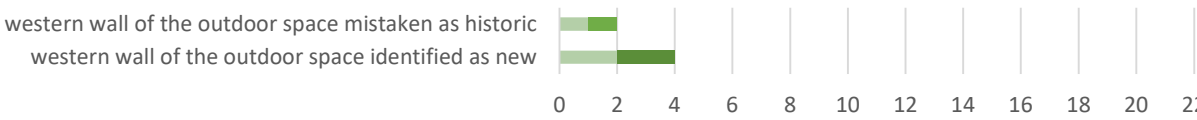


Diagram 3.4-11: Judgements on historicity of the western wall of the outdoor space by non-architects

The same interviewees mistook the **concrete-block wall segments south of the archaeological area** in the outdoor space which abuts the neighbouring building (annex fig. 3.4.1-72 to 73) as a historic feature for its historicing niches and white surface plaster (I 4,9). Five interviewees pointed to the wall segments as a new feature (I 16,17,21,15,13):

“But the walls, I think they have been added. Because they are very neat, very clean. And the dimensions between the recesses, you can see they are identical. While when you go back there, you can see it is irregular in a way.” (17b)

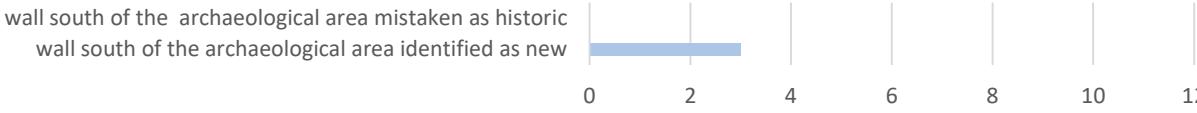


Diagram 3.4-12: Judgements on historicity of the wall segments in the outdoor archaeological area by architects

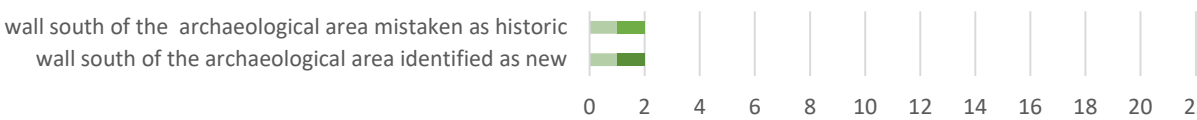


Diagram 3.4-13: Judgements on historicity of the wall segments in the outdoor archaeological area by non-architects

The **eastern wall along Bu Maher Avenue** (annex fig. 3.4.1-67 to 68, 73 to 74), which was reconstructed in traditional technique, repeatedly caused doubts or even misconceptions. Five interviewees, including two architects tended to considered it historic due to the vernacular construction materials (I 16,24,4,15,9). Seven eventually identified it as newly built (I 17,21,30,11,18,3,13) for the architectural form and design:

“It looks so smooth. This all looks like a modelling form. I wonder about the wood. The twine cannot be original.” (I 14b)

“It is clear that it has been added later on. [...] Maybe the finishes, the straight lines, it is very neat. Even though they have tried playing with the textures that it will look the same. But still, to me it, I feel it has been added later on.” (I 17b)

Five interviewees were uncertain about the wall’s historicity (I 24,15,8,13,14). Sometimes the feature triggered reflections on historicity and authenticity in architectural conservation. The following statements were made when entering the outdoor space of the eastern block:

Author: “So, if you look around, can you tell me which elements are historic and which are not?”

8a: “I don’t think any of it is historic except this [pointing to the date syrup press in the outdoor space].”

Author: “The mdbasah?”

8a: “Ya, the mdbasah, I think, is what used to be here. Maybe it has even been restored a bit. But that is really the only thing that survived the original building.”

Author: “So, you think that this wall along the street [Bu Maher Avenue], that this is not historic?”

8a: “Well, the definition of historic is a very hard... [...] I don’t know what they did here. But the idea of what is historic and what is rebuilt ... I mean... like you tear down the original thing and built it as to your best knowledge of what it was designed? [...] Or is it just taking what is already there and sort of plastering it to what it used to look like? Or is it using the same construction materials and the same construction methods to build something that was built before? [...] Let us just say it has been restored to what it probably looked like. It’s a very brought question. I don’t think I can...”

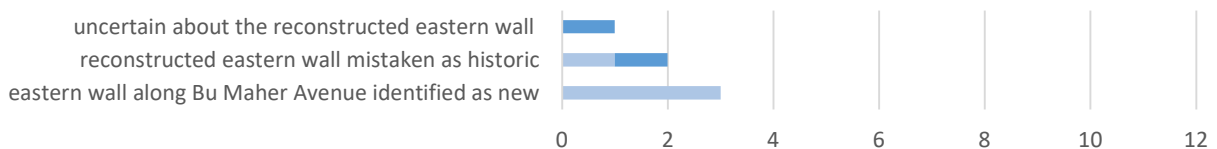


Diagram 3.4-14: Judgements on historicity of the eastern wall along Bu Maher Avenue by architects

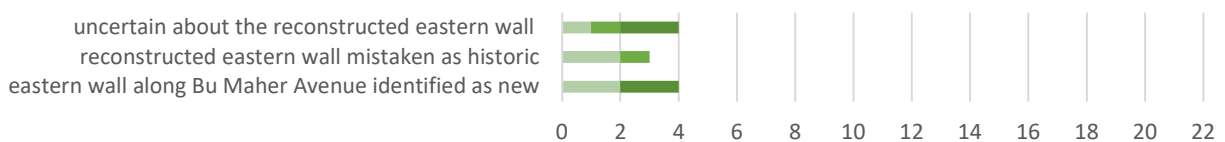


Diagram 3.4-15: Judgements on historicity of the eastern wall along Bu Maher Avenue by non-architects

Likewise, the **low wall of the outdoor seating area** (annex fig. 3.4.1-71 to 73), which was reconstructed on historic foundations in fully plastered coral stone masonry, triggered misconceptions. One in each group tended to believe it was a newly added element (I 13,30). Four interviewees, including one architect, mistook it for an authentic, historic feature (I 17,12,3,15). At least one of them considered it to be fragmentary:

“[...], the low wall I think is real, but I guess it was not a whole wall. So, this is all they could manage.” (I 15)

Two interviewees expressed uncertainties about its historicity (I 30,14). Value judgements of this ambiguity were rare (I 30), even when discovering misconceptions when viewing the photo of the archaeological investigations (annex fig. 3.4.1-38):

Author: “Earlier you said that this wall was historic.”

12c: “Ya, it’s not. But it’s beautiful. I like it.”



Diagram 3.4-16: Judgements on historicity of the low wall of the outdoor seating area by architects

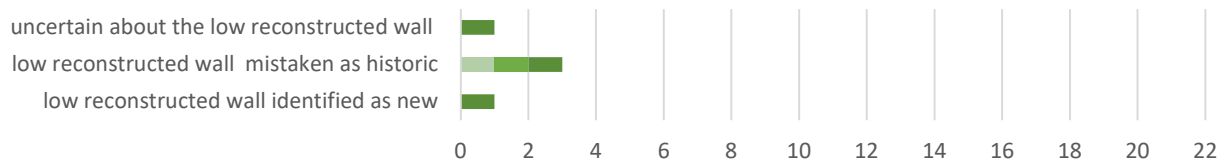


Diagram 3.4-17: Judgements on historicity of the low wall of the outdoor seating area by non-architects

The vernacular construction techniques hence arose misconceptions when used in reconstructions. At the same time, they played a crucial role for the identification of authentic historic fabric, such as in the case of the **two restored shop units of the western block** (annex fig. 3.4.1-80 to 82):

Autor: “And how do you know the building is old? What are the signs that tell you this is an old building?”

9a: “Mhm, I think the texture and the material. There are a lot of wooden structures, I see. The small windows on the top.”

The two conservatively restored western shop units were almost unanimously considered old and authentic (I 16,17,21,30,20,4,11,15,8,10,12,3,14,13):

“This is where I use the word authenticity!” (I 12c)

Five interviewees mistook the two shops as unrestored (I 21,30,20,11,8). One interviewee even seemed to be convinced the two shops were purposefully built with an old appearance (I 18). The longer the building was discussed, uncertainties arose in some interviews:

“Old! Well, I hope so at least [laughing].” (I 3c)

“It’s an old building, it’s falling apart. [...] Don’t tell me it’s a new building and they just built it the old style!? [...]” (I 15c)

“They look very old. Very authentic. And I don’t think they have demolished any part of it. I think it is the same as it looked before. Maybe I am mistaken. But that is my feeling now, when I look at them – like it is the original building.” (17a)

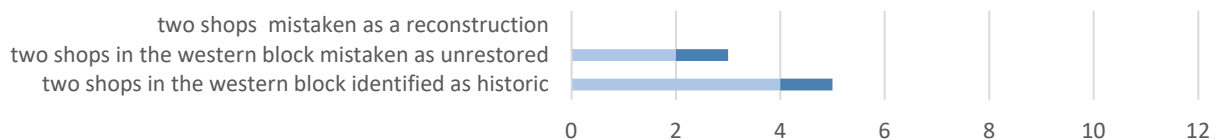


Diagram 3.4-18: Judgements on historicity of the two restored western shop units by architects

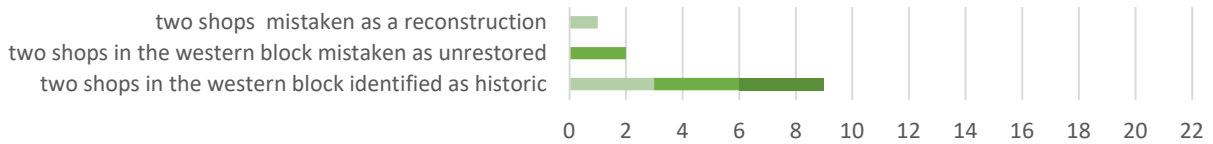


Diagram 3.4-19: Judgements on historicity of the two restored western shop units by non-architects

The vernacular shops of the eastern block including the adapted sixth shop unit (annex fig. 3.4.1-67 to 71, 84 to 85) rather seldom rose fundamental doubts. Three interviewees, at first tended to consider all or a part of the eastern shops as reconstructions (I 17,8,4). A young Bahraini non-architect expressed her doubts as follows:

“No, because, they are good in copying these old things, I don’t know if it’s old or not.” (I 4b)

The majority in both groups however eventually identified all six units as restored pre-existing fabric (I 16,17,21,30,20,4,11,15,18,9,10,12,3,14,13) due to the irregularity of the design and the vernacular details:

“I can see that it’s authentic. Maybe they have done it really right – they reconstructed the base but in a really good way that looks authentic. But to me, it looks like the real old suq.” (I 17a)

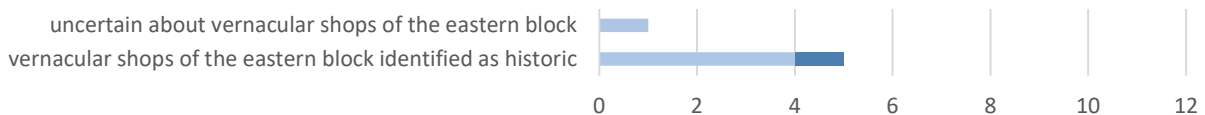


Diagram 3.4-20: Judgements on historicity of the vernacular shops of the eastern block by architects

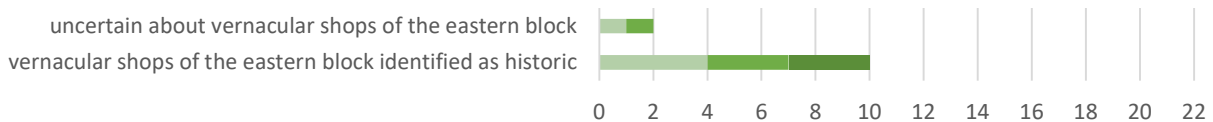


Diagram 3.4-21: Judgements on historicity of the vernacular shops of the eastern block by non-architects

Overall, there were slightly more misconceptions about the age and historicity of the site’s individual elements among the non-architects than among the architects. The difference between the two groups was however rather insignificant in this regard. Most elements were rather easily identified as restored or added fabric while most misconceptions and uncertainties occurred in both groups in the case of elements that were reconstructed in traditional techniques. Although several non-architects expressed their appreciation for the efforts to achieve differentiability of historic and added elements or criticized the lack of it, that matter was generally more pressing to architects (refer to ‘Form and design’ and ‘Materials and substance’ for more details).

3.4.4.4 The cultural significance attributed to the site by the interviewees

The explicit or implicit value judgements about the site, which were made throughout the interviewees are summarized in this section. One question, the author often asked, is whether the interviewees considered the site and its vernacular buildings historic.

A certain **age value**, and **cultural** if not **historical value**, was almost unanimously attributed to the site among the interviewees. Almost everybody explicitly expressed their **esteem for the site's vernacular buildings and craft** (I 16,17,21,25,30,7,22,23,24,33,20,4,11,15,28,34,36,37,45,8,9,10,12,3,13,14). Only two local Bahraini men (I 35) – one senior, the other a young adult – whom the author had a spontaneous conversation with at Suq al-Qaisariya, did not attribute any value to the vernacular buildings:

“What is this? Nothing special! It does not take a big effort to build this house”. (I 35-1)

“Just normal buildings. Nothing special.” (35 -2)

Some of the interviewees with whom the author had previously discussed the historicity of Bab al-Bahrain, considered that **architectural and age value** are more evident in the case of the vernacular market buildings in Muharraq than in the case of the mid-20th century buildings in Central Manama. In Bahrain, the word archaeological is often used as a synonym for built heritage. A young Bahraini hence intended to highlight the monument value of the vernacular buildings when saying:

“The building is more like an archaeological site. Alright?” (15c)

Nevertheless, a variety of interviewees of both groups (I 25,10,3,13) challenged the author's notion of historicity or at least did not agree to call the site and its vernacular buildings 'historic' for being rather not old or, possibly, not culturally significant enough. Asked about the historicity of the café space, a western interviewee questioned it for lack of historical background knowledge:

“What's a historic room? Is it old? Yes. It's specific for some reason? I don't know. [...] I do feel like I am sitting in a house that was built some time ago. But for something to be historical it would have to have a specific function or purpose, or be unique in a way adding to the fact that it is just old. If something is simply old it is not historic.” (I 13a)

The following quote of a young Bahraini exemplifies that historicity is sometimes associated with obsolescence and outdatedness. Often, the vernacular buildings were instead described as traditional:

Author: “Is this a historic place to you?”

10a: “No, not historic.”

Author: “Why not?”

10a: “Maybe I have a wrong impression of historic, but if I consider that historic then I would consider my grandfather historic.”

Author: “So it's too new?”

10a: “Ya. And also, the notion that it is still functioning for more or less the same purpose it was made for. Something historic has to be hundreds of years old, or relatively longer time, and it has to be out of function. Like the fort for example, it is not used to defend Bahrain anymore. That's my notion of historic.”

Author: “So, traditional then?”

10a: “Traditional! Very much.”

A certain dichotomy of the concepts 'historic' and 'traditional' is likewise expressed in the following statement of the interior designer, whose conflicts with the heritage authority's conservation architects during the rehabilitation of the site and other vernacular buildings were already described in chapter 3.2:

“This word 'historic' freaks me out! I mean tradition! That's tradition! Historic. Historic. Conservation. Big words for this! [...] Let's stop the masquerade.” (I 25)

Along similar lines, two architects (I 21,22) judged that the site's vernacular buildings are a sort of **second-grade heritage** in comparison to ancient monuments like the Egyptian pyramids. Hence, they considered that when rehabilitating such buildings, conservation ethics should be more leniently applied in order to focus on meeting contemporary functional, aesthetic and economic needs.¹⁰

The notion that the vernacular building tradition is a **living heritage** to be valued and treated as such was shared by another Arab architect with whom the author discussed the site (I 24). While many interviewees of both groups moreover pointed to the importance of the continuity of commercial and social usage of the site (I 21,25,7,22,23,24,20,4,34,8,9,12,3) three architects among them prioritized the **value of use and function** (I 21,22,25). Four non-architects (I 4,34,9,12) moreover highlighted the site's value as an **attraction for local and foreign visitors**.

There were prominent comments on the **documentary value of the archaeological, architectural or urban heritage**. The site's built heritage was widely considered evidence of the local history and culture (I 17,30,7,23,33,20,4,11,28,36,45,8,9,10,14):

"Here is the history of Arab people, how they lived." (11c)

Apart from pointing to the vernacular buildings, interviewees commented on the urban layout of the market area (I 23), to accessories and details like the historic electrical appliances (I 7,17,15) as well as to archaeological remains such as foundations (I 10) and date syrup presses. With a view to the vanishing architectural and urban heritage throughout Bahrain, two interviewees pointed to a **value of rarity** (I 8,14):

"History is going so fast here. There is not much left." (I 14b)

Since few interviewees were aware of the site's World Heritage status and the reasons behind it, the site's **value as testimony to the cultural tradition of pearling** or association to the Pearling Testimony was seldom addressed by the interviewees (I 33,34,8,13). However, the author usually raised the matter and asked if they knew why the site is part of the World Heritage site that testifies to the pearling tradition. The majority of interviewees were not able to establish any clear link and considered this value dimension not well conveyed at the site (I 16,17,21,30,4,11,15,9,10,12,13). Only few explicitly considered the site and its vernacular buildings, if not the entire neighbourhood or Old Muharraq, valuable in this regard (I 25,33,8,34). Certainly, more shared this view after the author explained the site's contribution to the Outstanding Universal Value.

Despite the deficiencies in communicating the link to the Siyadi family and the pearling history, interviewees of both groups more or less approximated the reasoning for the inclusion in the World Heritage site with their interpretations (I 12,13,16,17,4):

"But what does it have to do with pearling? In those shops they used to sell pearls?" (I 4a)

"This one maybe would be where the merchants would meet to discuss over lunch issues like this." (I 12c)

"They might be selling pearling stuff. Or they might be selling the stuff that the people used to use while they are diving searching for pearls. Something like that." (I 16c)

"I guess it was used as a suq area during the pearling trading times." (13a)

¹⁰ The classification of monuments into different value levels as for example in the British heritage legislation, does not exist in Bahrain's heritage law (Kingdom of Bahrain 1995).

“Maybe because of the people who used to go for pearling – the tawaweesh – they had some shops here? Maybe that is why. [...] I mean, it is all connected to each other. The houses and the mosques and the shops. It’s the same people using everything.” (17b)

The notion, that the site is generically part of the pearling heritage for its origin in the pearling era was shared not only among architects (I 7,12,17,23,8,33):

“This sort of architecture is part of the pearling period in Bahrain. [...] So, these are all remnants of the pearling heritage.” (I 8a)

An architect of the heritage authority (I 33) as well as the interior designer (I 25) highlighted the site’s **narrative value in relation to pearling** as particularly significant albeit poorly conveyed (refer to ‘Other internal and external factors’):

“But what we try preserve, or we try to present, [...] is that the heritage is in the thought and the idea of the pearling.” (I 25)

Contrary to these perceptions, the lead conservation architect of the site’s rehabilitation in 2010-12 as well as another involved architect of the heritage authority, actually challenged the outstanding significance of the site as pearling heritage. They considered the eastern block’s link to the pearling narrative and its contribution to the World Heritage Site’s Outstanding Universal Value intrinsically weak. They considered mere traditional ownership of the eastern Siyadi shops not significant and hence pointed to a lack of evidence of specific pearling related activities:

“But what I am saying is, that [...] those specific five shops didn’t really add anything from an OUV-perspective, except if you are talking about the market.” (I 7b)

Only in the case of the grand pearl merchant’s apartment at the upper floor a more specific link to the pearling narrative was acknowledged:

“I think the Siyadi shops block A is actually more important for pearling.” (I 23)

Instead, the lead conservation architect considered the eastern block more significant as **testimony to traditional date syrup production**:

7b: “In fact, in all my presentations of this project elsewhere, in conferences or in meetings, I highlight the fact that actually there is another value that has been revealed here – right? – that might not contradict but actually go in parallel with the pearling.”

Author: “Which is?”

7b: “Which is the mdbasah. Which is a very important craft.”

This explains why the site’s presentation and interpretation focuses on the cultural tradition of date syrup production and makes hardly any reference to pearling. It is hence not surprising that interviewees of both groups mentioned the site’s testimony to traditional date syrup production as an important value dimension (I 7,16,17,4,11,15,8,10,12) and considered the date syrup presses “one important element” of the place (17b):

“It’s their culture and unique. We don’t have this.” (I 11c)

After the joint visit of the site, three interviewees including a Bahraini (I 15,16,9) expressed their confusion about the focus of the site’s presentation on the date syrup production which was found to overshadow the pearling narrative:

“How it was connected [to the pearling narrative]? I don’t know. It does not really make sense with the dates now, to me.” (I 9a)

15c: “I assume they are just old buildings from the era of pearling. That’s it. But I don’t know if they are related to pearling. Because this is just to make date honey.”

Author: "Do you know what the Pearling Site is about?"

15c: "[...] Since you included this, now I am confused. [...] I thought anything that has to do with pearling. [...] But now that you tell me this one is included, I would say, anything that was in the pearling era."

Mostly non-architects pointed to the **educational value** of the site and its historic testimony (I 7,4,11,28,8,9,3) both with regard to the local building tradition and to the former way of life:

Author: "Why is it [the site] important, do you think?"

11c: "For the new generation to feel how it was before. Because now people don't understand how it was before. How simple it was."

The site's security guard phrased this as follows:

Author: "Why do you like it [the site]?"

28: "Because it is historical area. New generations to know previous history. It is part of education."

Both local and foreign interviewees of different backgrounds raised the notion that the site's heritage is a **source of cultural identity** and a **memory marker** that nourishes a collective memory (I 7,4,36,8,14). The site's **experiential and emotional appeal** was appreciated by most interviewees, but mostly non-architects seemed to consider this an essential value dimension (I 22,4,11,15,36,45,8,9,10,12,14). Sole one western visitor questioned the emotional value of the site particularly for younger Bahrainis:

"I think this has more of a connection with the elders, and they are dying out. I wonder how the Bahrainis feel about preserving this. [...] Do you think the people want the preservation? I mean the people to whom this is meaningful are dying out." (14b)

Several Bahraini, including younger interviewees, said that the site evoked feelings of pride, nostalgia and connectedness with their culture (I 4,10,15,45) while foreigners brought up the concept of time-travelling (I 9,11) (refer to 'Spirit and feeling'). A younger Egyptian-Bahraini interviewee phrased the significance of the site with a view to preserving cultural rootedness and collective memory as follows:

8a: "But as I said, it serves a bigger national purpose to have a place like this renovated."

Author: "Why?"

8a: "Because there are not many places like this. This is part of a UNESCO World Heritage site. It's quite rare for people who are born in and lived in Bahrain in my generation to have a feel of how this place [Bahrain] used to be. So, renovating this place is important to cultural preservation at a national level."

In addition to date syrup production, pearling and vernacular construction techniques, mostly Bahraini non-architects (I 4,15,36,37,11,8) considered various other **cultural traditions** to be referenced at the site (refer to 'Language, and other forms of intangible heritage').

Last but not least, the following incident illustrates that the site with its successful café had turned into a landmark in Muharraq and Bahrain: When the author asked a face-veiled middle-aged woman for directions in the market area, she asked "Do you know Safron?" (I 50), upon which a short conversation about the site ensued.

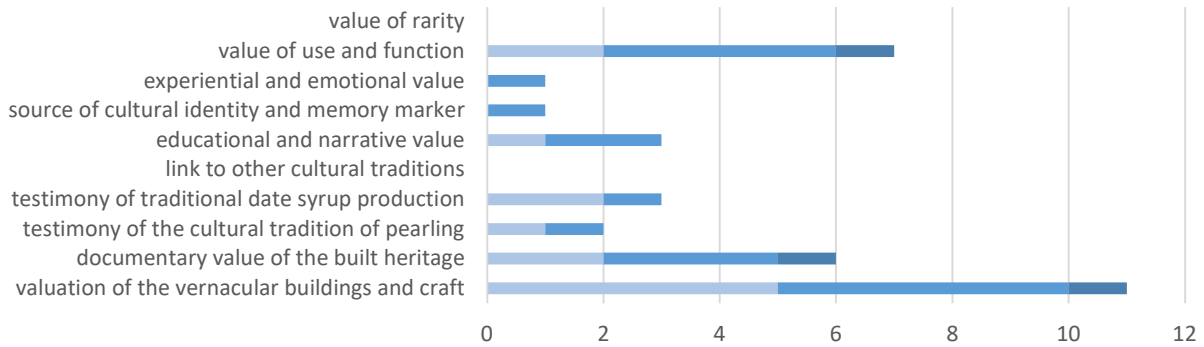


Diagram 3.4-22: Value attributions by architects

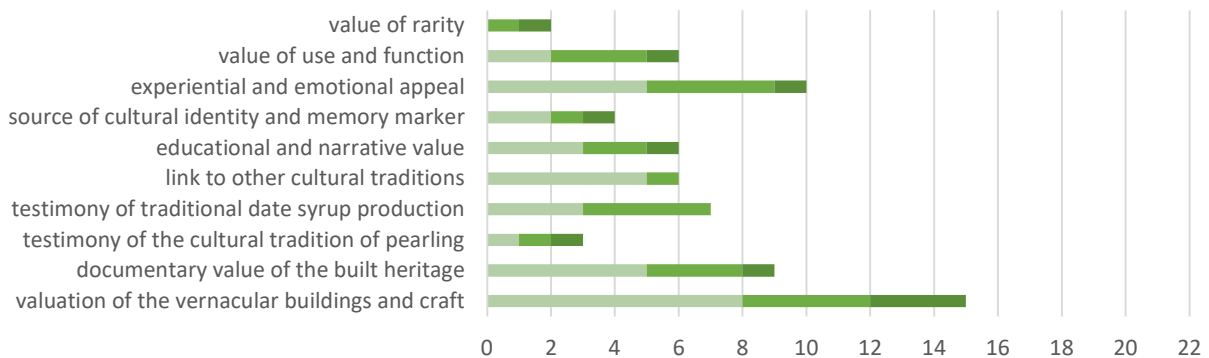


Diagram 3.4-23: Value attributions by non-architects

The comparison of the statements of the two groups shows that value attributions to the site were more varied in the case of the non-architects, who of course represented of a bigger and more homogeneous group. Value attributions which featured in this group but were not mentioned by the architects relate to the site’s experiential and emotional appeal and to the traditional features which are integrated into the site’s commercial functions and their presentation. Surprisingly, the site’s value of rarity was only pointed to in that group. Both groups however expressed high esteem for the vernacular buildings and craft as well as for the archaeological remains. In both groups, the built heritage was attributed high documentary value. Although the site’s use and function were widely appreciated and often mentioned, this value dimension was less prominent in both. The fact that awareness of the site’s value as testimony to date syrup production was higher in both groups than its significance as testimony to pearling, is certainly due to the site’s presentation and on-site interpretation. Lastly, both groups shared the notion that the site is of importance as memory marker and educational resource with the potential to nourish cultural identity. Significant imbalances in the value attributions with regard to different cultural backgrounds of the interviewees were not identified.

3.4.4.5 Evaluation of the architectural and urban interventions by the interviewees

As in the case of the first reference site, the author invited the interviewees to evaluate the various interventions at the site throughout the interviews. The approach with which the reference site at Suq al-Qaisariya was rehabilitated between 2010 and 2012 and the result of the works, were met with great appreciation if not enthusiasm by the vast majority of the interviewees (I 16,17,21,25,22,23,24,32,33,4,11,15,18,28,34,36,37,9,10,12,3,13). Only the two local gentlemen of

interview 35 fully disapproved of the site's rehabilitation per se as they did not attribute any value to it vernacular buildings. Moreover, they considered the commercial facilities not to cater for the local community of Muharraq. Criticism of the latter aspect was strongly shared by the young Bahraini artist of interview 46. She was overall critical of the project as she considered the site's alienation from its urban and social context expressed not only in the high prices of the sales products but also in its conversion into a "museum-style space" (I 46). An architect who had been involved in later repair works at the site, was critical of the interventions as he considered them too intrusive in parts and having diminished the historic site's authenticity (I 30). And lastly, a visiting western conservation architect (I 20) considered the interventions and their design overall overambitious and not fully successful in trying to deliver the desired messages about the site's history.

Some of this criticism or other issues were also raised by such interviewees who overall had a positive attitude towards the project. The high prices of sales products and food were overall mentioned by six non-architects (I 34,35^{x2},8,10,3) and often associated with a lack of social inclusiveness:

"I thought that this café is owned by the Ministry of Culture and that its proceeds go to maintaining the site. [...] That is why I come here a lot. It serves a good Bahraini breakfast that is highly overpriced, ok? But I don't mind paying because I always thought that the profits go to maintaining the site. [...] Later on, I found out that it is a private business. [...] Now, that I know that it is a profit-oriented institution I am not so inclined to pay this much for a Bahraini breakfast."
(I 8a)

The project's interior designer (I 25), seemed to share the criticism that the conservation works artificially museumized the vernacular buildings and thereby somewhat alienated them from the local public. Other interviewees explicitly commended the good integration of the site in its urban context (I 12,3). It was considered typical Bahraini by some (I 4,9,13) not only due to the presence of Bahraini clientele and traders (I 17,10,3,4) but for its tangible and intangible heritage dimensions.

Few interviewees had other fundamental concerns with the rehabilitation approach related to doubts about the site's functionality (I 22,30) and the project's economic viability particularly with a view to maintenance costs (I 22). Interviewees of both groups criticized that the interventions were somewhat inconsistent or not fully compliant with conservation ethics (I 16,20,21,30,10,13). This particularly concerned the various different reconstructions as well as a lack of differentiability between historic and new fabric (I 4,16,14), despite the obvious efforts that were made in this regard. The reconstructions were criticized (I 16,17,21,30,32,33,10,12) either simply for aesthetics or for not having been reconstructed closer to the original vernacular fabric (I 17,10,13), or else for potentially creating misconceptions (I 4,16,17,30,32) and devaluating the authentic historic fabric (I 16). The Indian architect who had been involved in the 1980s refurbishment of Bab al-Bahrain and who was critical of reconstructions per se, considered that the reconstructions throughout the site were based on meagre evidence and hence on conjecture and that they negate history (I 21):

„All the things that are being built try to visualize what was there before. [...] That is wrong history. [...] It is someone's imagination." (I 21a)

Another architect who was involved in the rehabilitation of the Siyadi Shops, in turn, wished more spatial elements had been reconstructed and criticized an overemphasis on material authenticity. The same architect moreover regretted that the archaeological finds and other historic evidence were not better analysed in order understand the market's urban development (I 23):

“But nobody is really working on the old layout. Nobody is trying to get the information from the archaeological findings and actually studying this a bit further. [...] That is really a lack, I think.” (I 23)

Points of criticism of technical nature concerned the standard of the works and craftsmanship, foremost in view of the ongoing repair works on traditional surface plaster throughout the site (I 30,8,13,14) or reversibility and impact of new interventions on the historic remains (I 23). Moreover, there was individual criticism that the overall design should have been better geared towards the final use from the start (I 25) and that utilities should have been better integrated and concealed (I 30). Generally, the adaptation and reuse of the site’s vernacular fabric and spaces was appreciated (I 24,4,8,9,10,3,13):

“It is very, very nice. [...] Maybe from the beginning I tried to explain to you, to reuse the monument it is a good idea. Not to block it.” (I 24)

“I would rather have a functioning thing, than a non-functional heritage. Does that make sense to you?” (10b)

“No, it’s really unbelievable how they preserved these things when they became abandoned and now people love to see and visit.” (I 11c)

Overall, there was overwhelming approval of the site and its rehabilitation as illustrated in the diagrams 3.4-24 and 25. Many interviewees expressed gratitude for the preservation of the site’s vernacular fabric (I 16,17,32,4,11,15,34,8,10,3,14). This often came with acclaim for the cultural minister Shaikha May (I 17,25,11,15,12) for “initiating all this” (I 12c):

“Luckily Shaikha Mai is doing a great job in this lately. But ten years ago, I remember when we came to this place to eat, we never knew about any of these.” (I 15c)

“Walla [Arabic: really], this is a very good job of Shaikha Mai, because she preserved this one. People recognize and try to remember what they had.” (I 11c)

Despite several points of criticism and conflicts with the conservation team, the interior designer positively pointed out the project as “a turning point” in Bahrain’s heritage conservation practice (I 25). Another architect acknowledged that the conservative restoration works at the site are the first of their kind he has seen in Bahrain (I 21). Two architects positively highlighted the capacity building for conservation and the use of vernacular construction techniques in the interventions (I 24,20).

The rehabilitation project was also appreciated as means of fostering cultural identity and national branding (I 34,9). The UNESCO World Heritage status was twice commended (I 34,8) for the international recognition it generates for Bahrain:

“Yes, it is good! At least the Bahrain name, everybody knows about it because of the UNESCO.” (I 34)

The vast majority of interviewees of both groups appreciated the historical or traditional appeal of the site (I 16,17,21,32,4,11,15,18,34,36,37,47,9,10,12,3,13,14) which was associated with historical authenticity (I 16,17,12,3) and feelings of nostalgia for the past (I 4,9,10,15).

More interviewees commended (I 21,24,15,8,9,12) than criticized (I 17,30,20,46) the site’s overall design. Two pointed to its attractiveness as a photo motif (I 9,28). The interviewed security guard highlighted that many visitors take pictures to put them on Facebook (I 28). Interviewees of both groups also appreciated the fusion or contrast of contemporary and traditional design features (I 16,21,24,32,18,12,3,13). Likewise, the differentiability of historic features and added elements (I 7,16,30,21,32,20,4,12,3,13,10) was highly esteemed, although some architects wished this approach

had been more consistently followed through (I 16,30) (refer to ‘Form and design’). Three interviewees commended the range and diversity of interventions (I 30,10,13). One interviewee moreover pointed out the narrativity of the rehabilitation (I 33):

“I think it is the right approach for this kind of project. A public project. It gives a story to the place...” (I 33)

Interviewees also commended the uniqueness of the rehabilitated site with its tailor-made design solutions to complement historic resources with new commodities (I 9) as well as the attention paid to details (I 17,15,14). This encompassed pre-existing elements such as historic electrical cabling (annex fig. 3.4.1-45, 69) and a traditional bench in the pedestrian lane (annex fig. 3.4.1-82) as well as vintage features like the recycled metal locks and hinges on traditional doors (annex fig. 3.4.1-70, 78, 82) or accessories of the café’s interior decoration (annex fig. 3.4.1-84 to 85):

“I don’t think they will ever use it, but even the radio, you see, they put an old radio in front of the I-pod-holder. Which means they are into details – and the beauty is all in the details.” (I 15d)

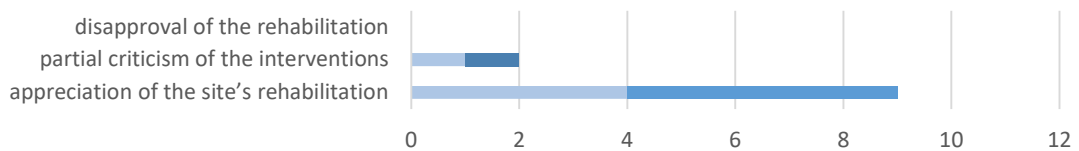


Diagram 3.4-24: Evaluation of the site’s refurbishment by architects

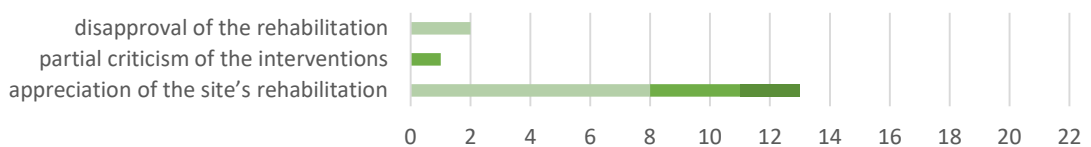


Diagram 3.4-25: Evaluation of the site’s refurbishment by non-architects

Diagrams 3.4-26 to 35 illustrate how **individual elements** which received particular attention were evaluated. The **café in the adapted sixth shop unit** was most enthusiastically commented on in many interviews (16,17,21,4,15,18,50,9,10,12,3,13,14):

Author: “How do you feel about this place?”

14b: “It’s nice. It’s nice to see some history kept alive.”

Particularly the lower café space was met with much acclaim. Interviewees particularly commended the sensitive adaptation approach (I 16,15,9,3,13), the interior design (I 21,4,15,37,9,12,3) and the atmosphere (I 17,4,15,8,9):

“Wow. It’s very cozy and modern. It’s very conceptual. I love it. That is the places I usually look for whenever I’m traveling. I have been living in Europe for a long time and for example my experience in the States after Europe: I was really missing all those authentic ... Everything just looked so fake and new. Like new buildings. I was living in L.A., and it looked like a Florentine or Venetian site, but it was fake. It was a sort of bad copy paste thing. But this place is one that I would definitely – if I would come as a tourist – I would be looking for. And I would recommend this place for visitors.” (I 9a)

“I like the cosiness of the place, the materials of the walls. They are very authentic.” (I 17b)

“The effort they made: they could have easily chopped the building and just put a roof on it. But I do appreciate the effort they made to preserve the building.” (I 15c)

Two interviewees commented positively on the music (I 18,12). The two customers who were spontaneously interviewed at the café and others commended the traditional Bahraini food (I 15,36,37,8,12), which was also twice criticized (I 34,10):

„The food is very typical Bahraini breakfast. And it is actually tasty. The atmosphere is amazing.” (I 15c)

Six interviewees, criticized the **ceiling in the lower café space** which consists of remains of a traditional *danshal* ceiling underneath a fairfaced concrete roof slab (annex fig. 3.4.1-83) (I 16,17,30,23,18,3) (refer to ‘Form and design’). One architect moreover questioned the environmental friendliness of the **glass façade** with regard to heat control (I 23). It was appreciated as a contemporary design element by others (I 16,12,3).

“This is a new addition, but I like it.” (I 16b)

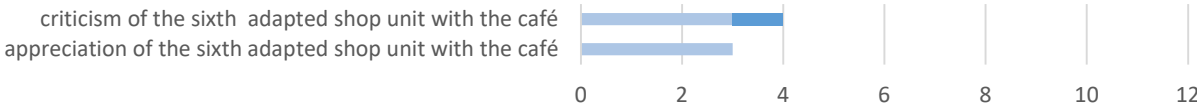


Diagram 3.4-26: Evaluation of the adapted sixth shop unit with café by architects

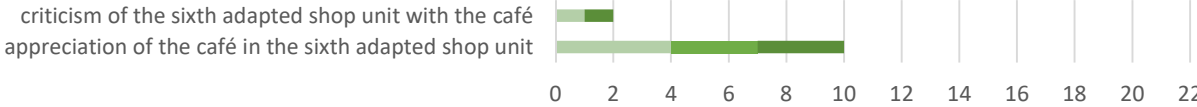


Diagram 3.4-27: Evaluation of the adapted sixth shop unit with café by non-architects

Among the most appreciated features, too, were the **two conservatively restored shop units of the western block** (annex fig. 3.4.1-80 to 82) (I 16,17,21,30,4,11,15,8,10,12,3). Interviewees lauded them for their beauty (I 21,15,8,12,13), for their “human touch” (I 21a), “rough feeling” (I 16b) and authenticity or historicity (I16,17,4,11,12) and commended their careful preservation when comparing to the photo of the building before the rehabilitation (annex fig. 3.4.1-28):

“Yes, these two shops: very beautiful. [...] I love the finishing. It doesn’t look fake although you can see some renovation works on it. But it looks real and a good chunk of it was there before.” (I 12b)

“I like them. I like the feeling of the façade generally, of the old buildings. I like it a lot. I like this rough feeling.” (I 16b)

“They did an amazing job. Very beautiful job!” (I 15c)

Only one interviewee of lower social status disapproved of the simple, unplastered vernacular shop units, as she associated their appearance with poverty (I 18). This notion was initially shared by another interviewee, who later revised her judgement about the shops (I 11). Two interviewees regretted that the two western shops were not yet in use at the time of the interviews (I 10,13) and at least one worried about their stability:

“It seems like they are going to fall.” (I 10b)

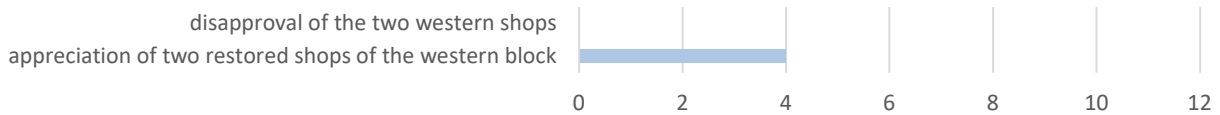


Diagram 3.4-28: Evaluation of the two restored shop units of the western block by architects

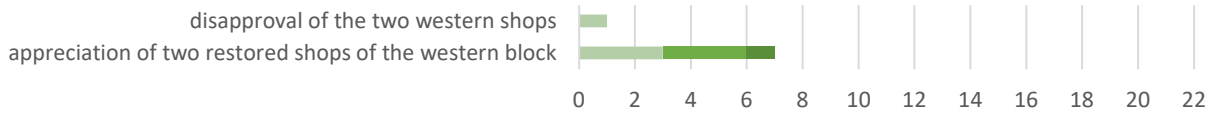


Diagram 3.4-29: Evaluation of the two restored shop units of the western block by non-architects

The restored **five northern shops of the eastern block** (annex fig. 3.4.1-67 to 70) and their “simple conservation” (I 16) which maintained or restored the typical vernacular features were generally perceived positively and explicitly praised by four interviewees (I 16,17,10,3). During most on-site interviews only the perfumery was open and operational among the five northern shops. Four non-architects were hence particularly enthusiastic about the **perfume shop** (annex fig. 3.4.1-67, 87) (I 18,8,9,12) for its exterior and interior appearance as well as for the merchandise:

„I was taking pictures of this perfumery. I couldn't stop taking picture of this. Because it looks so nice. It's so ... original and like real. It's not fake, it's not copy paste from any other big city or anything. It's like a blend of tradition, an authentic building and at the same time a perfumery.” (I 9a)

The **archaeological wall window** with exposed *farush* in the northern façade of the western of the five shops (annex fig. 3.4.1-69 to 70, 86) was twice commended (I 18,12) and four times criticized foremost as an aesthetically unpleasing feature (I 20,9,3,13):

„It's not the pleasantest piece of the building to look at.” (I 9a)

“Ugly!” (I 13)

“And it does not look original. It looks like they added some strange things to it.” (I 3)

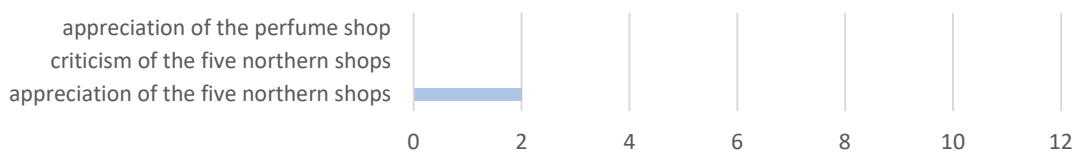


Diagram 3.4-30: Evaluation of the five restored northern shops by architects

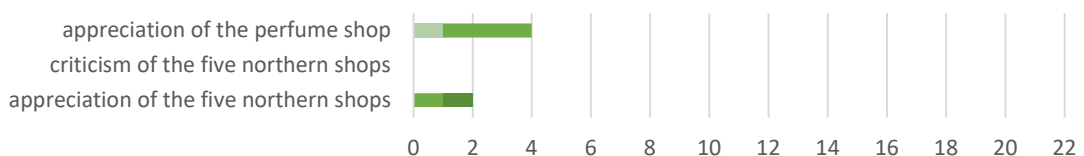


Diagram 3.4-31: Evaluation of the five restored northern shops by non-architects

The **outdoor space** (annex fig. 3.4.1-71 to 74, 76) within the eastern block was generally perceived as a positive contemporary feature (I 16,17,11,15,18,37,8,9,10,12,3).

“I like it here. It has a very elegant touch.” (I 9a)

“This part looks new, which doesn’t bother me. It goes very well with the neighbouring houses in terms of colours, in terms of spirit.” (I 12a)

Others, however, criticised the outdoor space with regard to its design and resulting shortcomings in usability (I 17,33,20,3,37,23,15):

“It’s very nice. In Bahrain you have 5 months of acceptable weather. So, sitting outside is really beautiful. Sadly, there is only one table. They could have managed to put more.” (I 15c)

„Very nice. But too much hot now. I cannot sit.” (I 47)

The provision of a public toilet was commended twice (I 33,3). One interviewee disapproved of the outdoor space as a historically untypical feature within the market area (I 21). While another interviewee challenged this notion (I 17), the majority considered the outdoor space a useful contemporary feature within the market’s dense urban fabric:

“The open area is needed in such suqs, because in the old times they had many open spaces.” (I 17b)

The most shattering criticism of the outdoor space however came from the security guard from Bangladesh (I 28). With a plea to stay anonymous, he started with complaints about his working conditions without seating or shading in the heat of the open space, without shelter for utensils or himself and about his struggle to repel illegally parked cars at the site. He then pursued with his fear of sectarian aggression against him as a Sunni within a partly Shia community, to finally express his general frustration with his living conditions and the visa system:

“Unmerciful. I came here and hoped to gather experience. But this system is no human rights.” (I 28)

Only architects criticized the reconstructed **eastern wall along Bu Maher Avenue** (annex fig. 3.4.1-67 to 68, 73). They disapproved of the use of traditional techniques for the reconstruction, as it might create misconceptions about the wall’s authenticity (I 16,21,30,32). One of them (I 17) reasoned, that the wall should have either been reconstructed as an exact copy on the basis of the historic photograph or built in contemporary design. Likewise for fear of misconceptions and for being obstructive, at least one of the architects (I 30) disapproved of the **low wall in the outdoor seating area** (annex fig. 3.4.1-71 to 73, 76).

The **western wall segment in the outdoor space** (annex fig. 3.4.1-71 to 72, 76) was often disapproved of (I 3,16,17,33,10,12,13) for different reasons than the eastern wall. Most interviewees expressed concerns about its function, purpose and aesthetics. Several particularly disliked the wooden grid windows in the wall (I 32,12,3,13):

“The only thing that I really don’t like is this wall, that was built here. I know that it was built to give a sense of inclusion, but I think, if the area is not covered to make it shaded for use, there was no point.” (I 33)

“But why did they put this wall? I don’t like it. It separates this from that.” (I 12c)

“New obviously. With this very clearly cut window things – strange – what is it anyway?” (I 3c)

Ironically, the **floor tiling in the outdoor space**, which was simplified during the course of the works (compare annex fig. 3.4.1-54 and 57), was picked on by two interviewees precisely for the features that were changed. One missed comprehensible reference to the reburied archaeological finds underneath (I 20). The other considered the design too sterile for the historic site, besides wishing to see more of the archaeology (I 12):

“The floor here I am not too sure. It looks a bit odd to me. I would have made a different pavement. But definitely not [concrete] blocks like here [in the surrounding streets and pathways]. I would make it more organic. It looks too clean to me.” (I 12c)

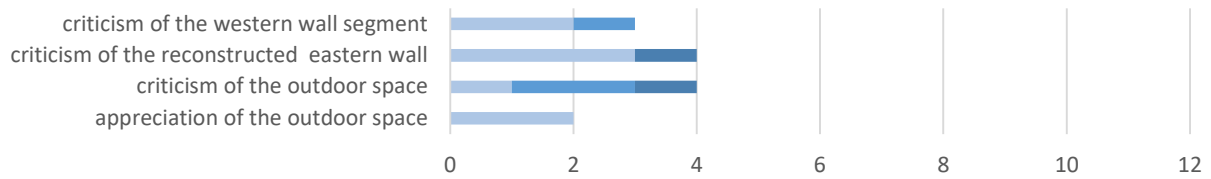


Diagram 3.4-32: Evaluation of the outdoor space within the eastern block by architects

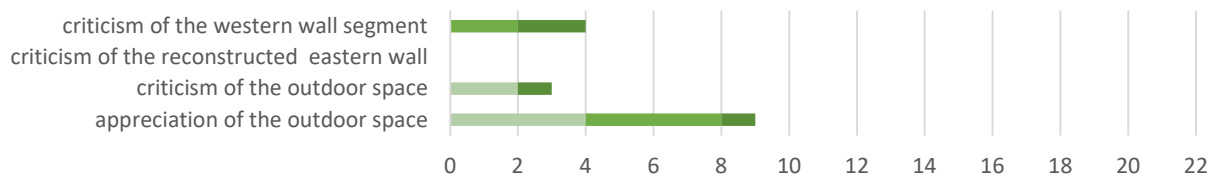


Diagram 3.4-33: Evaluation of the outdoor space within the eastern block by non-architects

The exposed archaeological feature, the two areas with exposed **date syrup presses** (annex fig. 3.4.1-49 to 50), were generally met with appreciation and often enthusiasm (I 16,17,21,33,20,4,18,8,9,12,3) for inspiring curiosity about the site and Bahraini culture and history and for bringing in a human dimension:

“Wow, it’s amazing. It creates this curiosity to discover more about the place and Bahrain in general. Like, ok, they were doing this and what else, you know? And it would make me also want to go and buy the date honey.” (I 9a)

The various **restored and replicated traditional doors throughout the site** were often discussed. A Bahraini architect wished for more faithful replicas of the doors (I 30), but they were generally met with much appreciation (I 16,17,18,8,10,12,3,13):

“And these old doors. I know that some of them are restored, and some are old. But it is really nice.” (I 16b)

The various **plaster surfaces** throughout the site proved to be another controversial issue. The differentiation of batches of added and historic wall plaster in principle found more acclaim (I 10,12,3) than rejection (I 17) (refer to ‘Materials and substance’). Most criticism related to craftsmanship or aesthetics (I 30,32,21,13,14), seldom to authenticity (I 30,33). The colour treatment of plaster surfaces was viewed sceptically at least by three interviewees (I 30,32,33). One interviewee, however, lauded the site’s overall colour scheme (I 14).

The on-site interpretation, namely the **information panels**, were commended by some (I 15,8,9) and criticized by others (I 16,17,30,33,4,8,10,12,3,13,14) for various reasons (refer to ‘Other internal and external factors’). Temporal **artistic installations** throughout the site – a chain of coloured light bulbs in the pedestrian lane and a wall-mounted bicycle – were seldom commented on. Two interviewees with artistic backgrounds were enthusiastic about them (I 9,12). A third considered the installations as well as parts of the **sales items** of “Egyptian pop art” inappropriate for the site (I 8). Like others, this interviewee preferred the traditional handicraft sold at the site (refer to ‘Language, and other forms of intangible heritage’).

In summary, the comparison of the evaluative comments, which the interviewees made freely or when invited to make a personal judgement, overall shows many similarities in the way the site was evaluated by the two groups but also indicates some differences. The comments clearly show that an overwhelming majority in both groups appreciated the site and its rehabilitation. Other than in the group of non-architects, no architect fully disapproved of the project. Architects however tended to be overall more critical of the interventions. This is particularly the case for the historicizing reconstructions and the treatment of surface plaster throughout the site. In addition, inconsistencies of the interventions in relation to conservation ethics were directly or indirectly criticized in both groups but more so by architects. In both groups, there was much appreciation for the combination and contrast of contemporary and historic or traditional design features. The same is the case for the various endeavours to ensure differentiability of historic and added fabric.

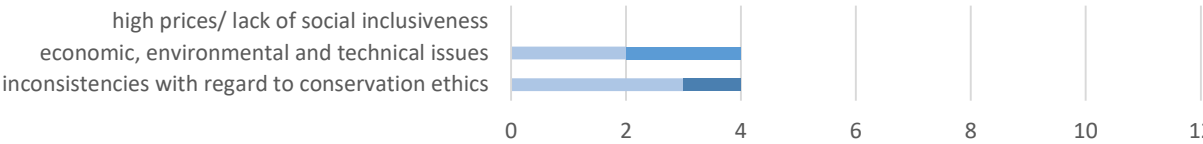


Diagram 3.4-34: Reasons for criticism of the rehabilitation among architects

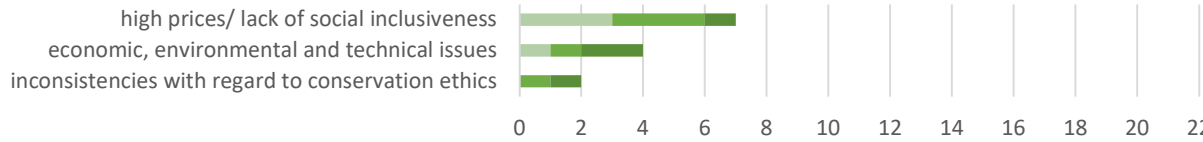


Diagram 3.4-35: Reasons for criticism of the rehabilitation among non-architects

The main general characteristic which particularly non-architects but also architects said they appreciated the site for was its historical or traditional appeal. Even more non-architects than architects hence expressed their explicit appreciation that the site’s historic fabric was preserved and adapted for reuse. Both groups, but more so architects, raised concerns with regard to economic, environmental or technical specificities. Only non-architects criticized a lack of social inclusiveness mostly with regard to the high prices of merchandise, food and drinks on offer at the site. Likewise, more non-architects appreciatingly pointed out the high ratio of Bahraini people among the customers and traders at the site and in its surroundings.

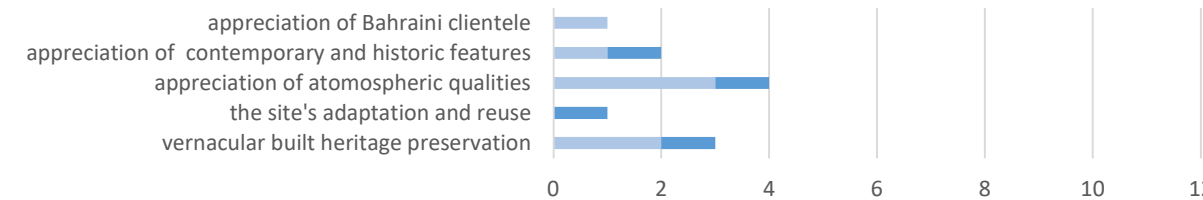


Diagram 3.4-36: Reasons for appreciation of the rehabilitation among architects

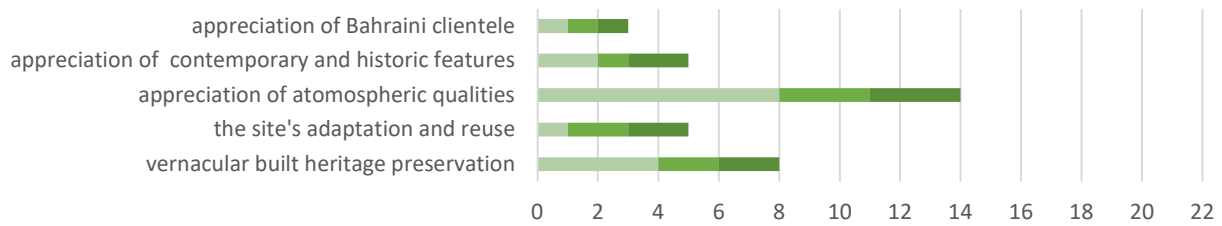


Diagram 3.4-37: **Reasons for appreciation of the rehabilitation among non-architects**

With regard to individual elements, the evaluations seldom differed fundamentally between the two groups. Appreciation was generally high and more so among the non-architects. Architects, here again, tended to be more critical. The most significant difference surfaced in the case of the eastern wall along Bu Maher Avenue (annex fig. 3.4.1-67 to 68, 73). For authenticity concerns only architects disapproved of this feature, which was rebuilt in a somewhat abstracted design but in traditional technique. No non-architect raised concerns about the wall. With regard to cultural contingencies of the evaluations no meaningful patterns were identified.

Finally, it has to be recalled that the author did not systematically ask the interviewees to evaluate each individual element or aspect of the site and its rehabilitation and that architects – other than laypeople in that field – are trained to discuss architectural projects on a professional rather than a personal level. Given that the assessment is based on judgmental comments which the interviewees made rather freely, the results are to be understood as tendencies with no claim to completeness.

3.4.4.6 Authenticity judgements by the interviewees per information source

The following subchapter further explores the perception of the rehabilitated Siyadi Shops by the interviewees on the basis of the individual sources of information of authenticity as listed in the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

Form and design

During the tours, the author asked the interviewees to comment on the urban and architectural characteristics of the site and on how they changed. The main topics addressed in this section are spatial and architectural changes over time, aesthetics and messages conveyed by the architecture. An issue that was much discussed in this context was the way vernacular features, traditional designs, reconstructions and new additions are integrated in the overall design.

Several interviewees commented on the likeness of the rehabilitated site or its individual buildings to the original state or to later stages in terms of spatial configuration, architecture and designs. Judgements thereof were partly based on intuition, given that only few interviewees were familiar with the site's development and because very limited photographic evidence of the site's appearance in the past was available for comparison (annex fig. 3.4.1-9).

Two architects (I 23,33) who were involved in the site's rehabilitation associated the changed spatial configuration in the eastern block – which was originally entirely built up and now accommodates an open space – with a lack of authenticity in this regard. One of them criticized that there were no attempts to re-establish "spatial authenticity" (I 23) except reinstating the original "street alignment" (I 23) with the reconstruction of the eastern wall along Bu Maher Avenue and the western wall segment of the outdoor space:

“So, the physical authenticity is there. But the spatial authenticity was not there when the project started. And there was not attempt – other than the street alignment – there was no attempt to get that back. While the archaeology showed how the shops were distributed. And it was possible, actually, to get that same distribution of shops and the same spatial ...” (I 23)

A third architect (I 30), who was involved in later repair works, more generally considered the site significantly changed and its historicity impaired by the rehabilitation:

Author: “Do you feel this is a historic place?”

30b: “No.”

Author: “Why not?”

30b: “Maybe because of how the restoration project was done. Many details that were removed.”

An architect of the consultancy firm Gulf House Engineering (I 22) judged the rehabilitation work as honest:

“He [the lead conservation architect] didn’t try to rebuilt it as it used to be. At least he was sincere about it. [...] And it draws quite a lot of people nowadays. [...]” (I 22)

On the other hand, the same interviewee (I 22) generally questioned the spatial and architectural authenticity of restored heritage sites:

“But if you look at Qaisariya and you question yourself, what authenticity is there? How I would like to... It has been subject to change over many years. It is completely different when I have, let’s say, Al Ummayad Mosque. Even Al Ummayad Mosque in Syria, or any of this heritage places. Even Bahrain Fort. Do you think that is has been rebuilt and conserved to its original? I don’t think so!” (I 22)

Contrary to such perceptions, at least three interviewees of other professional backgrounds considered the site overall little changed over time or by the rehabilitation project (I 47,11,14):

„To me all of this could be how it has been originally and they would have just refitted it.” (I 14b)

“This is heritage look. Very old. They just changed only a few modern things, the floor...” (I 11 c)

A young Bahraini woman, when entering the outdoor space on her way to the café, said:

“You know what I like about this place? It’s the same place. They did not change it.” (I 47)

While deviations from typical vernacular designs were criticized by some (refer to ‘Traditions, techniques and management systems’), the notion that at least the remaining vernacular buildings throughout the site were little changed in appearance was explicitly shared by yet another architect (I 32):

“In Qaisariya the building is preserved as it is, and no image was imposed.” (I 32)



Diagram 3.4-38: Assessment of the site’s level of change by architects



Diagram 3.4-39: Assessment of the site’s level of change by non-architects

Authenticity in form and design was discussed in more detail on the basis of the individual vernacular buildings, such as the **five northern shop units of the eastern block** (annex fig. 3.4.1-67 to 70). They were generally appreciated for their traditional appearance and low level of intervention:

*16b: "It seems an old building. Nice old building."
 Author: "What do you think is what the Ministry of Culture has done here?"
 16b: "I think, a simple conservation."*

Interviewees of both groups, considered the five shops authentic in appearance and presumably little changed from their origin (I 16,17,30,10,3). Some pointed to maintained details such as the traditional rain gutters (I 17,10), wooden beams of the traditional awning and the door shutters:

*„This one I approve of. [...] And I assume, this is how it looked like before.” (I 10b)
 “Because the exterior shows like the old type shops. It’s very authentic. Specially the top part, you can see the danshal and the layer above the danshal. It shows a very authentic way of building this shop. Even the steps under the doors, and even the doors themselves. It’s nice, I like it.” (I 17b)*

This perception also prevailed when comparing to the photograph of the shops from 2008 (annex fig. 3.4.1-12):

*Author: "You said 'wow!'"
 30b: "Yes, because they maintained everything!"*

Only one of the involved architects pointed to the various restorative changes the five shop units had in fact been subjected to between 2010 and 2012:

“Well, the five old shops were still standing, but they were disfigured. They had very weird signs, and cement plaster and steps, I think...” (I 33)

Moreover, perceptions of the **archaeological wall window** and the **surface rendering** of the five northern shops differed greatly. Both features were criticized not only for aesthetics but also for authenticity concerns and are further discussed in other sections of this subchapter. One interviewee, for example, considered the surface rendering to contribute to the shops’ authentic appearance:

“Because it is kind of a different texture. And I am afraid that if it would all be a little bit smoother, then it would look like fake.” (I 9a)

Another, by no means shared that notion:

“Kind of a crude job. [...] It kind of makes it look very patinated.” (I 14b)

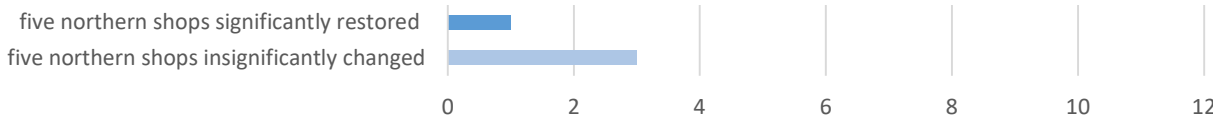


Diagram 3.4-40: Assessment of changes in form and design to the five northern shops by architects



Diagram 3.4-41: Assessment of changes in form and design to the five northern shops by non-architects

The perceptions of the **two shop units of the western block** (annex fig. 3.4.1-80 to 82), which had been rather conservatively restored but left without wall plaster, exemplify the complexity and subjectivity involved when assessing authenticity in form and design. Most of those, with whom the matter was discussed, considered the two shop units authentic in their vernacular appearance or insignificantly changed during the rehabilitation (I 17,30,21,4,11,45,13,20):

„[...] generally the building, I think, it is preserved as it is.” (I 16c)

Five interviewees, including three architects, tended to believe that the two shops had not been restored yet at all (I 21,30,20,11,8):

“They are finished?! I think this is very beautiful.” (I 8a)

When comparing to the photo taken in 2008 (annex fig. 3.4.1-28), some were surprised about the actual changes (I 16,21,15):

“They have done some work!” (21a)

“But look at the place before and after! Big difference.” (15c)

“Very different. They were abandoned. Now there are people taking care of it. Unbelievable!” (I 11c)

Others, on the contrary, still considered the changes minor even when spotting the new traditional doors or other alterations (I 17,30,4):

“So, nothing really changed. It’s good. They didn’t touch anything.” (I 30b)

“It’s the same. Except the doors.” (I 4a)

The vast majority of interviewees who commented on the two western shops, were enthusiastic about their appearance and how they were restored:

“So, this [the two western shops] is a better work than this one [the eastern shops]. [...] I am not a modern architect in the sense I like old things. And I like the way they were constructed. [...] I feel for a house to have a little roughness, not to be very clinical, straight. Architects insist on these kinds of things. I like to live with the land – what you call organic architecture. [...] There is a human touch to it. Like this thing here [the two shops], they look to me ‘oh, very nice!’.” (I 21a)

Most interviewees appreciated the irregularity of the forms and the natural materials of the two shops:

13a: “They look nice to me, yes.”

Author: “It is not appalling that they are crooked and so on?”

13a: “No, not at all.”

Only two non-architects, who associated the shops’ appearance with poverty and ruralness, considered them inappropriate in an urban context (I 18,11), but one of them, later revised her opinion (I 11):

„Very rough old look. It’s ok if you are living in the mountain, but you are in the city. It shouldn’t be like this.” (I 11c)

Towards the end of the interview, she reconsidered:

“Yes, but they want the people to feel the old times. So, they need to have this rough look. [...] It’s ok. It’s good. But only this place! If it’s everywhere, ah! Only this place you can keep like this to visit a heritage moment. But if it’s like that around it: dirty, messy!” (I 11c)

None of the interviewees fully disapproved of the exposed wall masonry, but some were concerned with the aesthetics (I 11) or with misconceptions it might create (I 21,10). More interviewees were clearly in favour of the choice made (I 17,30,4,8,13):

“But most of the material here is authentic. So, for me it is enough. You don’t have to finish it. Because that is the original. But since I did not see what it is before, I cannot really say if there was any plaster or what.” (I 30b)

One non-architect appreciated the decision to not plaster the two western shops for the sake of preserving them as evidence of what he believed to be the state prior to the rehabilitation (I 8):

8a: “I think it should be kept like this, because you have a bit of both, you have a part plastered and unplastered.”

Author: “What does that add to the site if you have a bit of both?”

8a: “It’s a snapshot of how this was like when you decided to keep it. [...] So, it may not be how it was built, but it’s an important decision when you decided to keep it. So, we should keep that snapshot in time somehow as well.”

The choice to surface-render the eastern shops and to leave the two western shops unplastered was also appreciated for aesthetics:

“Actually, the variety of both makes them both beautiful. I don’t prefer this one over the other.” (15c)

While the lacking surface render and exposed construction material certainly increases, if not constitutes the particular aura of authenticity of the two western shops, it turned out to be a source of some misconceptions or doubts. The following excerpt from an interview with a Bahraini non-architect illustrates the complexity of the matter:

10b: “I don’t feel it’s bad at all. It’s good. It looks very authentic, let’s say. Out of all the shops here these look like the most authentic ones.”

Author: “Authentic in which sense?”

10b: “In the sense that it is closer to what it looked like originally.”

Author: “But did shops in Muharraq look like that originally?”

10b: “No, ok, with the exception of the plastering. That’s the difference.”

Author: “It’s a big difference, isn’t it?”

10b: “No. Looking-wise yes. Actually, the fact that the plaster is removed from these ones, makes them look older than if they had plaster. So, it is kind of deceiving.”

Author: “But there was no plaster. Or maybe there was some cement plaster.”

10b: “I don’t know what they did. But I am sure that the shops in their original state were not left unplastered.”

While some interviewees raised the question if the shops were originally plastered or not (I 30,13), others concluded that the walls were originally unplastered (I 4,11,15) for example for lack of resources of the original owners:

“The stones are exposed – I don’t know if in the past they would have let the stones exposed or they would have plaster on them.” (I 13a)

“I would say this [the plastered eastern shops] is more important, or it has been for a richer person, and the unplastered [western] one was for a poor person.” (15c)

Probably due to the missing surface render, several interviewees were also misled to considered the two western shops older than other vernacular fabric at the site and in its surroundings (I 30,4,13):

17b: “I like them [the two western shops]. But I still, I don’t see why sometimes they plaster some parts of the walls and sometimes they kept them there like this. I still don’t see why.”

Author: “Does it disturb you?”

17b: "Not really. But it is confusing."

Author: "Confusing in a bad way? Or confusing in a good way?"

17b: "In a good way. You know why? Because the suq is never built at once it the past. So, there are phases even in the old times. So, you can see that this [the western shops] was the original thing, then this [the eastern shops] was added..."

Two interviewees (I 18,13) believed the two shops were intentionally left unplastered "to look in fact old" (I 13). Two others interpreted the different surface treatments of the various vernacular shops at the site as a means to showcase different intervention levels (I 8,10), which is part of the truth.

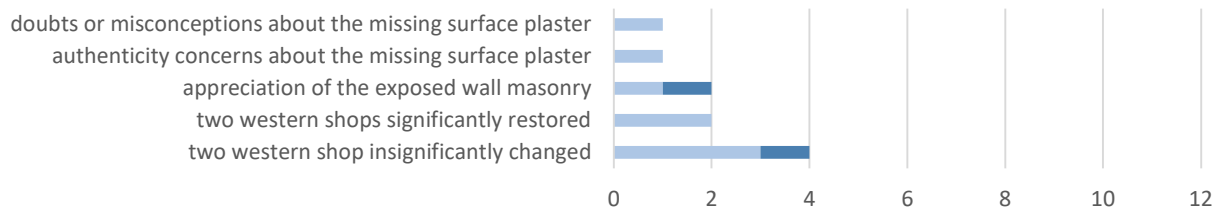


Diagram 3.4-42: Assessment of changes in form and design to the two western shops by architects

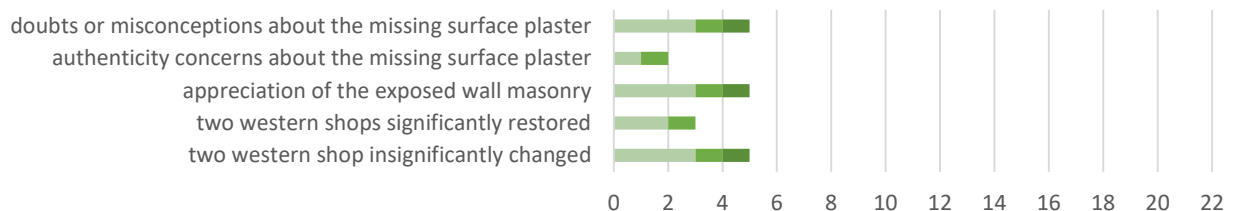


Diagram 3.4-43: Assessment of changes in form and design to the two western shops by non-architects

Interviewees unanimously identified the **café space** (annex fig. 3.4.1-83 to 85) as an adaption of vernacular remains with new additions:

"I don't think it was like this. Maybe there were more run-down buildings or maybe there were no buildings here." (10b)

"... it has been adapted." (I 13)

What attracted most attention at the café was the **adapted sixth shop unit** (annex fig. 3.4.1-83 to 85) which was usually discussed in the interior. Viewing the shop from the pedestrian lane between the two blocks of the Siyadi Shops (annex fig. 3.4.1-76), one interviewee described the intervention as a sort of shelter for the preserved vernacular fabric:

"If you step back, you see the glass ceiling, and the new ceiling. And there are the columns inside of Safron, which shows they built a building to shell the original building. [...] I like how they kept it by building something around it." (I 15c)

The same interviewee pointed to this approach being a novelty in Bahrain at the time:

"I do appreciate the effort they made and the solution that's there. I'm sure it's not the first of its kind as a smart solution. [...] In Bahrain, yes! But I am sure, the idea came from outside." (15c)

Although interviewees noticed the incompleteness of the vernacular structure of the sixth shop unit, several interviewees considered it quite truthful to its original appearance (I 15,9,12,14) or at least to give a truthful impression of the original vernacular building (I 16,13):

“The interior has been slightly touched but not really...” (I 9a)

“It gives you an idea of what existed here in the past. Of course, there is some modern stuff, like the lighting, the steel pillars, the ceiling and that stuff... This rough feeling: I like it. [...] Gianni [Arabic: I mean], there was a sensitivity in dealing with this space.” (I 16b)

“Here again I love it. Obviously, they try to keep visible whatever is there from the original. You can see that they did a lot of masonry work but happy to reveal the real thing.” (I 12c)

The level of change was acknowledged by some of the interviewees when viewing the photos of the ruined shop unit (annex fig. 3.4.1-20, 22):

“Wow, what a transformation!” (I 14b)

The **exposed stone masonry of the walls** in the lower café space (annex fig. 3.4.1-84 to 85) was for example often commended as a design choice (I 16,17,21,8,12). In this case, none of the interviewees seemed to think that the interior walls might have originally been unplastered. However, the exposed stone masonry was not interpreted by all interviewees as a proof of material authenticity of the building and it was a source of some doubts and misconceptions in both groups of interviewees (refer to ‘Materials and substance’).

The **remains of the rear wall of the sixth shop unit** (annex fig. 3.4.1-84 to 85), which were intentionally left exposed in the masonry walls as an indicative feature of the former room configuration, were only once, by an architect (I 16), pointed out and correctly interpreted:

“Even between these two pillars they left some traces to show that there was a wall here or something like that.” (I 16b)

The author’s attempt to bring the interpretive feature to the attention of a non-architect (I 15) was not successful:

15c: “So, below was the shop and up here was the factory.”

Author: “Were they separated?”

15c: “I don’t know.”

The perceived authenticity of the café space certainly also had to do with the interior design, which was met with much acclaim for integrating contemporary and traditional elements:

“I like the way how creatively, artistically the furniture is put. [...] And it looks very traditional, conceptual, modern, creative.” (I 9a)

The interior designer explained that she aimed at keeping the atmosphere of the vernacular building with the choice of colours and textures of the furnishings and accessories:

“We tried to keep the Safron feel.” (I 25)

Several interviewees (I 21,12,13) explicitly commended the **ceiling in the lower café space** (annex fig. 3.4.1-83):

“See, they put a modern slab here. Very nice. That is ok, they did not try to imitate. It would have been too much. I like it! The modern columns, the slab, and in between you have this [the old walls]. Very nice.” (I 21a)

“I love the wooden beams. I love the ceiling. This marriage works well here.” (I 12c)

One interviewee pointed to the ease of differentiating between original and added elements:

“I think it is to clearly divide the old elements and the new elements. And you can tell. You don’t have to be an expert to know that the beams are the old elements and that the metal part is new. I think they probably tried to make the modern parts not so intrusive.” (13a)

More interviewees of both groups however criticized the ceiling solution (I 16,17,30,23,18,3). It was criticized for not having been rebuilt as a typical vernacular ceiling (I 17,30) or simply for aesthetics (I 16,3,18).

“Actually, I like everything but the roof. But even the roof, you know it is this mix of modern and old. Maybe it is even better to show that it is totally modern than pretending that it is what it is not. So, you have this clash, which is interesting. And normally, who looks up to the roof?” (I 3c)

A foreign architect, who had worked on restoring vernacular buildings throughout Bahrain, seemed to perceive the feature as a mutilation of the traditional local way of construction (I 30):

“Because usually, above the danshals they had this... we call it hashir [palm frond mat]. [...] It could have been used on the top, because it did not look this way. So maybe instead of having this concrete...” (I 17b)

A Bahraini architect (I 17) likewise criticised the fragmentary vernacular ceiling and thought it might be misinterpreted as a pergola. Yet another architect (I 23) criticized that the traditional wooden beams below the concrete ceiling had turned into a mere decorative feature while an interviewee of lower economic status associated them with poverty and disliked them for that (I 18):

“But this one looks like village.” (I 18b)

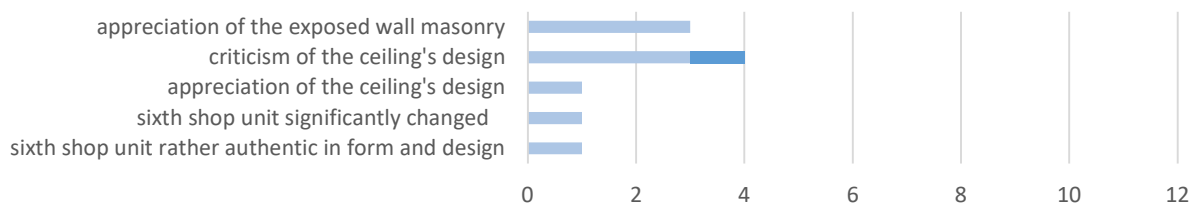


Diagram 3.4-44: Assessment of changes in form and design to the sixth shop unit by architects

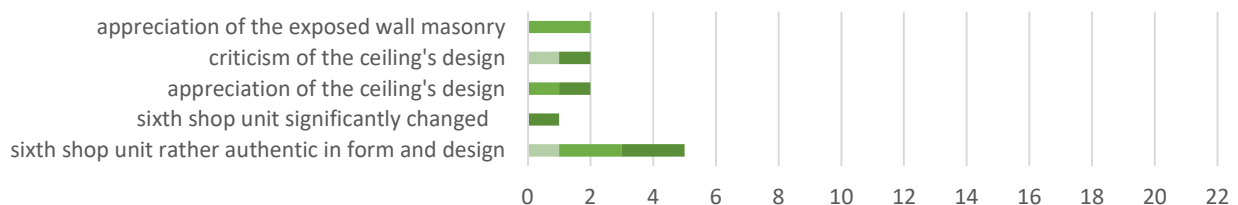


Diagram 3.4-45: Assessment of changes in form and design to the sixth shop unit by non-architects

Although few interviewees understood the former function of the **date syrup presses** (refer to ‘Other internal and external factors’) particularly the one under the glass in the lower café space found much acclaim as a design feature (I 16,17,21,33,20,4,18,8,9,12,3) (annex fig. 3.4.1-49, 84 to 85):

“I really like how they integrated that.” (I 3c)

“I think this a brilliant idea. Because you use the space and you also show what was here.” (I 8a)

A Bahraini non-architect (I 8) lauded the feature for giving “grandeur” to the place:

“The pearling monuments are beautiful in their own way. But they are not grand. [...] So, when you are renovating something that is not so grand, somehow you have to try and give it some grandeur. And a mdbasah with a glass floor on the top of it – that is pretty grand actually. So, it takes a bit of innovation.” (I 8a)

Two US-American visitors, who interrupted one of the interviews (I 4), pointed to the way the archaeological remains had been integrated as “a good blend between the modern and the

traditional.” Only one architect had reservations, as walking above the archaeological remains struck him as disrespectful towards the heritage:

“And I like the mdbasah with the glass here. It feels like there was something very important here in this place. But the idea of stepping on it clicks something in my mind. I don’t know what. [...] It’s like you are stepping on the history – really stepping on it. Maybe if you could go around it, instead of stepping on it...” (17b)

Interviewees of both groups said they appreciated the **combination of contemporarily designed additions with historic or traditional elements** throughout the site (I 16,21,24,32,18,12,3,13).

“I don’t mind the step into the 21st century, in the sense that you incorporate modern features. It’s nice. Nothing has to be a 100% old or remind of that. I love the glass floor. These are beautiful additions as long as we don’t overdo it. I love the metal ceiling and the columns holding the ceiling. I love these additions. But the most attractive is the old part and these are additions. They don’t bother me. There is a thin line between looking ugly and blending nicely.” (I 12c)

The built additions in the café space were found to “not overshadow the old historic” parts (I 16b). At least five interviewees seemed to share this notion (I 16,15,9,12,13). One non-architect, who had visited the café several times, did not even recall any contemporary features when describing the site from memory prior to the joint visit (I 10). Only one interviewee stated that the additions in contemporary design dominate the overall design and thereby render the site artificial and “museum-style” (I 46).

Overall, the interviewees were divided – or even undecided (I 17) – in their preference of a strong **design contrast** (I 16,17,21,24,32,3) versus an approach in which additions blend almost “seamlessly” (I 25) with the pre-existing elements (I 17,25,46,14). Interviewees of both groups for example approved of the strikingly contemporary **glass façade of the café space** (annex fig. 3.4.1-71, 74, 84) as a new, functional feature (I 16,15,12,3):

“The glazing addition. And I really like that. I like to have this strong contrast between old and new.” (I 16b)

“But still, I don’t know, maybe the glass is forming a big contrast with the surroundings, with these materials. But this kind of contrast, I don’t mind in such places. You need such places to attract the tourists and whoever wants to enjoy this suq, wants to enjoy the functions.” (I 12c)

A western archaeologist disapproved of the rough aesthetics of the **roof shelter above the outdoor archaeological area** (annex fig. 3.4.1-83 to 85), which she would have preferred to not be in sharp contrast with the surrounding fabric:

3c: “Well, this one I actually don’t like. It is a very ugly concrete roof. And I am pretty sure they could have actually found a more aesthetic one.”

Author: “What would you have preferred?”

3c: “Something... just the continuation of the walls. Like with the colour and everything.”

Author: “So, something that would look more traditional, or would blend in better?”

3c: “Yes.”

Author: “But here you like the glass.”

3c: “Ya, I like the glass. Because it is a modern cafeteria. So, it fits the idea.”

Along the same lines, another western archaeologist found the way historic, historicizing and contemporary features were combined aesthetically unsatisfactory and wished for a more subtle differentiation (I 14b):

“They could have done a better job in blending perhaps. That you tell a difference but... [...] I guess it is the contrast of the two together. And it probably has a lot to do with texture as well. These forms look so perfect and then you have the original here. I guess it kind of gives a shabby-chic look which is kind of what everyone is wanting these days. It’s not like it is an eye-sore, but...” (I 14b)

Interviewees of both groups (I 17,13) considered the **added building with the two shops in the southern parts of the eastern block** (annex fig. 3.4.1-75 to 77) a positive example of integrating historic and added elements:

“It looks modern but is built sort of in a traditional way. Not trying to look like it’s old but just copying the style. [...] Because it is so obviously modern, I think it is fine. It is not trying to look old.” (I 13a)

“They are going with the rest of the place. They are not interfering with the place.” (I 17b)

Foremost non-architects (I 16,17,18,8,10,12,13,3) also commended the design of the **replicated traditional door shutters** throughout the site for harmonizing with the restored ones but still being subtly differentiable (annex fig. 3.4.1-69, 77, 80, 82). While the doors were less often discussed with architects, most interviewees were indeed able to differentiate between replicated and restored traditional door shutters (I 16,17,4,15,18,8,9,10,12,3,13,14) and appreciated that:

“The wooden doors are meant to look like it originally was. [...] This one kind of looks original. They even replicated the hinges.” (I 14b)

“The doors are new – again trying to look the old style but obviously new. And I think they look fine with the building.” (I 13a)

“Good! [...] I mean they look similar. It’s just the wood looks older in the original doors. So, I think it’s fine. I would not like to see completely different doors. It would ruin the theme.” (10b)

“I think it is good that you can differentiate them if you want to. But normally you would just pass and would not realize. That is a good thing.” (I 3a)

At least two interviewees (I 9,13) however considered the differentiation “not so important” (I 13). One of them even said she would have preferred that the replicas of doors would have been perfected to uphold the illusion of historicity. Identifying them as new she felt “cheated”. Only when discussing the matter, did she acknowledge a notion of truthfulness in the possibility to differentiate:

9a: *“Even the doors: From a distance, I kind of felt that they are new, probably. Coming now closer it is a little bit... mhm... it’s like: ‘Ach!’ It’s like a fake vintage kind of thing.”*

Author: *“Compare these two. [pointing to the new and the authentic door] Can you tell a difference between the two?”*

9a: *“Ya, ya, ya. I prefer the one on the left, and I guess it is an older one.”*

Author: *“That is the original. And this is a copy.”*

9a: *“This is a bit disappointing to me. In terms of assuming that this is a building that might be 200 years old and seeing this type of wooden ... it’s like too smooth, it’s too new. [...] They could have done something in order to make it look more old.”*

Author: *“Ok, so you would have preferred if they tried to make it look the same, even if it was not the original?”*

9a: *“I don’t know. It depends on the effects. Because sometimes it can be also ... When it is not done well, it feels like cheated. Like someone wanted to cheat me that this was old, but I can tell.”*

Author: *“Ya, and here they are trying not to cheat you.”*

9a: *“At least you can tell that this was new. So, you can have different...”*

Author: *“So you can appreciate that?”*

9a: “Ah, yes, I think so. It is like being honest with me.”

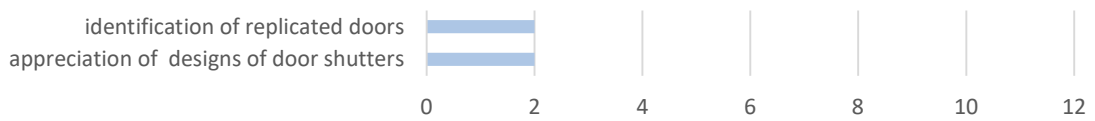


Diagram 3.4-46: Comments on the design of door shutters by architects

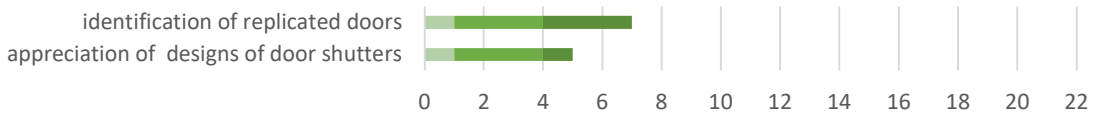


Diagram 3.4-47: Comments on the design of door shutters by non-architects

As in the case of the first reference site, mostly architects were particularly concerned with the **differentiability of historic and added elements** (I 16,21,30,32,33,7,20). But many non-architects, too, either expressed their appreciation for the efforts to achieve legibility in this regard (I 10,12,3,13) or criticized the lack of it (I 4,14).

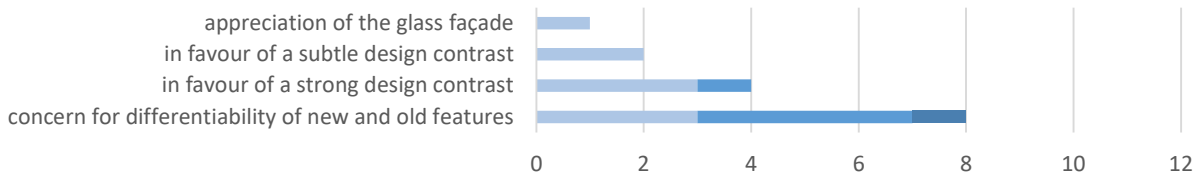


Diagram 3.4-48: Comments on the contrast and differentiability of elements by architects

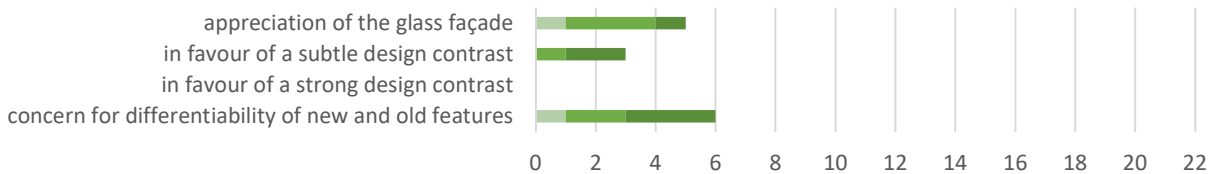


Diagram 3.4-49: Comments on the contrast and differentiability of elements by non-architects

The interviewees were quite divided in their judgement about the various **reconstructions**. A conservation architect (I 23) who was involved in the rehabilitation would have appreciated more reconstructions in the eastern block on the basis of further investigations into the original layout and its development for the sake of re-establishing spatial authenticity:

“The space was changed. It used to be three shops, now it’s one continuous shop. And this space outside also is used as terrace rather than shops. [...] Why didn’t we try to have a certain space back, a certain spatial distribution?” (I 23)

Contrary to this opinion, another architect – when seeing the photos of the site from 2008 – considered that the sixth shop unit, which was partly preserved, should rather have been reconstructed instead of other parts, which had entirely disappeared (I 30b). Yet another architect, who was critical of reconstructions in principle, found that a part of the site had been reconstructed based on conjecture (I 21a).

Comments from non-architects were equally controversial. One Bahraini (I 15) wished for a larger scale reconstruction scheme in the market of Muharraq along the lines of the Al Wakrah heritage village

which was under construction in Qatar at the time and introduced in chapter 3.2. With reference to the two conservatively restored western shops he said:

“I wished the whole area was like this. It would be very beautiful.” (I 15c)

Contrary to this another Bahraini said:

„No need to rebuild the whole area. Ok, it’s good to give a life to the past. But you should think about your present. So, a few examples it’s ok.” (I 4a)

Most interviewees appreciated the open outdoor space and considered it the right decision to not reconstruct the shops which originally stood in its place in order to avoid “inventing what the inside looked like” (I 13a) and in order to differentiate it from the preserved “authentic areas” of the site (I 13a):

“It’s better to have a space like this, that is more encouraging to modern visitors to come and learn about how this space used to be, rather than to renovate it exactly to what it was.” (I 8b)

The number of critical comments about the **western wall in the outdoor space** (refer to 3.4.4.5 ‘Evaluations of the Siyadi Shops’ refurbishment’) indicates that the feature was seldom identified as a reconstitution of the former street façade and urban layout (I 17,23,8):

“This is an architectural feature, isn’t it? It is just added as a feature. Maybe it marks the site of an original wall.” (I 8a)

“There might have been a wall there. [...] But I don’t really see the function of this wall. Maybe it is in a way enclosing this space.” (I 17b)

Some interviewees perceived inconsistencies in the design of the different reconstructions. One said, she did not understand why some reconstructions were built in resemblance to traditional elements while others were more abstract in design (I 13). Referring to the wooden grid windows she said:

“They look fine design-wise, but I don’t know how much wooden windows in this form would have been used in Bahrain. But it’s a modern area, so... But then, if you are going for the older look, trying to sort of mimic the style even in the newer buildings, why would you not just do it everywhere?” (I 13a)

Another interviewee (I 10) said the western wall should have been built more traditionally and in a similar manner as the eastern one. He clearly did not appreciate the rationale of reconstructing in an abstract manner for lack of photographic evidence, which the author tried to explain while showing the historic photo of the eastern elevation (annex fig. 3.4.1-9):

“I would build the other side the same as this picture.” (I 10b)

When comparing to the historic photo which inspired the reconstruction of the **eastern wall along Bu Maher Avenue**, two architects (I 17,30) pointed out deviations in form and design as the wall was not strictly rebuilt on the basis of the historic photo (compare annex fig. 3.4.1-9, 67 to 68):

“They could have done it in a better way, so that it would blend naturally with the surrounding. [...] To me, I feel it has to be just the same as this one [the wall in the historic photo] or something that... not in a big contrast... but something like in Bahrain fort, where they have a museum which is totally modern, and it’s totally different than the fort itself but it’s nice.” (I 17b)

Two non-architects who equally noticed a difference when comparing to the historic photograph commended the design of the reconstruction for being superior to the original (I 11,9):

“It looks different. [...] I like it now. It gives a different feeling than what I see in the picture from the 80s. I feel now it is more welcoming. At least for me.” (I 9b)

Potential misconceptions about authenticity and historicity were the main concern of several architects with regard to the eastern wall (I 16,21,30,32):

“I don’t like it. If it is new, show it!” (I 21a)

“I think it is better not to reconstruct with the old features, because it is again confusing. [...] If you are adding two stuff together, you might ruin the authentic one. [...] So, from my side, when I am working on a project like this, I would love to construct something really very modern. But I might use the same rhythm, with a very modern stuff. And it will recall the past as a shadow, and it will highlight this unique place very much.” (I 16c)

Three Bahraini non-architects seemed to share concerns about misconceptions and differentiability in the case of the eastern wall. One somewhat critically called the wall “imaginary” (I 15c) after realizing it is newly built. Another appreciated the attempts in the architectural design to achieve differentiability (I 10), while a third wished for further interpretation means explaining the intervention (I 4):

“But maybe the walls were demolished and rebuilt. I can’t really tell. This looks entirely new. They did not make it to give a false impression at least.” (I 10b)

“Well, I think it’s better if they had put this photo of the old one, so people they can know what is the new and what is the old. For me, I cannot differentiate.” (I 4a)

Contrary to this perception, semblance to historic features was considered desirable particularly among non-architects (17,10,8):

“I mean it is a good job all in all. It looks old, but I don’t think it is.” (I 8a)

The same non-architect (I 8) brought up the notion, that the acceptability of reconstructions depends on who built them. Asked if it matters to him if the walls of the café space are rebuilt or original, he replied:

“I have to think about that question. There is no straight answer. It depends on the place. It depends on how and who built it. If it is built using slave labour, ya, it matters to me. If it is built using the grandchildren of the people who built the original one, then it’s fine. It’s like they built it. [...] I mean, these walls are not made for decoration, if they are original, they are made to be used. So, with time something will happen to them.” (I 8a)

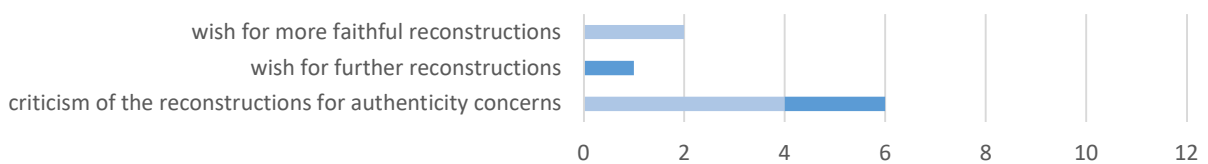


Diagram 3.4-50: **Comments on reconstructions by architects**

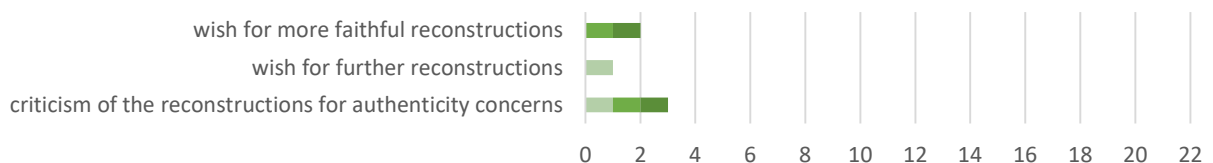


Diagram 3.4-51: **Comments on reconstructions by non-architects**

The **colour-coding** of the eastern wall and of other plastered surfaces throughout the site was identified as an interpretive means by many interviewees (I 16,30,32,33,11,10,12,3). Some of the

architects were aware of the rationale beforehand (I 30,32,33). Few interviewees did not identify the approach or considered it not very clear (I 4,9,18,13). One interpreted all plastered elements as preserved or restored features (I 9). Others seemed to consider it a design feature (I 4,18). A western non-architect considered the approach successful despite a certain lack of clarity:

Author: What do you think about that approach?

13a: I think it is not absolutely and totally obvious. But then my question would be, does it have to be absolutely and totally obvious?"

Author: "And can it be?"

13a: "And can it be!? And how many different materials would you have to use to make it obvious? Is there a need to be so obvious? Because the purpose of this reconstruction is to show what it could have looked like – or looked like in this case, as they had a picture. And I think that is well done. [...] When we were going around, I told you: 'This looks old this looks new.' You can see a difference."

Overall, the whitish plaster of the eastern wall along Bu Maher Avenue consciously or unconsciously played into the fact that a majority of interviewees perceived the eastern wall next to the darker shop units as new despite its historizing features:

12c: "I think this is the old part and this is the new part."

Author: "What makes you understand that?"

12c: "The façade. The treatment."

Likewise, the **brownish façade colour of the five northern shops** probably contributed to them being perceived as historic by most interviewees, although there were several concerns in terms of craftsmanship and aesthetics (I 32,11,12,14):

"They should fix it better. Or they want us to see that it is from before? So, it's ok, keep it. But just make sure it does not fall." (I 11c)

Moreover, two architects (I 30,33) said that in their eyes, the pigmentation of the plaster as a means of artificial patination takes away from the vernacular buildings' authenticity, such as in the case of the five northern shops of the eastern block:

Author: "Even that side? When you stand in front of those shops. You don't feel that it is historic?"

30b: "I don't know. Because I saw what they did: painting."

The Bahraini among the two, furthermore, disapproved of the approach for contradicting fundamentals of the local building tradition. He had preferred all vernacular parts, including areas of historic plaster, to be newly plastered and not pigmented:

"[...] Because the brown colour, I don't know... I did not see any other building that had plaster that brown. So, it looks a bit alien. If there is an original plaster that colour, ok. But that [the whitish plaster of the eastern wall] is closer to the plaster colour that I have seen. [...] And what I believe is, that usually, if you replaster, the point of it is not to make it old. Whenever they plaster a building, or they replaster it, the intention is to make it new. So, in this way, we are giving a wrong impression by doing a new plaster that looks old. That takes away from it, I think. That is why I would have preferred that the entire thing is plastered new." (I 33)

On the other hand, another young Bahraini architect (I 17a) considered that the surface renderings of the site's vernacular buildings made them appear more authentic in comparison to earlier restoration and reconstruction projects such as those of the Shaikh Ebrahim Center which were introduced in chapter 3.2:

“The finishes are different. When you look at the buildings and the surroundings at Shaikh Ebrahim Center, you feel they are new. The finishes are very neat, nice there. But when you go to Suq al Qaisariya, you feel like it more of mud-like.” (I 17a)

It will be further discussed in the section ‘Use and function’ that other attempts to achieve **legibility of the site’s former spatial configuration, use and development** were even less successful in conveying the intended messages than the colour-coding.

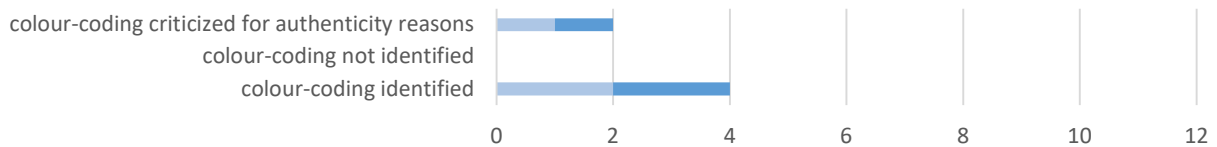


Diagram 3.4-52: **Comments on the colour-coding of plastered surfaces by architects**

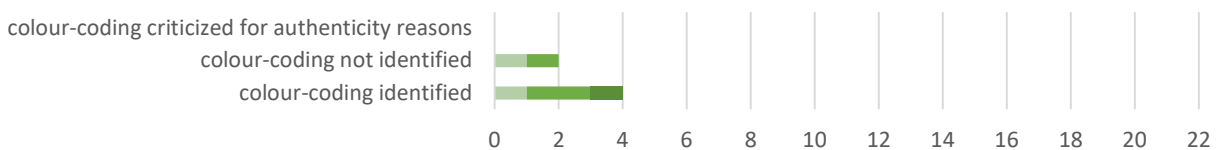


Diagram 3.4-53: **Comments on the colour-coding of plastered surfaces by non-architects**

In summary, architects considered the site overall more significantly changed than non-architects. The assessments of authenticity in form and design of the individual vernacular buildings did not differ significantly between the two groups. A majority in both groups considered that the pre-existing buildings, including the adapted sixth shop unit, gave a truthful impression of their original vernacular design. This notion was somewhat contested by two architects, who were more critical of deviations from the vernacular building tradition.

The assessments of the two restored western shops most clearly showed to what extent judgements about authenticity in form and design depend on historical background knowledge and architectural expertise. At the same time, it showed that such assessment is intrinsically subjective not only because personal taste plays into it, but because it requires the choice of a point in time against which the building’s contemporary state is assessed. The level and significance of changes to the form and design of the two western shops hence differed greatly among interviewees of both groups. Although the missing surface plaster was found to create misconceptions about the shops, there was an overwhelming approval of the way they were restored.

Only architects said that added and historic elements should be clearly set apart by design in principle. Two Arab conservation architects pointed to this as a tenet of conservation ethics (I 24,32). Approval of select strikingly modern features, particularly of the glass façade, prevailed in both groups. The fair-faced concrete slabs and sand-blasted steel elements turned out to be more controversial mostly for concerns about aesthetics. Moreover, there were interviewees in both groups who approved of or preferred a subtle or no differentiation of added and historic elements by design. The designs of replicated traditional door shutters were repeatedly pointed out as a positive example in this regard. Some interviewees among both groups wished for more historic features to be reinstated or for reconstructions to be more faithful to traditional forms. Overall, there were however more authenticity concerns about the reconstructions at the site among architects than among interviewees

of other professional backgrounds. A western non-architect with an education in heritage conservation pointed to this discrepancy and challenged the pertinent conservation ethics:

“What we are doing sometimes is to say: ‘No, we only have to preserve the original, we should not reconstruct and we should not add.’ But is that so bad? I don’t know. [...] I think, probably, you as an architect would say: ‘No, this should have been done differently.’” (I 13a)

No significant patterns were identified with regard to cultural backgrounds of the interviewees.

Materials and substance

Material authenticity was discussed at this reference site with reference to the general rehabilitation approach, the individual buildings and even accessories. The perceptions of historicity of the individual parts of the site presented above are closely linked to the perception of material authenticity. The assessments indicate that there were rather few misconceptions about the material authenticity of the historic built elements. Most misconceptions concerned the reconstructed elements, which were sometimes taken as restored historic fabric. Due to the vernacular buildings and the differentiability of many additions, the majority of interviewees of both groups perceived the site as rather authentic in substance:

“[...] because you can see and feel the authentic fabric. Whatever is added is clear.” (I 32)

Several architects, even pointed to a **focus on material authenticity** and negligence of other dimensions of authenticity in the site’s rehabilitation (I 23,22,17,30,33). One architect (I 23) pointed to the neglect of spatial authenticity when discussing the adapted sixth shop unit:

*“So, if physical authenticity was respected, right, ... it was totally respected, because the actual *danshals* were kept in their place, the actual wall was kept as is, all sort of things were ... but as a fabric! And the space was changed. [...]” (I 23)*

Other architects (I 17,30,33) would have preferred more concern for reinstating typical vernacular features despite inherent conflicts with material authenticity (see below and ‘Traditions, techniques and management systems’). An architect who had worked on the conception of the unexecuted rehabilitation project for Suq al-Qaisariya of 2006, in turn, considered that there can be other means of preserving the site’s history and heritage than material conservation. In his eyes, an authentic user experience and the preservation of memory should be the prime objectives:

“There is also another concept of conservation: the memory of the place, rather than the physical. You protect the physical structure in order to preserve the memory of the place. And to conserve the experience, which allows you to experience when you are in that place. Which will be completely different than the experience of a shopping mall. And by doing this, you are doing a type of conservation. Whatever you want to name, to term it.” (I 22)

Even the lead conservation architect of the site’s rehabilitation works (I 7) pointed to authenticity as a multidimensional concept:

“I have a problem confining the concept of authenticity to fabric and physical aspects. I have a problem with that. Because it needs to be integrated with the intangible aspects as well. You know, authenticity is not about an original fabric only. But it is about original fabric integrated in a certain context. A cultural context.” (I 7b)

From a more technical perspective, another architect who was involved in the rehabilitation of the Siyadi Shops (I 23) pointed to the conservation tenet of **reversibility of the new interventions** as a means of protecting material authenticity. In this context, he criticized the installation of heavy concrete foundations for a new, widely spanning roof:

“They were heavy foundations of 1x1 meter that had to be put actually above the archaeology that was discovered. So, they are removable. It is not irreversible. But it is kind of a heavy intervention. [...] The amount of concrete that was put in the ground. [...] It did not harm the archaeology, but it is sitting on the top of it. [...] The question is, was this really necessary? Was it necessary to open this space all together and to have a roof disconnected from the old structure?” (I 23)

The same interviewee (I 23) pointed to the reversibility of the ventilation trenches which he considered not to impact the buildings’ authenticity:

“Because it is totally reversible. [...] You can fill them back in and that’s it.” (I 23)

Features that incited many discussions about materiality were the exposed vernacular building materials. Coral stone masonry, coral stone slabs and wooden beams throughout the site were pointed out as traditional building elements in both groups of interviewees. The interviewees were however not always able to differentiate if the traditional elements were historic and preserved in situ, or recycled for a reconstruction. Some non-architects expressed the notion, that material authenticity is no prime concern in this case. The following discussion about the **two restored shop units of the western block** (annex fig. 3.4.1-80 to 82) and reference to Al Wakrah heritage village in Qatar exemplifies this:

15c: “You know, whenever you see a historical show about Bahrain, old buildings are like this. I don’t know if it is real or not. That is very confusing. Either it is old or it is well renewed. I cannot tell the difference.”

Author: “If it was renewed?”

15c: “Ok, if it was an original building, I am happy they kept it like this and they renewed the door. If it was completely built from scratch and it looks very old like this, they are doing an amazing job.”

Author: “And you would like that?”

15c: “Yes. I wished the whole area was like this. It would be very beautiful. We’ve seen an example in Qatar. Everybody knows it. It’s very beautiful. Everybody likes it. They are making a huge village like that. A huge village. Five times the size of Suq Waqif. Almost the size of Old Muharraq. On the beach in Qatar. The same technique. Small narrow roads, all like these...”

Author: “And then people will think it’s old.”

15c: “I don’t know what people will think. It’s not complete yet.”

Despite such uncertainties, there was a tendency to consider traditional materials as historic and as a proof of material authenticity of the vernacular buildings. Only one interviewee considered them purpose-built to look old (I 18). The two restored shops of the western block were hence mostly perceived as authentic in substance (16,17,21,30,20,4,11,15,8,10,12,3,13,14), even when certain additions were identified:

“That is another great job, because they kept those building materials as it is. They didn’t cover it with anything, so you can see the...” (I 4a)

“I think they are original. They have been renovated. Parts of it is maybe added.” (10b)

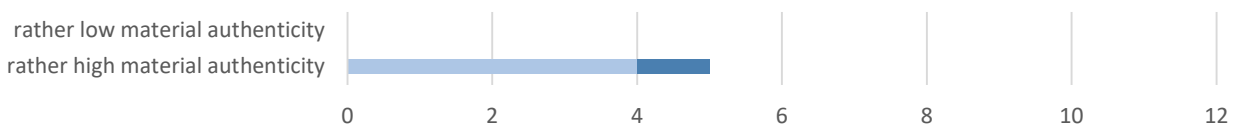


Diagram 3.4-54: Comments on material authenticity of the restored western shops by architects

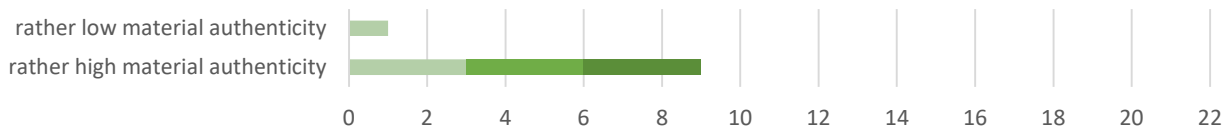


Diagram 3.4-55: **Comments on material authenticity of the restored western shops by non-architects**

Most interviewees considered the fragmentary vernacular remains of the **adapted sixth shop unit of the eastern block** authentic in substance (I 16,17,21, 9,10,11,15,13,14). Only one interviewee considered the vernacular parts mostly rebuilt (I 8) and another expressed uncertainty in this regard (I 4). Here again, the exposed stone masonry of the walls in the lower café space (annex fig. 3.4.1-84 to 85) was often taken as a sign of material authenticity as the following excerpt exemplifies:

Author: "So looking down into the lower part of the coffee shop. What do you think?"

8a: "I think it is beautiful, that is the word I can think of. But I think... this is thinking speculation... it could be a really wrong answer. Let us go down for a minute! [...] I think this wall might be... This is a coral stone wall! They used to build like this. Which is like the first layer of lime stone which you have under the sea. It's consisting of silt and coral. They used to actually build of this. But obviously it is heavily treated - so they put something over it. That is what I think. So, I think this wall is original. [...]"

Author: "And the top part?"

8a: "I don't think so. I think it is built new."

Author: "What makes you think that?"

8a: "Because the wood looks obviously new, and the plaster also. And I don't think it will survive that long. I could be wrong, of course, it could have been there and they could have just rebuilt this part. But I think this is all new."

The surface plaster in the upper parts of the walls of the lower café space was hence found to be a source of doubts or misconceptions with regard to material authenticity in both groups of interviewees (I 17,8,12,13). One architect expressed his uncertainty about the historicity of the plaster in the upper parts of the wall and contemplated if original plaster might have been removed in the lower parts in order "to make the people closer to the stones which were used to build the buildings" (I 17). This notion was shared by a non-architect (I 3), who thought that the plaster was removed in order to make the wall appear more authentic:

"Although, I guess, everything was plastered before, it seems more original if it's like that to the layman." (I 3c)

When the author asked another interviewee, why the bottom part of the walls is not plastered, while the top part is, the answer was:

"Maybe because in the top part there was a lot of work to be done so they had to come with an architectural idea to hide – I think." (12c)

At least one other interviewee (I 13) thought that the upper parts were newly plastered, while the contrary was actually the case: The lower part of the masonry wall including the plaster, was highly deteriorated due to raising ground humidity and the masonry had to be restored. The upper parts, including their original surface plaster, were in much better state and could be conserved (compare annex fig. 3.4.1-20, 22, 84 to 85).

Most interviewees with whom the wooden beams of the fragmentary wooden ceiling were discussed identified them as authentic (I 16,21,15,18,9,12,13,14). According to the lead conservation architect they had in fact been removed, treated and put back in place (I 7).

Author: "You think they were here?"

21c: "I think so. Otherwise, they wouldn't keep them here."

At least two interviewees however took them as a new decorative feature (I 4) or an architectural statement (I 8). A third (I 15) thought some of the beams were replaced, which is possible:

"I don't think all these beams are real. I think some of them had fallen apart and they replaced them. They are not all old. This one is old, this one is new." (I 15c)

A non-architect explained why material authenticity of the vernacular feature was of no concern to him since the "method" is what matters (I 8a):

Author: "How about the danshal?"

8a: "No, the danshals are definitely new."

Author: "New? Why?"

8a: "Because this doesn't look like a-hundred-year-old wood. [...] Maybe they took the old wood and managed to treat it beautifully. But I don't know much about that. But most likely it's new. Even if it's new, I don't think that it matters. The fact that they used wood like this ... Obviously it is not a support, it is just an architectural statement."

Author: "Which is?"

8a: "Which is that this is how they used to build things. And it is worth it. Because this wood is very expensive and it is very hard to find today. So, for them to expend this much to show how it used to look like is beautiful in itself. You know, for a detail like this it does not matter if it is the original, or restored, the method matters. They are trying to show something that is a strong part of the old architecture. It's nice."

One Bahraini (I 4) pointed out the place mats on the tables in the café as unauthentic in material (annex fig. 3.4.1-84). While she preferred if the mats were actually made of traditional palm frond, she assumed that plastic imitations are economically more viable for a restaurant and hence approved of the accessory:

"Whatever, it is not made of palm trees, Bahraini palm trees, but at least their style is like an old style. So, I like it. [...] In a restaurant you will not buy original things. Maybe it is expensive, you have to think economically." (I 4a)

Overall, the adapted shop unit was mostly considered of high material authenticity:

"So, they kept the original walls, they fitted the electricity and the air conditioning in the new ceiling. Meanwhile they kept the original wooden beams for the ceiling. Me and my friend appreciated this about this place. They really kept the original building." (I 15c)

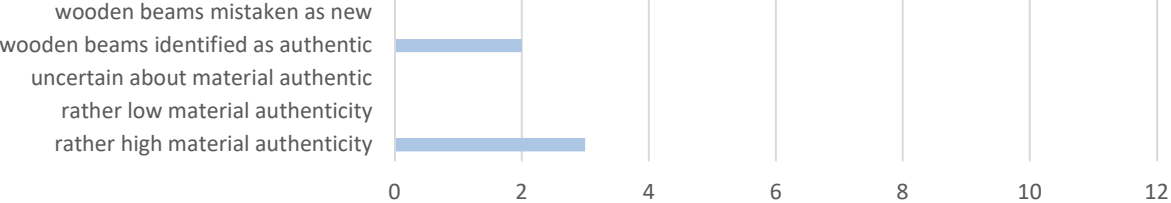


Diagram 3.4-56: Comments on material authenticity of the adapted sixth shop unit by architects

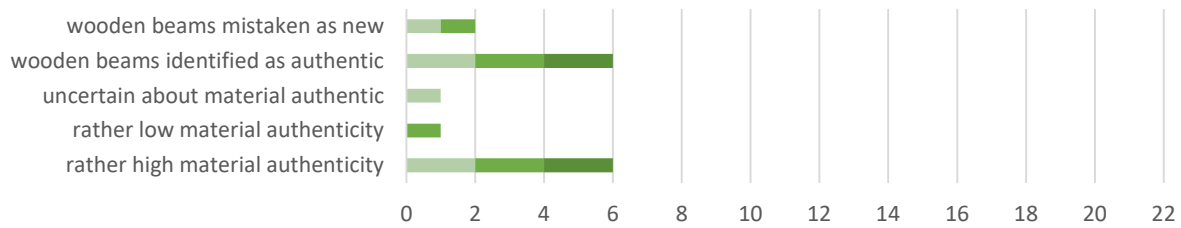


Diagram 3.4-57: **Comments on material authenticity of the adapted sixth shop unit by non-architects**

The **five northern shops of the eastern block** (annex fig. 3.4.1-67 to 70), too, were unanimously perceived as rather authentic in substance albeit newly rendered (I 16,17,21,4,11,8,9,10,12,3,13,14). Again, the vernacular features played into this perception:

“See, this one is just a renovation. It was getting rough by time. I don’t think they built it from scratch, they just made a layer around it. I think it is the same up here and the wood is very original. It’s all an original building. [...] What gives it away as an original building is the palm frond. It looks very old.” (I 15c)

One interviewee considered parts of the shop structures might have been added. He referred to those as “the cheat” (I 10a):

10b: “I feel like portions of it have been done from scratch and portions have been standing.”

Author: “But you can’t tell from sight?”

10b: “No. But this part [...], I think, it is the cheat and this is the old part.”

Some interviewees pointed to the exposed **coral stone slab in the archaeological wall window** (annex fig. 3.4.1-86) as a typical vernacular construction material (I 4,8). Many took the feature as a sign of material authenticity and historicity (I 16,17,20,8,10,12,15,3,14). But most of those interviewees were familiar with the feature from a previous visit to Bab al-Bahrain (I 16,17,15,10,12,3,14):

“And here, they wanted to reveal the hidden structure. And it was stone.” (I 16c)

“I think this is the original wall, which they kept, just like in Bab al-Bahrain. It’s not very clear here.” (I 15 c)

“So, this one – keeping the wall, it’s a nice feature. It looks nice. It gives you a reminder of the building.” (I 12c)

One of them slightly misinterpreted the archaeological wall window as “a snapshot of how the building looked back in time” (I 8a) and seemed to derive that the shops were originally not surface plastered. One of the architects (I 20) expressed the fear that such misconceptions would occur. Several interviewees fully misinterpreted the exposed coral stone slab (I 21,4,11,9,13), for example as a former window (I 4,13) or area for advertisements (I 13):

“Maybe it was a window before and just they closed it?” (I 4a)

“Maybe for advertising? ‘Fresh Fish...!’ [going closer] It still looks ugly. I don’t know what that is.” (I 13a)

One of the architects (I 21) thought the coral stone slab was unplastered for technical issues:

“I don’t know why... maybe there are difficulties in plastering this. You see these cracks? The moment you plaster it, it will crack again. Or they have to put a mesh and plaster it.”

Author: “It looks unfinished to you?”

21a: “This is unfinished.”

Finally, one interviewee (I 10) asked if the areas of coral stone masonry in the base of the building, which was exposed for maintenance works at the time of the interview (annex fig. 3.4.1-86 to 87), served the same didactic purpose. Another interviewee considered that a small sign next to the archaeological window would suffice avoid such confusion and to draw attention to the interpretive feature:

“Because now the work is in progress, I would not understand that this is meant to be kept and to show. [...] Maybe if it would be like an outdoor museum. Like if there would be small sign, even a person who is not reading the sign would see that something is written next to that would assume it is a gallery.” (I 9a)

Several interviewees noticed the area of **historic surface plaster in the façade of the five northern shops** (annex fig. 3.4.1-86) on their own (I 16,12,13,14). In addition, the author used to point to that feature during many interviews:

Author: “Do you have an idea why the plaster up there you see there is a part that looks different? Do you have an idea about that?”

3c: “Is it the original fabric and the newly added?”

Author: “Yes, exactly. [...] What do think about that?”

3c: “I think that is also a good thing. Because you will only see it if you want to see it. And if you don’t want to see it, you will never focus on that actually. So, if you just have a short glance, you will just have the impression of the nice old, traditional building. But if you want to find out the secrets of the building you can still see them.”

While more architects were able to identify the historic plaster remains and their purpose, the feature was also understood by non-architects (I 16,17,21,4,10,12,3,13,14):

“That looks pretty original. Interesting.” (I 14b)

“The top part is different. Maybe the upper part was actually saved. While the lower part could be a reconstruction. I am not sure about that. [...] It’s not exactly obvious.” (I 13a)

“They tried to blend and they did a fair job. You can tell that the upper part is genuine.” (I 12c)

One architect (I 33), with whom the feature was discussed in an off-site interviewee as well as four non-architects did not identify the historic plaster remains or misinterpreted them (I 15,18,8,9). Some identified a difference but could not tell the meaning:

“I honestly don’t think there is a reason for it.” (I 8a)

The interviewee of the following quote, for example, took the area of new plaster for historic and the historic parts for additions:

“I notice something but I don’t know what it means. Could it be, that this is original and this is not?” (I 15c)

The choice to maintain and expose the original plaster remains was appreciated as a proof of material authenticity by interviewees of both groups (I 16,11,15,10,3,12,13,14):

“I think it is important to keep whatever is genuine from the building. And to show it. And to work around it.” (I 12c)

“So, what I was telling you about Qal’at Arad is similar to this kind of thing. So, you can see the different colours of the two plasters. [...] I would rather have the differentiation so people can understand that this was old and has been fixed and that they kept it that way. Rather than demolishing it and building it all in the same way so people can think wrongly about it. Or if they did that at least they declare that and put some written explanation of what they did and why.” (10b)

One non-architect internalized the approach of leaving historic traces to the point that, later in the interview, he interpreted a water stain from the air-conditioning on the wall in the lower café space as a batch of historic plaster among newly added plaster (I 12):

“Here this is very neat.” (I 12c)

However, interviewees of both groups also criticized a lack of comprehensibility of the intended message (I 16,13):

“I can see there is a difference in texture and in colour but it does not tell. It is not that obvious, because actually I have here like four kinds of textures and colour.” (I 16b)

“It is just not so obvious why it is different. But I definitely don’t think they should have removed it.” (I 13a)

Moreover, several interviewees disapproved of the way the remains of original surface plaster were set within the areas of new surface plaster. Several architects disapproved of the artificial patination of the surrounding new plaster for authenticity concerns. Contrary to their view, one architect considered historic and new plaster areas should blend seamlessly in order to simulate historicity (I 17):

“The whole thing should look authentic.” (I 17a)

As described in section ‘Form and design,’ all interviewees with whom the site’s **replicated door shutters** were discussed (I 16,17,4,15,18,9,8,10,12,3,13,14) were able to identify them despite their traditional designs. The majority of them appreciated this. Contrarily, the **reconstructed walls** for which traditional construction techniques and materials were used, caused several misconceptions or uncertainties with regard to historicity and material authenticity. Particularly in the case of the eastern wall along Bu Maher Avenue (annex fig. 3.4.1-67 to 68), several interviewees were uncertain if the wall was entirely rebuilt or just replastered but only architects were concerned with potential misinterpretations:

„It probably is built like what the old one looked like – exactly. But maybe the old one is still underneath it and was too dilapidated and was covered.” (I 8a)

“I think they renovated most of that wall. Maybe it had fallen apart with time. But this is very old. Correct me if I am wrong.” (I 15c)

The two non-architects who had taken the low wall of the outdoor seating area as a historic testimony were rather indifferent when finding out it is a reconstruction (I 12,3):

“So, this is totally artificial! [...] Ok, that is interesting.” (I 3c)

Despite somewhat judgmental descriptions of the reconstructions such as “artificial” (I 3c), “the cheat” (I 10a) and “imaginary” (I 15c), non-architects seemed less critical of facsimile reconstructions. Only one archaeologist (I 14) expressed her discomfort about not being able to tell apart historic and added built elements:

“So, you don’t even know what the original was, unless they left something for us.” (I 14b)

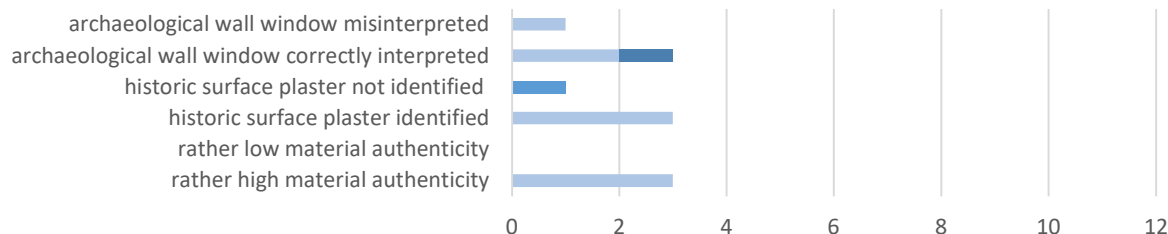


Diagram 3.4-58: **Comments on material authenticity of the five northern shops in the eastern block by architects**

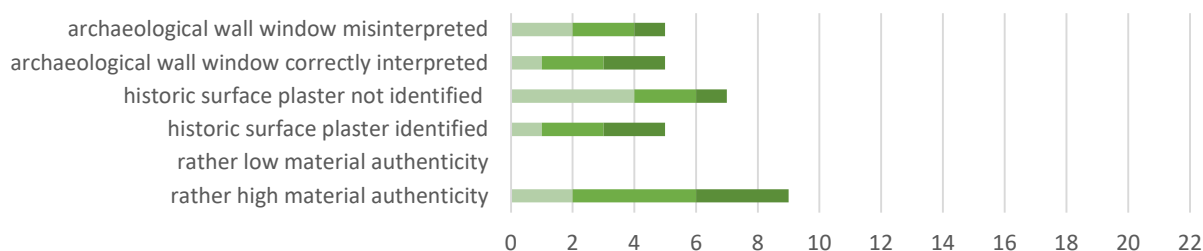


Diagram 3.4-59: **Comments on material authenticity of the five northern shops in the eastern block by non-architects**

In summary, the vernacular fabric at the reference site was generally perceived to be of a high level of material authenticity, despite a number of misconceptions among both groups of interviewees. The display of vernacular building techniques and materials, both historic and reconstructed, played an important role in this perception. Material authenticity was attributed value in both groups. While architects generally attributed even greater importance to the matter, several interviewees of that group critically pointed to a somewhat dominant focus on material authenticity in the site’s rehabilitation. No meaningful differences between interviewees of eastern and western cultural backgrounds were identified in the assessment and valuation of authenticity in materials and substance.

Use and function

There was generally a high awareness among the interviewees of both groups that the site is part of a traditional market area and that **commercial use** – in form of retail and associated storage – continues in parts of the site while other parts have been adapted for gastronomy. The authenticity of the commercial uses was seldom discussed further, as it would have required detailed knowledge of the site’s former use and function. Nevertheless, a number of misconceptions about the site’s original configuration and use were identified.

The **adaptation and reuse of the site** was much appreciated in both groups. Various interviewees explicitly commended that the site and its vernacular buildings had been adapted for reuse. The lead conservation architect highlighted that the reuse was the main purpose of the rehabilitation:

“As I said, the main message is: Historic buildings can be reused – and can be reused efficiently and as an income generating entity. [...] It’s not a museum.” (I 7)

Another conservation architect pointed to the fact that usage of historic buildings facilitates their maintenance:

“To restore it, is a great idea. To reuse it, is more than a great idea. Because you will have the contact between the people and the monument [...].” (I 24)

The same interviewee problematized that the final usage of monuments is often given too little attention when restoring them. In fact, the interior designer (I 25) criticized that, from her perspective, this had been the case in the site’s rehabilitation. She said that when she got involved in the project in order to accommodate the café, the conservation works were already completed. According to her, the project lacked a clear, integrative vision with the final use in mind from the start and that this reflects in a poor integration of the historic fabric and the utilities:

“An overall concept. And the way to link the material, the old with the new, seamlessly. Not how to scotch.” (I 25)

Along similar lines, another architect (I 30) considered that utilities such as air-conditioning could have been better integrated into the design – both not to negatively impact the site and to improve its usability. Some interviewees (I 30,10,13) criticized that the two restored shop units of the western block were not yet in use at the time of the field research. On the other hand, many interviewees (I 7,22,4,15,10,12,28,34) lauded the commercial success of the new uses and their attractiveness for visitors:

“It draws quite a lot of people nowadays.” (I 22)

“We are dealing with a market that is alive, still not dead, even though it was about to. [...] This area was a garbage dump. That is why most of the shops around us were only used as storages and still are by the way. But now they start to see the value and started to think ‘Oh, why don’t we open a shop here.’” (I 7)

Interviewees particularly appreciated the popularity of the café, which one interviewee called “the original” (I 14) in a series of branches that had lately opened throughout Bahrain:

“There is a phenomenon called Safron!” (I 25)

The lead conservation architect (I 7), however, acknowledged shortcomings in the way the heritage authority tried to reactivate the individual shop units with regard both to economic viability and authenticity:

“So, you do the best conservation technique, but then when it comes to function, which is the life of the space, you are trying to fake it up. I don’t think that is the proper way to do it.” (I 7)

The choice of tenants and products offered at the site is further discussed in section ‘Language, and other forms of intangible heritage’.

The **restored and adapted vernacular shop units** of both blocks of the Siyadi Shops with their traditional door shutters were usually identified as traditional commercial premises for sale and storage of goods within the market area (I 16,17,21,4,15,12,13,14). Although among the **five northern shop units** only the perfume shop was open and operational during most interviews, they awoke the association of a traditional suq:

“Yes, this gives the impression of a suq.” (I 13a)

“These were the individual shops.” (I 14b)

“Right now, it looks abandoned even. I don’t know if it is still functioning, but I think it is. What could it be? First idea, is that it is small workshops for different crafts maybe. That’s what it seems to me with those different doors.” (9a)

When assessing the interior of the café space within the adapted fragmentary **sixth shop unit** some identified it as a former shop and storage (I 15,16):

“I think this is a front for a shop. And this was a door for a shop.” (I 15c)

However, the **upper café space along with the outdoor area of the eastern block** was interpreted either as a former residential building, a fort (I 36) or a production space for date syrup (I 15,16,13). The archaeological date syrup presses in the café and in the outdoor area along with the interpretation panels certainly raised awareness of the fact that that activity was taking place at the site in the past:

“Revealing the mdbasah shows that there was a different purpose, a different function once.” (I 33)

However, the date syrup presses tended to overshadow other aspects of the site’s history and usage:

Author: “Do you know what this was before?”

15c: “I assume that since there is this for making the dates honey, I assumed that this is the storage for it, or the shop for it. [...] So, below was the shop and up here was the factory.”

Moreover, historical details such as when and under which conditions date syrup was produced and sold at the site were not conveyed. Several interviewees criticized this. Interpretations and misconceptions about the date syrup presses are further discussed in the section ‘Other internal and external factors’.

With reference to the former date syrup production, one non-architect expressed his appreciation that the new gastronomy established continuity in use:

“It used to be a food industry place and it still is.” (I 15c)

The upper café space and outdoor area were usually not associated with a traditional market area:

“I would not even notice that this was a suq – just because you told me it is. But just because there are [traditional] doors, it doesn’t tell me this is a suq.” (I 13a)

The **open space of the eastern block** was generally appreciated for its use potential as an outdoor area within the densely built-up market area:

Author: “How do you feel about the fact that they created an open space. Do you think they should have much rather reconstructed those shops there, completely?”

3c: “No. Because there are a lot of shops. And you know an open space is nice and what people need probably more than to have even more shops. So, you should also serve the people. So, no, I think it is a very good thing that they designed that open space.”

Most did not mind the change in function this entailed. Only two architects were critical about the open space in principle as they considered it a historically inaccurate feature (I 21,23). Interviewees of both groups however criticized the configuration and design of the space for limiting its usability (I 17,23,33,20,15,12,28,37):

“This is an area that can be used better as a public space.” (I 12c)

“Right now, it’s dead. Nothing is going on here. There are no functions here. It’s an open space and there are the toilets overlooking the place. It can be used for some events, for some galleries. But I don’t like the toilets overlooking here.” (I 17b)

Interviewees particularly criticize the lack of shading and seating facilities (I 12,23,33,28,37). Several expert interviews disclosed that the tenant of the café space originally wished to expand the gastronomic use into the outdoor area, but that the request was declined for design reasons:

“You see that this terrace is not working. Nobody is using it. Because it is a point of passage. It is too hot. [...] They [the café operator] asked for a cover. A shade. [...] It did not happen because a proper design was not there. But there are a few months... like the past four months were always cloudy and shaded. And still, they did not try to use the terrace. [...] It’s a question: Why didn’t they put seating? [...] It has so many accesses. And I think it maybe needs a tree or something.” (I 23)

Two architects considered parts of the outdoor area “lost space” (I 20,33):

33: *“The space, I think, there could have been another approach to it. The outer space.”*

Author: *“In which sense?”*

33: *“To make it more interactive. Now it is just lost space. [...] I never saw anyone doing anything there. No tables. This space [the lower parts of the outdoor area] is completely lost.” (I 33)*

Even more important for the assessment of authenticity is the question which messages were conveyed with regard to the original spatial layout and the associated use and function of the site.

16c: *“I am thinking about the space outside - what it was.”*

Author: *“It gives you no clue?”*

16c: *“No, I don’t know. [...] So, for me it was either an outdoor thing related to the mdbasah. Or simply it might be another shop that was demolished.”*

It turned out, that many **interpretive architectural features** that aimed at making the original layout intelligible were unsuccessful. While some interviewees were aware that the site was originally built-up, many had no or wrong conceptions of the original layout (I 16,17,30,4,11,36,37,9,15,3,13,14):

“I think this was all connected as one big hall with the outside. [...] If you see the mdbasah over here and the mdbasah over there, there should either be a corridor in between or it was one big room. That’s what I think. I don’t know if it’s right.” (I 15c)

Several non-architects misinterpreted the outdoor space as a courtyard of a traditional house (I 4,11,36,37,3,13,14):

“See how it looks! Like a barn, like a stockroom. And this is the house before?” (I 11)

“It seems like it used to be a house. Those are windows and this is what you call it in Arabic housh [courtyard].” (I 4a)

“I think this would be a shop. And behind would probably be the living quarters of the person who owned the shop.” (I 13a)

“Was this just a village?” (I 14b)

The **low reconstructed wall in the outdoor seating** area certainly raised curiosity but left open questions among several interviewees (I 17,12,15,14):

“I don’t know why they have this [low wall]. I think there was a building in here, that did not last.” (15d)

“It could show that there was an additional room to the house or something. I am not quite sure.” (I 12c)

“I believe there was a function here. I am not really sure what was the function.” (17b)

Two architects (I 16,17) expressed confusion about the reason for the different **floor levels** of the café and open space:

“I don’t think we had this kind of levels in these shops before. I don’t know if they added this or [...]” (17b)

The **patterns of the outdoor space’s floor tiling** (annex fig. 3.4.1-37, 57), which are supposed to depict the reburied foundations and date syrup presses, were hardly ever identified or correctly interpreted – not even when the author asked for a comparison to the photo of the excavated foundations and date syrup presses (annex fig. 3.4.1-38) (16,17,20,15,10,12,3,13):

Author: *“Do you have an idea what this space was before? Can you figure it out?”*

15c: *“No.”*

Author: "Do you notice anything about the tiles of the floor?"

15c: "No. I don't see anything." (15c)

Some interviewees identified irregularities but were uncertain how to interpret them:

„Here there are pieces that are cut in half. But why? I am not sure, maybe to correct an error.“ (I 12c)

"The middle tiles are a little different – are they supposed to represent different rooms or something? That is not obvious at all." (I 13a)

Several architects considered that the representation of the original layout in the flooring of the outdoor space should have been made more evident (I 16,33,20). This had in fact been the case before the tiling was reconfigured in a simpler design for aesthetic reasons (compare annex fig. 3.4.1-37, 54 to 55):

"It is very subtle but if you pay attention, this is vertical, and this is all horizontal." (I 33)

"Maybe it could have been shown a little bit more clearly. [...] I don't think anyone would notice these lines here." (17b)

A non-architect, in turn, considered additional interpretation facilities would be required:

"Ya, unless you put that picture there [annex fig. 3.4.1-38] people would not really notice the pattern. They would think they did a lousy tiling job. But it's nice that they actually thought about it. But more information in all these things would be really helpful." (I 10b)

While some interviewees lamented that "important information gets lost" (I 20, translated from German) with the deficiencies of the interpretive design features, others expressed indifference in this regard:

Author: "Does it bother you, that you can't read what they found here in the place?"

3c: "Not really. Because it is part of the evolution of the place somehow. I think you can't show everything that ever used to be here. So, you have to make decisions."

The notion that 'use and function' do not lend themselves easily as information sources of authenticity was expressed by the architect (I 33) of the following interview excerpt:

Author: "This whole modern intervention, like the open space, the café, how authentic are they?"

33: "Well, as a function, I don't know. Because I don't think there was a café there. And the space surely that it was built up before. So, as a function I don't think they are authentic. But you can't really put authenticity as an element on function. Because function is always changing. [...]"

Last but not least, it mattered to several interviewees of both groups who uses the site and who benefits from it (I 17,30,22,8,10,3,4,35,46). This was addressed with regard to economics and functionality or with appreciative comments on the presence of Bahraini nationals among **traders and clientele** (I 17,10,3,4). It was also addressed with criticism of the high prices which were considered to make the café unaffordable for "most Bahrainis" (I 35).

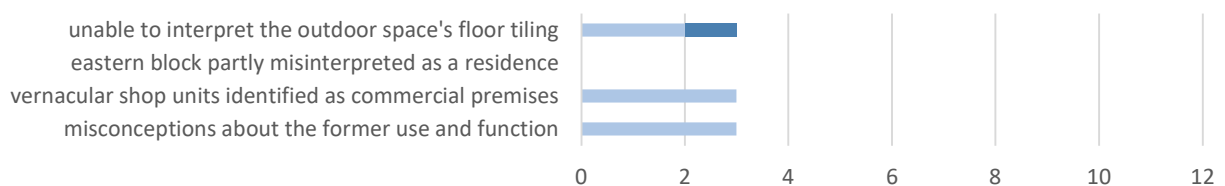


Diagram 3.4-60: Comments on use and function of the site by architects

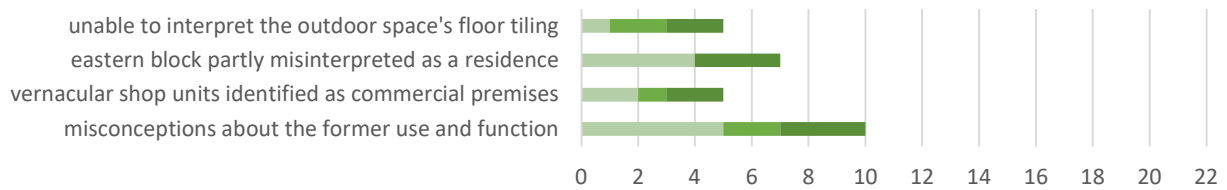


Diagram 3.4-61: **Comments on use and function of the site by non-architects**

In summary, use and function were clearly a matter of high concern in both groups of interviewees, albeit less with regard to historical authenticity than to the role the heritage site plays in the contemporary society. Nevertheless, heritage features that inform about the site’s history, particularly its past use and function, were much appreciated and valued. The interview statements however showed that the project design was only partly successful in conveying messages about the site’s former use and function. Many open questions and misconceptions in this regard were identified in both groups of interviewees. This matter is further discussed in section ‘Other internal and external factors’.

Traditions, techniques and management systems

Like in the case of the first reference site, this section focuses on building traditions – in this case the vernacular building tradition. It discusses further how the interviewees perceived, interpreted and valued the site’s vernacular elements and traditional crafts, including historic and reconstructed ones. Issues related to the site’s ownership, management and other cultural traditions associated with the site are discussed in the context of the information sources ‘Language, and other forms of intangible heritage’.

The lead conservation architect pointed out that one aim of the rehabilitation was to “showcase several construction techniques” (I 7b) in order to foster public appreciation of the vernacular heritage and the governmental efforts to preserve it:

“Here in Qaisariya for example, we decided to show the coral stone. And for that it has already given a huge difference in the perception of people of heritage buildings. Before that wall [at the lower café space], people did not really know what is a coral stone. They knew that they have been used. But then, when you put it in context and reveal some of it, they started to understand how things are assembled.” (I 7b)

As described in previous sections, the vernacular buildings, **construction details and materials** indeed attracted much attention and curiosity. Many interviewees, for example, closely inspected and sometimes touched features like the exposed wall masonry in the lower café space (annex fig. 3.4.1-84 to 85). Overall, the vernacular elements and details – like the coral stone masonry, gypsum plaster, *danshal* ceilings with mangrove beams and palm frond mats or replicated rain gutters – were highly appreciated. Local and foreign interviewees valued the building craft as an intangible heritage expression and the vernacular elements as testimony of the pearling era or more generally as memory-markers. They were, however, particularly valued for adding to the site’s atmosphere and historical appeal (refer to ‘Spirit and feeling’). Last but not least, the originally locally sourced materials were also appreciated for their naturalness (I 17,21) as they originate from the local environment as well as for bringing in a human dimension (I 21):

“You know it is even healthy to stay next to the materials of the old houses here in Bahrain. The stones and stuff.” (I 17b)

“I like to live with the land.” (I 21a)

“There is a human touch to it.” (I 21a)

Often, the exposed vernacular materials were appreciated as an indicator of historicity and material authenticity, such as in the case of the two restored shops of the western block:

“This is heritage! This is how they built their houses. You can see the wood and the mud that kept the house together. This is the design of their houses. You feel the rock and mud only. This is the first Bahrain houses.” (I 11c)

Several interviewees also pointed to the **didactic value** of exposing the vernacular materials and techniques at the site. When discussing the two restored shop units of the western block during interview number 10, a local gentleman was explaining the construction details to two young girls and a boy:

“He is trying to explain to them how they built this and that the rock is from the sea. [...] He explained the rope around the beams is to make it stronger.” (I 10b)

On the other hand, mostly architects (I 17,21,22,25,15) pointed to **structural or functional deficiencies** of the vernacular buildings or of specific building elements. One interviewee (I 17), on the contrary, considered it a prejudice that the vernacular buildings naturally have a short lifespan and regretted that this belief leads to the tremendous destruction of such heritage throughout Bahrain.

Interviewees of both groups disclosed background knowledge about the vernacular building techniques or asked specific questions related to them. At the same time, a multitude of **misconceptions about the vernacular elements and techniques** were identified among architects and non-architects. Often, replicated vernacular details were wrongly taken as an indication of historicity. Several interviewees of both groups were unable to differentiate between historic vernacular elements and replicated ones. As described in 3.4.4.3, there were misconceptions or uncertainties about the historicity of the two restored shop units of the western block (annex fig. 3.4.1-80 to 82) (I 21,30,20,11,18,8), the low, traditionally reconstructed wall in the outdoor area (annex fig. 3.4.1-72 to 73, 76) (I 17,30,15,12,3,14) as well as about the eastern wall along Bu Maher Avenue (annex fig. 3.4.1-67 to 68) (I 16,24,4,15,8,9,13,14). The latter was in fact the feature that raised most misconceptions:

“I think it is old. You can see it from here, from the stone. But they have covered it with plaster and they have painted it.” (I 4a)

Sometimes, new additions – such as the wall segments of plastered concrete blocks south of the outdoor archaeological area (annex fig. 3.4.1-72 to 73) – were misinterpreted due to vernacular features like the traditional rendering (I 9). A Bahraini (I 4) mistook the wall for a historic feature due to the niches.

The **wall niches** throughout the site were often discussed (I 17,4,10,3) and found to be associated with further misconceptions. A Bahraini architect (I 17) misinterpreted the authentic wall niches in the lower space of the café as former ventilation openings that had been blocked up. At least two interviewees (I 10,4), moreover, took the same niches as decorative features. The foreigner among them (I 3) showed appreciation to learn that the niches are in fact a traditional means of saving construction material besides serving as shelves:

Author: “So you were saying you wonder about the wall niches.”

3c: *“But you just explained me all about them. It’s interesting. It would be actually nice to have more information about this. Because, I think, a lot of people wonder about these niches, and they have no idea.”*

Surface plaster was another topic often addressed. Mostly non-architects (I 30,4,11,15,13) had the misconception that the vernacular buildings might have originally been unplastered. One (I 14), moreover, associated a ventilation hole in the northern shops of the eastern block (annex fig. 3.4.1-67) with defensive features of the kind she had seen in medieval forts:

“When invaders came, they would pour hot oil on them. But this is a very small hole.” (I 14b)

Two interviewees (I 14,15) wondered about the former function of the poles on the roofs of the shop units (compare annex fig. 3.4.1-9, 67 to 68). Several interviewees hence expressed the wish for better interpretation of the vernacular heritage (refer to ‘Other internal and external factors’). A young Bahraini woman (I 4a) described her curiosity for the vernacular heritage and lack of familiarity with it, while walking towards the site in a traditional lane in Muharraq:

“I was saying, usually, once I walk in this street, I like to look at those old houses. How, you know, the building materials, like mortar, stones, or whatever... I usually take a look inside those doors or windows to see what is inside, what is on the ground. You know, I did not live in such a house. Even my grandmother ... or maybe she. But you know, not me.” (I 4a)

There were divergent **authenticity judgements** about the vernacular elements at the site and about their craftsmanship, but most interviewees considered the site’s restored and replicated vernacular features rather truthful to the local building tradition and appreciated that.

When discussing the remains of the traditional ceiling in the lower café space (annex fig. 3.4.1-83 to 85) an Egyptian-Bahraini non-architect (I 8) contemplated on how to assess the authenticity of vernacular elements. He gave great importance to the human dimension and the question of who precisely built or repaired the feature:

“So, it’s not just about how it looks like. It’s about how it was built – the material used in building it. For example, they did a great job getting this wood. But who is the one who put this wood up? These are the questions I would personally feel strongly about.” (I 8a)

In the case of the traditional door shutters, most interviewees appreciated the fact, that they were able to identify the replicas among them at close view.

The eastern wall along Bu Maher Avenue, which was reconstructed with vernacular building techniques, was found to be one of the most controversial features of the overall design. While some approved of the choice to reconstruct in traditional means, others did not:

“This is an imitation of the old. I don’t like it.” (I 21a)

Even the conservation architects were divided in their judgements about the eastern wall and its coral stone masonry:

24: *“The idea to use again the same material it is very interesting, because it is part of the monument.”*

Author: *“Even if it is reconstructed?”*

24: *“Even if it is!”*

Contrary to this, a young architect from the Philippines (I 30), who had made his first experience in architectural conservation with Bahrain’s heritage authority, said the way the eastern wall was reconstructed contradicted the conservation ethics which he had been taught on the job. Another

conservation architect of the heritage authority pointed to the misconceptions it might create but was somewhat appeased with the colour-coding of the wall's surface plaster:

"Also, in the eastern wall I would have used a different material, because people might be confused and take it for old. [...] But it is fine. It's plastered differently." (I 32)

The colour-coding throughout the site – precisely the patination of newly added surface plaster – was criticized by two architects (I 30,33) for contradicting the fundamentals of the building tradition. As discussed under 'Form and design', **truthfulness to the local vernacular building tradition** was found to be an important aspect mostly for architects. Several interviewees criticized designs which, in one way or another, deviate from the typical vernacular features and building techniques (I 17,25,33,30). For example, one of the architects, who disapproved of the fragmentary vernacular ceiling in the café (I 30), also criticized that showcase windows had been added to the perfume shop (annex fig. 3.4.1-67, 87). A Bahraini artist criticized the "museum-style" manner in which the vernacular buildings are presented (I 46). Such comments are indicative of the conflicting approaches of conserving and museumizing the vernacular building techniques versus treating them as a living tradition. This conflict surfaced in other Bahraini conservation projects and was described in chapter 3.2. Interviewees of both groups wished for perfect facsimile replicas of vernacular elements (I 9,30,21). One architect, for example found fault in the fact that the replicated traditional door shutters were not traditionally nailed but screwed (I 30). A non-architect, who was also attentive to the detail, was less judgmental about it:

15c: "This is nice. I don't know how original, how old it is, but if you keep an eye, these are screws."

Author: "Is this an old door?"

15c: "No. this one has screws. They did not have screws. They used nails, like this one."

A foreign architect (I 21) criticized the new plaster surfaces of the northern shop units for not looking traditionally crafted (annex fig. 3.4.1-67):

Author: "Why do you say, it looks too finished for you?"

21a: "Yes, because in the old days you did not have this kind of ... the trowel marks and all would be seen. When they were trowelling, people were not skilled in construction. You had those marks. It's like painting. A computerized painting and handmade painting. So now, [...] now, it is smooth."

Author: "But why does it bother you? You would prefer that it looked like in the old days?"

21a: "Yes. Even if it is not... But I don't want it done artificially. Like people, will scratch it and make it look old. [...] I want those people, who don't know to plaster, to plaster it! [laughing]"

Hence, he also disapproved of the surface render of the eastern wall along Bu Maher Avenue (annex fig. 3.4.1-68) for artificially imitating the look of traditional plaster:

"This is what I was talking about. This is done artificially. It's scratched, and ..." (I 21a)

A Bahraini non-architect (I 8a) described the challenge of replicating the vernacular craft as follows:

"When people built this stuff, Bahrain wasn't a very rich country. Now it's significantly richer. And people were more used to manual labour than they are today. So, people were building their own houses. And when you are building your own thing, you put a lot of ... – it's a different mentality – you put a lot of... – this might sound weird – but this sort of love of building your own thing reflects in the building itself. That's why you have much more architectural details at the time than you have now. [...] You can't get that now. But you can try to get what is the closest to it. And that is the job of the Ministry of Culture and the Municipality. They are supposed to find a sustainable way to build these things, even if it's less cost effective than doing it like any other building." (I 8a)

As described in the chapters 3.2 and 3.4.2, the rehabilitation of the Siyadi Shops was a **pioneering project of architectural conservation of vernacular fabric** in Bahrain and therefore involved particular challenges, capacity building and some technical innovations. The novelty of the rehabilitation approach in Bahrain was acknowledged by interviewees of both groups (I 7,21,22,25,15,10,15):

“Maybe this minimal intervention is the first to be done in Bahrain. That I agree.” (I 10b)

An architect of the Bahraini architectural firm Gulf House Engineering (I 22) confirmed this notion:

Author: “What do you think about that project, if I may ask?”

22: “Interesting. Interesting. To me, you know, new things!”

The architect who had been involved in the refurbishment of Bab al-Bahrain building in the 1980s, however, expressed scepticism about the sustainability of the conservative approach:

Author: “Have you seen something like this happening in Bahrain?”

21a: “No, no, this is the first time I am seeing renovation work being done. I don’t know how they manage it. As I said, Bab al-Bahrain was a construction – something like this. It was very, very difficult. This renovation work, how long it will last, we don’t know. Whether it will require a lot of maintenance...”

Indeed, repair works on plaster surfaces were ongoing during the field research in 2014 (annex fig. 3.4.1-86 to 87) and commented on in several interviews. One of the architects of the heritage authority pointed to the challenge of replicating the traditional surface plaster:

“Again, there is the issue of the plaster mix. There were a lot of issues in here, so that it is cracking up. [...] Because this is really the first project, I guess.” (I 33)

It was mostly architects (I 21,32,33,20,15), who commented on technical issues and capacity building, such as the new ventilation trenches (I 23); the lack of skilled labour for architectural conservation (I 20,21) and the difficulty of reactivating the traditional craft and keeping it alive, if mostly temporal migrant workers are working on the projects (I 20).

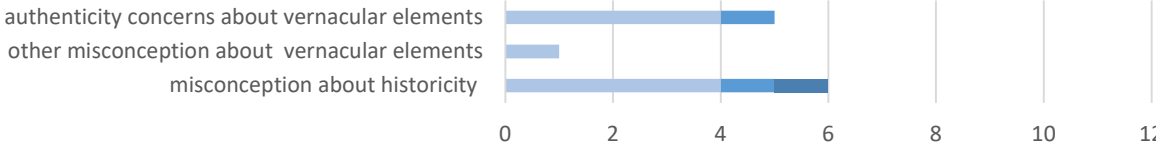


Diagram 3.4-62: Comments on vernacular building elements by architects

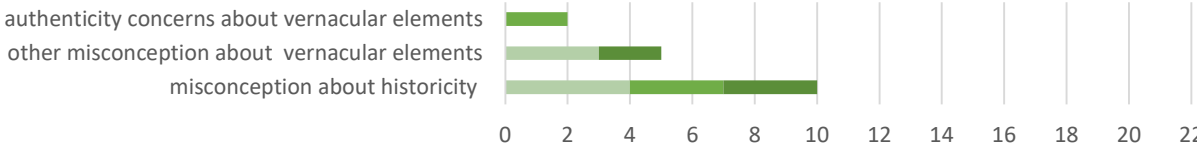


Diagram 3.4-63: Comments on vernacular building elements by non-architects

In summary, the vernacular building elements, both historic and replicated, played a major role in the interviews and were highly valued by interviewees of both groups. There were misconceptions about the historicity of vernacular and replicated elements throughout the site in both groups. Misconceptions about functional and technical details prevailed among non-architects. In turn, there were more authenticity concerns about vernacular elements that deviate from their original form, design and craftsmanship among eastern architects than among other interviewees.

Location and setting

As in the first reference site, location and setting of the site was often commented on although the author did not specifically inquire about these information sources.

The **authenticity of location** was never questioned. Neither was the site’s relative position to the sea often discussed (I 3,8,9). Only one interviewee, who had attended a recent lecture about the project, went into detail when commenting on the location and transformation of the harbour area:

“The road that goes around this whole neighbourhood is called Sharia al-Ghous [street of the pearl dive] and it is a very old name for this particular road. Now it is a highway, but before it used to be sort of a walking road. And it is a very sort of unique arrangement, because even though you have a lot of medieval cities across the Middle East, like Damascus and Cairo and so on, but you have very few that actually have a very strong interaction with the sea. And this particular business [pearling], there is no other that I know of. So, it is very unique even by Middle Eastern standards. And it always has the feel of a little island. Something you will only find in the Caribbean or so... It’s very unique in its own way. So, it deserves to be preserved.” (I 8a)

The perception of **the urban setting** differed among the interviewees. Some pointed to the neighbourhood’s traditional character and preserved heritage assets such as vernacular fabric (I 33,12,10) or street and plot lines (I 7,3):

“This is my favourite area in Muharraq. I love this area a lot. They changed few houses only, not the whole area.” (12a)

Others, on the contrary, highlighted the level of change, such as the loss of historic fabric (I 15) along with other urban or broader socio-economic changes (I 22). An architect explicitly lamented the visual impact of the adjacent four-storey building (I 17b). Regardless of how the magnitude of change was perceived, several interviewees expressed their appreciation of the neighbourhood (I 17,33,11,15,8,9,10,12) or of individual characteristics, such as the picturesque irregularity and unpredictability when exploring the traditional area (I 17,12), the “feel of a little island” (I 8), the adjacent mosque building in somewhat Arabesque design (I 11,12) (annex fig. 3.4.1-68, 70) and adjacent jewellery shops (I 33) as well as the general liveliness (I 9):

“Right now, it is a little bit quiet, but what I felt is that here it is a really dynamical city. Like, people are actually living here and using these spaces. Not coming here for specific things, but living, just for daily life. And that’s what really attracts me. It shows that there are real inhabitants here – real!” (I 9a)

Two interviewees moreover commended the site or its rehabilitation for embeddedness in the urban surroundings (I 12,3):

“It is a beautiful renovation. And look with the mosque, and the building next to it, it goes well.” (I 12a)

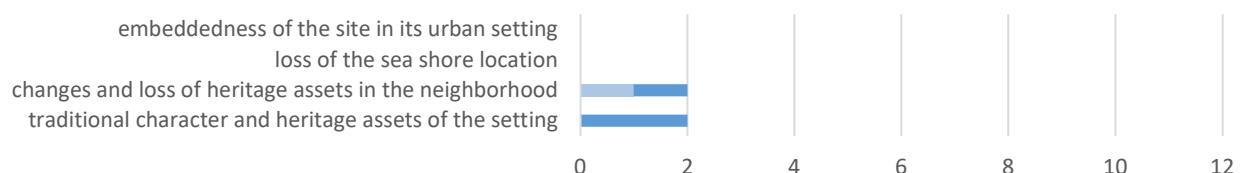


Diagram 3.4-64: Comments on setting and location by architects

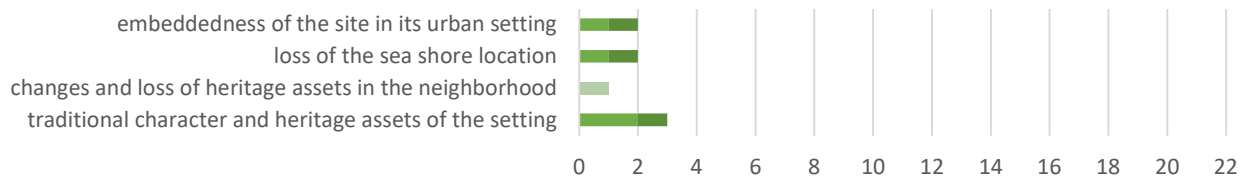


Diagram 3.4-65: **Comments on the setting and location by non-architects**

In summary, the comments suggest that particularly the architects were divided in the judgement on the authenticity of location and setting, but that the setting was overall appreciated for its traditional character.

Language, and other forms of intangible heritage

Intangible heritage dimensions which interviewees addressed, range from names, ownership and management to the revival of cultural traditions at the site. In the context of ownership and management comments on community involvement will additionally be presented.

Place or business **names** were addressed in some interviews. One interviewee critically pointed out that the name of Siyadi family, despite its importance to the site's cultural significance, is not mentioned in the on-site interpretation (I 10). The lead conservation architect (I 7), in turn, challenged the authenticity of the name Siyadi Shops given the fact that some shop units and plots belong to other owners:

“And you have called them Siyadi Shops, which are not Siyadi shops.” (I 7)

The site's historic buildings were monument listed in 2010 with the name Siyadi Shops but are not usually referred to as such, locally. The partner of interview 15 commented on a nameboard which indicated an old Bahraini family of the name Bu Khamas as one of the tenants. A senior Bahraini, who interrupted the same interview, shared the information that the traditional name of the harbour area was *“Dawasa Muharraq”* [Persian: door to Muharraq]. Another interviewee (I 8) pointed out that the pearl diving activities used to nametag the south-eastern neighbourhoods of Old Muharraq with its former coastal road 'Sharia al-Ghous' [Arabic: Street of the pearl dive]. While these names seem to have lost significance, the traditional name of the market area, Suq al-Qaisariya remains in frequent colloquial and official use. It was used in the interviews but was not discussed.

An interviewee of both groups (I 7,8) pointed to the importance of preserving **traditional ownership**. An Egyptian-Bahraini civil engineer (I 8) considered:

“It should be that way, because the people are part of the site.” (I 8a)

The lead conservation architect found the issue of ownership exemplarily addressed in the rehabilitation of the Siyadi Shops as agreements were set up with the original owners for the site's maintenance and operation:

“So, in this project, I think it was dealt with in a very sensible way. Because each property owner was dealt with separately.” (I 7)

A local architect of the heritage authority (I 33) pointed to the municipal ownership of parts of Suq al-Qaisariya. With a view to adequate stakeholder involvement and sustainable urban development, he made reference to the mall, which the Municipality had planned in direct vicinity of the Siyadi Shops in 2006 and which was described in chapter 3.4.2. He personally considered, that a compromise would

have been preferable, which would have given the Municipality the possibility to build the mall while preserving the remaining vernacular fabric:

“Well, from a conservation point of view – authenticity – it would be a very bad thing. But I think it would have been a hit in the suq. It would attract people. [...] So, it would have been very profitable for them. [...] Ideal would have been, to give the municipality the freedom to build the new part but to preserve the existing. Even if they would have rebuilt the new part traditionally.” (I 33)

The same two interviewees who commented on traditional ownership also pointed to the importance of **community involvement** and considered that the attitude of the local community towards the rehabilitated site plays into the authenticity:

„But I don’t know what the residents think, and I think that is an important bit of it.” (I 8a)

A lack of community-based decision-making was the main point of critique for the non-architect among them (I 8). Referring to the lecture he attended about the site’s rehabilitation he said:

“I mean some of the architects of the Ministry of Works were saying things like: we consulted the opinions of the locals. For me that was just an arrogant statement. These locals they are talking about, they are the decedents of the pearl merchants. This is their neighbourhood. It’s like me walking into your house and redecorating it and consulting on your opinion on how you do it.” (I 8a)

Asked for a definition of the local community he specified:

“I think the residents would be people that live around the area and the people who have inherited the shops and this place from their grandfathers and so on. I think they should have a final say in what happens in these areas. [...] It’s always tricky when people are part of a site, and their lives are part of a site. So, you have to... in the end of the day, they have their business interests. They are not really concerned, as much, with cultural preservation, so it has to be aligned with it. And they have the full right.” (I 8a)

The lead conservation architect (I 7) pointed to community involvement as a dimension of authenticity and sustainability. He problematized that the heritage authority’s conservation efforts throughout the old town of Muharraq are still seen critically by the local community and stressed the need to gain appreciation and active engagement:

“As I said, that is my objective, that is my dream: to have the community to appreciate and also to engage in the activity.” (I 7b)

The civil engineer (I 8) expressed his hope that such appreciation would be achieved as more urban spaces are rehabilitated and aesthetically improved:

“[...] maybe there will be a paradigm shift, in the sense of people coming out of their house, and they would be like: ‘Ah, it doesn’t look too bad now. I kind of like it, I like the idea of a nice square.’ So, maybe more people will be more receptive to the idea of yielding their properties to the Ministry of Culture in order for them to come up with the best renovation philosophy. Only from a sheer idea of beauty, not in the sense of historical preservation, but it makes things look a bit more beautiful.” (I 8)

Both of the above quoted interviewees (I 7,8) moreover spoke favourably in principle of the fact that the heritage authority reserved itself the right to choose adequate **tenants** for the site’s traditional business premises. With a view to the partial economic failure of this practice, the lead conservation architect (I 7) however critically reflected on the approach at hindsight:

“You know, we had an image of the market as being traditional, so the goods have to be traditional. And we have imposed some tenants dealing with traditional objects in a context that does not really appreciate that yet. So, I was hoping in the market to do one example to stand out

and let the market grow by itself. [...] Because otherwise you are trying to impose a model that would create a fake representation regardless of the preservation aspect. [...] I think you should let it go. Even if you sell plastic now. Sell plastic for the moment and let it pick up by itself. That's my point of view on how to deal with a market which we want to revive. Yes, if you have an opportunity to introduce one or two for people to appreciate, so other would look at them as being models, if they are successful. And then the wheel would run. If I could step back, that is exactly what I would do in determining the tenants of each shop in Qaisariya." (I 7b)

However, most interviewees who commented on the types of businesses and merchandise were appreciative of the approach taken at the site:

"I think they chose some sales that can represent Bahrain. Like the perfume shop, and a sweet shop and there is some handcraft stuff and 'Saffron'." (I 10b)

"They tell you something about the place. This is a Bahraini old suq." (I 8a)

Clearly, the **presentation and sale of traditional products** was not only seen as a tourist asset but also as an essential factor of authenticity. The site was seen as both touristic and genuinely local:

"The two concepts are not in conflict. It's both." (I 8a)

Several interviewees for example considered the sales of perfume "part of the heritage of this place" (I 8) and commended the way they were presented in the perfume shop (I 8,9,12):

"Beautiful ambience inside, it looks really nice. I mean these are the kind of shops you would like to see in Bab al-Bahrain as well, rather than a Hoover and a mixer and microwave." (I 12c)

Nobody, except the conservation architect (I 7), problematized the concept of staged authenticity which is indirectly addressed in the following quote:

Author: "But why particularly here or in Bab al-Bahrain they are supposed to sell traditional products?"

12c: "Because you are in a historic site. And this is where you have tourists visiting, people who are relaxing during the weekend. People who are visiting Bahrain want to get a feel of the place. These are traditional products and very specific to the region that you would like to buy as a gift The other utilitarian products you can go to other places, like malls. But this is more visited by tourists and expats."

The site's café triggered the most appreciative comments for establishing links to local heritage and culture although one interviewee (I 15) pointed out that the furniture at the café deviates from the local housing culture:

"The seating was not very traditional but very comfortable. Because usually we sit on the floor on mattresses and stuff like this." (I 15c)

Several non-architects considered the "very typical Bahraini breakfast" (I 15) or other food sold at the café and the "very old Bahraini music" (I 15) to establish links to the **culinary** (I 4,15,36,37,8) and **musical heritage** (I 15) of Bahrain. One interviewee somewhat amused, yet appreciatively pointed to the South-East Asian waiter in traditional Bahraini dress:

"It's tradition!" (I 11c)

Several interviewees (I 4,11,36) hence considered that the site and particularly the café is emblematic of the local past way of life:

"The place, we remember here all these people how they lived." (I 36)

"This is how their simple life was." (11c)

Interviewees of both groups considered that the former practice of date syrup production should reflect in the site's merchandise (I 17,7,9,12).

9a: "So you think in the café there is also something in the menu with date juice?"

Author: "Let's check."

9a: "That would be nice, and it would be shame if they don't have."

The plan to install an ice-cream shop in the two restored shop units of the western block was seen critically by a Bahraini architect (I 17):

17b: "It pops: an ice cream shop in the middle of this. An ice cream shop you can find it in City Centre¹¹ or anywhere else. But here you should go for authentic goods."

Author: "Like what?"

17b: "A halwa [traditional sweets] shop. Or something that is brought out from the mdbasah and sold here."

The same interviewee (I 17) approved of the somewhat orientalist merchandise on offer in the southern shops of the eastern block:

"This is a designer shop. But still it is related to the culture in a way. But not necessarily Bahrain. Because they have many things which are related to Egypt, Lebanon..." (I 17a)

An Egyptian-Bahraini interviewee (I 8) on the contrary strongly disapproved of the merchandise from other Arabic countries and particularly of the chain of coloured light bulbs which was temporarily extended across the alley in front of the shops:

„It disturbs me very strongly. Because it is all about Egyptian 60s pop culture. Even these colours are 1960s. So, it is like walking into an Egyptian alley. And I think it defeats the whole project – a small detail like this can ruin the feel of the whole place. I am not saying it is not beautiful, I am just saying it doesn't belong here. [...] I mean, this in particular is a real culture clash."

The **cultural traditions**, which the site is intrinsically associated with apart from the vernacular building tradition range from traditional trade, including pearling related trade, social functions of the market to the production and sale of date syrup. While trading and social activities continue and were highlighted as a dimension of authenticity by several interviewees (refer to 'Use and function'), the **tradition of diving for pearls** and the associated socio-economic system is derelict. The field research showed that some interviewees were aware of the fact that the reference site constitutes an urban and architectural testimony to this tradition. Given that only older generations remember the pearling era, the site was found to require more in-situ interpretation in order to effectively convey the narrative of pearling and to nourish the collective memory of the tradition (refer to 'Other internal and external factors').

An architect of the heritage authority (I 33) expressed his hope that jewellers might open their business within one of the restored shop units as a sort of intangible heritage revival. It is however unlikely that jewellery was ever traded at the site with the exception of the first-floor apartment of the western Siyadi Shops where pearls were traded among pearl merchants.

Hopes for intangible heritage revival were equally expressed by the lead conservation architect (I 7). He considered the site a "living heritage" because the market is still active and because of the cultural practices and collective memories it is associated with. Attributing most significance to the **traditional date syrup production** – which is equally derelict in this form – he hence expressed particular

¹¹ Bahrain's largest shopping mall is called City Centre.

ambitions to reactivate that cultural tradition in Suq al-Qaisariya along with vernacular building traditions:

7b: “[...] I am hoping also that many of the building crafts and some traditional associated activities would be revived in the community.”

Author: “Which associated activities?”

7b: “One that comes to my mind is the *mdbasah*. I would love to see a *mdbasah* working.”

He explicitly linked the reactivation of cultural traditions and memories to the concept of authenticity:

“You know, authenticity is not about an original fabric only. But it is about original fabric integrated in a certain context. A cultural context. And this is exactly what I am trying to say here in the case of Qaisariya. The fabric is original, it is authentic. But it lacks this cultural context [...]. Because all the memories, to a certain degree, are forgotten.” (I 7b)

The following quote from an interview with a young Bahraini woman (I 4), who was deeply impressed with the date syrup presses at the site, supports that notion:

“My father, he used to make this date syrup. But actually, I don’t know the technique or the things that they used – that they had a special place for it. Although, you know, my father worked in palm trees groves for a long time. Like 20 or 30 years. Since he was maybe 10 years. And he knew all the kinds of dates, how you can make date syrup. But unfortunately, we are girls, he will not teach us how to do it. But he will not even teach my brother, because nowadays they will not be interested, actually. I don’t know the differences between the types of dates although I would like to know. But it is hard to learn these things.” (I 4a)

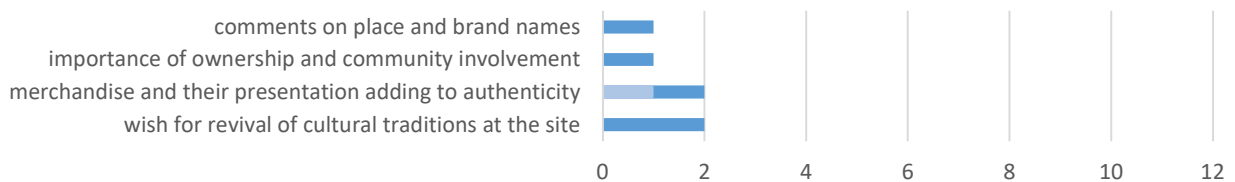


Diagram 3.4-66: Comments on intangible heritage dimensions by architects

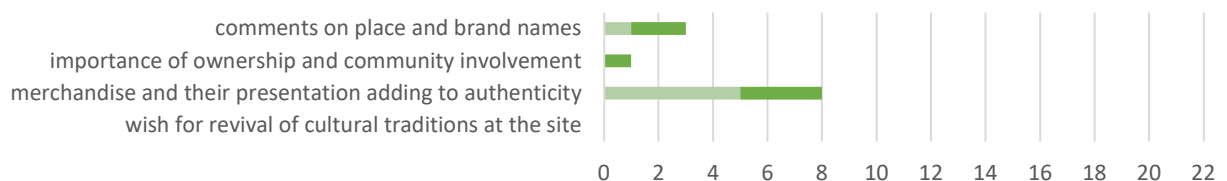


Diagram 3.4-67: Comments on intangible heritage dimensions by non-architects

In summary, place and business names, traditional ownership and the management of the site, including community involvement, were pointed out as important intangible heritage dimensions and aspects of authenticity by several interviewees. What was found to significantly add to the site’s perceived authenticity is the presentation and sale of traditional merchandise that relate to the local culture. Although all interviewees were certainly aware that the above-described ways of place and business branding constitute a form of heritage revival, none, except the lead conservation architect, questioned how authentic that is. Particularly non-architects expressed their appreciation of the traditional products and of the way they are presented. Two architects, in turn, wished to intensify attempts to revive cultural practices at the site, such as the trade of jewellery or the production and sale of date syrup.

With regard to cultural contingencies, it has to be noted, that none of the western interviewees commented on any of the intangible heritage assets discussed in this section. In fact, it was predominantly Bahrainis or long-term residents of Bahrain of Eastern origin who commented on them, possibly simply because they are more familiar with the local culture.

Spirit and feeling

As described in previous sections of this chapter, the site's traditional atmosphere as well as its historical, experiential and emotional appeal were among the main reasons why the site was valued and why its rehabilitation found much acclaim among the interviewees. The **site's atmosphere** was described as traditional (I 7,4,8,9,10,13,14), "welcoming" (I 9a), "lively" (I 10b) and "cosy" (I 17,9,3,13). Whether this atmosphere corresponds to the original sense of place of the pearling era's market was seldom discussed. One interviewee (I 13) stated, that the gastronomic use reduced the feel of a traditional market area in her eyes:

"I like it that there is a coffee shop here. But it does not give me anymore the impression that it was a suq." (I 13a)

According to the comments, various factors played into the atmospheric and emotional appeal of the site. Interviewees mentioned the small scale (I 17,13,14), the naturalness of the vernacular building materials (I 17,21) as well as their textures (I 17,25,9) and colours (I 12,25,14). Others said that the "roughness" of the vernacular fabric (I 16,22) or the coherence and elegance of the additions (I 9) added to the atmospheric qualities. As discussed above, the type of products and their presentation played a role, too. This is also true for the social aspect – the presence of local people at the site and in its surroundings – as well as the setting. Probably due to the fact that most interviews took place during daylight, the site's illumination at nighttime was no subject of discussion. Particularly, the **atmosphere at the café** was often commended:

"It's a nice place to rest." (I 8a)

"The atmosphere is amazing." (I 15c)

"I feel really great here. There is not only the physical, like the material thing, but also atmosphere. [...] It's very cozy and nice. And I would definitely come back whenever I am back to Bahrain. [...] I feel more comfortable, more easy. I am really grateful to you for bringing me here." (9b)

"I am happy I am in Muharraq." (I 4a)

Interviewees also pointed to the historical or traditional appeal of the café space in particular:

"What I like is, that I feel, there is a history here. And it's been respected and it's been just edited in order for all of us – people – to be able to enjoy and to have an experience and to have some relationship with the place. [...] I feel the historical spirit in part here as well, but of course it is also a modern space." (9a)

Certainly, the interior design, which was often commended, played a key role in the atmospheric appeal of the café (annex fig. 3.4.1-84 to 85). The interior designer (I 25) explained that she maintained and enhanced the vernacular building's sense of place by picking up the natural colour shades of "burnt sienna" and by combining some high-quality organic textiles of international designers with traditional furniture and simple accessories from the local market:

"I walked down the street in Muharraq, and there is this guy who does the benches. [...] And he has traditional tables. And then I was walking down the street further and I found an old man sitting on the floor in his shop where he works with those metal sheets. He makes them into pans and pots

and so on. And he had this old radio station. Very old man. [...] So, I said, we will take the sheets from him and cover the tables. They are like table cloth.” (I 25)

However, three Bahraini interviewees (I 17,8,10) perceived a lack of aura and emotional appeal of the café space due to the gastronomic function:

30b: “See, for example, my own observation: People come here, they only want to come just to eat, that’s it. Not really to feel. [...]”

Author: “What do you feel here? “

30b: “Just like in a restaurant.”

At least two Bahraini interviewees (I 8,10) considered the high prices to take away from the café’s atmosphere, including one, who initially believed that the site was operated by the heritage authority and that the revenue is invested into the upkeep of the historic buildings:

“Now, that I know that it is a profit-oriented institution I am not so inclined to pay this much for a Bahraini breakfast. [...] It suddenly turns it into a tourist scam. I can’t explain it: like suddenly you are in a place that is overpriced because it is a historical site. And you can get the same thing in genuine atmosphere for much less of the price.”

Author: “So, is this not a genuine atmosphere?”

8b: “It is a genuine atmosphere, ok. But the prices are not genuine. Like I said, I would have no problems paying for this if it goes to the site itself. But if it doesn’t, why is it overpriced? Because it is a tourist site?”

This notion was backed by a second interviewee (I 10):

“I think it’s nice. I would come here again and again. But I would not be a frequent visitor of the place. It wouldn’t give me that nostalgic feeling. Maybe because it is a café. For a café I would go to more local places. They tried to make it like a local looking café. They succeed in a way but they fail in other ways as well. [...] If you see the menu for example. [...] What they serve is kind of a mixture of the past and some creative innovations. [...] Also, the overpricing and the quantity is a big issue. [...] Maybe the overpricing is the main reason.” (I 10)

The interviewees rather unanimously agreed on an **aura of authenticity and historicity of the restored vernacular shop units** throughout the site. A Bahraini architect considered the site’s vernacular buildings radiate an aura of historicity even to the newly built-up neighbouring areas of the market (I 33). One of the interviewees who was less enthusiastic about the café’s atmosphere, said that the exterior appearance of the vernacular shops inspires nostalgia (I 10). Referring to the two restored western shops a foreign non-architect said:

“You can feel the time, the age.” (I 11c)

Among the five northern shops of the eastern block, the perfume shop was often commended for its charm:

„Like, it welcomes you. But it’s intimate.” (I 9a)

Judgements about the sense of place of the eastern block’s **outdoor space** were more divided. Most interviewees perceived it as a largely contemporary area which does not transmit the typical “Muharraq feeling” (I 3a), as opposed to its restored and adapted vernacular parts to the north:

Author: “Does this place make you nostalgic? Because earlier you said that Suq al-Qaisariya makes you nostalgic.”

10b: “No, I meant more the other side of the suq – the Suq al-Qaisariya itself.”

Particularly architects criticized a low quality of stay. Several interviewees however appreciatingly described the outdoor areas as an “authentic” (I 9a) and “peaceful kind of space” (I 3c) with a “nice atmosphere” (I 11c) admits the buzz of the market:

“I understand that this is an authentic place and I would like to have my own experience with this place. [...] It’s totally me. It clicks with me.” (I 9a)

The above quote stands exemplarily for the overall high degree of **identification with the site** among the interviewees. The same interviewee (I 9) specified that a clear and elegant design in addition to the public and gastronomic uses facilitate interaction with the site in her eyes. Several non-architects said that the site made them feel “connected to the people who may have lived here” (I 13a) and the past way of life (I 11,36). A senior Bahraini in traditional dress, who was observing the works in 2012, had tears in his eyes when he said that the two conservatively restored western shops reminded him of how the market looked like in the past (I 45). Two foreign non-architects described the visit to the site as a romantic time-travel (I 9,11):

“That is what I like as well: Imagining that in this building people would be wearing this and doing this... [...]. And this connection is... not like a time machine... but something very romantic in that. Something like a true spirit of a traveller. A traveller around the world.” (I 9a)

Only one young Bahraini (I 46) explicitly pointed to a certain artificiality of the site. She also considered it not “humble enough” to be typically Bahraini (I 46). Other Bahraini interviewees however raised the notion that the site inspires pride in the local past and culture (I 4,15). A young Bahraini woman said she knew less about her own culture than about others and that she was happy to discover part of it at the reference site:

“I feel that I am proud because my grand-grand-grand they are there and they were smart. It’s nice to see and know about your past, especially when you don’t have a lot of information. And I think I will come again and again. And I am thinking that next weekend I will come with my father, if he will see it, he will tell the story of his ... He will be the legend, you know [laughing].” (I 4a)

Reinforcing the emotional attachment of the wider local community to the site and reactivating collective memories, is in fact what the lead conservation architect pointed out as one of the key objectives of the conservative rehabilitation and adaptation (I 7):

“We are not reconstructing things. WE are not reconstructing Muharraq. We are bringing up things which were totally forgotten.” (I 7b)

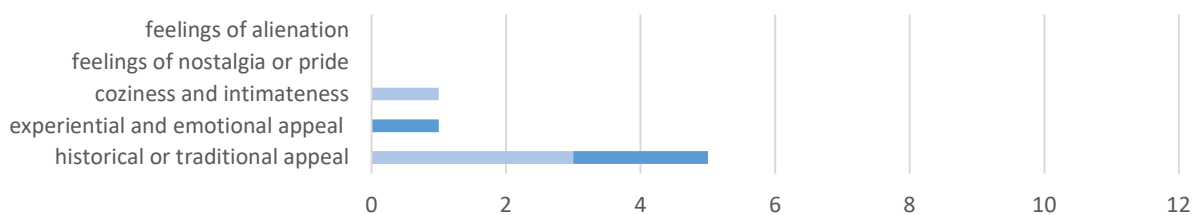


Diagram 3.4-68: **Comments on the sense of place by architects**

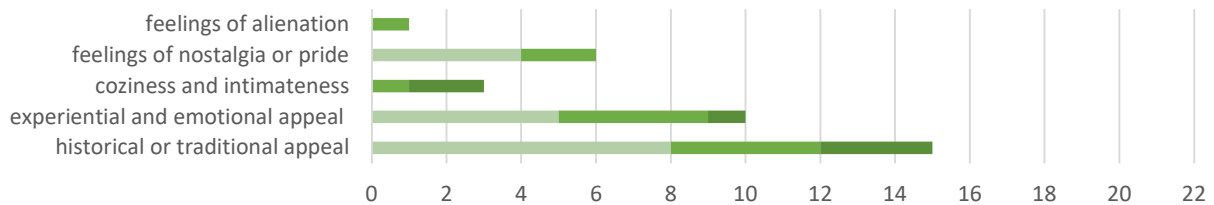


Diagram 3.4-69: **Comments on the sense of place by non-architects**

Overall, explicit or implicit statements indicated that the historical or traditional appeal of the site was highly valued by interviewees of both groups and cultural backgrounds. It was revealed that the site has a strong emotional appeal due to the historic features and the way they are presented. However, in total, there were significantly more comments on the emotional appeal of the site among non-architects, including feelings of nostalgia and pride particularly among Bahraini interviewees.

Other internal and external factors

As in the case of the first reference site, **interpretation**, which links to presentation and research, was identified as an aspect that was of prime importance to the interviewees and pointed to as a basis for informed authenticity judgements and appreciation of the site.

The lead conservation architect (I 7) pointed out in an expert interview that making the site and its history understood was a key concern in the rehabilitation works. He highlighted that besides architectural, archaeological and archival research, anthropological investigations accompanied the rehabilitation process and influenced how the architectural interventions were designed:

“Because once we reveal something, we bring the owners, and try to refresh their memory. They say: ‘Oh, yeah, there used to be something there...’” (I 7)

Along similar lines, the interior designer highlighted the responsibility of the planners in architectural conservation to hold back with personal design statements and let the site speak for itself:

“So, it is difficult to say who is the architect there. Because the architect is history – what it used to be. And we are preserving it. But then there is the subtle way of reinterpreting.” (I 25)

The effectiveness or ineffectiveness of several **architectural interpretation features** have been discussed up to this point: these included the colour-coding of surface plaster and other design means of differentiating historic, reconstructed and added fabric; the archaeological wall window in the elevation of the northern shops of the eastern block (annex fig. 3.4.1-69 to 70, 86); the attempt to represent reburied archaeological finds in the floor tiling of the outdoors space (annex fig. 3.4.1-57); as well as the displayed date syrup presses (annex fig. 3.4.1-49 to 50) which will be discussed in more detail below. Many comments from architects and non-architects showed that most interviewees took **interest in the site’s history**, including when, how and by whom it was built and used:

“Yes. Actually, for me it has been like this all my life. Since I am an architect, and my husband is an architect as well, we like to go around and read the history of the place. And we like to tell it afterwards.” (I 16c)

Several times, interviewees expressed their appreciation for learning about the site in the course of the interviews:

“I’m learning a lot from you.” (I 8a)

The existing **information panels** (annex fig. 3.4.1-71 to 73, 76 to 77) were commended in principle by three non-architects (I 15,8,9):

“For some reason in Bahrain they don’t write the history, although it is very rich in history relative to the other Gulf countries. At least here, they wrote what this place originally was.” (I 15c)

But, quite often, a **lack of interpretation facilities** or deficiencies of the existing ones were pointed out (I 16,17,30,33,4,8,10,12,3,13,14). Interviewees of both groups particularly wished for more information about the site’s association to the traditional pearling economy, the date syrup presses as well as about the construction history, the vernacular building tradition and the rehabilitation. One non-architect concluded during the visit that the rationale of the architectural design and the conservation approach itself need interpretation:

“It’s a bit philosophic. It would nice to explain it.” (I 8a)

Interviewees mentioned design features as well as text or photos as potential interpretive elements to be added. It was also pointed out that such features have to be ostentatious enough to catch attention, trigger interest and motivate visitors to learn about the history of the site (I 16,17,30,8,9). While one interviewee criticized the “museum-style” approach of the site’s rehabilitation (I 46), other interviewees appreciated the adaptive re-use for exploiting the educational potential of the site (I 4,8):

“Ya, it’s a great job because if they didn’t restore it, then they will just remove it and build another house. And who will know that for examples those shops used to sell pearls? Or, who would know about this history if they removed it? Because you know, if you want to attract visitors, even your locals, Bahrainis – don’t just build a museum and then: ‘Come!’. But to the café, believe me, this is the real story.” (I 4a)

The interpretive features which were most discussed and much appreciated by both groups of interviewees (I 16,17,21,33,20,4,18,8,9,12,3) are the outdoor and indoor archaeological areas with **remains of date syrup presses** (annex fig. 3.4.1-49 to 50). Like other interpretive architectural features, they were found not only to add to the historical appeal but also to triggering curiosity about the site and its history even if the exact meaning of the feature was seldom understood:

“I love [the mdbasah]... somebody told me that this is a brewery or something?” (I 12c)

It turned out that actually quite few interviewees (I 17,37,10,3,13) in both groups identified the archaeology as date syrup presses. Mostly Bahrainis did:

“Before this old. You make this one: date. You put it inside for four months, five months...” (I 37)

“I like it. I believe this is an original, authentic mdbasah.” (I 10b)

Locals and foreigners (I 4,3,13) who were aware of similar archaeological features on display at the World Heritage Site of the former capital of Dilmun identified the feature:

13a: “There is a mdbasah that we are standing on the top of.”

Author: “How do you know it is a mdbasah?”

13a: “Because I learned about it in Qal’at al-Bahrain. Ah, ha, that is interesting. So, my theory that these are the living quarters is obviously wrong. Is it normal that they have mudbasas in the suq area?”

The majority was not aware of the feature’s function and meaning (I 16,21,25,20,4,11,18,29,8,9,12,14), not even the interviewee whose father used to produce date syrup. When looking at the date juice press in the outdoor archaeological area she said:

4b: “This I like to see.”

Author: "What is that?"

4a: "I don't know, but I like stones on the street. Is it a well?"

Author: "No, it is not a well."

4a: "Swimming pool?"

Author: "No, it has something to do with dates."

4a: "Ah, it is a mdbasah! I thought it's only in Bahrain fort. We don't have it here."

Author: "No, they found it here."

4a: "Wow! So, this is an old building! Maybe it belongs to ... not Dilmun era... but I heard, that Bahraini people they have such a thing. My father he used to make this date syrup."

The date syrup presses were also misinterpreted as an "old foundation" (I 16c) or "flooring of the original place" (I 16c), "water channels" (I 21a), a facility "for washing" (I 18), "a fireplace" (I 11), an "underground storage" (I 11) for water or food (I 9) or "something odd" possibly for dyeing cloth (I 14b). Even the rehabilitation's interior designer did not seem to be aware of the original function as she simply referred to the presses as "something historic underneath" (I 25). Once the original function and its association to a millennia-old cultural tradition was disclosed, most interviewees showed themselves impressed:

"Of course I will never guess. [...] But wow!" (I 16c)

"A nice idea [...] Because now the original thing, that was there before, is being preserved. I have been here [in Bahrain] for 30 years and I did not know these things were there!" (I 21a)

There was also confusion and uncertainty about the reason why the presses are located considerably below ground level. Some, including the archaeologists, made it clear that they understood that the date syrup presses testify to earlier development phases of the site and to a gradually increasing floor level (I 16,17,10,13,3,14):

"I think this is where the original level of the street was. [...] Because mudbasas go back a really long time. I don't think they used them the last 50 years." (I 10b)

A non-architect (I 13) took the lower level of the date syrup press in the upper café space as an indication that the adaptation combines buildings from different phases:

"Probably the upper floor was constructed later on the top of an older construction. Probably there was an older house that was built upon. And this is now an adaptation of the second and the first together."

Further confusion arose from the multilayered date syrup presses inside the glass-covered ground window (annex fig. 3.4.1-50) (I 16,13):

"I have no idea why they would be in two different levels. [...] Maybe again, the older mdbasah belonged to the older house." (I 13a)

Several interviewees, on the other hand, were under the wrong impression that the presses might have originally been dug into the ground for functional reasons (I 17,4,15):

Author: "Why is it so deep in the ground, you think?"

4a: "For the purpose of making this dates syrup. Because my father he said they take the dates and put something that is heavy on the dates for weeks until it becomes like this, then they will take the syrup. So that is why. I am not sure actually."

Even among interviewees who had been to the site prior to the joint visit and who had consulted the information panel, which provide basic information about the date syrup presses including a photo from the excavation process, misconceptions persisted:

15c: *"From the panel I understood it is always low. So, when they put the dates, the honey comes down on one side. I think they do it in lines, so they don't mix everything."*

Author: *"Do you have an idea, why they are not on the same level?"*

15c: *"Maybe because they dug them?"*

The waiter at the café pointed to the information panel when asked what the archaeological feature represents, but he was not able to answer the question. Other comments, like the following, likewise suggest that the interpretive panel was of little success among the interviewees:

30b: *"Because for example, if you are coming here, usually your focus is not here. So, there is something missing that would catch the attention of the people."*

Author: *"But there is some description, right?"*

30b: *"Yes, but not everyone will read."*

Interviewees of both groups said that better and more obvious interpretive features would be required directly at the date syrup presses (I 16,30). Two interviewees missed an indication of an age (I 4,14):

"I just wonder from what time." (I 4a)

Despite these shortcomings in interpreting the date syrup presses, the archaeological features were found to overshadow other aspects of the site's cultural significance:

"You can see that this is an old building - for some reason they are preserving it. When you enter it is a coffee shop and honestly for me it could be anything. And then I see a mdbasa – and then I would never make the connection to a suq." (I 13a)

As described above, awareness of the site's association to the pearling heritage was rather low and not enhanced by the interpretation provided on site:

Author: *"If I hadn't told you the site is part of the pearling project, you wouldn't know, right?"*

16c: *"No. I would generally feel that it is a nice old place near the market and since they are having this mdbasa, so they might be selling dates and syrups related to the dates. And that is it."*

It was impossible for the interviewees to establish a link to the Siyadi family without background knowledge. The on-site interpretation makes no mention of a pearl merchant family whatsoever:

"Where does Siyadi come into this thing? I have not noticed Siyadi's name in any of the shops." (10a)

Although the site's contribution to the Outstanding Universal Value of the Pearling Testimony was not discussed in all interviews, it became clear that this value dimension is poorly conveyed at the site. Interviewees whom the author informed about the connection to pearling or who were aware of it took interest in this dimension of cultural significance:

"It is an interesting place. I like it. But yet it is not revealing all this." (I 16c)

"The general idea is represented here. But it is a little difficult to understand the site. I think it is an amazing [World Heritage] nomination. But it is difficult to understand it." (I 13a)

Several interviewees of both groups hence wished that the pearling narrative, "the untold story" (I 25), was better communicated at the site (I 16,25,33,15,10,12,13). This included an architect of the local heritage authority (I 33):

33: *"The suq is a major social element of the pearling industry. That is where the interaction of all people – merchants, divers, buyers, sellers – took place."*

Author: *"So that value, that part of the value of the site, is reflected there in that project, or not?"*

33: “I don’t think it is reflected. [...] I mean, the story is lost in the project. As an element it is important. But as a project, the way we executed it, I don’t think we took into consideration, or we didn’t focus on that aspect of the project – to tell the story of pearling. I don’t know if it will be done in the next phase.”

The same interviewee hence suggested that the unused area of the open space could have been used for this purpose:

“It could have been exploited to maybe bring back part of that pearling story, which the aim was to be told in this project.” (I 33)

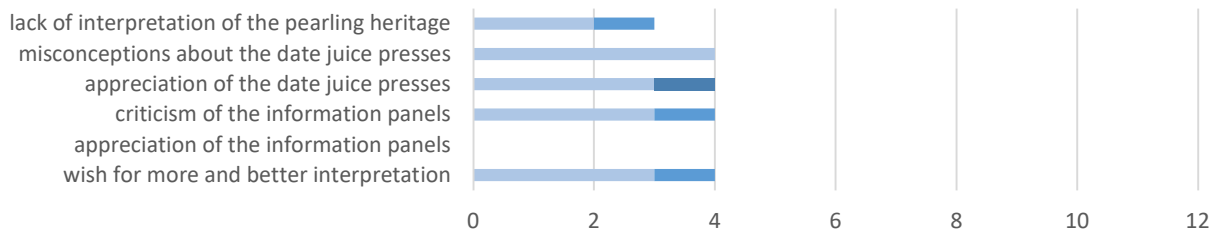


Diagram 3.4-70: Comments on interpretation facilities by architects

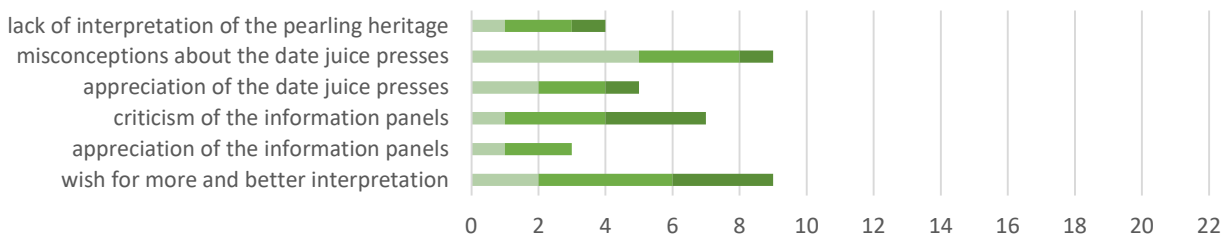


Diagram 3.4-71: Comments on interpretation facilities by non-architects

Comparing the perception of the site’s interpretation among architects and non-architects, the matter was found to be of similar importance to both groups. Regardless of the professional background, a majority of interviewees wished for more information about the use and construction history, the vernacular building tradition and the rehabilitation. Both interview groups particularly wished for more information about the site’s association to the traditional pearling economy and about the date syrup presses. In both groups there were many misconceptions about the latter. Meaningful differences with regard to cultural backgrounds did not emerge.

3.4.4.7 Overall authenticity judgements (summary)

This subchapter summarizes the main findings on how the interviewees perceived and rated the site’s overall authenticity. Most interviewees made comments that allow conclusions about the level of authenticity they attributed to the site. Not all, however, explicitly referred to the concept of authenticity (refer to table 3.4.4 – 7 in the annex).

Most interviewees, and particularly many architects, pointed both to strengths and weaknesses with regard to the site’s authenticity. Comments by six architects (I 21,7,22,23,33,20) and five non-architects (I 34,8,10,13,14) show that they were divided in their overall authenticity judgement. Nevertheless, the statements suggest that most interviewees, and the majority of non-architects tended to perceive the site as rather authentic. Comments from ten interviewees – including three

architects (I 16,17,32) and seven non-architects (I 4,11,15,37,47,9,3) – suggest that they rated the site on a high authenticity level. Only two interviewees – one architect (I 30) and one non-architect (I 46) – attributed the site an overall low authenticity level as they considered it significantly changed by the rehabilitation. The Bahraini among them criticized that the site had been turned into a somewhat pretentious “museum-style space” in which contemporary features dominate and which is alienated from the local culture and community (I 46).

Among others, the lead conservation architect (I 7) pointed to the particular **challenge of defining authenticity** for this type of heritage site, which is part of a living traditional market area:

“So, when we talk about a living heritage, authenticity is very hard to define. It is not an archaeological site.” (I 7c)

He was hence in two minds about the site’s authenticity. The lead conservation architect (I 7) considered that the interventions respected the site’s authenticity for having reintegrated it spatially, culturally and functionally into the wider market area. He pointed to a high material authenticity and to the fact that the various interventions strive for legibility of the site’s history and development. On the other hand, he perceived deficiencies with regard to intangible dimensions of authenticity. In this context, he pointed to a weak collective memory and lacking appreciation of the vernacular heritage and associated cultural traditions among the local community. In his eyes, the rehabilitation has contributed to diminishing such deficiencies of authenticity:

“Now, I am hoping that through those kinds of interventions here and there, that authenticity would again be complemented. We are dealing with one aspect of authenticity – the tangible one. The intangible one is still not there. It started to be seen here. See, this is what we started to feel.” (I 7c)

And indeed, among the wide range of factors of authenticity, emotional and experiential dimensions which are based in the site’s **traditional atmosphere and historical aura** were found to be essential for both groups of interviewees:

Author: “What are the things that you would consider authentic here?”

17b: “The atmosphere of the place. Including the textures, the wall materials, the wooden elements. The whole thing is giving me the authentic atmosphere. But it is the original place at the same time. [...] The meanings are clear and very honest. The stones are very clear.”

What fundamentally influenced the atmosphere is the **vernacular fabric** and the way it is presented. Few architects considered that some cases of untruthful representations of the local vernacular building tradition take away from the site’s authenticity. Mostly, however, the vernacular elements were considered to be restored at a high level of authenticity with regard to materials, substance, form and design:

“You can see they are the original buildings.” (I 17b)

“I think it is properly renovated.” (I 12c)

Due to the preserved material testimony and various references to associated cultural traditions, many interviewees considered the site an **authentic historic testimony and evidence of a past way of life**. Few architects highlighted the facilitation of an authentic visitor experience as a prime objective in architectural conservation. But in general, the site’s **emotional appeal**, which was not restricted to architectural features, was far more often commented on by non-architects:

“You see: the beams, the stones, the setup. The food we are having, not hamburgers. Next to a perfume shop. It helps. It relaxes. And there aren’t many settings in Bahrain like this. So, you enjoy it.” (I 12c)

Mostly Bahraini interviewees expressed feelings of **socio-cultural belonging and pride**. The feeling of **nostalgia** and **connectedness to the past** was also shared by non-Bahrainis:

„It’s like the authenticity, for me, in the buildings, is that people were living here, maybe it is even more energetically, or, just connecting me also with the past.” (I 9)

A controversially perceived aspect that was equally more often commented on by non-architects is the **social dimension** – that is who frequents the site and benefits from it. On the one hand, interviewees considered the presence of Bahrainis to contribute to the site’s authenticity. On the other, the high prices at the café were found to impair the atmospheric authenticity for some.

The site’s overall architectural design stands out with many **interpretive features** aimed at conveying information about the site’s history and development. Several interviewees (I 17,7,33,11) pointed out, that they considered the messages that the site delivers truthful:

“Like, it is telling the story of the place. It is telling the original, the honest story of the place. It’s not lying.” (I 17b)

While some interviewees considered that strikingly contemporary features take away from the site’s authenticity, many of the interviewees, and particularly architects, considered the differentiability of historic and added elements a factor of authenticity. However, the interviews showed, that many interpretive design features were not identified or misinterpreted. The use of both strikingly contemporary and rather historicizing designs as well as the various grades of abstraction used for reconstructed features were identified as sources of misconceptions and often criticized for that reason. Particularly architects hence criticized a lack of readability of the site’s history and of its cultural significance. Many interviewees of both groups pointed to the need for additional interpretation which would allow for a better understanding of the site and a better-informed assessment of its authenticity.

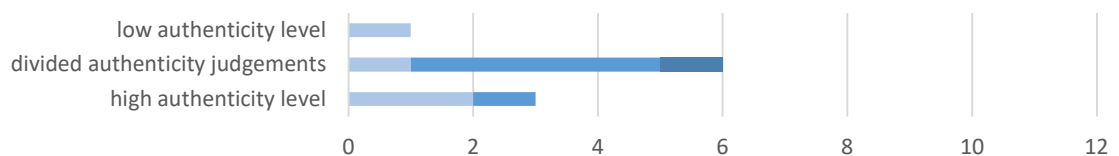


Diagram 3.4-72: Overall authenticity judgements about the rehabilitated site by architects

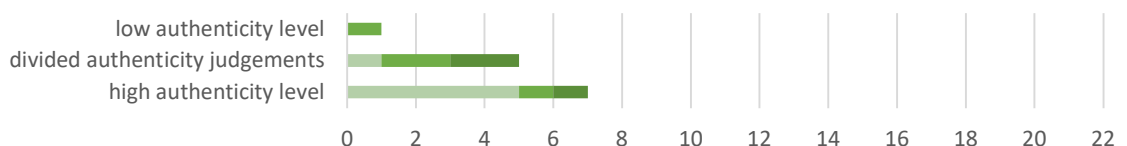


Diagram 3.4-73: Overall authenticity judgements about the rehabilitated site by non-architects

In summary, very few interviewees – one in each group – seemed to attribute a low level of authenticity to the reference site at Suq al-Qaisariya. Most interviewees in both groups tended towards a high authenticity level or clearly stated that they perceived the site maintained a high level of authenticity. Interviewees of both groups, and more so architects, however also expressed certain reservations with regard to authenticity. As architects were more critical about the interventions, the

authenticity level was overall rated higher among the non-architects. The importance attributed to individual factors of authenticity sometimes differed between the two groups, and there were slightly more misconceptions about the site among non-architects. Overall, relatively few disparities were identified in the way architects and non-architects perceived this reference site. Moreover, no cultural contingency patterns were identified in the overall authenticity judgements nor for most of the individual sources of information on authenticity. The sole conspicuous imbalance occurred in the case of the information source 'Language, and other forms of intangible heritage:' None of the western interviewees commented on the cultural traditions discussed under that heading. The findings will be discussed in chapter 4.

3.5 COMPARISON OF THE TWO MAIN REFERENCE SITES AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS

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The following comparisons of how the author of this thesis and the various interviewees assessed the authenticity of the two main reference sites aim at identifying differences in the way architects and non-architects perceive their authenticity and to relate this to heritage conservation doctrine. The results will be evaluated in chapter 4.

In 3.5.1 the author first compares the state of conservation of both reference sites and the compliance of their rehabilitation with conservation ethics based on her own authenticity assessments of the chapters 3.3.3 and 3.4.3. Subchapter 3.5.2 then presents how the interviewees compared the two sites, their rehabilitation and their authenticity. Against this backdrop and on the basis of the findings from chapters 3.3.4 and 3.4.4, the author then analyses the differences in the perception and valuation of the individual sources of information on authenticity at both sites by architects and non-architects.

3.5.1 COMPARISON OF THE SITES' AUTHENTICITY FROM A HERITAGE CONSERVATION PERSPECTIVE

The comparison of the author's assessments of the two sites based on the Operational Guidelines' individual information sources of authenticity shows that – from the perspective of heritage conservation doctrine – the reference site in Muharraq exhibited an overall higher authenticity level at the time of the field research than the one in Manama.

From a heritage conservation perspective, the key cultural significance of both sites is their documentary value as testimony to two different phases of Bahrain's history. Both are moreover of art-historian value as evidence of local architectural developments, namely of the transitional architecture of the mid-20th century's local colonial style and of the 19th century vernacular building tradition. In order to authenticate this significance, the most relevant information sources are 'Form and design', 'Material and substance' as well as building techniques. Additionally, 'Location and setting' as well as the intangible aspects 'Use and function' and continuities of place names, ownership and tenants ('Language and other forms of intangible heritage') are of certain relevance when assessing the historical authenticity of both reference sites.

With regard to 'Form and design', the architectural interventions at the reference site in Muharraq preserved or reinstated the original vernacular features and reconstructed lost elements in various levels of abstraction. Historic and reconstructed elements were complemented with new additions in contemporary design. Thereby, exceeding thought went into the legibility of the individual interventions and historicity of elements. At Bab al-Bahrain, the introduction of historicising references of various local and foreign architectural styles outweighed certain attempts to reinstate the original features of the colonial-style ensemble.

Authenticity of 'Materials and substance' – that is the preservation of tangible testimony of various historic phases and uses – were a priority in the rehabilitation of the Siyadi Shops. Contrary to this, preserving authentic historic testimony hardly played a role in the refurbishments at Bab al-Bahrain until a more conservative approach was later taken at the Customs House. The works at Muharraq also stand apart from most of the ones at Bab al-Bahrain with more extensive use of traditional building materials and techniques.

In terms of other intangible heritage dimensions, the discrepancy between the two sites is less striking. At both sites, the continuity of original or related uses and functions within the market areas had high priority and original ownership was mostly retained. While most tenants of the

commercial premises at Bab al-Bahrain remained, new tenants that sell traditional products were installed in the restored and new shop units in Muharraq.

An intangible dimension that played positively into the authenticity assessment of Bab al-Bahrain building was the fact that the works preserved or even augmented its symbolism as state monument and representative city gate. This symbolism extends to traditional place names. Moreover, the author rated positively that the site preserved a certain cosmopolitanism and social inclusiveness. In Muharraq, the author positively took into account that the works preserved and reinstated the traditional urban character and atmosphere.

Last but not least, research, documentation and interpretation played a considerably less important role in the works in Manama than in Muharraq. This likewise played into the author’s authenticity assessments, which overall turned out more favourable for the second reference site (compare the tables at the end of the chapters 3.3.3 and 3.4.3).

3.5.2 COMPARISONS OF THE SITES BY THE INTERVIEWEES

The author invited the 14 interviewees who participated in in-depth on-site interviews at both reference sites to make a concluding, comparative judgement about the sites and how they were rehabilitated (I 16,17,20,4,11,15,18,8,9,10,12,3,13,14). If direct reference to the theoretical concept of authenticity had been made during the interviews, the author explicitly asked for a comparison of the sites in this regard. In addition, six other interview partners (I 21,22,23,32,33,46), who are familiar with both sites, made comparative remarks (refer to annex 3.5.2). In the following, the main findings from those comparisons are presented. Moreover, several Bahraini interviewees drew very informative comparisons to Suq Waqif in Qatar, with which this subchapter closes.

3.5.2.1 Comparisons of the two main reference sites by the interviewees

From the interviewees’ statements it is clear, that there was a general **preference for the site in Suq al-Qaisariya** and for the way it has been rehabilitated. Clearly, the rehabilitated Siyadi Shops were associated with a higher level of authenticity both in the group of architects and in the groups of interviewees of different professional backgrounds. This played an important role in the positive evaluation of the site. This preference was significantly more pronounced among the architects despite certain reservations with regard to authenticity among that group.

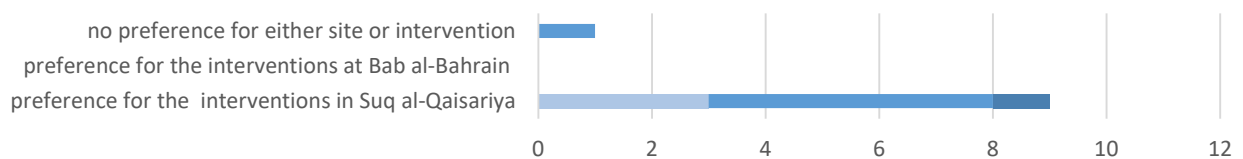


Diagram 3.5-1: Comparative evaluation of the two reference sites by architects

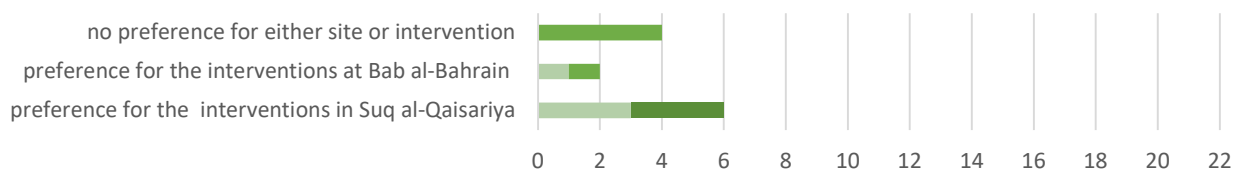


Diagram 3.5-2: Comparative evaluation of the two reference sites by non-architects

14 interviewees of various cultural backgrounds, including eight architects and six non-architects, either strongly preferred or at least tended to prefer the reference site and interventions in Muharraq (I 16,17,21,7,23,32,33,20,4,11,15,3,13,14). Four non-architects of East-western cultural background said they had no preference for either site or project (I 8,9,10,12). Among the architects who commented on both sites, only one, who had been involved in the refurbishment of Bab al-Bahrain Avenue, expressed no preference (I 22). Two non-architects, including an Ethiopian migrant who works in Bahrain as a housemaid (I 18) and a young Bahraini artist (I 46) said they preferred the site and interventions at Bab al-Bahrain. The latter, however, drew her comparison in summer 2012, when the latest refurbishment of Bab al-Bahrain building and in Bab al-Bahrain Avenue had not yet been implemented.

Many interviewees – particularly non-architects – per se preferred the vernacular buildings over the modernist mid-20th century buildings. When asked to compare the two reference sites, interviewees of both groups highlighted that the vernacular buildings in Suq al-Qaisariya are older than the colonial-style buildings in Manama (I 17,33,11,15,8,10,15,14). This was often considered to increase both the site's cultural significance and authenticity:

"Maybe Qaisariya Suq is older. [...] So that would maybe give it more significance in terms of age." (I 33b)

"The older the buildings are the more precious they are." (15c)

The **preserved vernacular buildings and crafts** were an important reason why interviewees preferred the site in Muharraq (I 16,17,7,32,4,11,15,10,3). Several conservation architects, moreover, criticized the deliberate destruction of historic testimony in Manama when comparing the sites (I 16,32,20).

Some interviewees positively pointed out the **smaller scale and intimacy of the site** in Muharraq as well as the **attention paid to detail** in the interventions (I 15,12,13,14):

"I like the feel of this area [Suq al-Qaisariya] better. It is smaller, more like nooks and crannies. It just has more of a traditional feel than the Bab al-Bahrain." (I 14b)

"Maybe because it is a smaller project, they managed to go a lot into details. I enjoy the details." (I 15d)

While almost all interviewees pointed to a certain **artificiality** at Bab al-Bahrain (refer to 3.5.1.), an **aura of historicity** triggered stronger emotional attachment to the site in Suq al-Qaisariya (I 17,4,11,12,3,13):

"I like the one in Muharraq better. This one [Bab al-Bahrain] feels more artificial. Muharraq is cosy, this one is more artificial. [...] Maybe it's because the houses in Muharraq are smaller and you feel more connected with the people who may have lived there, then this area here [Bab al-Bahrain]." (I 13b)

Atmospheric qualities were a main reason particularly why non-architects preferred the second reference site.

"What you see here is a true feel of walking in the suq and this you don't feel in Manama." (I 12c)

Moreover, the **truthfulness of messages** was twice explicitly highlighted (I 17,21) and often indirectly described as a key factor of authenticity. A young Bahraini architect (I 17), who highlighted the complexity of the task when asked to assess the authenticity of the sites, explained his preference for the Siyadi Shops as follows:

17b: *"I don't know I am still confused. I need to research about it. But to me, when you go to a place which has this kind of atmosphere, I feel it is authentic."*

Author: *"And Bab al-Bahrain?"*

17b: *"I don't feel it's authentic. Like, the meanings are not honest in Bab al-Bahrain. Maybe that is why it is not authentic to me in Bab al-Bahrain. But here [at the Siyadi Shops], the meanings are clear and very honest. The stones are very clear."*

Author: *"What is the meaning?"*

17b: *"Like, it is telling the story of the place. It is telling the original, the honest story of the place. It's not lying. When you go back to Bab al-Bahrain. It is very clear that it's lying. It is not telling the original story of the place."*

Interviewees of both groups, but more architects, pointed to the better **differentiability of historic and new fabric** at Suq al-Qaisariya than at Bab al-Bahrain (I 16,32,20,4,3,13):

"I feel better about this project here [Suq al-Qaisariya]. I mean it is already some days ago that we went to Bab – so my memory is not that fresh anymore. But this seems a much better approach. And more authentic than it does in Bab. Because you know, you have this artificial façade and it's all very artificial. Besides this one corner [Post Office and Police Station]. And here, you really can feel what was there. And you actually HAVE the original fabric. And you can distinguish between the new and the old. Like this glass façade and everything. So, Muharraq it is!" (I 3c)

"In the other place [Bab al-Bahrain], I feel I am walking in a place that never existed. Now, here [in Suq al-Qaisariya], I feel that this place existed and it has some addition from our time. Which I understand. I like this." (I 16c)

The main reason for the perceived artificiality of the site in Manama are the **historicizing designs** of which mostly architects were very critical:

"Qaisariya is much better than Bab al-Bahrain because you can see and feel the authentic fabric. Whatever is added is clear. In Bab al-Bahrain an image was imposed on the building. In Qaisariya the building is preserved as it is and no image was imposed. Any addition contrasts it as contemporary." (I 32)

Among the non-architects, on the contrary, some interviewees appreciated the **architectural revivalism** in Bab al-Bahrain Avenue as an alternative means of heritage preservation despite preference for the preserved historic buildings at Suq al-Qaisariya.

4b: *"I prefer that one [Suq al-Qaisariya]."*

Author: *"Why do you prefer it?"*

4b: *"Because still I can feel that it is old. From the past. But here [in Bab al-Bahrain Avenue] ... ok, it is the same traditional style but there are all of these new things – new buildings. [...] But I like this idea to just copy things from the past and then bring them alive again. But I have a different feeling. When I come across Qaisariya Suq I feel I am proud of my ancestors, or whatever. But now [at Bab al-Bahrain], I don't have this feeling."*

Author: *"But you like it?"*

4b: *"Yes, I like it. It is better than nothing."*

Likewise, particularly non-architects (I 15,12) pointed out that the authenticity of the two sites was not only based in the architecture but also in other means of **place branding**, including the display of sales products that relate to local cultural traditions. A Bahraini non-architect drew the following comparison between the new mall building at Bab al-Bahrain and Suq al-Qaisariya with the new café:

“I know it, [the mall building], is not original. As long as it is not original, it cannot be authentic. But if we go to Safroon in Muharraq it is an authentic building with authentic food.” (I 15a)

Mostly Bahraini non-architects (I 17,4,10,3), moreover, pointed to the **social dimension** as a factor of authenticity. Perceptions thereof were somewhat divergent however. In Suq al-Qaisariya, the presence of more Bahraini nationals was most commonly perceived as a factor of authenticity, while the lack of “original people” (I 17b) was considered a diminishing factor in Manama. A young Bahraini woman (I 4), who described feelings of belonging and pride at Suq al-Qaisariya, said she felt socio-cultural alienation and deprivation at Bab al-Bahrain:

“I like Suq al-Qaisariya more than this one [Bab al-Bahrain] because I can still see some Bahrainis sitting and selling. There are shops, maybe, but here [at Bab al-Bahrain] all of them are Indians, so you know, I prefer that one [Suq al-Qaisariya]. At least I can see some of my... of the citizens there. But here [at Bab al-Bahrain], it’s occupied by Indians, it’s not ours anymore.” (I 4b)

Contrary to this perception, an Egyptian-Bahraini interviewee (I 8) pointed to the social and cultural inclusiveness of the public space at Bab al-Bahrain as a continuum of the site’s historic cosmopolitanism. Two interviewees (I 3,46) moreover compared the **embeddedness of the sites in their social and urban context** and likewise came to diverging conclusions. One (I 3) considered the second reference site well integrated:

“Also, it, [Suq al-Qaisariya], is more embedded in its surroundings. And Bab is not embedded. It’s like THERE! And then you feel, when you leave this exact area we have visited, that you enter a totally different world. There is no transition. It’s very different. It does not really merge into the surroundings. While here, it was part of it, and it still is part of it.” (I 3c)

The other interviewee – the young Bahraini artist (I 46) – had the opposite perception of the two sites. She preferred Bab al-Bahrain Avenue over the rehabilitated site in Suq al-Qaisariya as an interactive, socially integrative and well-embedded commercial space. She also preferred Bab al-Bahrain Avenue for being more typically Bahraini. It has to be noted, though, that the folklore architectural references of the initial refurbishment of the Avenue had not yet been removed at the time of her statement (compare annex fig. 3.3.1-86 to 96 and 101 to 108). The site hence had a somewhat more traditional character during that first, early interview. Although the interviewee stressed the importance of the social dimension, the different architectural setup is likely to have influenced her judgement:

“Well, what I feel about this space [Bab al-Bahrain Avenue] is that it communicates culture, because it is an interactive space. With the shops and people going around. And perhaps it is slightly larger [than the site as Suq al-Qaisariya]. It is definitely Bahraini and close to home. In comparison to Qaisariya, though, I feel that that place is isolated and slightly more contemporary. This [Bab al-Bahrain] is humble. That [Qaisariya] isn’t humble enough. And that is more of a museum-style space.” (I 46)

The above quoted Bahraini woman hence felt alienated by the way the Siyadi Shops are presented as historic relics among contemporary-style additions that clearly dominated the site in her eyes. A second interviewee (I 18) preferred the site in Manama simply for being larger and more modern.

Despite prevalent preference for Suq al-Qaisariya, several interviewees expressed certain reservations with regard to the interventions in both sites. Mostly, these related to

reconstructions of which most architects were somewhat critical. One of the architects disapproved of any type of reconstruction in principle (I 21):

“It is like wiping out some part of the history and: ‘Oh, it never happened!’ Like an ostrich putting its head in sand. Things are developing!” (I 21a)

Interviewees of both groups (I 16,21,10) shared the notion that **development** should be embraced when preserving historic urban sites:

“I prefer – when we want to reconstruct something from the past – I prefer to reconstruct it in a modern sense, even if the old neighbourhood is going into modernity. For me, it is sort of evolving the city or the urban place. And it is more dynamic. It won’t be static. You know, at a certain time, if we started to make it static and capture certain moments, at a certain time it will die. But if we kept on making it evolving, the old building will be like a pearl inside this setting. It will show more and it will be more authentic and the value of it will raise more. And that doesn’t mean that I’m totally going to make a modern city. But I mean to evolve.” (I 16b)

A Bahraini non-architect (I 10), who considered neither site particularly authentic or unauthentic, appreciated both projects for balancing development and heritage preservation:

10a: “I don’t see them as unauthentic but I don’t see them as authentic. Because they have been altered, and they have been changed through time. But I see that as process of evolution, things evolving keep changing. But I’m kind of happy with the idea, they resisted the extreme kind of change. Any other areas have altered.”

Author: “Why are you happy about that?”

10a: “Because it keeps the identity of the place. When I pass through these places, I feel kind of nostalgic to the past.”

Doubting the **sustainability** of the approach taken in Suq al-Qaisariya, the architect of the Bahraini architectural firm, which carried out the initial refurbishment of Bab al-Bahrain Avenue, compared the economic viability of the two sites and pointed to probably high maintenance costs for the vernacular buildings in Muharraq (I 22). Two other interviewees, who did not express any preference, pointed to **fundamental differences of the sites** which impede comparison in their eyes (I 9,8):

“Both of them give me completely different feelings and ideas. I would say Muharraq gives me more a traditional and authentic feeling and being closer to the culture, the historical culture of Bahrain. And here [at Bab al-Bahrain] it is more modern, not modern up-to-date, but modern Bahrain [...]. They are two different phases.” (I 9c)

An Egyptian-Bahraini non-architect (I 8) likewise considered the two sites incomparable in age, construction techniques, historical context and original function. Given these differences, he considered the choice of different rehabilitation approaches for the two sites appropriate and, hence, had no preference for either intervention:

“They are incomparable. [...] I mean, you are showing something from the 40s. It is really not that worthwhile. [...] If it is a hundred years old, then you shouldn’t go about it in the same way.” (I 8b)

Overall, the direct comparisons of the two sites by the interviewees confirms that their authenticity was generally judged differently by architects than by non-architects. The comparisons also reflect a correlation to the somewhat divergent **value attributions** between

the two groups. The value attributions reflect in the relative importance the interviewees paid to the individual information sources of authenticity, which will be assessed below in 3.5.3.

3.5.2.2 Comparisons of the two reference sites to Suq Waqif in Qatar

Several, mostly Bahraini, interviewees drew comparisons of either of the two reference sites to Suq Waqif, which was introduced in chapter 3.2. The most illustrative comparisons are presented here almost unabridged as they reflect which foci particularly Bahraini non-architects laid when assessing authenticity.

An Egyptian-Bahraini civil engineer (I 8), who said that he found the two main reference sites incomparable, drew the following comparison of Bab al-Bahrain area to Suq Waqif:

8b: "I could compare Qaisariya with other buildings in Muharraq. I can compare this [Bab al-Bahrain area] with Suq Waqif."

Author: "Compare this to Suq Waqif!"

8b: "This is much better."

Author: "Why?"

8b: "Because Suq Waqif is so not in the right place! [...] Even though Doha was part of Bahrain and Qatar was part of Bahrain, THIS was the centre of Bahrain, what you are seeing now, including all of Doha. But Doha is a provincial town. Suq Waqif is too much, it's like a theme-park."

Author: "You don't think it looked like that before?"

8b: "No, it looked nothing like that. Because even though they are using traditional materials, it looks so rich. Which it wasn't. You can't dissociate this place [Bab al-Bahrain] from the people. But in Suq Waqif it's totally dissociated from everything inside it."

Author: "But it's popular, isn't it?"

8b: "It's popular. It has Ben and Jerry's. Here [at Bab al-Bahrain], at least you have Naseef, people who were sweet-makers in Bahrain for a long time. But there, everything is franchised internationally. There is a falcon store there. But it's for display. Because no one is going to buy a 60.000 Dollar falcon in the market. It just doesn't happen. So, it's very silly. Suq Waqif is silly. It's a re-creation of a Disney theme-park but it is in the wrong place in downtown Doha. [...] This [Bab al-Bahrain area] is what this place meant to be, when Manama decided to be the capital of Bahrain. And, so, it retains that. For example, when the Bab Market started, and for the first time ever there was a street musician playing modern guitar music, there were like thousands of Asian labourers standing in front of it. [...] And I think, this is the perfect setting to do something like that. You know, the state is changing, this is something very unique to Bahrain, that the social classes are diminishing a little bit, and everyone has a right to beauty and art and things like that. [...] That was an excellent use of a space like this! This would never happen in Qatar, because they would just kick the labourers out. They are not even allowed anywhere near it. So, the people don't see them. So, it is not meant to be the same way. This is an Asian market, this part of Manama always had trade with Asians and so on. [...] There is a lot of identity here, a lot of interaction and trade. The keyword is trade. And state. It's what it's supposed to be and it stays that way. It will never change. Ok, so we have a glass façade and a modern mall. And the windows of Bab al-Bahrain have changed and so on. But it's still the same function. You cannot compare that to Qaisariya. Qaisariya is not the same. When restoring it, the idea should be very different. I'm not a professional. This is just a very subjective opinion."

The rather scathing comments about Suq Waqif by the above quoted interviewee is expression of a high concern for a truthful representation of history. Contrary to most architects, the

interviewee did not root this in originality of forms and substance at least in the case of the monumental mid-20th century buildings and space in Central Manama. Considering the preservation of their function and symbolism more crucial, he, like several non-architects, derived a more favourable authenticity judgement for the first reference site than most architects did. Like other non-architects, he, in turn, expressed the opinion that the older vernacular buildings in Suq al-Qaisariya should be more conservatively preserved as authentic testimony to a more distant local and regional past.

The interviewees of the following two statements were considerably less judgmental about the untruthful representation of Suq Waqif in historical terms. Like other interviewees – particularly non-architects – they appreciated but did not prioritize historical authenticity and originality of form, design and substance. Clearly, in historic urban sites like the two reference sites, the satisfaction of aesthetic and emotional including identity or economic needs of contemporary societies were considered at least as important. The following discussion took place at the Siyadi Shops:

15c: "I am no expert, but you can tell sometimes, what is real, what is not real, is fake. When you go to Qatar [Suq Waqif] you can tell, some of the buildings are real, some of them you can tell right away they are fake."

Author: "Is there anything real there?"

15c: "Some of the buildings are real. Very few. The suq was never that big. It never was. [...] It started with a small area – the original area. And they renewed it. Then they expanded on the same random basis. [...] Qatar and Bahrain used to be one country. And this is not long ago, 40-50 years ago. And there were just tribes ruling the area. So, the families were here and there. Almost every family in Qatar has a branch in Bahrain. Not every family in Bahrain has a branch in Qatar. [...] In the end, it's the same culture. Same way of life. But the real history is here, it's the same history, but the real buildings are here. So, for a tourist, he would probably prefer to go to Qatar, or somewhere the biggest the better and it will not matter if this stone is authentic or not."

Author: "It will not matter?"

15c: "I don't think it will matter much. But for an archaeologist,¹ it would make the whole difference."

Author: "For you?"

15c: "For me, I would enjoy it, if the building was original, but since we don't have much of that... this is not Rome! So, at least, Qatar has the luxury of having the imagination of how life used to be and they expand it. And there is nothing much written. And very rarely you see pictures or videos. Because realistically speaking, 60 years ago there was nothing in this area [Qatar], it was pure desert. Muharraq was a major city in the area. [...]"

Asked whether the untruthful representation of the history of the market in the neighbouring country bothered him, yet another Bahraini (I 10) replied:

"No. if you are happy to wear a fake Rolex watch, I am fine with that. If that makes your day, I'm fine with that. I wouldn't wear a fake Rolex. If I wear one it has to be a real one. I am not Qatari, so I am not concerned." (I 10b)

¹ As typical in Bahrain, the interviewee subsumed all heritage professions under the term archaeologist.

The interviewee of the above quote seemed to share the rather undogmatic approach to material authenticity but at the same time highlighted the importance of providing historical information and interpretation at historic sites:

10b: "I've been to Suq Waqif once or twice and I remember this big row of old-looking shops. But I assume that they were not always like that, because I know that Qatar has been recently developing as a country and I would not expect that they had this many years ago – like 20 or 30 years ago. I would think, it was much more basic, smaller stores maybe, some of them might not even have permanent roofs, more like street stands."

Author: "So what do you think about Suq Waqif as it is there now? Do you think there is historic fabric there?"

10b: "I don't know if there is or not. I can't really be bothered. I 'm a tourist in Qatar and as a tourist I don't mind being fooled by.... not that I don't mind... it's not a big issue to see something and... I don't know if they have a picture gallery of how it was before and how they changed it, or a description of the place before. I am not aware of that. But I would like to have that. I mean even in Bahrain here. There is much information that you told me today that I was not aware of. And a passer-by would not even be bothered to go and investigate. Probably it is freely available to the public this information, but it would be nice to have somewhere in Bab al-Bahrain."

The director of the EWAN al-Bahrain, the firm specialized in facsimile reconstructions of vernacular buildings (I 26), positively mentioned Suq Waqif for the use of traditional construction techniques when comparing to the reconstruction of façade of the Government Shops and Offices in Bab al-Bahrain Avenue in conventional technique.

Finally, when discussing the rehabilitation of Suq al-Qaisariya, a local architect of the heritage authority (I 33) lauded Suq Waqif for successfully harmonizing architectural heritage conservation with economically viable urban revitalisation as well as for meeting the expectations of site users including tourists:

"I like it, yes. Even though – if you think of it from a conservation point of view – it is maybe not authentic. But taking it as an attraction, it's a nice place to go. You have old traditional workshops. You have nice events that take place. It's an active, revived space. I think that would have been the same here." (I 33)

In his eyes, Suq Waqif could have served as blueprint for a compromise between the conflicting approaches of governmental authorities who wanted to preserve the historic fabric in Suq al-Qaisariya and those who envisaged the construction of a modern mall in traditionalist design which was described in chapter 3.4.1.3:

"Ideal would have been, to give the municipality the freedom to build the new part but to preserve the existing. Even if they would have rebuilt the new part traditionally." (I 33)

3.5.3 COMPARISON OF THE AUTHENTICITY ASSESSMENTS

This final subchapter brings together the findings about the perceptions of the two main reference sites in order to identify the main differences in how architects, including the author on the basis of heritage conservation doctrine, and non-architects evaluated and valued the individual information sources of authenticity.

3.5.3.1 Form and design

'Form and design' was extensively discussed at both sites with interviewees of both groups. The following quote from an interview with a Bahraini non-architect at Suq al-Qaisariya serves to

illustrate the prime importance interviewees attributed to this source of information on authenticity:

Author: "What is authenticity to you in historic places? [...]"

10b: "Ok, for me – I am not an expert in the architecture field, but as a simple person – I think visual is the most! If it looks authentic than it is authentic for me. Unless I am expert and I can identify what is real – what is old and what has been added to it later. But I am not that person. [...]"

Author: "Does it matter if it looked like that before or whether it looks again, or still, like that?"

10b: "Ya, if you go and you change something: that for me makes a difference. For example, you don't touch the building and just paint it red. That would entirely destroy the idea to me. If you demolish the building and you build the exact same building again with the same colours and the same exact shape, I would think that the second one is more authentic than the first one just painted. Although, that might not exactly be the reality."

The above quote hints to the importance of professional expertise for the assessment of authenticity of buildings. Unsurprisingly, architects who are trained in the field, tended to assess architectural designs more critically and were also more attentive to changes of original forms. Non-architects hence often rated the **level of change** to the individual historic buildings at the two sites lower than architects. Likewise, non-architects often consider reconstructed buildings and building parts more truthful to their historic models than architects. The scientific authenticity assessment by the author likewise put much emphasis on the evaluation of 'Form and design'. The matter was scrutinized on the basis of more information sources than available to the interviewees but focused exclusively on compliance with the original designs including spatial layouts of the buildings.

At both sites, **truthfulness to historic designs** was a major concern for most, albeit not all architects and certainly for those trained in conservation. Among the interviewees of other professional backgrounds similarity to original designs was of less consequence, particularly in the case of the mid-20th century buildings in Manama. Partly due to the fact that the original designs of the buildings were so significantly changed, there was little awareness of their historical significance as evidence of the early state modernization and the local transitional architectural period. Generally, concern for beauty prevailed in that group.

Improved **aesthetics** was a main reason why non-architects appreciated the refurbishments at the first reference site in Manama which architects almost unanimously disapproved of. This discrepancy was significantly less pronounced in the case of the vernacular buildings in Suq al-Qaisariya, which the majority in both groups valued as historic testimony. Beauty was not explicitly addressed in the author's assessments as it is not officially considered a dimension of cultural significance or authenticity. It only indirectly plays into the assessment of integrity of architectural designs.

The inquiry identified a conflict line between architects with regard to the **representation of the vernacular building craft** at Suq al-Qaisariya. Those architects who perceived the vernacular building tradition as a living heritage, tended to prioritize the integrity of the vernacular design and accurate application of the techniques over the preservation of traces of history and age including the differentiation between historic and added fabric.

The conservation tenet of preserving **evidence of different historical stages** in architectural conservations was seldom referred to, but was mentioned by interviewees of both groups. The matter also played a subordinate role in the scientific assessment due to the lowly rated cultural significance of later changes to both sites.

Historicizing designs were rather categorically dismissed by most architects including by the author for historical untruthfulness and concerns about potential misconceptions. Indeed, facsimile reconstruction and design elements of the **architectural revivalism** at Bab al-Bahrain were sometimes mistaken as historic features particularly among non-architects. Nevertheless, mostly non-architects perceived the historicizing designs as a legitimate, alternative means of heritage preservation and expression of cultural continuity.

At both sites, architects, including the author, attributed greater importance to **differentiability of pre-existing and added fabric** in principle. Differentiability was however often appreciated by interviewees of the other group, too, albeit less for scientific than for emotive reasons as the following quote exemplifies:

“It is good to know what made it over time and the parts that were added to make it more complete. So, it’s not really fake: You have an original Rolex, but it has a leather strip that is not a Rolex, but that does not make it not a Rolex.” (10b)

Only architects categorically promoted a **design contrast between new and old** as stipulated by the Venice Charter and other conservation doctrine. Mostly non-architects were in favour of almost seamlessly blending authentic, reconstructed and added elements in favour of a harmonious, traditional appearance. Nevertheless, strikingly contemporary designs for certain new facilities were approved of by interviewees of both groups. Subtle differentiations of intervention levels as a means of interpretation, which abound in Suq al-Qaisariya, were found to be not very effective and particularly so among non-architects.

3.5.3.2 Materials and substance

Material authenticity was generally less extensively discussed than other dimensions of authenticity but played a fundamental role in the author’s authenticity assessments. The subject was more often addressed in Suq al-Qaisariya. The exposed vernacular building materials were a reason why material authenticity was discussed more often at that site.

While the author could rely on a wealth of scientific information, for most interviewees it was hardly possible to judge the individual buildings’ material authenticity for lack of background knowledge. While there were no fundamental differences in the judgement of material authenticity among architects and non-architects at either site, the information source was differently valued by the groups. Due to differing value attributions, authentic substance tended to matter more to architects than to non-architects as a scientific information source. While architects more often pointed to the documentary value of historic fabric, non-architects attached foremost sentimental value, if any, to authentic substance.

A clear dichotomy surfaced in the case of the first reference site. Most architects, including the author, were critical of the refurbishments at Bab al-Bahrain because they lacked concern for material authenticity. Many non-architects, in turn, attributed little value to the fabric of the mid- 20th century buildings because they perceived them as too young for being considered historic. Non-architects clearly considered ‘Material and substance’ a subordinate dimension of

authenticity in the case of Bab al-Bahrain. Contrary to most architects and the author, interviewees of that group hence considered the less conservative rehabilitation approach at Bab al-Bahrain appropriate.

In the case of the vernacular buildings at Suq al-Qaisariya, material authenticity was a matter of concern in both groups. Many non-architects considered the vernacular buildings significantly older and more precious in substance than the colonial-style buildings in Manama. Architects and non-architects valued the vernacular buildings as **testimony** to a past way of life. In this, intangible dimensions – such as the building techniques and who employed them – were at least as important for several non-architects as material authenticity. Several architects however criticized the conservation works at Suq al-Qaisariya for a rather too dominant focus on material authenticity to the detriment of other dimensions of authenticity.

Non-architects, foremost valued the historic fabric of the Siyadi Shops for its **historical appeal** and for raising feelings of nostalgia. However, both historic and new vernacular building elements were found to significantly add to the traditional atmosphere of the second reference site. Moreover, the seemingly clear contrast of additions, which are, however, not all in contemporary design, contributed to the perceived high material authenticity of the vernacular elements in Suq al-Qaisariya. The case of the Post Office and Police Station at Bab al-Bahrain moreover suggests, that authenticity in ‘Form and design’ evoked the illusion of material authenticity among both groups of interviewees.

Generally, it was a matter of little concern to many non-architects and of high concern to most architects, including the author, if they had difficulties to tell historic from reconstructed or new elements apart. More **misconceptions about material authenticity** of built elements were identified among non-architects at both sites. Non-architects less often identified **interpretive design features**. Interviewees of that group also often did not interpret the archaeological wall windows, which display coral stone masonry at both reference sites, as a proof of historicity. Nevertheless, there were less misconceptions with regard to material authenticity in the case of the Siyadi Shops than at Bab al-Bahrain.

The various **reconstructions** at both sites, which the author assessed critically as per conservation ethics, clearly raised more authenticity concerns among architects, than among non-architects. Mostly architects, however, also wished for further or more faithful reconstructions at both sites.

Reversibility of interventions as a means of protecting material authenticity played an important role in the author’s assessments but in the inquiry was raised only once by a conservation architect.

In addition, several architects addressed material authenticity as an **architectural doctrine**. This is exemplified by the following interview excerpt, in which an Indian architect described a historicizing facsimile construction project in Bahrain:

21a: “The client wanted old looking things. We were planning to do it the traditional way.”

Author: “Here in Bahrain?”

21a: “Yes. But you know, those materials are not available here. You have to get them from Iran or somewhere: the danshal, the mangrove and all these things. And the client did not

want. He was worried that there would be bugs, insects, ... and finally, the interior designer did it in gypsum.”

Author: “What?”

21a: “Everything. The roof. Everything painted. And you wouldn’t know. You could not make it out. But it is so bad! Uh!”

Author: “So, why do you find that so bad?”

21a: “I feel that the material should be shown. What material you use, you show that material. You don’t imitate things. I am very, very against imitation. Even I tell my wife: ‘You want to get gold, you get gold, you want to wear iron, wear iron. Don’t wear plastic looking like gold!’ [laughing]”

Author: “Where did you pick up that mentality? Like, is that a very common mentality, you think?”

21a: “No, most people are not like that. I had good mentors. I worked with good architects. That influenced.”²

3.5.3.3 Use and function

Use and function were clearly a matter of high concern in both groups of interviewees and at both sites, albeit less with regard to historical authenticity than to the role the heritage sites play in the contemporary society. The author’s authenticity assessments, in turn, focused on continuity of historic uses and functions.

There was generally some awareness among the interviewees but more detailed knowledge among architects about the former use and function of both sites. Despite some changes, ranging from the pedestrianization of Bab al-Bahrain Avenue to the integration of gastronomic use and a public open space at the Siyadi Shops, the authenticity level was considered rather high in this regard at both sites both by the interviewees and the author. Given the fact, that the second reference site integrates a project of adaptive re-use, architects more often commented on the subject at this site than at the other.

In Manama, use and function was significantly more often commented on by non-architects, which corresponds with the higher significance this group generally attributed to that value dimension at this site. Three non-architects explicitly said that they anchored Bab al-Bahrain’s historical authenticity in the continuity of its function as state symbol and entrance gate to Suq al-Manama. Many non-architects clearly considered designs and materials subordinate dimensions of authenticity to continuity of use and function at this site. This was a key reason, why the first reference site’s overall authenticity was considered much higher in that group than among architects, including the author.

Several architects moreover pointed to the importance of **considering future use and function** at the outset when planning for the rehabilitation of heritage sites. Usage of heritage buildings was moreover pointed to as a prerequisite for sustainable heritage conservation and maintenance in that group.

Despite the focus on contemporary use, features that inform about the sites’ former use and function, or about other aspects of their history, were much appreciated and valued in both

² In the following, the interviewee explained that he took classes with the internationally renowned British and Egyptian architects Laurie Baker and Hassan Fatih during his studies of architecture in India.

groups. Interpretive architectural features were, however, often not successful in conveying the intended messages. Overall, there were more misconceptions about the former use and function of the sites among non-architects than among architects.

An aspect of 'Use and function' which was found to matter more to non-architects and which played a minor role in the author's assessments, too, was the **social dimension** – that is who frequents the site and benefits from it. Although perceptions thereof were somewhat controversial at both sites, the presence of Bahraini nationals was clearly perceived as an important factor of authenticity mostly among non-architects. This was found to extend to the continuity of local brands and brand names as well as to the merchandizing of local traditional products. The author rated the latter as rather unauthentic. Last but not least, cultural and commercial events as well as gastronomic facilities were positively pointed out by interviewees of both groups as they increase liveliness of the sites and thereby increase atmospheric authenticity.

3.5.3.4 Traditions, techniques and management systems

Building traditions were discussed at each of the two sites and more so in the case of the Siyadi shops. However, comments on the **structural authenticity** of the individual buildings were not very common, least among non-architects. Both aspects played an important role in the author's assessments.

In both groups, **vernacular building traditions** played a key role in interviews at the Siyadi Shops. This is due to the fact that vernacular materials and techniques are clearly discernible throughout the site and were valued both by architects and non-architects. Interviewees of both groups valued the building craft as an intangible heritage expression and the vernacular elements as testimony of the pearling era, more generally as memory-markers of a past way of life, and as a didactic resource. Particularly non-architects pointed to the vernacular features at Suq al-Qaisariya for adding to the site's atmosphere and historical appeal. Two architects, moreover pointed to the naturalness of the materials that were originally sourced from the local environment. Among both groups, there was considerable interest in the local vernacular building tradition and background knowledge about it. However, again, misconceptions about functional and technical aspects of the vernacular features prevailed among non-architects. The misconceptions were often triggered by interpretive design features, such as in the case of exposed coral stone masonry in archaeological windows.

At the first reference site in Manama, only architects, who were informed of the cultural significance of the transitional colonial-style buildings commented on their structural hybridity, which was a key concern in the author's assessment. The archaeological wall window at Bab al-Bahrain, in which the coral stone masonry is displayed, gave rise to a certain interest in the **structural characteristics** of this building among non-architects as well. For lack of available documentation, the author faced challenges in assessing both the material and structural authenticity of this building.

Foremost non-architects found that **replicated vernacular designs** added to the Bahraini character of the first reference site despite lacking the aura of historicity. They appreciated such features as a local cultural heritage expression. This notion was seldom shared by architects who – like the author – were mostly very critical of historicizing designs, particularly if they were not

traditionally crafted. On the contrary, most architects, including the author, approved of the reconstruction of vernacular features in traditional techniques in Suq al-Qaisariya. Interviewees of both groups considered that the use of the vernacular techniques for repairs and certain reconstructions added to that site's authenticity. An interviewee of each group also considered that the authenticity of the replicated Government Shops and Offices in Manama would have benefitted if the reconstruction had been carried out in traditional techniques. However, at Suq al-Qaisariya it turned out, that reconstructions in traditional techniques were often a source of misconceptions about historicity in both groups of interviewees. Usually, but not always, signs of **traditional craftsmanship** were taken as a proof of historicity. Both groups found it difficult to tell historic and replicated vernacular elements apart before receiving background information from the author. In several cases, interviewees of both groups misinterpreted reconstructions as historic elements. On the other hand, particularly Bahraini non-architects sometimes misinterpreted authentic vernacular remains as purpose-built replicas.

A **faithful representation of vernacular building elements and compliance with traditional techniques** was found to be an important aspect particularly for eastern architects but played a subordinate role in the author's assessment. Conflicting approaches of conserving and museumizing the authentic vernacular remains versus treating them as living tradition were found to foremost divide professionals involved in architectural conservation in Bahrain. The director of EWAN Al-Bahrain, for example, criticized the exposure of coral stone masonry in the archaeological wall windows in conservation projects of the heritage authority throughout Bahrain as untruthful to the local building tradition:

“Now, I feel, they are doing a mistake. You know, because... [...] We have something: we call it farush – the thin one. They used it usually in the wind towers and in the recesses. It looks very nice when you keep the stone to show it as a stone, to present it. But this [exposing the sea stone masonry], we don't have it like that. [...] It used to be plastered.” (I 26)

Several architects moreover criticized the artificial patination of newly plastered surfaces at Suq al-Qaisariya for contradicting the fundamentals of the building tradition.

Finally, some interviewees of both groups pointed to the fact that the traces of manual labour on vernacular elements increase authenticity by bringing in a **human dimension**, which was of no relevance in the author's assessments. The fact that, in contemporary Bahrain, the local building tradition is practised foremost by migrant workers was seldom commented on. A Bahraini non-architect (I 8a) however illustrated the importance of the question of who are the practitioners of the tradition with the following anecdote:

8a: “And for example, I used to live in Norway in a World Heritage site – in Bryggen. Close to it. I broke a glass pane once. It was just a glass pane. So, I went to exchange it. They are like: ‘Sorry, you can't fix it. You have to get... You actually have to find the guy who made this glass pane in the 1800s. Find out if his grandson has a shop and can make it. And you have to’ – this is Norway, it's an extreme case. Social protectionism – ‘and if this family still makes glass you have to get it from that family. And if not, you have to get it from somebody who makes it in the very same way, which is handmade. And that glass... And you have to do it like that. And you cannot put in a small new pane of glass.’ We are talking about a pane of glass that is maybe 30 by 20 cm.”

Author: “So you broke an original 18th century glass pane?”

8a: "Ya, but, it's a house. [...] I was living there. So, people live all over here, it's a World Heritage site."

Author: "How did you feel about that?"

8a: "I think they were doing the right thing. Even though I was having a hard time trying to replace that glass."

Author: "How did it end?"

8a: "It ended by me finding an old glass maker far away who did the exact same..."

Author: "Who paid the costs?"

8a: "I paid the costs of replacing a glass pane, but then the state subsidized it."

Author: "And why do you think they did the right thing?"

8a: "Because that is the way to preserve a certain site. If you are going to have it functioning and people living in it. It is going to be subject to wear and tear. I mean, these walls [at the café in Suq al-Qaisariya] are not made for decoration. If they are original, they are made to be used. So, with time something will happen to them."

Author: "So, why was it good then? Why does it matter to have the glass pane that you replaced... why does it have to look like an old one?"

8a: "It's not just a matter of looking like an old one. Like for example, if it was built by slavery it matters to me. But it's not just a matter of looking... it has to be MADE by the same people or by the same guilt. Not mass produced in a factory. It's about how you make it, and why you make it. And it's about how it looks like. It's a system."

3.5.3.5 Location and setting

The author did not explicitly ask the interviewees to evaluate changes to the location and setting of either site. The fact that these sources of information were nevertheless commented on by interviewees of both groups, but more so by non-architects, confirms their relevance, which was also taken into consideration in the author's assessments.

Authenticity of location was seldom doubted, but the changes in **relative position to the sea** was commented on at both sites predominantly by non-architects. Bab al-Bahrain's former harbour location is well-known in Bahrain and was perceived as an important dimension of cultural significance by interviewees of both groups. In turn, there seemed to be less awareness of the former connection of the Siyadi Shops to the harbour of Muharraq and hence fewer comments on it.

While the setting of the site in Manama was rather unanimously perceived as significantly changed, perceptions of the **level of change in the setting** of the Siyadi Shops differed particularly among the architects. Almost all non-architects, who were interviewed at Bab al-Bahrain, appreciatively pointed to the only preserved vernacular building within the site's vicinity. Interviewees of both groups regretted the loss of heritage assets in both towns. Generally, however, the Siyadi Shops' setting in Muharraq was perceived as traditional in character and considered to add to the site's authenticity by interviewees of both groups. At both sites, few non-architects explicitly highlighted the level of **embeddedness in the spatial and social urban context** as a factor of authenticity, although there were divergent perceptions of the matter among the interviewees. Overall, there were no fundamental differences in the assessment and valuation of 'Location and setting' among the two groups of interviewees and the author.

3.5.3.6 Language, and other forms of intangible heritage

At both sites, more non-architects commented on intangible heritage expressions, such as the **continuity of names or cultural practices** in addition to building techniques and trade, than architects. In the assessments as per conservation ethics, the author generally looked into the same issues but partly came to different conclusions and overall tended to attribute less significance to these sources of information on authenticity.

In the case of Bab al-Bahrain, exclusively non-architects commented on the strong **symbolism of the traditional name**, which the author rated positively as well. One interviewee even considered, that this was the only authentic characteristic that the gate building preserved. None of the interviewees commented on the British-colonial origin of the building's or area's name. There seems to have seldom been awareness of other names of colonial origin which are no longer in use and which the author considered in her assessment. Interviewees of the group of non-architects, highlighted that the **continuity of local brands and their names** is an important dimension of authenticity in Bab al-Bahrain Avenue. The author was able to take this aspect into consideration because she had learned about it during the interviews.

Traditional names were also a matter of discussion with non-architects at Suq al-Qaisariya. The site's lead conservation architect questioned the **authenticity of the name Siyadi Shops** under which the buildings are registered as monuments and of which most other interviewees were probably not even aware.

Few interviewees of both groups commented on the importance of preserving **traditional ownership**, which the author likewise rated positively, and of **involving local communities** in architectural and urban conservation projects. A Bahraini non-architect, moreover, pointed to the practice of **bargaining as a living heritage** which only survived in the historic market areas.

Both groups of interviewees, but not the author, considered that **traditional merchandise** contributes to the authenticity of the two sites. Non-architects, generally seemed more susceptible to such forms of **place branding**. Several non-architects positively commented on cases of **heritage revival** in the presentation and promotion of the Siyadi Shops and its commercial functions – like playing traditional Arabic music, selling traditional local food or traditionally dressed-up service personnel. None of the interviewees, with the exception of the lead conservation architect, problematized this as a case of 'staged authenticity.'

Overall, the interview statements suggest that **intangible heritage dimensions** mattered more to laypeople. On the other hand, it was two Arabic architects with western training, who expressed a desire to reactivate at the Siyadi Shops certain cultural traditions, such as the production of date syrup or the sale of pearl jewellery, as a means of increasing the site's authenticity.

In the case of this information source, potential cultural contingencies surfaced. In fact, western interviewees did not comment on other intangible heritage dimensions other than continuity of use. It was predominantly Bahrainis or long-term residents, who commented on cultural traditions. Moreover, two Arab architects, albeit each of a different school of thought, highlighted the importance of reconciling tangible and intangible heritage dimensions in urban conservation.

3.5.3.7 Spirit and feeling

There was a wide range of levels of familiarity with the two sites and emotional attachment to them among the interviewees. What was mainly discussed with regard to 'Spirit and feeling,' both in the interviews and in the author's assessments, was **sense of place**.

Comments on **historical authenticity of the sense of place** were rare at both sites. While the author focused on comparing the current and past genius loci, few interviewees of either group commented on the compliance with the sites' original atmosphere in the 19th and mid-20th century respectively. Non-comparative comments on atmospheric qualities however were frequent in both groups. Atmosphere was clearly considered an important dimension of authenticity in urban and architectural conservation regardless of the professional or cultural background. In the case of Suq al-Qaisariya, **emotional and experiential qualities** were more often commented on by non-architects. In Manama, the matter was often addressed by interviewees of both groups but quite differently perceived. The perception of the site in Muharraq differed less between architects and non-architects, than in the case of Bab al-Bahrain area. At Bab al-Bahrain, more non-architects were appreciative of the **traditional atmosphere**, which was identified as somewhat artificial and orientalist by interviews of both groups. More architects, however, disapproved of the rehabilitated site and its atmosphere for this reason, which also played unfavourably into the author's authenticity assessment. Both groups commented on a **lack of authentic aura** in the case of Bab al-Bahrain. In the eyes of many non-architects, this deficiency was however outweighed by the strong symbolism and improved aesthetics of the gate building. In the case of the rehabilitated Siyadi Shops, both groups strongly appreciated the **historical or traditional appeal** of the site. Its traditional atmosphere likewise played positively into the author's assessment.

At both sites, non-architects more often expressed appreciation of **tangible or intangible references to the local culture**. Foremost Bahraini non-architects expressed **feelings of nostalgia or pride**. **Social inclusiveness** was only commented on by non-architects. The **liveliness** of the urban spaces and the **presence or absence of Bahraini nationals** were highlighted as factors of atmospheric authenticity in both groups.

3.5.3.8 Other internal and external factors

Interpretation was found to be a matter of prime importance to interviewees of both groups and at both sites. The question if research was carried out and documented in the course of the sites' rehabilitation played a minor role in the interviews but was very important in the author's assessment. Only architects, who were familiar with the rehabilitation processes, commented on a certain lack of **historical and analytical research** at both sites but more so in the case of Manama.

The sparsely provided classical **interpretation facilities** such as text boards and photographs at both sites, were appreciated in principle but found to be deficient by the interviewees and the author. Moreover, **interpretive architectural features** which abound at Suq al-Qaisariya proved to be slightly more effective in conveying information to architects, but overall, not very efficient in informing site users about the history, development and cultural significance of the sites. Particularly non-architects often struggled to notice or interpret features like colour-coded surface plaster. Features like the archaeological wall windows, which display historic coral stone masonry, or underground remains of historic date juice presses at the Siyadi Shops were found

to often create misconceptions, and slightly more so among non-architects. Both architects and non-architects hence pointed to the need for additional on-site interpretation as a basis for appreciating and understanding the sites and for judging their authenticity. In her assessments of compliance with conservation ethics, the author rated the projects’ attempts to convey information with interpretive design features positively.

No other internal or external factors of authenticity than those addressed throughout this subchapter were identified for the two reference sites.

3.5.3.9 Summary – Prioritization of the information sources by the interviewees

Figure 3.5-3 illustrates the above-described findings with regard to differences in how the groups prioritized the individual information sources when evaluating both sites. The table serves to illustrate the main tendencies that can be derived from the interview statements based on the analysis of how and how often interviewees commented on the individual information sources when they evaluated the sites. The table neither depicts exceptions among the groups nor nuances in the valuation of the individual information sources. Some of the sources of information are renamed in the table in order to indicate what they entail in the case of the two reference sites.

	Historical and cultural truthfulness or credibility of:								
	Form and design	Materials and substance	Use and function	Building traditions	Location and setting	Names, ownership and other cultural traditions	Sense of place	Inter-pretation	
Bab al-Bahrain	Blue	Blue	Green	Blue	Blue	Green	Blue	Green	Green
Siyadi Shops	Blue	Blue	Blue	Green	Blue	Green	Blue	Green	Green

Figure 3.5-3: **Prioritization of dimensions of historical authenticity by the interviewees**

blue: architects

green: non-architects

Although aesthetics was found to be an important matter for non-architects, ‘Form and design’ as well as ‘Materials and substance’ in terms of compliance with the original state of the sites in substance and appearance played a subordinate role in that group. These information sources mattered significantly more to architects and were considered the most important sources of information on authenticity for the two reference sites by the author. ‘Location and setting,’ ‘Sense of place’ and ‘Interpretation’ were generally rated high and no fundamental differences in the valuation of these sources of information were identified among the two groups and sites. These information sources were considered important but subordinate to the before-mentioned ones in the author’s authenticity assessment. Moreover, the author, like a few architects, considered research another fundamental factor to be considered together with interpretation. With regard to the authenticity of ‘Use and function,’ ‘Building traditions’ and ‘Names, ownership and cultural traditions’ the two groups had divergent priorities in the case of Bab al-Bahrain but rated the information sources similarly for the Siyadi Shops. These information sources were again generally rated higher by the interviewees than by the author who – with a focus on historical authenticity – focused more on cultural continuity than on the role the sites play in contemporary society.

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This final chapter first evaluates the authenticity levels of the two main reference sites. It then summarizes the case study's insights into their communicative impact and evaluates the identified differences of how architects and non-architects perceive their authenticity. The chapter also evaluates in how far authenticity perceptions of the discussed sites were found to be culturally contingent. What follows is an assessment of standard methodological guidance for the assessment of authenticity in heritage conservation – namely the paragraphs on authenticity of the Operational Guidelines and of the Venice Charter. On this basis, the author derives conclusions and recommendations for the assessment of authenticity of architectural heritage as well as for architectural conservation practice more generally. Underlying this is the assumption that the nature of the general findings and the case study's research design grants a certain transferability to other architectural and urban sites.

4.1 EVALUATION OF THE FINDINGS ON COMMUNICATIVE IMPACT AND AUTHENTICITY PERCEPTIONS

4.1.1 AUTHENTICITY LEVELS OF THE TWO MAIN REFERENCE SITES

Both the results of the inquiry and the author's assessment of the two main reference sites based on the Operational Guidelines' individual information sources of authenticity attest the second reference site in Muharraq a significantly higher authenticity level at the time of the field research than the one in Manama. The findings show that this discrepancy in authenticity is more poignant when judged on the basis of heritage conservation doctrine and with a focus on the sites' documentary value than from a laypeople's perspective, as will be further discussed below.

The differences in authenticity between the two reference sites are largely due to the divergent rehabilitation approaches but also have to do with differing circumstances and initial states of conservation. From the outset, the state of conservation of the two urban ensembles differed. Investments at Bab al-Bahrain throughout the 20th and 21st centuries affected various dimensions of historical authenticity of the site and its setting and left most of its colonial-style buildings significantly modified. In Muharraq's wider market, as in Suq al-Qaisariya, development was slightly more moderate but neglect additionally affected the vernacular structures, leaving many totally or partly decayed.

In the 21st century, both sites were subjected to an array of conservation approaches and intervention levels – albeit on different scales – in the course of governmental urban rehabilitation and heritage revival projects. The rehabilitation works at the much smaller reference site in Suq al-Qaisariya happened in only a bit more than one year and entirely under the lead of Bahrain's heritage authority. The rehabilitation works at Bab al-Bahrain, which started in 2006, lasted much longer and were only partly carried out under the auspices of the heritage authority. As a result, the interventions at Bab al-Bahrain were less orchestrated or even followed contrary aims.

Of utmost consequence in the case of the Siyadi Shops in Suq al-Qaisariya was the fact that their rehabilitation was part of a UNESCO World Heritage nomination. In this context, the rehabilitation served as an early pilot-project which kick-started more conservative architectural rehabilitation works than previously practised in Bahrain. Striving for the World Heritage status, the project team sought compliance with international conservation doctrine and standards – foremost the Venice Charter and the UNESCO World Heritage Convention. At the reference site

in Manama, conservation ethics, on the contrary, were of minor or no concern in the interventions except in those implemented later on the Customs House. Overall, the works carried out at the Siyadi Shops between 2010 and 2012 were considerably more sensitive to the site's historical authenticity than the ones carried out between 2006 and 2013 at Bab al-Bahrain. This reflects in the different levels of authenticity.

In focusing on Bab al-Bahrain's iconic symbolism and the establishment of a convenient modern shopping environment with a traditional atmosphere, the various interventions at the first reference site were quite intrusive on the mid-20th century urban ensemble. Those on the vernacular commercial structures in Suq al-Qaisariya, on the contrary, balanced the preservation of both tangible and intangible heritage assets with requirements for their functional reintegration into the market. Nevertheless, both sites certainly present themselves significantly changed from their original states in the late 19th and early 20th century and the mid-20th century respectively. Both were intensively place-branded and subjected to an array of conservative, restorative and adaptive physical interventions as well as means to revive intangible heritage expressions.

4.1.2 MESSAGES CONVEYED BY THE REFERENCE SITES

What will be discussed in this section are the insights into the communicative impact of the two main reference sites and of interventions that had been carried out within them by the time of the field research in 2014 and 2015. Taking as its starting point the World Heritage system's definition of authenticity, the case study's inquiry assessed the messages which the reference sites actually conveyed to the interviewees. Based on the Nara Document on Authenticity (ICOMOS 1994a), the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO 2021) define authenticity as the credibility and truthfulness of information sources that inform about the cultural significance of heritage sites. The core question addressed in this section is hence: How historically and culturally truthful are the messages the reference sites conveyed to the interviewees?

The aim of the inquiry was not so much to assess the sites' authenticity but rather to explore different authenticity perceptions and to verify the validity of the concept's definition. The findings illustrate that the two historic urban sites and the various architectural interventions within them – along with other means of interpretation and place branding – constitute media of communication that can convey facts as much as create misconceptions. The sites' reliability as information sources for their users was found to be limited even when the architectural conservation had been carried out in line with standard conservation ethics and with great concern for historical authenticity.

Most rehabilitation works at the reference site in Manama's mid-20th century colonial town centre were carried out with little or no concerns for historical authenticity in terms of materials and substance or form and design. The level of truthfulness of messages this site conveyed to the users tended to differ significantly between laypeople and experts in the field of architectural conservation. Most architects identified the nature of various architectural interventions or were aware of them beforehand, including the traditionalist redesign of the gate building Bab al-Bahrain, the seemingly vernacular screening wall that conceals younger buildings along Bab al-Bahrain Avenue and the reconstructed façade of the new mall building which fuses colonial-style and vernacular designs. Such historicising features led foremost non-

architects to misjudge the historicity and origin of the site. Many interviewees of that group dated the market area and its individual buildings significantly older than they are, or mistook new for historic fabric of a traditional, oriental market. When identifying the interventions as rather conjectural historicising recreations foremost non-architects appreciated them as a successful means of traditional place branding, which had in fact been the main aim of the site's initial rehabilitation. By the time of the field research, the folklore character of the urban space had been reduced as many of the orientalist designs had been removed in order to reinstate the colonial-style features of the site. Awareness of or association to the colonial origin and historical significance of the site as testimony to the early post-oil discovery state modernisation were nevertheless rare among most non-architects. Clearly, interviewees with a higher level of historical and architectural background knowledge were able to derive more truthful messages from the site with regard to its historical significance and authenticity. Historicizing architectural features were found to create misconceptions particularly among non-architects. Only minor interpretation facilities were in place which could potentially serve as remedy for misconceptions. At both sites, most interviewees were found to be interested in the history and cultural significance and wished for better interpretation facilities.

While many appreciated the refurbishment of the historic urban spaces at Bab al-Bahrain as an alternative means of heritage conservation, most interviewees of both groups considered the site in Manama significantly less authentic than the one in Muharraq. The comparatively low level of truthfulness of messages conveyed at the first reference site particularly to people with little expert knowledge coincides with a low level of authenticity which the author attested the site when assessing it on the basis of the Operational Guidelines (UNESCO 2021, §§ 79-86).

The reference site in Manama moreover illustrates that it can be misleading to deduce conclusions about intended messages from architectural designs alone. It is not surprising that one of the interviewed foreign architects interpreted the motive of a triumphal gate, which was imposed on the national icon Bab al-Bahrain, as an imperialist gesture of the governmental project at the time of domestic political conflict. According to planners involved in the project, this was however not the governmental client's intention at all. The heritage authority had in fact aimed at restoring the gate building's more modest, original colonial-style features. It was foremost design considerations of the commissioned Italian architect that led to the imperialist expression of the building's revamp.

The reconstruction and promotion of what was mistaken as a former Shaikh's office inside Bab al-Bahrain building, on the other hand, can hardly be interpreted in any other way than as an attempt to contributing to the legitimatization of the Al-Khalifa rule. Ironically, the case study research proved based on archival data that the reconstruction in fact did not recreate the office of the late ruler Shaikh Sulman Al-Khalifa but that of his British Advisor Charles Belgrave. The reconstructed office was moreover originally located in the British Agency building in a different part of Manama. On his own account, the commissioned architect had expressed doubts about the authenticity of location to the client when facilitating the reconstruction. The full extent of confusion about the office appears however to have been unknown at the time. This example is indicative of how architectural conservation interventions can create misleading narratives, intentionally or unintentionally distort historical facts, and how important it is to base any intervention on careful historical research.

Historical research – including archival research and site investigations – was given greater concern in the rehabilitation of the so-called Siyadi Shops in Suq al-Qaisariya than at the first reference site. The partly dilapidated vernacular market structures in the old town of Muharraq were rehabilitated in the context of a World Heritage nomination. The architects commissioned for their restoration and adaptation hence placed a strong focus on material authenticity as per international conservation standards, foremost the Venice Charter (ICOMOS 1964). However, given the overall poor state of conservation and many lacunas in the market's fabric, a range of different interventions were required here, too. The commissioned conservation architect aimed at letting the remains of the vernacular shops and storage structure be the site's main protagonists. The project went to great length in imbuing the different interventions with information about the site's former use and function and its past spatial and architectural configurations. Most additions to the conserved, restored or adapted historic parts were hence of contemporary design while reconstructions were designed in various degrees of abstraction and coded with interpretive design features. However, the field research disclosed that this somewhat academic attempt of translating conservation ethics into practice was indeed a bit too "philosophical" (I 8), as one site user phrased it, and would have required interpretation itself. The comparison the conveyed messages to the intentions of the project's conservation architect showed that many interpretive design features were little effective. As a result, most interviewees gained only vague or wrong conceptions of the original appearance, layout and function of the individual spaces and structures of the vernacular market area. This applies less to the better-preserved vernacular shop units which, upon their restoration, were operational as such, than to those areas where ruined structures and archaeological remains were integrated into a contemporary reconfiguration of the space.

Reconstructed and facsimile historicizing architectural features were found to create most misconceptions at this site, too. While historicizing designs in Bab al-Bahrain were mistaken mostly by non-architects, at the Siyadi Shops even architects had difficulties to identify reconstructions that imitate vernacular features and building techniques.

It is somewhat telling that in the Bahraini context, at times, it was not the reconstructions and historicizing architectural recreations that were found to afflict "an uneasy feeling of doubt" (Fischer 1902) but rather the most conservatively restored vernacular structures of the Siyadi Shops. Several local interviewees at first mistook sensitively restored elements as facsimile reconstructions due to the fact that the conservative approach in architectural and urban conservation was just burgeoning in Bahrain at the time of the field research. These findings support the notion, which was introduced in chapter 3.2, that younger Bahrainis are alienated from their own history and culture to a point that it affects their capacity to tell authentic heritage assets apart from reconstructions or forgeries. Judging by their reactions, the past indeed appeared to be a very "foreign country" (Lowenthal 1985) to some of the local interviewees. All of them were positively surprised when learning that the vernacular buildings in question are in fact authentic in substance.

What all interviewees understood, but not necessarily appreciated, were strikingly modern additions in steel, glass and fair-faced concrete. Most non-architects tended to prefer design features that were more subtle in contrast. However, subtle contrasts such as differences in texture and colour between historic batches of surface plaster and newly plastered and

artificially patinated areas were often not identified. Particularly non-architects often struggled to notice or interpret features like color-coded surface plaster or archaeological wall or floor windows. This clearly had to do with a lesser familiarity with such interpretive design features among that group but also with deficiencies of the features themselves. Certainly, at the Siyadi Shops there were too many different and inconsistent attempts to charge the individual architectural interventions with meaning.

For lack of interpretation, there was also little awareness of the World Heritage status of the Siyadi Shops as a serial component to the site Pearlring, Testimony of an Island Economy. Interviewees often had only vague ideas of how the site relates to Bahrain's important history of pearl harvest and trade but wished to learn more about it through on-site interpretation facilities.

What instead attracted much attention at the Siyadi Shops was the display of archaeological remains of date syrup presses in two archaeological floor windows which were accompanied with bilingual interpretive panels. The date syrup production was not directly associated with the pearling economy. The archaeological remains of the date syrup presses are hence testimony to a cultural significance that goes beyond the one for which the site is essentially inscribed on the World Heritage List. The focus on date syrup production in the site's presentation and interpretation was found to divert the visitors' attention from the site's significance as testimony to the pearling era. At the same time, the archaeological remains conveyed concrete messages only to few interviewees. Most of the interviewees were not able to identify the date syrup presses as such unless they had consulted the interpretive panels, which moreover present only basic information. The presses were for example not dated. Nevertheless, all interviewees highly appreciated these archaeological features. They were found to significantly add to the historical appeal and aura of the place even if only few interviewees understood what the remains actually signify. Many interviewees seemed to enjoy the archaeological remains for stimulating their imagination.

Even less successful in conveying factual messages were the so-called archaeological wall windows which were used as an architectural interpretation means at both reference sites. The windows, which expose historic vernacular coral stone masonry, were not always taken as a sign of the buildings' historicity. Many interviewees misinterpreted the features and also criticized them as anaesthetic or untruthful to the local building tradition. Interviewees who were familiar with this interpretation method, in turn, did draw the intended conclusions about the historicity and structural characteristics of the concerned buildings.

While the level of truthfulness of messages conveyed to site users at the Siyadi Shops was overall found to be somewhat higher than at the first reference site, the intended messages about the site's history and cultural significance proved to be seldom conveyed to the site users. Again, detailed background knowledge was required for visitors to be able to read the site's origin, development and cultural significance and to judge its authenticity. Despite such shortcomings in delivering messages about the Siyadi Shops and their cultural significance, there were overall fewer misconceptions about the historicity of the individual elements at this reference site than at the one in Manama. Most interviewees were very enthusiastic about the Siyadi Shops and their rehabilitation and preferred them over the site and rehabilitation works at Bab al-Bahrain.

Rather than conveying factual messages, the historic features and fabric at the Siyadi Shops were found to account for the particular emotional appeal of the site. Several interviewees evoked the notion of time travel at the Siyadi Shops. Particularly the cosy café space within the adapted ruined shop unit gave many interviewees the illusion of being connected to the people who built and used the space in the past. Historic architectural features like unrendered walls of vernacular coral stone masonry and a fragmented traditional ceiling of mangrove poles were found to significantly add to the café's particular atmosphere. Other means of place branding, such as traditional decoration, music and food menu were found to additionally reinforce the historical appeal for many interviewees. The rehabilitated site hence very successfully provides visitors with a personal, sensual experience. This certainly played into the fact that most interviewees commended the rehabilitated Siyadi Shops as highly authentic. Most interviewees commended the preservation of authentic historic fabric in Suq al-Qaisariya as evidence of Bahrain's historical and architectural development, as anchor of cultural identity or simply for its emotive appeal.

The author's authenticity assessment of the rehabilitated Siyadi Shops on the basis of the Operational Guidelines and the Venice Charter is likewise comparatively favourable. A fundamental difference in the way the two reference sites were rehabilitated is that the interventions at the Siyadi Shops carefully preserved the tangible historical remains, while most interventions at Bab al-Bahrain were much more intrusive on or even destructive to the historic fabric. Nevertheless, the site at Suq al-Qaisariya, too, in parts bears little resemblance to its original state. Despite the strong focus on material authenticity, the rehabilitation created a highly artificial place. With various historic and contemporary architectural layers compacted on a small area and enriched with means of place branding, it collates evidence of various time layers and creates the illusion of simultaneously providing access to various moments in time way. It was found to evoke a diffuse curiosity and nostalgia among most interviewees. As a result, the rehabilitated Siyadi Shops offer a seemingly authentic experience but convey little factual information to most site users. The fact that interviewees considered the site authentic certainly has to do with these experiential qualities, because from the visitor's perspective "authentic is what meets one's expectations" as the historian Hanno Hochmuth put it when discussing the marketing of historic town centres. (Battis personal archive, Participant observation note, 21 June 2014, Potsdam).

The second reference site hence illustrates that often, if not always "restoring historic remains is not just about preservation" as the Austrian historian Valentin Groebner analysed (2018, 167, translated from German by the author):

"It entails the selection of the right phase that can serve as tourist attraction. It is applied time management. What is thereby presented is a new history, purged from unsuitable or simply superfluous elements of the past." (ibid.)

A certain scepticism towards the postulate of truthfulness and genuineness of historical monuments, which the German conservation theorist Ingrid Scheuermann propagates, hence seems very appropriate (commentary in Will 2020, 226).

In summary, both reference sites neither clearly conveyed to the interviewees the cultural significance for which they are registered as historical monuments nor how they changed throughout history. Although the rehabilitated site in Suq al-Qaisariya is more authentic from a

heritage perspective than the one in Manama, it is not significantly more successful in communicating such content. Despite the significant efforts to imbue the architectural features with messages, the Siyadi Shop's communicative impact was found to be primarily of an emotional nature.

4.1.3 AUTHENTICITY PERCEPTIONS OF ARCHITECTS AND NON-ARCHITECTS

Further exploring discrepancies of authenticity perceptions between experts and laypeople in the field of architectural conservation, the comparative case study provided ample empirical evidence of both differences and commonalities in how architects and non-architects among the interviewees perceived and valued the two reference sites and their authenticity. This section focuses on the question: How did value attributions and authenticity assessments at the two main reference sites differ between architects and non-architects?

The findings from the explorative field research indicate clear tendencies in how viewing habits, value attributions and authenticity judgements differ between the interviewed architects on the one hand and laypeople in the field of architecture and architectural conservation on the other. The differences had certainly been even more pronounced if the group of professionals was composed exclusively of academically trained conservation architects and art historians. At the same time, the case study provided ample evidence of common grounds between professionals and laypeople in the field.

Authenticity was in principle positively connoted in both groups of interviewees. When applied to cultural heritage it was found to be clearly based in cultural continuity. The case study however also illustrated that testimony of changes can contribute to the authenticity of architectural sites as well. For the interviewees of both groups, authenticity encompassed both tangible and intangible dimensions. The former related to continuity in space, substance and appearance and the latter to continuity in functions, uses, ownership, names, associations, meanings, memories etc. What differed was how the majority of interviewees in each group prioritized the different dimensions and to which characteristics of the site they attributed them. Almost all interviewees hence appreciated the efforts to foster cultural continuity in Bahrain. Particularly Shaikha Mai bint Mohammed al-Khalifa's achievements as head of the national heritage authority and founder of the non-governmental Shaikh Ebrahim Centre for Culture and Research were unanimously lauded in principle. All heritage sites discussed throughout the field research were generally valued either for scientific, emotive or socio-economic reasons including as testimony to the local history and culture, as anchors of cultural and national identity or as personal memory markers. The preservation of historic building and urban areas was found to be a priority for both groups. However, non-architects tended to attribute more importance to intangible dimensions than architects.

This dichotomy in value attribution between architects and non-architects was more pronounced in the case of the younger reference site in Manama with its originally mid-20 century hybrid, partly modernist architecture. On average, there was more awareness and hence more appreciation of the site's urban and architectural significance among the architects. While architects attributed documentary value to the tangible testimony in both sites, most non-architects only did so in the case of the vernacular buildings in Muharraq which many considered considerably older and hence more valuable. Many non-architects valued the younger reference

site in Manama primarily as a contemporary urban space of strong symbolic meaning. Lack of historical background knowledge might have played into a significantly lesser attribution of documentary value to the forms, materials and building techniques of the reference site in Manama among non-architects. On the other hand, even non-architects who were well aware of the site's value as testimony to the state modernization process and regional geopolitical importance of Bahrain during the times of British Protectorate considered the mid-20th century buildings of little architectural merit. Maintaining the symbolism of Bab al-Bahrain as a state monument and representative city gate was hence found to be of prime importance for many non-architects. In their eyes, this justified a less conservative conservation and development approach at this site than in the case of the older vernacular structures in Muharraq. The divergent value attributions reflected in the interviewees' authenticity assessments.

An interest in history and Bahraini culture was shared by most interviewees of both groups. The provision of historical background information about the sites was hence found to be a matter of prime importance to both groups. Almost in all discussed conservation projects, interviewees pointed to the need for adequate on-site interpretation as a basis for understanding, valuing and enjoying historic sites and as a prerequisite to judge their historical authenticity. It shall be noted that there were different levels of familiarity with the reference sites and their history as well as various degrees of familiarity with conservation ethics among both groups. Overall, there was more such knowledge among the group of architects. Several non-architects thus pointed to a lack of expertise when asked to assess the sites' authenticity. It was mostly architects who highlighted the importance of historical research and site analyses as a basis of any kind of interpretation and prerequisite for taking appropriate decisions on how to intervene on historic fabric.

Although architects tended to be more concerned with historical authenticity, interviewees of both groups appreciated truthful messages, that is compliance with historical facts in the way the sites are presented. In this, architects foremost paid attention to the compliance of form and design with original architectural features and to material authenticity, that is the perseverance of historic fabric. Contrary to this, non-architects tended to judge the truthfulness of the representation of historical and cultural contexts on the basis of a wider range of information sources and hence often derived more lenient authenticity judgements particularly in the case of the first reference site in Manama. The comparisons of the reference sites to Suq Waqif in Qatar which were presented in chapter 3.5.2.2 vividly illustrate the different foci. Historical authenticity, as per the definition of several laypeople in the field, was found to be primarily rooted in age and representativeness of local tradition and culture.

Most architects focused on the documentary value of the sites' historic fabric and hence put significantly more emphasis on the information sources 'Form and Design' and 'Materials and Substance'. The reservation has to be made, that an open, explorative approach was chosen for the inquiry and that architects and conservation architects are trained to discuss architectural projects with this academic focus. Aesthetics were found to be an important matter for non-architects, too, but less so in terms of compliance with the original appearance of the sites.

Particularly the first reference site at Bab al-Bahrain provided ample evidence of a fundamentally different perception of historicizing architecture between architects and non-architects. Most of the former strictly rejected the site's conjectural reconstructions and

recreations of traditional design features for authenticity concerns. They criticized the historicizing features for impairing the architectural testimony to the mid-20th century state modernisation under British influence and for creating a pseudo-historic urban space and architecture. Many architects also expressed concerns about the misconceptions which the historicizing design features were indeed found to create particularly among laypeople in the field. Many of the latter, however did not mind misconceptions about the historicity and origin of the site and its buildings. Mostly non-architects appreciated the historicizing designs at Bab al-Bahrain as a successful means of place branding but also as an alternative form of heritage preservation. On the other hand, more architects, including some conservation architects, expressed the wish to reconstruct certain lost features at the two main reference sites for the sake of reestablishing architectural or spatial authenticity. In both groups it was pointed out that reconstructions cannot compete with authentic buildings as historical evidence, and they did indeed create most misconceptions among both groups of interviewees. Even interviewees, who generally approved of reconstructions and architectural revivalism as an alternative means of heritage conservation, hence considered the preservation of authentic buildings as testimony of the local past and culture a priority.

At both sites, non-architects generally attributed less importance to scientific values than to the role the sites play in contemporary society. Emotive and experiential qualities were found to be of prime importance to most non-architects and, according to the statements made, less so for architects. With exceptions, non-architects hence attributed greater importance to intangible heritage dimensions which were found to play into the experiential qualities of the sites and into the authenticity judgements. Interviewees of that group also more often commented on means of place branding. Most of the interviewees who commented on the use of traditional decoration, merchandise, food and music did not question in how far such means of place branding actually relate to the site's history and cultural context. Even clear cases of staged authenticity such as traditionally dressed-up waiters were sometimes appreciatingly pointed out as heritage assets in that group. Some architects, in turn, pointed to the safeguard or potential revival of other cultural traditions as a means of linking material and immaterial authenticity dimensions. Such traditions included the vernacular building craft, trading traditions, traditional ownership and place names, as well as traditional date syrup production.

No fundamental discrepancies between the two groups were identified with regard to the perception of 'Location and setting' or sense of place, which was discussed under the information source 'Spirit and feeling.' Foremost Bahraini non-architects expressed feelings of nostalgia or pride particularly at the second reference site. The majority of interviewees in both groups agreed on a certain artificiality and lack of aura at Bab al-Bahrain. More non-architects nevertheless appreciated the pseudo-historical character of the urban space at Bab al-Bahrain than architects. In Suq al-Qaisariya, both groups expressed their appreciation for the historical or traditional appeal of the site. The presence of historic fabric was found to significantly play into this perception. The value of age was found to be fundamental in this. Particularly laypeople were found to attribute much importance to the aura of the authentic historic fabric. Other important factors of atmospheric authenticity in both groups were the level of liveliness and the presence or absence of Bahrainis. Social inclusiveness, as reflected in price levels of merchandise

and social structure of the clientele, was commented on as a factor of authenticity only by non-architects.

Another discrepancy surfaced with regard to the principle of facilitating differentiability of historic and added elements at historic sites. While such differentiability was in principle appreciated in both groups, most architects had a much more dogmatic approach to this tenet of conservation ethics and more often favoured a strong design contrast. Interviewees of both groups approved of strikingly contemporary additions for modern facilities as in the case of the glass façade of the café of the Siyadi Shops. Non-architects however tended to favour a harmonious integration of additions with historic parts as propagated in the Venice Charter (ICOMOS 1964, article 12). In the case of the Siyadi Shops, interviewees of both groups expressed a wish for verisimilitude of reconstructions so that they would seamlessly blend with the preserved parts. The southern elevation of the mall building at Bab al-Bahrain, which perverts the tenet of differentiability by integrating seemingly historic parts in vernacular designs into a contemporary glass curtain façade, was in turn criticized for authenticity concerns by some interviewees of both groups.

The application of conservation ethics to local vernacular buildings was found to be a conflictual matter across the two groups. Several, mostly local interviewees who were in some way involved in architectural conservation in Bahrain criticized the museification of vernacular structures as historic relics. Various such cases and opposite examples of heritage revival were discussed throughout the case study. Those interviewees considered the vernacular building tradition a living one, although it has largely been abandoned in the mid-20th century. They were generally supportive of restoring, reconstructing or replicating vernacular buildings with either traditional or modern construction means rather than conserving them as historical relics. One of several examples to this conflict discussed in the case study is the pigmentation of new plaster surfaces of vernacular buildings with the purpose of toning down the contrast to preserved historic batches of plaster for the sake of a more harmonious general appearance. Several Bahrainis not only questioned the artificial patination in terms of truthfulness, they also strongly disapproved of it as a violation of the fundamentals of the local building tradition which entails the regular whitewashing of vernacular buildings. It was interesting to note, as described in chapter 3.2, that the interviewee who expressed the fiercest criticism of the pigmentation technique made use of it in the latest non-governmental conservation project that was completed at the time of the field research. By seamlessly blending preserved and added plaster surfaces in the main room of the so-called Memory of the House, the technique was thwarted to feign a conservative restoration. This example proves that the conservative architectural conservation which had first been promoted in Bahrain by the heritage authority with the rehabilitation of the Siyadi Shops had become fashionable in the meantime. The controversial attitudes towards the conservation of vernacular buildings moreover show that the 19th century division of monuments into 'living' and 'dead' ones, which did not make it into international heritage doctrine, is of some topicality in Bahrain and certainly in other places as well.

In summary, both experts and laypeople in the field of architectural conservation were found to value the preservation of authentic architectural heritage. In their assessments of authenticity architects tended to have a more academic approach focused on historical continuity of form, design and substance as per standard conservation ethics of the Venice Charter. Non-architects

among the interviewees tended to base their assessments of authenticity on a wider set of dimensions and placed more importance on experiential qualities and historical appeal.

4.1.4 INSIGHTS INTO CULTURAL CONTINGENCIES OF AUTHENTICITY PERCEPTIONS

With a view to scholarly debates on cultural contingencies of how authenticity is defined in different parts of the world, the case study additionally explored potential patterns that relate to the cultural backgrounds of the interviewees. The main question addressed in this section is: How did value attributions and authenticity assessments at the two main reference sites differ between interviewees of Eastern, Western or East-Western cultural backgrounds?

While the comparative inquiry delivered evidence of a number of pronounced discrepancies between architects and non-architects in the way they value and perceive the reference sites and their authenticity, this was not the case when it came to their cultural backgrounds. No major imbalances could be identified in this regard between interviewees of different cultural backgrounds. Chapter 3.2 did however introduce a number of culturally contingent and partially conflicting perceptions about how to approach heritage conservation in Bahrain. The findings introduced there were partly substantiated by the inquiry at the two main reference sites.

Among the interviewees who commented on the matter of cultural contingencies there were different perspectives. Some plainly refuted the notion of differentiating between Eastern and Western contemporary ways of thinking altogether. Some questioned such differentiation by pointing to the blurring effects of globalisation and orientalism (Said 1978). Others, on the contrary, did point to specifically local attitudes to conservation practice. Several interviewees considered that cultures with a nomadic background attribute less importance to tangible than to immaterial heritage. With a strong focus on intangible heritage assets, the urban and architectural heritage conservation projects of the Shaikh Ebrahim Centre for Culture and Research partly substantiate this common notion. The impartial reaction of two interviewees from the Philippines to the replica of Sheikh Salman bin Ahmed Al-Fateh Fort in Riffa as opposed to the dismissive judgements of most other interviewees can moreover be interpreted as supporting the notion that a non-substantive authenticity understanding prevails in far-eastern cultures. However, the comparative analysis of the interview statements on the two main reference sites provides little evidence of such differences.

The inquiry delivered only few signs of potential cultural contingencies in the way the interviewees valued the two main reference sites and assessed their authenticity. One identified imbalance is that the four Western interviewees, who commented on both sites, preferred the rather conservatively restored and adapted Siyadi Shops at Suq al-Qaisariya. The only two interviewees who clearly preferred the site and interventions at Bab al-Bahrain were of Eastern and East-western background. The five interviewees who expressed no preference were of East-western background. This possibly indicates a stronger preference among Western interviewees for the site in Muharraq and its focus on material authenticity. However, the conclusion is hardly valid as it is based on statements by a low number of interviewees. More significant seems, that most interviewees across all three cultural categories, preferred the Siyadi Shops and associated them with a higher level of authenticity than the site and interventions in Manama. The preserved and displayed authentic historic fabric was found to play an important role in this. What limits this finding is the fact that most laypeople attributed higher value to the vernacular than to the modern architectural heritage per se.

The case study clearly illustrates how international conservation ethics, foremost the Venice Charter with its primacy of material authenticity, came into play in Bahrain by means of a UNESCO World Heritage nomination. Chapter 3.2 described conflicts which that process caused among local and partly Western-trained Arab professionals involved in heritage conservation in Bahrain. However, during the interviews at Suq al-Qaisariya there was no criticism that a material-focused conservation approach of European origin had been imposed at the site. Statements from various Eastern or East-Western interview partners, including many Bahrainis, illustrate that the appreciation of a special aura of tangible historic artefacts is by no means an exclusively Western perception. What social scientists referred to as a “Western sentimentality about the preservation of the built environment” (Exell and Rico 2013, 678) in the case of the restored Al-Bastakiyya residential area in Dubai, was clearly shared by most interviewees regardless of their cultural background. Overall, the comparison of the statements show that material authenticity and the conservative approach were valued by interviewees of all cultural backgrounds.

Interviewees of all groups and cultural categories moreover highlighted the value and importance of interpretation for facilitating understanding of the history and cultural significance of built heritage sites. This includes the differentiation of authentic and non-authentic fabric. At the same time, interviewees of all three cultural categories and of both professional groups indirectly expressed a certain desire for “well-narrated lies,” which the US-American author Ralph Keyes identified as a typical tendency in western democracies in the “post-truth era” (Keyes 2004). A Bahraini interviewee for example said about the restored and reconstructed vernacular structures at Suq al-Qaisariya:

“The whole thing should look authentic.” (I 17)

Such statements across the groups of interviewees indicates that verisimilitude was often found to be more important than factuality in the representation of the sites.

The fact that the second reference site entailed the conservation of colonial heritage was rarely problematized and only by Western interviewees.

Another imbalance identified is that none of the Western interviewees commented on intangible heritage assets apart from continuity of uses. It was predominantly Bahrainis or East-Western long-term residents, who commented on intangible heritage dimensions. This finding can be interpreted in support of the notion, that intangible heritage dimensions tend to be of greater concern to Eastern than to Western cultures. However, here, the additional reservation must be made, that the interviewees who commented on intangible heritage were those most familiar with the local culture and hence more aware of these dimensions. It can only be stated with some certainty that intangible dimensions of both reference sites appeared to matter more to non-architects than to architects regardless of their cultural backgrounds.

As described above, conflicting approaches of conserving and museumizing vernacular buildings versus treating them as products of a living tradition were found to divide the Bahraini interviewees involved in architectural conservation. Truthfulness to the local vernacular building tradition was found to be an important aspect particularly for Eastern architects. It is however not possible to derive conclusions about cultural contingencies in this case, given that exclusively

Arabs, albeit partly western trained, commented on the matter. Comparisons to a similar case in a Western context would be required to explore this matter further.

No other potential contingencies were identified, except the unsurprising observation that Bahraini interviewees often had a more personal connection to the sites, were generally more familiar with the cultural context, and more susceptible to feelings of pride and cultural identification.

On a broader perspective, it is interesting to note that the history of architectural conservation in Bahrain, which was outlined in chapter 3.2, with a time lag, shows several parallels to the development of the conservation movement in Europe in the 19th and 20th century introduced in chapter 2. In both cases, the tremendous loss of heritage and alienation from traditional ways of life in the face of 19th century industrialisation and 20th century war destruction or oil-era modernisations respectively resulted in a growing appreciation of built heritage assets as anchors of cultural identity and orientation. In both cases, but also on a global level, this extends to reconstructions and traditionalist architectural designs which are currently very fashionable across the globe. The return to the sober vernacular designs particularly among elite parts of the Bahraini society in the face of an excess supply of industrial design products, moreover, reminds of similar trends in Europe of the mid-19th to mid-20th century.

Overall, the findings suggest that the significance of cultural contingencies of authenticity perceptions might be overestimated at least in the context of architectural conservation. Certainly, the matter is often over-simplified in scholarly debates when international heritage conservation doctrine is blanketly criticized as a form of cultural imperialism for its focus on material authenticity in areas of the world where this is argued to be of no value. The case study provided evidence that material authenticity of tangible heritage was valued as a scientific or psychological asset by interviewees from across the globe. Further research into the matter is desirable and ongoing as described in chapter 2.

To qualify this study's insights into cultural contingencies, it shall once more be highlighted, that the interviewees were drawn from the rather cosmopolitan national and foreign population of Bahrain, making the problematic division into Eastern and Western mentalities even more questionable. The research design tried to accommodate this by introducing a third, in-between-category. Even so, the research methodology was devised to explore cultural contingencies only in second place and hence displays imbalances in the number of interviewees of different cultural categories.

4.2 EVALUATION OF THE OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES (§§ 79-86 AUTHENTICITY)

The case study's findings point to strengths but also to conceptual and operational deficiencies of the paragraphs 79-86 of the Operational Guidelines in their capacity to set a normative standard and provide guidance for authenticity assessments of architectural sites and of interventions within them.

The meanings and emotions that the two main reference sites evoked among the interviewees did not necessarily correspond with historical facts about their origin, function, development and history. This is not surprising, because, as per the constructivist understanding of language and signifying processes, meaning is produced in the interaction between the site and its users.

Authenticity can hence not be assessed exclusively based on the messages architectural heritage sites convey to their users.

Nevertheless, it is an important legacy of the Nara Document that authenticity of cultural heritage sites is being measured by the credibility of information sources as this pays tribute to their documentary value and to the fact that heritage conservation that deals with monuments of historical significance is – albeit not exclusively – an applied discipline of historiography.

4.2.1 INFORMATION SOURCES (§ 82)

The Nara Document's **list of information sources** which has been integrated as standard guidance into the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention was found to be relevant and in principle comprehensive for authenticity assessments of architectural and urban sites. All its items proved to be relevant for the authenticity assessments of the two reference sites. The non-conclusive character of the list, its rather broadly defined individual items, and particularly the last one called 'other internal and external factors' (UNESCO, 2021, § 82) offered sufficient room for the incorporation of additional aspects which interviewees referred to, but that are not explicitly mentioned in the list. The list of information sources on authenticity can hence be considered comprehensive for the assessment of architectural and urban sites. It accommodates the wide spectrum of values that different people and communities attribute to them and thereby does justice to the fact that architectural conservation is not only at the service of science but that it is a discipline entrusted with shaping the living environments of people.

The author however recommends to add interpretation to the list of potential dimensions of authenticity. Firstly, the case study provided ample empirical evidence that historical and architectural background knowledge are a prerequisite not only for the understanding and valuation of historic buildings and sites as testimony to the past but also as a basis for assessing their historical authenticity. Secondly, many participants of the case study's inquiry attributed prime importance to interpretation facilities. These can entail off-site and on-site interpretation facilities including architectural interpretive features of which several were discussed throughout the case study.

The importance the interviewees generally attributed to 'materials and substance' and 'form and design' indicates that these are – in line with the conventional authenticity understanding – certainly the core dimensions of authenticity of built heritage sites, even if non-architects tended to assess them differently than architects. At the same time, the findings support the relevance and importance of additional factors of the broadened authenticity definition. The case study illustrated the particularly importance of intangible dimensions to non-architects. Ownership, tenants and social composition of usership were moreover found to be relevant factors of authenticity which are not mentioned in the list.

For the author's authenticity assessments of the two main reference sites, presented in chapter 3, the list of information sources proved to be useful but limited guidance. Namely, it provided no guidance for choosing the relevant items of the list, weighing them within the overall authenticity judgement and identifying specific information sources they might entail at different sites. All this is left up to the specificities of the individual site and its cultural significance but also to the interpretation and potentially subjective judgement of those carrying

out the assessment. Moreover, the assessment of seemingly evident dimensions of authenticity like ‘form and design’, which were easier to access than for example ‘spirit and feeling’, proved to be prone to subjectivity. When assessing the historical authenticity of ‘form and design’, subjective judgements on aesthetics showed to easily come into play. Moreover, such assessment requires a choice among usually various development stages of a building to serve as reference.

In this context, it is important to highlight that the values which different groups attribute to World Heritage sites often go beyond the cultural significance for which they are protected under the World Heritage Convention. Statements of Outstanding Universal Value are usually streamlined to match the Operational Guidelines’ selection criteria for protection. The case study’s second reference site provided an example thereof. It is important that all, potentially conflictual value attributions are taken into consideration when conserving heritage sites.

The benefits and downsides of a loose definition of authenticity as a normative concept within the World Heritage system were introduced at the outset of this thesis. Nevertheless, it is out of the question that additional guidance for authenticity assessments of the different categories of heritage, including of architectural sites, will be beneficial for the World Heritage system and for conservation practice more generally. Such guidance could foster more coherent authenticity assessments of architectural sites and a more integrated conservation practice not only in the World Heritage context. The case study showed how the World Heritage system’s standards are influential in Bahrain’s architectural conservation practice even beyond the country’s World Heritage sites – a finding that is certainly transferable to other countries and sites.

4.2.2 TERMINOLOGY

The inconsistency of the terminology used in the paragraphs of the Operational Guidelines (UNESCO 2021, §§ 79-86) was problematized in chapter 2 of this thesis: the individual items of the list are referred to not only as ‘sources of information’ but also as ‘attributes’, ‘aspects of information sources’, or ‘factors’ of authenticity which relate to artistic, historic, social, or scientific value dimensions. The term which is at present favoured in the World Heritage system is ‘sources of information’. This choice can be questioned in the face of the case study’s finding – namely the overall poverty of informational content actually conveyed by the two reference sites and their individual parts. The previously commonly used term in the World Heritage system was ‘attributes of authenticity.’ At present, the term ‘attributes’ has however come to be primarily used for the site’s characteristics that constitute the Outstanding Universal Value of a World Heritage site – the so-called ‘attributes of OUV.’¹ Given that the term attributes is hence reserved and due to the fact that the list of paragraph 82 is composed both of intrinsic and extrinsic information sources – or rather of categories of potential information sources that relate to different tangible or intangible heritage expressions – the author recommends to opt for the terms ‘factors’ or ‘dimensions’ of authenticity. Both were sometimes used in this thesis.

¹ A related question that goes beyond the scope of this thesis is the appropriateness of the term ‘attributes of OUV.’ With its etymological roots in the Latin verb ‘attribuere’ (English: to assign) the author does not consider it an ideal term for tangible or sometimes intangible characteristics that are mostly intrinsic to the site as opposed to the values that people attribute to them.

The author tends to give preference to the term 'dimensions' as it signals the correlation of cultural significance and authenticity: the purpose of authenticity assessments is to authenticate the site's cultural significance by verifying the truthfulness or credibility of the attributes to which values of different dimensions (artistic, historic, social, scientific) are attributed on the basis of information sources that relate to tangible and intangible heritage expressions. The author hence recommends to refer to 'dimensions of authenticity' which each can be assessed based on a set of specific intrinsic and extrinsic information sources which vary from site to site.

4.2.3 INTRINSIC AND EXTRINSIC SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON AUTHENTICITY

A conceptual issue that reflects in competing constructivist and essentialist understandings of authenticity and paradigms of heritage conservation, which were introduced in chapter 2, is the poor differentiation of intrinsic and extrinsic sources of information on authenticity.

Some of the listed authenticity dimensions constitute information sources on authenticity that are intrinsic to the site. Such is the case with the dimensions 'form and design' and 'materials and substance' and less so in the case of 'use and function,' which more easily change over time. 'Feeling', on the contrary, like values and memories, is attributed to the site and hence extrinsic.

Advocates of the constructivist understanding of authenticity place emphasis on such extrinsic information sources. On this basis, some demand a paradigm shift towards managing change and preserving values rather than protecting physical heritage assets. The essentialist authenticity understanding, on the contrary, emphasises that architectural sites of cultural significance are a highly vulnerable, finite and not-renewable resources and should hence change as little as possible, while value attributions to them can change. The purpose of the test of authenticity and pertinent guidance is to serve as a tool to fulfil the conservation mandate which aims at preserving heritage sites as valuable testimony of the past. This requires emphasis on intrinsic information sources on authenticity. A constructivist definition of authenticity, based on extrinsic information sources, can hardly fulfil such normative function in heritage conservation practice.

To improve the concept's normative function, it might be advisable to clearly differentiate between intrinsic information sources and extrinsic sources like associated memories, feelings, archival documents etc. While the intrinsic information sources constitute the core characteristics that constitute cultural significance and require protection, extrinsic sources serve to verify their authenticity.

4.2.4 THE RELATION OF INTEGRITY AND AUTHENTICITY

Finally, another conceptual and operational issue to be mentioned is the interrelation of authenticity and integrity of architectural sites. The separate tests of authenticity and integrity in the World Heritage system was problematized in chapter 2. The case study research did not focus on their interrelation nor did it assess the current definition of integrity in the World Heritage context. Nevertheless, several aspects of integrity of the reference sites were addressed throughout the inquiry. The way some interviewees used the two terms or commented on both concepts suggests that they are closely interlinked but often poorly understood. The author recommends further research and awareness building on their interrelation and significance in architectural conservation. The author considers that combining the two concepts in one test is an option to be further explored.

4.2.5 PARTICIPATORY AUTHENTICITY ASSESSMENTS

The Operational Guidelines do not specify or problematize the important question of who should carry out authenticity assessments. The identified discrepancies between architects and non-architects in value attributions and authenticity perceptions highlights the importance of taking into consideration laypeople's perspectives when conserving and managing heritage sites. The author's authenticity assessments of the two main reference sites, which were significantly enhanced in the course of the field research by information provided by laypeople from the local community, illustrate the value of involving local communities. It proved essential particularly for the exploration of social, associative and emotive dimensions of authenticity of heritage sites.

At the same time, the case study demonstrated that the assessment of historical authenticity of architectural heritage sites requires expert knowledge and scientific skills. It is indispensable to base authenticity assessments on scientific analyses of the sites, their setting and context as well as of archival documents, oral histories and alike. This usually cannot be done by laypeople. The case study's findings hence underscore the crucial role architectural conservation experts and institutions have to play in authenticity assessments of architectural heritage of historical importance.

4.2.6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NORMATIVE AUTHENTICITY CONCEPT

In summary, paragraphs 79-86 of the Operational Guidelines provided valuable guidance for the authenticity assessment of the case study's reference sites. Paragraph 82 with its list of potential information sources on authenticity was found to be relevant and overall comprehensive. The author recommends to add interpretation as additional category. With regard to the inconsistent terminology used in the paragraphs, the author suggests to refer to 'dimensions of authenticity' for the individual categories listed in paragraph 82.

More detailed guidance for authenticity assessments of architectural sites should address the choice of relevant items of the list to consider, on how to weigh them in the overall assessment and further specify the information sources they might entail in the case of different architectural heritage sites. Such guidance should also address the interrelation of authenticity and integrity of architectural heritage sites and clearly define the roles of intrinsic and extrinsic information sources in authenticity assessments and architectural conservation. Moreover, authenticity assessments in heritage conservation require not only professional expertise but the involvement of local communities, including laypeople in the field.

As described in chapter 2, authenticity is developing into a more and more complex concept in the realm of heritage conservation. While confirming that 'materials and substance' and 'form and design' are the core dimensions of authenticity of architectural heritage, the case study illustrated the relevance and importance of the broadened normative authenticity definition. At the same time, the case study illustrated that a constructivist authenticity understanding, which overemphasizes extrinsic information sources like value attributions, cannot fulfil a normative function for the preservation mandate. The author moreover perceives a clear danger to overload the concept such as with multifaceted considerations for the sustainable development of heritage sites. While such considerations are essential, their integration into the authenticity concept can certainly weaken its normative function as a measure of historical truthfulness.

4.3 EVALUATION OF THE VENICE CHARTER

Besides the Operational Guidelines, the author used the ICOMOS Venice Charter of 1964 as reference for the authenticity assessments of the two reference sites and of interventions within them. Likewise, the participants of the inquiry repeatedly commented on the fundamentals of architectural conservation ethics which the charter enshrines. Moreover, the second reference site's rehabilitation was guided by the stipulations of the Venice Charter.

As addressed in chapter 2, the Venice Charter's topicality is being questioned among parts of the heritage conservation community and particularly in authenticity debates. Its validity shall hence be evaluated in the following on the basis of the case study's findings.

4.3.1 LIMITATIONS IN SCOPE

The scope of the Venice Charter is limited in various ways. It is supposed to provide guidance for the "conservation and restoration" (ICOMOS 1964) of works of architecture including their urban or rural setting as well as of archaeological ruins. The charter uses the term "conservation" not in its holistic meaning as per the Burra Charter but closer to what is there defined as "preservation" (Australia ICOMOS 2013, article 1.4 and 1.6). It hence seeks to provide guidance exclusively for physical interventions in built heritage sites in order to preserve them as works of art and historic testimony. The scope of the charter is thereby limited to architectural conservation. Without explicitly naming all of them, the Venice Charter refers to all levels of intervention this can entail and which were later specified in the Burra Charter (Australia ICOMOS 1979).

Besides this limitation in scope of categories of heritage and conservation activities, the Venice Charter focuses on historic and aesthetic value dimensions. Rooted in the 'conservation movement' and geared towards architectural conservation, the Venice Charter emphasizes authenticity of design and material and makes only indirect reference to some other value dimensions, such as pointing to the benefit of a "socially useful" usage (ICOMOS 1964, article 5). The case study illustrated that architectural and urban sites are indeed subject to broader value attributions than those mentioned in the Venice Charter. While these have to be taken into consideration, the case study's findings substantiate the notion that form and substance are the core dimensions of authenticity of architectural heritage sites and certainly the most important and intrinsic information sources to be preserved.

When comparing the authenticity understanding of the Venice Charter with that of the Operational Guidelines, one has to keep in mind that the World Heritage Convention addresses a wider scope of heritage categories. The stipulations for the test of authenticity within the Operational Guidelines are therefore geared to the assessment of potentially more complex sites and to guiding more holistic conservation activities than mere architectural conservation. This difference must be kept in mind when judging the validity of the Venice Charter.

4.3.2 MATERIAL AUTHENTICITY AND DOCUMENTARY VALUE

The Venice Charter centres on the documentary value of architectural sites and bases this first and foremost on their authentic substance. Given that most interviewees highly valued historic fabric as a scientific, socio-economic or psychological resource, the case study strongly supports the notion that the Venice Charter's primacy of material authenticity in architectural conservation is timely and adequate, and not only so in Western cultural contexts.

Authentic fabric from the initial construction time and of significant development stages of the building or site constitutes the only verifiable source on the basis of which site users and historians can explore and interpret the past. All other factors of authenticity of architectural sites are more prone to change, although the case study illustrated that built fabric is not immune to manipulation and misinterpretation either. Weakening the paradigm of testimonial value of materials and substance hence endangers the possibility for future generations to explore history on the basis of verifiable material information sources. This danger requires particularly attention in the current post-truth era (Sulfaro 2018, 3) which, according to the US-American author Ralph Keyes (2004) who coined the term, is prone to historical revisionism, manipulation of recent and distant pasts, and relativism of knowledge and science.

In addition, the case study confirmed that it is the “specific materiality of historic objects and environments, which facilitates an emotional connection to the past” (Saupe 2014, 182). The conservative approach of the Venice Charter hence pays tribute to the particular documentary and auratic value of authentic historic fabric.

The focus on material authenticity entails the tenet of differentiability of historic and added fabric. Particularly the second reference site illustrated that this can at times be in conflict with the public’s sense of aesthetics and perceptions of visual integrity. The tenet was found to be particularly conflictual when dealing with built heritage that is perceived to form part of living tradition. Overall, it was however an approach which was in principle appreciated. Apart from this principle, the Venice Charter however falls short in pointing out the importance of interpretation of architectural sites. The latter includes the use of architectural interpretive features of which the case study provided examples. The case study also confirmed the validity of the tenet of preserving evidence of different development stages of historic buildings, while it illustrated the difficulties this can entail. With regard to the primacy the charter gives to the use of traditional building techniques, the misconceptions on historicity these were found to evoke shall be mentioned. With its focus on the documentary value, the Venice Charter moreover highlights that all physical interventions must be flanked by research and documentation. The importance of such activities was likewise illustrated. Finally, article 11 can be interpreted as a step towards participatory approaches to conservation, as it states that value judgements and decisions on interventions “cannot rest solely on the individual in charge of the work.” (ICOMOS 1964)

In summary, the charter’s focus on material authenticity and of stipulations that relate to it were found to be adequate. It is however important to acknowledge that not all inherited built fabric is of particular historical significance, and that there are different grades of documentary value depending on the characteristics and history of each individual site. This needs to reflect in different authenticity standards to be applied to different sites or to their individual components.

4.3.3 RECONSTRUCTIONS AND ARCHITECTURAL REVIVALISM

The focus on documentary and artistic value dimensions, and hence on historical authenticity of forms, designs and material, entails a restrictive attitude towards reconstructions, which is also endorsed in paragraph 86 of the Operational Guidelines. Both doctrinal texts limit reconstructions to exceptional and non-conjectural cases. The misconceptions which

reconstructions and historicizing architecture were found to create underpin this restrictive attitude.

The case study however also illustrated that architectural revivalism in the form of historicizing designs and recreations can address identity needs particularly in a country where the architectural heritage is ravaged and where local building traditions are on the verge of extinction. The German art historian Tino Mager rightly points out that it is problematic to deduce authenticity from the identity-creating capacity of such (re)constructions (2016, 228). In the cases that were discussed throughout the case study, authenticity was usually limited to semblance to vernacular designs or sometimes involved the use of traditional building techniques. Both experts and laypeople in the field architectural conservation acknowledged that such recreations cannot compete with authentic historic vestiges neither as scientific testimony nor in their auratic qualities.

The American archaeologist, historian and interpretation expert Neil A. Silberman in an article on “heritage placemaking” argues that reconstruction “is not a conservation approach but an engagement approach that can help reconnect people with place, history, and landscape” and when “based on careful research, documentation, and traditional building techniques can” contribute to the transferal of “particular forms of tangible and intangible heritage to younger generations and generations yet to come.” (2015, 10) The case study’s findings substantiate this statement. While architectural revivalism and reconstructions shall hence not be categorically dismissed, legitimizing them as a form of architectural conservation would mean establishing a new paradigm of place-making and sacrificing the preservation mandate to socio-economic pressures and identity politics. A restrictive attitude towards reconstructions and historicizing designs in historic contexts is hence appropriate in principle.

4.3.4 CONCLUSIONS ON THE VENICE CHARTER AS ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION DOCTRINE

In summary, the Venice Charter proved to be limited in scope but the findings of the case study – not least the positive response to the second reference site, and to the way it was rehabilitated – confirm the unwavering validity of the guidance it provides for architectural conservation practice. The conservation of architectural and, even more so, urban sites of cultural significance, however, goes beyond mere architectural conservation. The two main reference sites illustrated the array of functions and usage requirements architectural conservation in historic urban areas has to address. While the Venice Charter still serves as fundamental doctrine for physical interventions in architectural sites of historical value, other doctrinal texts, of which a few were introduced in chapter 2, provide valuable additional guidance for more holistic conservation works.

4.4 CONCLUSIONS FOR ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION

This final section presents conclusions and recommendations for architectural conservation practice. The case study illustrated the unwavering relevance of the conservative preservation mandate: Whenever architectural conservation is in the service of historiography, its fundamental task is to preserve the site as historical testimony. Historic urban areas and ensembles like the two main reference sites as well as other examples of the case study, however also have to function as liveable public or private spaces to contemporary societies including serving as anchors of personal and collective memory and identity. As Silverman rightfully stated, “the perceived social necessity of reconnecting people with their past is a different task from conserving testimony of the past” (Battis personal archive, participant observation note, 25. March 2015, Dubai). The restoration and adaptation of the case study’s second reference site illustrates that the two tasks can be successfully combined.

4.4.1 PARTICIPATORY CONSERVATION PRACTICE AND LIMITS TO DEMOCRATISATION

The identified discrepancies in value attributions and authenticity perceptions between architects and non-architects signal that institutional heritage conservation, which is to act in the public interest, has to take account of laypeople’s perspectives when pursuing its mandate to preserve architectural heritage sites of historical importance for future generations and for the benefit of contemporary societies. The case study’s findings highlight the importance of integrating the preservation mandate with emotive and experiential needs of site users. This requires meaningful involvement of civil society. Initiatives that foster participatory heritage conservation practices are hence important and necessary.

At the same time, the case study’s findings underscore the crucial role architectural conservation experts play in authenticity assessments which are an integral part of all processes of heritage conservation – from identification, designation and preservation to development, interpretation and management. This points to limits of a potential democratisation of heritage conservation practice and is a strong argument against the deinstitutionalisation of the practice. In order to lead and facilitate participatory and integrated conservation and development processes, the governmental heritage authorities who have a legitimate public mandate for the task however need to be adequately staffed and trained.

4.4.2 INTERPRETATION, AWARENESS RAISING AND TRAINING

The case study demonstrated communication gaps between heritage professionals and other stakeholders to architectural heritage, including civil society. This calls for awareness raising on both sides. While fundamentals of architectural heritage conservation need to be promoted among non-expert audiences, architects need be sensitized for laypeople’s perspectives and needs.

Site interpretation is one means to narrow the gap between laypeople and experts in the field. The case study provided manifold examples of the potentials and limits of the communicative impact of architectural sites and of interventions within them. Mastering the communicative potential by making use of interpretation facilities and interpretive design features is something that should receive more attention in the training of architects and other professionals involved in heritage conservation.

As in several projects of the case study, architects with no training in conservation are often in charge of conserving and developing architectural sites of historical value. The case study illustrated that this can lead to significance losses of valuable heritage assets. It also presented several examples in which conservation ethics were superficially replicated and sometimes led ad absurdum. Conservation ethics should hence in principle be an integral part of architectural training.

Such training should include raising awareness of the importance of research and documentation as fundamental steps in architectural conservation. With a view to the fact that heritage conservation is an international and – as the case study illustrated – often conflictful arena, the training should involve sensitizing architects to respect local value systems, conservation practices and expertise when working abroad. Architects should moreover be trained for participatory and integrated conservation practice that involves members of civil society and local communities in all stages of the process, from research, analysis and planning to the management and interpretation of architectural heritage sites. The broadened authenticity understanding should lie at the heart of such practice.

4.4.3 INTEGRATED CONSERVATION BASED ON THE BROADENED AUTHENTICITY DEFINITION

For the realm of architectural conservation, the case study demonstrated the relevance of the broadened authenticity concept that embraces both essentialist and constructivist authenticity understandings. On the one hand, the findings confirm the importance of the conventional test of authenticity which certifies historical truthfulness of a site as per the concept's essentialist definition. On the other hand, the constructivist understanding is of relevance with regard to the public's authenticity perceptions. The public's value attributions are expression of the needs of site users. These have to be considered in the conservation and management of heritage sites in order to ensure that they play a meaningful role within their communities as stipulated in the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO 1972, article 5). Reconciling essentialist and constructivist authenticity understandings in the preservation, development and management of architectural heritage sites requires an integrated conservation approach, which balances different authenticity perspectives, value attributions, interests and usage requirements. The list of potential dimensions of authenticity of paragraph 82 in the Operational Guidelines can serve as guidance for such approach. As discussed above, the normative function of the Operational Guidelines' authenticity definition could however be significantly enhanced with more specific guidance on its application in architectural conservation. Authenticity guidance with a normative function in architectural conservation should ideally reconcile the two positions: it should serve as a basis for the scientific certification of the reliability of the historic testimony and at the same time guide holistic conservation and development measures that pay tribute to varied value attributions and expectations of the site users. This requires a clear differentiation between information sources of authenticity which are intrinsic to the site and need to be preserved, and extrinsic ones that might have to be fostered.

None of the case study's reference sites has been subjected to an exemplarily integrated conservation approach that involves all relevant stakeholders. Several of the discussed projects however put a strong focus on the integration of tangible and intangible heritage expressions and on both intrinsic and extrinsic source of information of authenticity. Particularly the case study's second reference site demonstrates that the conventional, material-focused approach

of the Venice Charter must not necessarily be in conflict with a widened authenticity understanding as per the Nara Document. The Siyadi Shops' restoration and adaptation can be considered a rather successful example of integrated architectural conservation which carefully preserved a maximum of tangible evidence of the past while presenting it in a manner that fulfils the emotional and experiential needs of the site's users. Although the site proved to convey little factual information to uninformed visitors, its rehabilitation fulfilled the preservation mandate while accommodating needs of cultural identification and nostalgic indulgence that many site users seek at places of cultural and historical significance.

4.5 SUMMATION

In summary, the case study identified clear discrepancies with regard to viewing habits, value attributions and authenticity perceptions of architectural heritage sites between architects with experience in architectural conservation and laypeople in the field. While architects tended to focus on historical authenticity in form and material, as per the conventional authenticity understanding of the Venice Charter, most non-architects based their site assessments of the two reference sites on a wider array of authenticity dimensions. The importance particularly laypeople attributed to emotive and experiential qualities of the sites points to the relevance of the broadened authenticity understanding as per the Nara Document on Authenticity (ICOMOS 1994a). Such understanding, which has been integrated into the Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO 2021), pays tribute to tangible and intangible heritage dimensions as well as intrinsic and extrinsic information sources of authenticity. It can thereby serve as guidance for integrated conservation measures.

Moreover, the case study confirmed a strong support for the conservative preservation mandate among professionals and laypeople. Both the author's authenticity assessments of the two main reference sites and the findings from the inquiry among site users underscored the unwavering validity of conventional conservation ethics as per the Venice Charter for architectural heritage sites. People from varied different cultural and professional backgrounds were found to attribute scientific, artistic or auratic values to authentic tangible vestiges from the past. The case study hence illustrated that the tenet of material authenticity needs to remain paramount, particularly when architectural conservation is at the service of historiography.

The second of the two main reference sites demonstrated that the stipulations of the Venice Charter must not be in conflict with the broadened normative authenticity definition. The conservation, restoration and adaptation of the vernacular market structures rather successfully catered for experiential and psychological needs of site users, while paying full tribute to the tenet of material authenticity. The site moreover illustrated the challenges of mastering the communicative potential of architectural sites and the importance of interpretation. Last but not least, the case also illustrates that the testimonial value of architectural sites has its limits, even if material authenticity is respected.

The case study's findings on misinterpretations and auratic deficiencies of reconstructions and historicizing architectural features speak in favour of the conventional restrictive attitude towards conjectural and facsimile reconstructions at sites of historical significance. The case study also illustrated that the legitimate practice of architectural revivalism must not be mistaken as a form of built heritage conservation despite its capacity to address cultural identity

needs. Particularly the first of the two main reference sites, where many interviewees deduced authenticity from the strong symbolism of the iconic, albeit significantly modified town gate Bab al-Bahrain, illustrates that a constructivist authenticity understanding can serve no normative function in the service of the preservation mandate.

While the case study provides limited evidence that authenticity perceptions of heritage sites are “culturally constructed” (Lawless and Silva 2017, 148), it illustrates to what extent they are “contextually variable and observer dependent” (ibid.). This precisely is the reason why the concept can only fulfil a normative function in the service of the preservation mandate if it focuses on scientifically measurable attributes that are intrinsic to the site. In the World Heritage Context, one function of the test of authenticity is to authenticate the Outstanding Universal Value. The concept’s main normative function in heritage conservation is however to authenticate the historical truthfulness or credibility of the site. In the case of architectural sites this hinges to a large degree on the authenticity of substance. A broadened, that is integrative authenticity understanding is nevertheless essential to guide integrated conservation approaches that reconcile tangible and intangible authenticity dimensions and potentially conflictual value attributions.

The author recommends such an integrated conservation approach when preserving and developing architectural sites of historical significance. Such an approach pursues the conservative preservation mandate while ensuring that the heritage sites play a meaningful role in contemporary societies by paying tribute to varied value attributions, usage requirements and authenticity dimensions. It meaningfully involves laypeople from local communities at all stages of the conservation process and places emphasis on the interpretation of the sites. Such an integrative approach requires professionals who are empowered to facilitate participatory conservation processes that respect the conventional conservation ethics as per the Venice Charter while applying the broader normative definition of authenticity as per the Nara Document. One step in this direction would be complementing the paragraphs 79-86 of the Operational Guidelines with more specific guidance on how to reconcile essentialist and constructivist authenticity concepts in architectural conservation.

AFTERWORD

This thesis set out to contribute to the scholarly discourse that aims at further refining authenticity as a normative concept in the realm of heritage conservation. I hope the case study's empirical data will prove useful to further debates and research.

It is not very surprising that the comparative inquiry found value attributions and authenticity judgements of most architects among the interviewees to be more aligned with standard heritage conservation doctrine than those of laypeople in the field. Nevertheless, the case study research was a somewhat eye-opening exercise for me. It made me more aware of the degree to which my discipline's viewing habits and value judgements differ from that of the general public. The findings substantiate common concerns that social and emotive value dimensions tend not to receive the attention in architectural conservation that they should. The study hence confirms the need to foster the participation of local communities in institutional heritage conservation practice. At the same time, it provided evidence of the indispensability of expert skills and thereby revealed limits to the democratisation of conservation practice.

The case study illustrated that a constructivist authenticity understanding can serve as guidance for holistic conservation measures but not fulfil a normative function for the preservation of architectural sites as reliable historic testimony. The findings confirmed the importance of authentic material testimony as a scientific, socio-economic and psychological resource to societies and people from across the globe. Therefore, I would like to close on a final plea not to abandon the Venice Charter's essentialist authenticity understanding and its primacy of material authenticity with the following quote:

"It is not for the sake of identifying and evaluating the monument that we need clear concepts of truth, genuineness and authenticity but rather in order to maintain or permanently regain an understanding of these categories in a changing world of substance and appearance we need the monuments." (Will 2020, 226)

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- Fig. 3.4-24: **The café after completion of the works in 2014.** Photo: Eva Battis.
- Fig. 3.4-25: **The outdoor space of the eastern block during construction in 2012.** Photo: Eva Battis.
- Fig. 3.4-26: **The outdoor space of the eastern block after construction in 2012.** Photo: Eva Battis.
- Fig. 3.4-27: **The two shop units in the southern part of the site during construction in 2011.** Photo: Eva Battis.
- Fig. 3.4-28: **The two shop units in the southern part of the site after construction in 2012.** Photo: Eva Battis.
- Fig. 3.4-29: **Tabular assessment of authenticity information sources of the Siyadi Shops.**
- Fig. 3.5-3: **Prioritization of dimensions of historical authenticity by the interviewees.**

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