A COMPARISON BETWEEN BEAUTY IN ISLAMIC URBAN TEXTURES AND EUROPEAN HISTORIC CITIES: DIFFERENCES IN URBAN CONSERVATION STRATEGIES

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1. Introduction

According to the Oriental-Islamic notion of urban space, socio-economic classification cannot appear in material form on the exterior of buildings. On the contrary, in a European historic city the social status of citizens can easily be expressed on urban facades. Expressing status and social condition through dwellings is normal and unavoidable, because, in general, an individual is obliged to have a house to be identified as a citizen. Introverted-Islamic structures consist of buildings with courtyards in which interior private facades are considered more important than the external characteristics of the buildings themselves. In this definition, the European concept of urban façade is not perceived. Pursuing an analytic-comparative method, this article attempts to explain the fundamental differences in the concept of urban beauty existing between the European historic center and the introverted inner city. Furthermore, the paper defines the urban aesthetics concerning particularities in the relationship between open and closed spaces. From this viewpoint, differences between the characteristics of open spaces in the past and the modern era are analytically debated. Particularities in the open spaces of introverted-closed urban textures are analyzed. In addition, the mutual relationship between socio-philosophical factors and urban aesthetics in introverted textures is discussed. The principles and characteristics of esoteric beauty are consequently verified.

European countries are considered pioneers in urban conservation debates. As a consequence, urban planners prevalently pursue European approaches and methods in conservation schemes. Likewise, European urban regeneration policies and strategies predominantly influence the general procedure of revitalization programs, especially in developing countries. On the other hand, Islamic historic centers have extremely different characteristics insofar as the definition of urban beauty in such fabrics completely differs from the perception of beauty in European historic cities. With integral knowledge about the basic differences between urban aesthetics in introverted and extroverted historic centers, the paper tries to analyze the sequent differences which may exist in urban conservation strategies. In addition, reasons for differences in urban regeneration policies and strategies are analytically described.

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CONSERVATION SCIENCE IN CULTURAL HERITAGE

2. Private facades in introverted Islamic urban textures compared to the beauty of European urban facades

In introverted architecture, a designer concentrates all his attention on interiors; as a result, interior facades are more important than the exterior character of buildings. In the center, there is a courtyard with a definite geometrical form. The other spaces are located around this private open space. All windows and apertures open onto the courtyard providing natural lighting and ventilation. In the irregular plots with no specific shape, courtyards - as a geometrical element - can play a key role in regularizing architectural spaces [1]. Introversion was considered a fundamental principle in Islamic cities. However, it is also seen in the pre-Islamic era in Persia (before the Arab attack in 651 AD). This kind of architecture originates from the dominant oriental philosophy emphasizing the privacy and independence of spaces. However, during the Islamic era, this approach was accentuated by Islamic regulations. According to Pirnia some scholars believe that introversion is merely a religious matter which emerged in Persia after the Arab attack by changing the official religion from Zoroastrian[1] to Islam.

Nevertheless, this kind of architecture can also be seen in the pre-Islamic period [2]. He argues:

Introversion and the Persian architects' tendency towards including courtyards, central garden yards, [and other spaces such as] vestibules and the Kolah Farangi[2] around which other architectural spaces such as the Shabestan[3] are located, are considered to be a Persian principle dating back to ancient times. [...] As observed in the Persepolis[4]palaces, the rooms, halls and porticos are located around a courtyard; similarly, in the Sassanid[5] palace of Sarvestan, and in Islamic edifices, there is an introverted architecture. This logical tendency towards introverted architecture has never been discarded by the Persians; they have always built their homes and palaces in this manner, which is similar to a kind mother who has warmly embraced her child [3].

On the contrary, in a European city, each citizen is considered an individual, and simultaneously, they represent their connection with the *civitas* (Figure 1).

The visible and inevitable behavior for its realization is the relationship with the material form of living, i.e. the *urbs*. Put differently, the physical aspect of single houses accurately reflects self-representation of each individual in relation to others [5]. In fact, people demonstrate their *urban status* through the "site", "type" and "style" of their house. In ancient times as well as in the world of Islam, the short-lived awareness of citizenship is unconnected to the visible materiality of the *urbs*. This means it cannot be expressed on exterior facades. This phenomenon can be observed in the ancient city of Herculaneum or in the Persian city of Isfahan. In such cities, modest closed walls can be seen in which just a few decorated doors are located [5]. This may be assumed to be the basic difference between an Islamic city and European historic urban fabrics. In fact, two different interpretations of the city are evident. According to the European perspective, citizens' social status can be expressed on urban facades. On the contrary, according to the Oriental-Islamic idea of urban space, socio-economic classifications are not easily found on the exterior of buildings.

Figure1. Introversion in the urban texture of the historic Persian city of Yazd [4]

In a European city, the social ascent of citizens tends to be demonstrated in a gradual progressive improvement in houses; this means grander apartments in more prestigious zones, advanced equipment and valuable furniture, gardens, terraces etc. Expressing the *status* and *social condition* through the "house" is normal and inevitable; because each person is obliged to have a house to be identified as a citizen (Figure 2).

When a person buys a house or villa in a prestigious neighborhood, they also purchase credit and success. The equality of citizens is an unquestionable moral value; but the same mechanism of social mobility produces visible inequality in houses [5]. Relatively reduced personal financial capital does not prevent citizens from being represented by their houses according to their personal tastes. It is similar to the language of a nation, which may, more or less, be suited to expressing the concepts of another culture, even though that tradition, style or thought is missing; on the contrary, it may be appropriate to express the ideas of each individual. In this way, the shape of buildings are considered a code which allows each level of "social stratification" to be expressed [5]. Conversely, when the constitutive units of an urban fabric generate their main spaces around isolated courtyards, it means the network of streets is characterized merely as a set of simple pathways. As a result, public spaces are comprised of simple closed walls without openings, green spaces, decorative and ornamental elements and other recognized urban attractions. Because of introversion, buildings connect easily with each other via different communicating paths so as to generate a "continuous" fabric, where, interestingly, a number of geometrical courtyards are

located. Instead, a European façade offers figurative expressions. This expression includes the dimension of lots, the length and height of the built part; the number, size, reciprocal disposition of the openings; the windows with their windowsills, frames, architraves, shutters, joinery; the front doors with knockers, doorbells, lamps, civic numbers, emblems; the balconies with their frequency, size, depth, railings; the sidewalks, cornices, protruding eaves, the roofs and their inclines, the chimneys; visible materials, coating, plasters, colors; decorations, frescoes and sculptures. All these items can represent different aspects of a citizen's personality, which is reflected on the walls. This *aesthetic expression* of facades has two aspects: at first sight, the facades seem to be "similar"; but at the same time, they are always "different" [5]. In an Islamic context, due to the absence of any external architectural elements, what is observed is extraordinary equality in the architectural units.
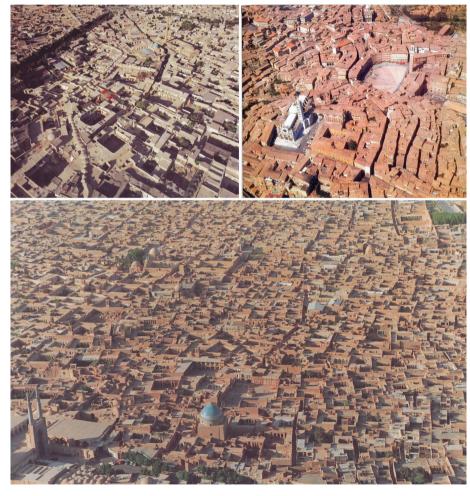

Figure 2. Aerial view of introverted historic centers in comparison with extroverted European urban textures. Upper-left hand [6]: Bazaar area in historic center of Isfahan in Persia; upper-right hand: inner city of Siena in Italy; below [6]: historic center of Yazd in central Persia.

Pursuing this approach, we see internal private aesthetics trying to remain hidden from strangers. Despite the uniformity of European facades, it is possible to distinguish different *tastes* belonging to various architects and architectures. These different architectural tastes can be immediately identified due to differences in details. In an Islamic historic center, these differences are not visible on the simple modest exterior walls which have no openings or decorations. In reality, all architectural details have been created in the interior of the courtyard buildings. From the fifteenth century onwards, the European elite wished to be distinct from other social classes. This "social distinction" is expressed not only in good execution, but also in "style". For instance, during the Renaissance period in European cities, both public buildings and the buildings of the aristocracy were constructed on the basis of variable norms of classicism which had been reinterpreted by local architects [5]. In an Islamic city, the individuality of the aristocratic elite does not appear on urban facades. This distinctive characteristic can be related to the size and magnificence of the private interior facades of their courtyards.

When we speak of 'figurative orders', we allude to individual artwork. When an art work is executed by a group, our discussion regards its central leader. For example, a painting is created by a painter, a building is constructed by an architect and finally, a city could be built well if it pursues a unitary directive. But it is difficult to imagine that a will superior to the wishes of citizens could impose a social system on the *civitas*. In this perspective, it is unthinkable that the physical order of the *urbs* coincides with the figurative model of an elite or the design of an artist [5]. Having deductive characteristics for a European city, we can identify a specific figurative order. To be precise, the model of 'ideal city' – at the basis of city planning, in Eighteenth-century urbanism and modern urbanization – indiscriminately intends to create very 'beautiful' cities; however, it is not related to a principle with long-established roots. In fact, the ancient dreamers of the perfect city – Plato, Augustine and Farabi – were especially occupied with the regulations of the *civitas* and not the *urbs*; while, the Sixteenth-century utopians were well aware of the connection between *civitas* and *urbs* [5]. In an Islamic city, we see architectural regulations used mainly for creating private architectural facades, while urban facades are left untouched [7]. Moreover, the complexity of introverted architecture is mostly based on the spatial compositions between the interior spaces instead of the exterior appearance of the building. For this reason more than any other, there are regulations regarding the quality of the composition in the different spaces.

In general, we can identify three constituent elements for an Islamic historic center: the Friday Mosque (Jamè); residential neighborhoods; the Bazaar [8]. All constituent parts of an Islamic city have introverted characteristics. The Friday Mosque is recognized as a key socio-urban node which has a particular spatial configuration and structural connections with the adjacent residential and commercial textures. In the past, besides its religious role, it was a place where important decisions related to the city were made [8]. In the majority of mosques the spatial structure includes closed, semi-closed and open spaces, with decorative elements and symbols, which have gradually become the principal symbols.

The external facades are of little importance except for the entrances which are large and richly decorated so as to be easily distinguished. Even the architectural element of the Minaretis prevalently used for a functional purpose and not for the external appearance of the facade [8]. The decorative walls horizontally and vertically

cover the "interior facades". It is usual to try to present the mosque looking towards the city square or streets. In this way, while responding to its special interior functions, a religious building represents itself to a greater urban space. By showing their more beautiful and decorative elements, in comparison to other buildings, mosques can represent their particular functional differences [8]. On the one hand, the Friday mosque hides its basic identity in the courtyard; on the other, it presents some of its vertical elements on its exterior in relation to its surroundings. Therefore, another aspect of urban beauty in an Islamic city is related to the spatial architectural-urban compositions existing between the prominent buildings and their surrounding environment. In fact, the beauty of an Islamic city is fundamentally based on several spatial connections and compositions. In this approach, the three-dimensionality of urban spaces is considered more important than the two-dimensionality of urban facades. On the contrary, according to Benevolo, in European contexts, some buildings possess an "internal balance" between the built volume and the open space (courtyard, garden, vegetable plot), while all of them overlook the "public space" through a bivalent wall: the "façade". It simultaneously serves the building (provides illumination, access, presentation, etc.) and qualifies the surrounding urban environment [9].

In European cities, the general form of squares, monumental streets and historic centers, depends on the quality of facades. Accordingly, everyone agrees with the necessity of there being some control over such facades. For instance, in the fourteenth century, the municipality of Siena requested people to open arched windows with columns onto the *Piazza del Campo* [10]. The houses, streets and urban landscape can be constituent elements of the 'style' of a city [10]. According to Romano, we can identify two notions of "beauty" and "style" for a European city and make the related urban considerations. When the streets are adequately designed and established the city can be considered "beautiful". There is a principle from ancient times that says, bastides[6], village settlements, new cities and their expansion are more beautiful if there are wide streets. Such streets, furthermore, respect the principles of alignment, perspective and typological considerations. Interestingly, a Venetian like Marco Polo states that the streets of Beijing are tortuous, while on the map they seem to be straighter than the streets of Venice. There is a concept that the beauty of streets is not damaged by a curved path; on the contrary, according to Leon Battista Alberti in the Sixteenth century and Raymond Unwinin the contemporary age, the winding streets, "like the curve of a river", offer more pleasant perspectives in the dense historic centers as well as in peripheral zones [5]. I should point out that from this view, there are similarities between European streets and the network of Islamic streets which consists predominantly of naturally curving pathways.

As it is evident that the beauty of the *urbs* is also related to the beauty of the facades of its houses, it is right for the civic assembly to determine aesthetical regulations for the facades [5]. For example, in the past, Milan may have been considered "ugly" because its prominent buildings were qualitatively and quantitatively inferior to those of other cities. We can compare it with the city of Genoa and its old castles of Spinola and Doria and the sixteenth-century buildings located in *Strada Nuova*. It could also be compared with Venice and the splendid facades of the buildings along the Grand Canal (*Canal Grande*). The *civitas,* however, can impose uniform facades with a determined standard, in order to make the *urbs* more beautiful. At the same time, it would like to give houses a determined standard of richness and aesthetics [5]. In the Nine-

teenth century, it is the boulevards which finally fulfill this notion where the beauty of the European city is also represented by the width of the streets. With this new model, citizens could also be provided with equivalent and appropriate standards for air and light [5]. In Haussmann's experience, particular building regulations could generate unified urban facades [11]. His works were imitated throughout Europe, especially after 1870 [11]. These established building regulations for new boulevards created a new season in European urban beauty.

In considering urban aesthetics, pavements and the cleanliness of streets are also important factors. For example, the bad quality of the pavements in Palermo and Naples create inadequate urban spaces [5]. The overflowing rubbish of Paris, in the age of 'Philip the Good' or conversely, complacency for the clean elegance of Lugano[7] and Amsterdam can influence our judgment about their beauty [5]. On the contrary, a network of introverted streets prevalently lacks suitable pavements. The courtyard buildings focus on private facades; similarly, they place more attention on private paving than the pavements and furniture of public spaces. Likewise, green spaces are just limited to private courtyards and historic gardens. From this view, the Islamic city also lacks the aesthetic potential of public green spaces. In addition, it is interesting that in the middle of the thirteenth century in Europe everyone thought that to be more beautiful, a city should have beautiful churches, buildings and squares [5]. In fact, it is well-known that a beautiful church helps to make a beautiful city [5]. Pursuing this notion, in the fourteenth century, a new lawn for the fair in Siena would have made this city more beautiful. The new clock in Lyon would have enhanced the beauty of the city, and the *Sagrada Familia* would have made Barcelona more beautiful [5]. Comparing this idea with its Islamic interpretation, the largeness and magnificence of the Bazaar as well as the Friday mosque plays the same role as those factors regarding beauty. There is a direct relationship between the prosperity of a city and the length of its Bazaar (as a linear structure), in addition to the magnificence of its Friday mosque.

Romano believes that by walking through a European city and reading it as a book, we can immediately recognize the more well-known collective themes such as the church, castle, square, park and stadium. In addition, we can identify the evident architectural vigor of the buildings. We can recognize the status of monasteries, monumental squares, commercial streets, grand shops and so forth [5].

All of these items can create an identifiable 'style' for the city. Put differently, it can be said that style can be recognized in collective themes. In an introverted-Islamic historic center, by walking through the Bazaar and visiting the Friday mosque we can, more or less, recognize the socio-economic as well as cultural richness of the citizens (Figure 3).

These spaces are the most public parts of the city and thus, places where it is possible to comprehend socio-cultural behavior; on the other hand, there is less possibility to visit private courtyards. In this regard, Carla Serena[8] says of the Bazaar in Tehran:

> [...] the Bazaar is a place for appointments and public meetings. Besides speaking about their personal business affairs, people discuss social and political events. It could be considered not only a warehouse, but also a parliament [...] news, hearsay, scandal, gossip, obloquies and idle chatting start at the Bazaar [12].

Figure 3. A comparison between the introverted-closed street network and the extroverted European public space (left and right: historic center of Yazd in Persia; center: historic center of Rome)

This means courtyard buildings conceal their facades in their interior, in the form of private property; as a consequence, it is difficult to comprehend the architectural richness of different buildings. In other words, courtyard buildings lack any form of representation except their decorated entrances.

3. Definition of urban beauty through the relationship between open and closed spaces

Introversion of the urban fabric is defined in the relationship existing between filled and empty spaces. An introverted fabric consists of central geometrical open spaces surrounded by full spaces. Contrarily, in modern urbanism we observe a new definition of open space which is completely different from the identifiable characteristics of the open space in historical fabrics. In this sense, Belfiore believes that the open space is a space in a modern city. Sporadically, it is seen in several past civilizations, for instance in Pre-Hellenistic Greece, Egypt and Mesopotamia, and in some Pre-Colombian and Oriental cultures [13]. But, the modern urban space presents diversified characteristics in comparison to nineteenth-century ones. In this definition, for the first time, spaces without buildings become supporting structures [13]. The built space with its linear or precise character causes the disappearance of the three-dimensionality of the lot and façade as a principal urban point of reference. In this way, the connections and articulations of a space, which consists of an internal private part (courtyards, gardens) and a public exterior one, are lost [13]. One of the most remarkable aspects of urban heritage in historical fabrics, both in European and Islamic cities, is related to the characteristics of open spaces. A considerable part of urban beauty in a European historic center concerns the particularities of semi-public and public open spaces; in urban revitalization programs, careful attention is paid to the conservation and enhancement of these details in open spaces. At the other end, in the modern era, the open space ratifies a clear separation between the built part and the street, each of them organized according to different and distinct structural matrixes. The street is liberated from continuously being overlooked by the facades and is reduced to a bi-dimensional band. Consequently, there are no differences between urban streets and territorial roads. In other words, the street loses its character as a place and a space

for holding a multitude of activities such as meetings, entertainment, business, representations, assemblies, performances, work, ceremonies, competitions etc. [13]; it is indeed specialized in simply being a path for traffic.

A large part of the notion of urban beauty in Islamic neighborhoods is based on the spatial qualities of private and public open spaces; the quality of the orientation of closed spaces can thus be defined. While in a European city, urban aesthetics is predominantly related to the spatial configuration of squares, streets and so forth, introverted-Islamic urban beauty is based on the configuration of geometric-symmetric courtyards. In the modern era, the open space places urbanism in a structural field which does not have the specificity of all the built parts (artificial parts) of the ancient city. Hence, the boundaries between the artificial part and the natural one are the open spaces [13]. It opens the way for a process of reciprocal contamination and infinite possibilities for changing the role of various urban spaces: the street becomes park, the garden, square or theatre, etc. In short, the open space ratifies the break in the relationship, related to the total identity of the *ancient* city, between the built space and the public one. This space loses its structural characteristics with regard to continuity and unity, limited to the "islands" or "lines" of local importance; there is a separation not only among, but also between them and the collective historic spaces. While the 'ancient' space presents a powerful structural completeness, the 'modern' space has contradictory characteristics: opening, indeterminateness and indefiniteness [13]. All these changes have negatively influenced the relationship between open and closed spaces, not only in European historic centers but also in introverted inner cities. This new definition of open space has fundamentally altered the spatial configuration of public spaces. In introverted areas, the drastic separation existing between private courtyards and public spaces has caused old houses to remain unchanged, as if frozen in time. These isolated private courtyards can no longer continue their life without having a dynamic connection with public open spaces. This discontinuity between private and public spaces is one of the most arguable problems in the regeneration of courtyard houses (Figure 4).
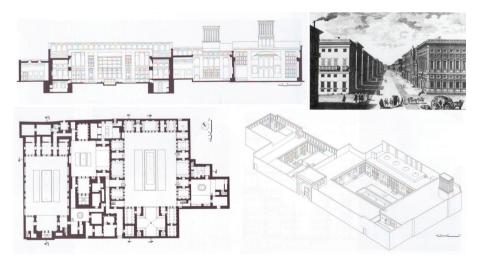

Figure 4. A comparison between the notion of European urban façade and the private interior facades of Islamic courtyard houses (upper right: New street or La Strada Nuova in Genoa; other pictures are related to courtyard houses in the inner city of Yazd in central Persia [14])

4. Urban aesthetics and socio-philosophical considerations in introverted fabrics

Introverted urbanism tries to keep the main character of courtyard buildings hidden; so before entering a building an individual is not able to comprehend its spatial configuration and architectural arrangement. In the Oriental world, basically, special attention is placed on the inner space of the human mind. There is a series of opinions in Sufism[9] which teach the individual to concentrate on themselves in order to achieve the truth about man and the universe. There is a close relationship between the principles of Sufism and the richness of architectural introversion emerging within the physical framework of courtyard buildings. While all Muslims believe they are on the way to God and hope to become close to God in Paradise, Sufis also believe that it is possible to draw closer to God and to more fully embrace the Divine Presence in this life[10]. The chief aim of all Sufis is to seek to please God by working towards restoring the primordial state of *fitra*[11] within themselves, described in the Quran [15]. In this state, nothing one does defies God, and everything is undertaken with the single motivation of love of God. A secondary consequence of this is that the seeker may be led to abandon all notions of dualism or multiplicity, including the conception of an individual self and to realize Divine Unity. Thus, Sufism has been characterized as the science of the states of the lower self (the ego) and as a way of purifying this lower self of its reprehensible traits, while adorning it instead with what is praiseworthy; this, despite whether this process of cleansing and purifying the heart, is in time rewarded by *esoteric* knowledge of God or not. For the Sufi who is enraptured with the love of God who is the source of all existence, all existence is extraordinarily beautiful[12]. Evidently, interpretation of this *esoteric beauty* is different from the European concept of beauty. Introverted beauty is more sophisticated, indirect and mysterious. As a consequence, the physical appearance of this beauty is considered more "metaphoric" and "esoteric". Hence, the aesthetic aspects of buildings can be seen in their interior in a more metaphoric-esoteric manner. In this interpretation, the emphasis on the human mind and spirit has been characterized as a fundamental philosophical principle. In fact, it is presented as a key solution for the happiness of a human being. Pursuing this approach, introverted architecture attempts to focus on its *inside* instead of its outside identity and avoids displaying itself to strangers. In the past, introverted-Islamic urbanism meant most social activities were performed in the interior spaces. People preferred isolated private courtyards for their social relationships rather than public spaces. Even the Bazaar, as the most prominent socio-economic pole of a city, has an introverted framework with a minimum of exterior display.

5. Different strategies for urban conservation in different contexts: introverted and extroverted

Urban space is transformed because of the nature of the city which is alive and is a dynamic organism. It is, in fact, the result of the symbiosis with the life of man, which is constantly evolving. "Transformation", in its slow or accelerated state, is the natural condition of the physical space which registers different rhythms, the life-stream of societies and their historic period. On the contrary, "conservation" is a cultural action; indeed, it is an operation related to the values of memory, cultural identity, artistic quality and history of the built environment [13]. In the past, the stream of continuous changes was slow and imperceptible, because the demographic, economic, technological and

social evolution of the city was more gradual. Nowadays, it is assumed it has a more accelerated continuous character, because the evolution of settlements have overwhelming rhythms and dynamism [13]. In an Islamic historic center, we observe the development of new urban structures according to so-called modern life standards without paying enough attention to the old parts. Moreover, the incompatibility of the old districts with new trends, expectations and needs has led to their deterioration [16]. New streets, squares, large-scale inhuman open spaces and inappropriate interventions have severely damaged the Islamic inner city. With the efforts of French and British Mandate and post-Mandate urban planning interventions to embrace modernity, the separation between the past and the present has intensified in many parts of the Arab world. In this sense, Daher argues:

> In Damascus, Beirut, and several other cities, during the French Mandate in the 1920s and 1930s, planners such as Echochard imposed schemes on the old organic pattern of the traditional city based on Haussmannian principles. Several new modern plans introduced interventions, like boulevards and avenues which sliced into traditional settings, causing destruction and demolition of whole neighborhoods and a dichotomy of old traditional parts of town on the one hand and newly zoned areas on the other. Everything was sacrificed to the great infrastructure of transport. Only fragments and isolated monuments were retained for future generations [17].

At present, we can classify Islamic urban fabrics into three parts: (1) Introverted fabric: conserved areas; (2) Mixed fabric: old urban fabrics in which new direct streets, circular squares and extroverted buildings have emerged; (3) Extroverted fabrics: marginal areas. The chaotic formation of diverse, as well as contradictory typologies has generated fundamental alterations in urban features. In fact, the introverted old city was limited to the area of the historic center and was unable to continue to grow. The new public spaces had completely different characteristics. New street networks were no longer considered just passages for people to pass through; instead, the windows of buildings opened onto the streets and alleys; in this way, the notion of "urban façade" was gradually formed. In a gradual manner too, the general tendency towards the extroverted urban system increased; the old streets lost their prestige because of: (1) monotonous and boring facades; (2) a lack of urban facilities and services; (3) a feeling of insecurity in simple closed pathways; and (4) impossibility of access by car. Modern urban phenomena caused the formation of a mixed fabric comprising introverted and extroverted units. From this time onwards, extroverted and discontinuous textures next to or within the introverted continuous fabric can be seen. This contrast gradually intensified due to an urban rival which appeared between the new and old districts. New zones were seen as a symbol of development; they were relatively equipped with new services. Naturally, they were the winners in this competition. This process led to a gradual recession in the inner city.

During the last century, the unprecedented development of the urban environment has strongly influenced the procedure of urban transformation. Rapid urban expansion, densification (or, conversely, decline and abandonment), inappropriate modern interventions, gentrification, and changes in uses are occurring worldwide, directly affecting the preservation of historic environments. It is now quite clear that cities all around the world are in a state of continuous transition and transformation. This process of continual transition and transformation occurs partly in response to political, industrial, economic, and social changes, and some believe that cities experience inflec-

tion points of growth and decline, both of which lead to transformation of urban space [16]. As previously described, in the past, lifestyle in the introverted urban typology meant most of a family's needs could be met in the central yard. It meant social relationships could be generated in public spaces at a limited level. By changing the urban form, from introversion to extroversion, the social context was affected. Mutations in architectural-urban approaches led to the emergence of new social relationships. Additionally, most of these relations and meetings were formed in the new urban spaces. It meant that they were no longer limited to the private courtyard, neighborhood center and Friday mosque. The appearance of new squares, streets, theatres, cinemas and so on, led to the creation of more social contact, which gradually succeeded in changing people's social behavior. These urban changes, moreover, reflected a fundamental change in lifestyle. With the development of new architecture, citizens were gradually introduced to a new lifestyle. For example, having exterior openings looking towards public spaces was no longer considered a defect; instead, it was considered a symbol of modernization. Besides, living in a group became widespread due to residential complexes; it meant that having a closed private space was no longer considered an essential principle. All these modifications led to the creation of an opinion that recognized new extroverted buildings as a sign of development, whereas courtyard buildings were considered symbolic of old traditions.

Nowadays, urban heritage is identified as a precious cultural asset which should necessarily be conserved. Accordingly, a number of urban conservation and revitalization programs are pursued in historic neighborhoods by city governors. It is widely accepted throughout the world, that historic urban quarters have a special place in the cultural and historical heritage of any country, since they are coherent entities, which are clearly identified by their traditional character and architectural value [18]. The main aim of urban conservation is to adopt measures for preserving the historical environment, which will continue its existence by reconciling past and future and by not losing its historical appearance. It can be clearly determined that in various earlier research, the subject is examined using multidimensional approaches within the framework of these measures. In the context of these approaches, the importance of the conservation of physical characteristics is emphasized together with cultural, social and economic aspects [19]. Belfiore entitles a part of her book using this phrase: "opposition of transformation: conservation" [13].She defines conservation as a type of intervention in the existent city. Furthermore, she points out that in opposition to the strong waves of Modernism, which was against the past, the theory of urban conservative reorganization was a response-reaction that led to the definition and elaboration of scientific-philological considerations in architectural and urbanism culture (Sitte, Viollet-le-Duc, Ruskin, Stubben, Boito, etc.) [13]. Being the witness of past civilizations and the accumulation of thousands of years' creativeness, historic urban quarters are the most precious constituent of the cultural heritage [18] to which careful attention should be paid by city governors.

Pursuing the debate on urban conservation, I should point out that the general tendency of Islamic societies toward modernization caused people to reject traditional architecture; consequently, courtyard buildings became representative of what was old, degraded and inadequate. It is worth pointing out that nowadays, architects who intend to represent the spirit of Islamic building in their works refer to introversion. This means that introversion has been characterized as a key principle in Islamic architecture (Figure 5).
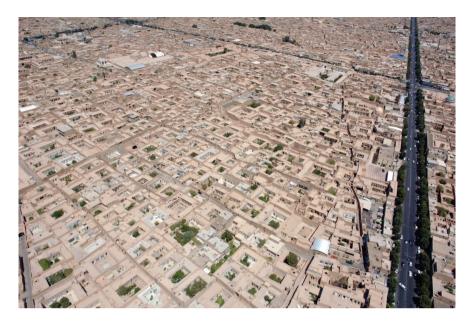
Figure 5. Appearance of new extroverted direct streets within the introverted-organic fabrics; historic center of Yazd city in Persia
(Source of picture: Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization of Yazd city, Persia, 2010)

Furthermore, the transformation process of cities, from introversion to extroversion, continued until even traditional buildings such as the mosque were implemented on the basis of extroverted principles. Likewise, the old Bazaar system became an extroverted one within the framework of new commercial centers. Considering all these changes, it seems a difficult task to revitalize historic neighborhoods which are mostly comprised of courtyard buildings. As the lifestyle has drastically changed and citizens have experienced a new social life, the regeneration of courtyard houses is not a simple task. There is another problem which makes it more complicated: due to technological restrictions, the majority of courtyard buildings are formed of just one or two storeys. From this point of view, there is an apparent contrast between new and old districts. This problem is not evident in European fabrics, as there is no drastic contrast between the inner city and peripheral areas [8]. Altogether, the main obstacles for the regeneration of isolated-introverted areas are the result of two factors which have drastically generated such contrast: (1) Difference in architectural typologies (introverted - extroverted); (2) Difference in height (one or two storied buildings - high buildings). This contrast is not observed in a European historic center; hence, from this perspective, a process of urban redevelopment is easier than for an introverted city center. On the contrary, at the present time, it would be difficult to make indigenous families return to the one or two storied courtyard houses. To achieve this objective, multi-dimensional planned solutions are needed. In some cases, a number of houses have been re-functionalized. This strategy has led to a relatively dynamic conservation of such buildings. Yet the main problem is related to revitalizing courtyard houses which have a particular residential function. First and foremost, urban conservators are attempting to solve this dilemma. They strive to find logical and

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achievable solutions to eliminate the obstacle concerning the *contrast* existing between the two concepts of city and lifestyle.

Conservation can be referred to as 'surface' conservation and 'deep' conservation. It can also be defined 'passive' or 'dynamic' conservation. Surface conservation deals with the external character of historical areas. For instance, in the historic center of Rome, passive conservation has controlled the appearance of buildings; however, it lacks dynamic programs for upgrading their exteriors. The old city with its peeling paint and sun-washed facades looks authentically old, but the interiors have been modernized. Deep conservation strives to restore historic environments to a rigorous, complete, and accurate form, inside as well as outside [20]. Notwithstanding the fact that in an Islamic historic center the streets practically lack any definite form of urban façade, city governors prevalently pursue a strategy of *surface* conservation. This can potentially create conflict between different urban conservation strategies. However, in European contexts, while the uncovering of the historical form may be authentic, conversion to livable occupancy unavoidably coats them with a veneer of modernity. Conservation often preserves the form but *modernizes* the surface [20]. On the contrary, in Oriental-Islamic fabrics, external facades are difficult to modernize on the one hand; on the other, the spatial structure of interior spaces must necessarily be altered, whereby the building can be adapted to the new necessities of modern life. Thus, the situation is more complicated than the process of urban redevelopment in European fabrics. Ragghianti (1946) believes that architecture and urbanism are not superficial arts relating exclusively to facades [21]. The process of reconstruction during the postwar period and the insertion of new parts into the old, are also important in Rogers' opinion (1958). He emphasizes that history is not 'static'. It has always been distinguished by continuous mutations. Hence, the expression *contemporaneity* is inevitable [21] (Figure 6).

Figure 6.The general tendency of Islamic communities toward modernization caused people to reject traditional architecture; consequently, courtyard buildings were representative of being old, degraded and inadequate. Inner city of Yazd, Persia
(Source of picture: Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization of Yazd city, Persia, 2010)

Factors such as privacy, personal space and territorial behavior affect perception of convenience and quality of environment [22]. The need for privacy is common amongst human beings and helps to meet other needs for security, affiliation and esteem [23]. However, the way people express this need and the way to achieve it, is different in different societies [24]. As described, traditional Islamic architecture puts strong emphasis on the privacy of buildings. After the emergence of Modern urbanization a drastic conflict was created between the two ways of perceiving personal space. Definitions of privacy have one characteristic in common, the important point being the ability of one person or a group of people to control audio-visual and olfactory interaction with other people [22]. In other words, "privacy" and "social interaction" are closely related. Hence, privacy should not lead to isolation [25]. A number of theorists have referred to the individual's need of territory as a need to manage the boundary between themselves and others [26].Accordingly, at present, this type of spatial configuration, based on strong *isolation,* cannot be pursued in urban regeneration plans. It is an extremely delicate matter. In revitalizing such fabrics, fundamental transformations and remodeling are inevitable in order to include isolated structures as part of urban spaces. In this way, central private spaces can be connected to public spaces. As can be observed, this strategy seems to be more complicated than the urban regeneration policies which are generally pursued in European contexts. On the one hand, the basic urban identity of such fabrics is based on introversion; while on the other hand, to modernize such areas, isolated private courtyards would necessarily have to be connected to public spaces. These contradictory objectives should be analyzed in more detail in urban revitalization strategies.

6. Conclusions

In a European historic city people are able to demonstrate their urban status through the site, type and style of their house; in Islamic fabrics it cannot be expressed on exterior facades. In a European city, expressing status and social condition through dwellings is normal and inevitable; forms of buildings are considered a code allowing each level of social stratification to be expressed. Conversely, the constitutive units of an introverted fabric generate their main spaces around isolated courtyards; so the network of streets is merely considered a pathway without openings, green spaces, decorative elements and other recognizable urban attractions. The facades of European houses can offer figurative expression. Different traits in the personality of a citizen can be aesthetically expressed on the walls. On the contrary, we see internal private aesthetics being kept hidden from outsiders. In addition, despite the uniformity of European facades, we can distinguish different architectural tastes, immediately identified by differences in details. In an Islamic historic center, however, these differences are not visible and all architectural details have been placed in the inner parts of courtyard buildings. In an Islamic city, architectural regulations are adopted to create private facades, whereas urban facades are left untouched. The complexity of introverted architecture is mostly based on spatial compositions within the interior spaces. Another aspect of Islamic urban beauty is related to the architectural-urban spatial compositions existing between prominent buildings and their surrounding environment. In this approach, the three-dimensionality of urban spaces is considered more important than the two-dimensionality of urban facades. In contrast, in European cities, the general form of squares, monumental streets and historic centers depends on the quality of the facades. As a result, everyone agrees with the necessity of there being some control over the appearance of these facades.

In addition, introversion of the urban fabric is defined in the relationship existing between full spaces and empty ones. While in a European city, urban aesthetics is predominantly related to the spatial configuration of squares, streets and so forth, introverted-Islamic urban beauty is based on the configuration of geometric-symmetric courtyards. With the emergence of modern alterations in the structure of open spaces, both European and Islamic historic centers have been negatively influenced. In introverted areas, the drastic separation existing between private courtyards and public spaces has caused old houses to remain unchanged. These isolated private courtyards can no longer continue their life without having a dynamic connection with public open spaces. This discontinuity between private and public spaces is one of the most controversial problems standing in the way of regenerating courtyard houses. Furthermore, there is a close relationship between introverted urban frameworks and the notion of esoteric beauty which is completely different from the European concept of beauty. This type of esoteric aesthetics is more sophisticated, indirect and mysterious. As a consequence, its physical appearance is more metaphoric and introverted.

As stated by Cohen (1994), it has also been recognized that if historical elements are not correctly integrated in daily life, efforts made for their protection will fail and urban centers will continue to empty: the past would simply become both a cultural stumbling block and a burden to the public. Correctly integrating historical elements into daily life inevitably calls for a positive change. Recognition of the value of historic urban neighborhoods as capital stock, in addition to their intangible aesthetic value, plays a crucial role in changing attitudes towards the protection/conservation of these areas [18]. Nevertheless, conservation of introverted-Islamic neighborhoods has its particularities. In such areas, the general tendency towards the extroverted urban system has gradually increased. Modern urban phenomena has caused the formation of a mixed fabric comprising both introverted and extroverted units. The chaotic formation of different typologies has generated fundamental alterations in urban features. It seems a difficult task to make indigenous families return to the one or two storied courtyard houses. First and foremost, urban conservators should try to find solutions to eliminate the obstacle concerning the contrast existing between the two different notions of city and lifestyle.

On the other hand, notwithstanding the fact that in Islamic historic centers, the streets practically lack a determined urban façade, the strategy of surface conservation is prevalently pursued by city governors. This can potentially create conflict between urban conservation strategies. On the one hand, external facades can hardly be modernized; on the other, the spatial framework of interior spaces should necessarily be altered if the building is to be adapted to the new necessities of a modern life. Thus, the situation is more complicated than the process of urban renewal in European historic centers. In fact, this type of spatial configuration, based on strong isolation, cannot be pursued in urban regeneration plans. To revitalize such fabrics fundamental transformations would inevitably occur where by static-isolated structures could be connected to urban places. In this way, central private spaces could be connected to public spaces.

Placing emphasis on the concept declared in the following quotation: "the future of architectural heritage depends largely upon its *integration* into the context of people's lives and upon the weight given to it in regional and town planning and development schemes", has resulted in the creation of a strong link, and a positive interdependency, between the "conservation" of historic urban quarters and their "revitalization" [18].

On the one hand, the basic urban identity of Islamic fabrics is based on principles of introversion; on the other, to connect private interior spaces to external public spaces a series of transformations and remodeling would be inevitable. Consequently, creating a logical "balance" between these two different aspects of urban regeneration in such fabrics must be taken into consideration by urban planners. Making a mistake could lead to damaging the authentic urban beauty of such districts. Likewise, merely pursuing restrictive conservation strategies can lead to creating a great urban museum where the spirit of dynamic urban life is not evident.

Notes

[1]   'Zoroastrianism', also called Mazdaism and Magianism, is a religion and philosophy based on the teachings of the prophet Zoroaster (also known as Zarathustra, in Avestan) and was formerly among the world's most widespread religions. It was probably founded some time before the 6th century BCE in the eastern part of ancient Greater Iran(http://www.bestirantravel.com/culture/zoroastrian.html).

[2]   A particular Persian vestibule.

[3]   The roofed part of a mosque with its spatial module based on four columns.

[4]   'Persepolis was the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire (ca. 550-330 BCE). It is situated 70 km northeast of the modern city of Shiraz in the Fars Province of modern Iran. UNESCO declared the citadel of Persepolis a World Heritage Site in 1979.

[5]   The 'Sassanid Empire' was the last pre-Islamic Persian Empire, ruled by the Sassanian Dynasty from AD 224 to AD 651.

[6]   'Bastides' are fortified new towns built in medieval Languedoc, Gascony and Aquitaine during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

[7]   In the south of Switzerland

[8]   1824-1884, Italian traveler

[9]   'Sufism' is defined by its adherents as the inner, mystical dimension of Islam (A. Godlas, *Sufism's Many Paths.* University of Georgia). A practitioner of this tradition is generally known as a 'Sufi'. Classical Sufi scholars have defined Sufism as "a science whose objective is the reparation of the heart and turning it away from all else but God" (A. Zarruq; Z. Istrabadi; H.Y., Hanson, *The Principles of Sufism* (Amal Press, 2008). Alternatively, in the words of the Darqawi Sufi teacher Ahmad ibnAjiba, "a science through which one can know how to travel into the presence of the Divine, purify one's inner self from filth, and *beautify* it with a variety of praiseworthy traits". (An English translation of Ahmad ibnAjiba's biography has been published by Fons Vitae)

[10]   http://islam.uga.edu/sufismintro.html accessed August 2012

[11]   '*Fitra*' is an Arabic word meaning disposition, nature, constitution, or instinct. In a mystical context, it can connote intuition or insight. It is similar to the Calvinist term "*Sensus divinitatis*".

[12]   http://islam.uga.edu/sufismdhikrlove.html accessed August 2012

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