

IDENTITY CRISIS DUE TO TRANSFORMATION OF HOME ENVIRONMENT: THE CASE FOR TWO MUSLIM CITIES, DHAKA AND HOFUF

Shihabuddin MAHMUD

First Received: 12.03.2006;
Final Text: 29.09.2007

Keywords: transformation of old dwellings;
neighbourhood identity; traditional housing;
domestic spaces; Dhaka; Hofuf..

INTRODUCTION

Affiliation and bonding of community members with one another within a neighbourhood is important and a way of acquiring identity. As neighbourhoods are geographical locations in which people live side by side in a limited range of physical arrangements, the spatial proximity inevitably produces certain kinds of intrusions or annoyances among the neighbours that share the space and acquire identity. Similarly, a neighbourhood also refers to the physical setting, activities, and boundaries, where the communal life refers to the norms, values and common beliefs of a group of people. Because neighbourhood today serves many of the functions of the communal life, in many neighbourhoods, especially poor ones, reliance on neighbours may be essential despite difference in the political and socio-economic background. Altman and Wandersman (1987) pointed out that the communal life provides the communal identity and essential characteristics, such as, the presence of local institutions, official recognition, the type of housing they contain, the pattern of social interaction and organization that they exhibit, the ethnic, socio-economic, and demographic makeup of residents.

Population increase in urban centers has an impact on the built environment. On the one hand, poor people of rural origin migrate to big cities in search of job and economic security; on the other, expansion of the city and new development in the periphery with modern facilities encourages the affluent to move out from traditional buildings. Recently the issue of globalization also becomes an important factor for more job opportunities, which further accelerates the physical changes of old centers to accommodate the incoming population. As a result of this phenomenon, communal life and identity are gradually diminishing (Mahmud, 2001). A number of factors can be identified for such rapid changes in traditional neighbourhoods. In many urban studies and research, urban scholars point out these factors as, the changing social structure of the family; the



Figure 1a. The map showing the Old and New Centre of Dhaka (Islam, 1996, 25).

Figure 1b. The old centre of Hofuf divided into three main districts (Courtesy of the Documentation Centre, College of Architecture, KFUPM).

idea of extended family diminishing; diversity of the jobs and mobility of people keeping family members apart; maintenance of old traditional dwellings becoming difficult; emergence of developers and purchase of modern apartments with all facilities in restricted, preplanned, secured neighbourhoods; and potential of existing traditional houses for rental purposes for low-income generations. (Castells, 1985; Flanagan, 1990; Drakakis-Smith, 1997).

Rapid migration of a large number of skilled and unskilled labourers to urban centers increased the demand in housing and accommodation. To accommodate this number, many traditional dwellings are transforming day by day but without coping with any building code or prescribed rules from the authorities. As the initial settlers are moving out and housing is occupied by people from outside, the traditional lifestyle is changing in the neighbourhood and place attachment and identity might be questioned. Dhaka (1), the capital city of Bangladesh, has long been regarded as one of the fastest growing cities and at present the city accommodates nearly 10 million inhabitants and 50 percent of this population is migrants (El-Shakhs and Shoshkes, 1998). The destitute condition of migrants couples with the severe shortage in the supply of residential land, accelerating transformation of the traditional housing stock especially in the old part of Dhaka (Figure 1a).

Residential buildings in the old part of Dhaka are 2-3 storied, usually around 100 years old, and under the occupation of middle class families who either occupied these buildings by force or bought them with a very nominal price from the Hindu Jamindars (2). In 1971 during the liberation war, there was another breakthrough, a good number of Hindu families finally decided to move to India and sold their property. Thus, a major transformation took place in such areas of old Dhaka (Muntasir, 1993). For another 30 years, the middle class Muslim families (who had business around the old centre of Dhaka) were residing in such houses. In the last two decades due to a number of reasons (3) these houses have been divided and subdivided into many small residential or commercial units.

Housing industry in Saudi Arabia and Hofuf in particular has experienced major changes during the last four decades. Economic growth in Saudi Arabia encouraged the government to start implementing a series of five year development plans, from 1970 onwards, in order to benefit from oil revenues (4). These plans were intended to develop economic and human resources and to enhance the social order and physical infrastructure (Al-Naim, 2001). The Transformation from the traditional to the modern way of living for the Saudis was a compromise between accepting modernity and also keeping the religious and cultural values. After the oil discovery, government declaration (5) of providing land for local people through an agreement made housing development possible in a mass scale. In addition, increase in the crude oil revenue beginning in the 1970s created a boom in national economy bringing a sharp rise in national and household income. This increase encouraged the government's program for providing free plots and the REDF loans, have made it possible for many Saudi households in Hofuf to build new, "better quality" bigger dwellings. That is perhaps one reason why the traditional Saudi landlords have moved out from the old city centre to the new development areas and gradually transformed the old dwellings for rental units (Figure 1b). Beside serving as rental units and income generating spaces for the Saudi owners, these houses also solve the major housing scarcity for the vast number of low-

1. After the Hindu rulers, Dhaka was successively under the control of Turks and Pathans for a long time (from 1299 to 1608) before the arrival of the Mughals. After 1947 only few areas of the old city such as Sutrapur, Dalpatti, Bangla Bazar and around Baksi Bazaar remained of important locality, which retained their middle class status until today (Islam, 1996).

2. Jamindars are the landowners. In 1947 when the Indian sub-continent had been divided, many such Jamindars sold their properties to local Muslim families and moved to India and thus Muslims became the new owners.

3. The chronic problem of traffic jam in the old centre is vital. However, the most usual case is that the owner moves to apartments in the new part of Dhaka for education and better living of their children. Maintaining such big houses for the old generation is almost impossible and finally these houses are potential for rental uses and other commercial enterprises.

income expatriate which the government and in particular municipality could not handle.

This paper claims that in the old Dhaka, traditional way of living within the neighbourhood is now changing and people are now losing the neighbourhood identity once they were proud of, since the physical built environment is transforming. In Hofuf, the *fereej* system which developed in the traditional society as a safe-guard for neighbourhood identity is also diminishing gradually due to the modernization both in the built environment and in social life.

METHOD AND SCOPE OF RESEARCH

Traditional houses in the two cities were examined in terms of a number of criteria to yield their potential as **physical form** that enhances social interaction among neighbours; their **capacity** to accommodate new functions; their **flexibility**; their **location and accessibility**; their **age and quality at present**; their **layout and size**; their **function and topologic relationship**; and their **open and covered spaces** in terms of changing functions. How the process of transformation in such traditional and old houses can achieve a unique architectural form, expression and spatial organization which may be compatible with modern requirements, has also been considered. In attempt to understand spatial organization of traditional houses and the transformation through time, an analysis of their basic spatial formation, components and elements has been accomplished and examined by means of questionnaires, in depth interviews and a series of personal observations.

For Dhaka, one neighbourhood named DalPatti has been chosen to understand the physical characteristics that accelerated the social interaction between families of the same clan. From this neighbourhood (Dalpatti)(6), only three houses were chosen which had internal connections and occupied previously by the same family members. For Hofuf, a neighbourhood named Anna'athil has been chosen as one of the oldest settlements. Three old houses were chosen for the interviews with women households. For both cities one major criterion in choosing families is to understand how they meet and where, as there is substantial amount of transformation compared to their previous residences. An objective of this research is to understand the degree of social interactions and up to what extent the residents feel the attachment with their neighbourhoods. Their expectations from the neighbourhood and how they feel they can contribute; the domestic spaces they intend to change for better communications with others; whether or not there are play areas for children the children and where these are; the house-satisfaction levels of residents and their genuine problems, all were investigated to understand the nature of the neighbourhood the residents relations with their housing environment. Questionnaires aimed to evaluate the daily interaction of residents with domestic spaces and the degree and extent of transformation realized by the owner as well as by the current tenants.

PHASES OF TRANSFORMATION IN DHAKA AND HOFUF

The phases of transformation in the traditional houses both in Dhaka and Hofuf have experienced two distinct levels of transformation. In Dhaka, the first level of transformation was by the Hindu landlords who were the original owners who also constructed the dwellings. The second phase of transformation was by the Muslim families as they are currently occupying

4. Dammam became important when oil was discovered in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. Its close location to the oil fields made it a favorite settling area for local oil field workers. The administrative power moved from Hofuf to Dammam and Dammam municipality became independent in 1947. Governor of the East province Prince Abdullah bin Jalawy had requested the assistance of ARAMCO planning office in providing a plan for the growing city of Dammam (Al-Said, 1992).

5. The government of his majesty the king wishes to encourage urbanization (Umran) and to provide comfort for his citizens. Every Saudi citizen is eligible for a grant of land for building, depending on the conditions issued by the organizational (Tanzem) committee; however, the government will not tax the given lands for the period of ten years beginning from the date of obtaining the permission (MOMRA, 1980).

6. The basic layout and orientation of these houses, though chosen from different neighbourhoods, are similar except for the materials used. The houses chosen in Dhaka are one, two and three-storied, respectively and all are constructed during the British time and under the occupation of Hindu families (Author's analysis, Dhaka, 2003). In Hofuf the size, quality and physical setting of these neighbourhoods are different as one is closer to the centre than the other, but they have similar domestic spaces with similar functions (Al-Naim, 1998).

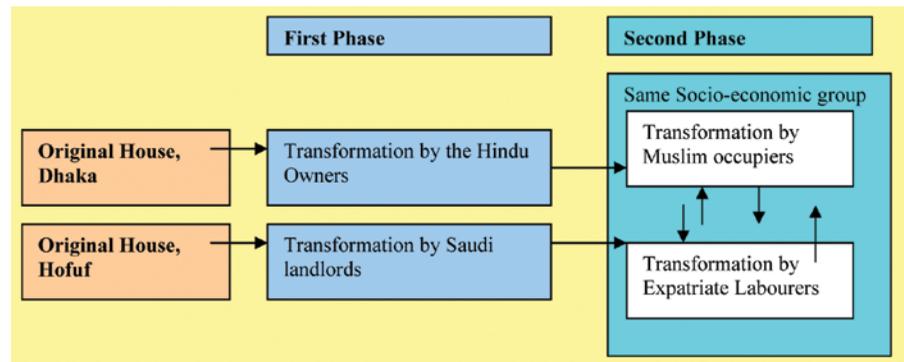


Figure 2. Two Phases of Transformation and the Socio-economic Group in the Second Phase.

the dwellings. Similarly in Hofuf, the first phase of transformation was by the Saudi landlords, and the second phase by the expatriate labourers who have the tenant status. At both levels there is a substantial amount of transformation in both cities. The basic need for such a transformation is due to current pressure to find more habitable spaces, to increase their income levels, and to cope with the influence of modern technology. It has been observed that after the transformation realized by the moving in new tenants, social interaction among neighbours declined. The short lived houses still need to achieve bondages among neighbours and they need to adapt with the new habitable spaces.

MEANING OF COMMUNAL LIFE AND NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTIVITY

When people have a shared culture, that is, shared norms of behavior and values, it generates the symbols of group identity. Each person wants to be treated as a unique and valuable individual but also has a simultaneous need to belong to something greater than him/her; something more than one; and feelings of something greater than self occur in the experience of community. Manning, Curtis and Mc Millen (1996) denote that a healthy community has a sense of where it should go, and what it might become and simultaneously it will have a positive and future-oriented role image which provides direction and motivation for its members.

The idea of neighbourhood identity suggests that people attach psychological, social, and cultural significance to specific space and they thereby bond themselves to an environment. Thus, identity implies certain bonding or mergence of a person and place such that the place takes its identity from the dweller and the dweller takes his or her identity from the place. However, attachment to a particular neighbourhood may help to achieve an identity but the attachment takes undefined time for an individual. To explain the components of identity, Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff (1983) pointed out that,

“People’s place attachment goes directly with space interaction in any residential area of an individual while identity refers to memories, ideas, feelings, attitudes, values, preferences, meanings and conceptions of behavior and experience which relate to the variety and complexity of physical setting that defines existence of every human being” (1983, 59).

Although there exists a mere difference between the concept of a community and a neighbourhood, Davies and Herbert (1993) differentiated them by size and mentioned that a community is a group of neighbourhoods. Abughazzeh (1996) pointed out that neighbourhood

spaces in many contemporary communities, particularly in the Third World cities, often have the appearance of no man's land. Thus peoples' participation in designing a neighbourhood is nothing but giving people a genuine involvement in shaping up their own communities.

What Rivlin (1987) means by neighbourhood's life is nothing different than communal life within the miniature social systems that are part of a larger social order with cultural background. The social organization of the neighbourhood creates patterns of authority and channels of communication. A neighbourhood defines its social identity, the shared rules of neighbourhood life, and the traditional means of dealing with proximity problems. According to Unger and Wandersman (1983), a strong sense of community is positively related to length of residence, satisfaction with the community, and the number of neighbours one can identify and these are positive attributes for achieving a neighbourhood identity.

The notion of communal life differs among developed and developing countries and represents many activities and relationships. Whereas communal life is determined by ghettos of ethnic groups in developed countries, income usually determines where to live and which particular

Table 1. Neighbourhood Characteristics based on three ideals (adapted from Warren, 1977; McAndrew, 1993, 223).

Types from three Dimensions	Identity Sense of belonging	Interaction of Active behaviour	Linkage Outside contacts	Dhaka case	Hofuf case
1. Integral (Integrated: Internally and Externally) Active with face to face contacts among residents; residents also maintain connections to larger community outside the neighbourhood.	Yes	Yes	Yes	During Hindu occupiers (Figure2)	
2. Parochial (Localized) High interaction neighbourhoods that have little involvement with the outside world	Yes	Yes	No	During Muslim occupiers	During original Saudi owners (Figure2)
3 Diffuse (Inactive and Poorly Connected) Neighbourhood lacking informal social interaction in which residents vary in the degree of connectedness to the outside world.	Yes	No	No		
4 Stepping-Stone (Short-term Stay) Neighbourhood made up entirely of people whose allegiance is to outside groups.	No	Yes	Yes	Current occupiers	
5. Transitory (Residual and Mixed) Neighbourhood characterized by low interaction, a complete lack of identity, and high turnover.	No	No	Yes		Current occupiers low-income expatriates
6. Anomic (Disorganized) Disorganized neighbourhood in which residents have no connection to each other or to outside groups.	No	No	No		

7. The word *iskan* means dwelling and housing. In traditional Muslim house, the social unit usually shelters an extended family of several generations, as part of a larger clan or tribal unit.

communal life to choose for the people of the developing world. Regarding this issue, Altman and Werner (1985) point out that the way people construct meanings around places they live in, and the way designers make decisions about the residential needs of others, is necessary to conceptualize the communal life as having meanings that transcend physical boundaries of a shelter. However, communal identity also depends on the integration of a person with the people and the physical setting around him.

For classification of neighbourhoods, Brower (1996) defined neighbourhood simply as open and closed, by determining the interaction with physical and social aspects. On the other hand, Warren's (1977) classification was based on three basic characteristics (Table 1), namely the type and amount of interaction among residents; the sense of identity that residents have; and the amount of connection between residents and the outside world. However, it is difficult to say if the western classification fits the neighbourhoods of the Third World cities.

As different definitions serve different interests, the neighbourhood may be seen as a source of place-identity, an element of urban form, or a unit of decision-making.

UNDERSTANDING OF A MUSLIM HOUSE AND ITS SOCIAL INTERACTION FOR IDENTITY

As far as the domestic space organization is concerned, old dwellings of Muslim origin illustrate different structures and forms that may not fit the conventional understanding of modern apartment housing today. According to Bianca (2000), the philosophy of domestic spaces within the context of housing in the Islamic world has three Arab terms "*iskan*" (7), "*harim*", and "*dar*". Although the family clan is marked by a dominant male ancestry and patriarchal character, domestic space of a house like in other cultures, is dominated by the female and the main power belongs to the mother or grand mother as the leading personality.

Chowdhury (1998) denotes that urban houses are nothing but the replica of rural houses where male and female domain, and privacy of women create a number of semi-private and semi-public spaces in a Muslim house. A number of scholars also point out that in some Muslim societies, family and especially women are strictly separated from public life on the street and this strict segregation of the women and the separation of the public and private life results in two distinct areas within a house: the private family area, and the semi-private guest areas for the men (Chowdhury, 1998; Samizay and Kazimee, 1993; Akbar, 1998; Al-Faqih, 1989). To develop identity there has to be a common ground, a common space to share, and a homogeneous group of people to interact. It is perhaps the contribution of women to develop such close-knit relations among different families as the basis to achieve communal life and identity.

In Dhaka, although these houses were divided and subdivided over past decades, one common feature is that until recently they all maintained the common social space as inner courtyard, where most daily activities are performed. There is a visual access from the rooftop for women and a backdoor through which female members can go from one house to another, while male members are at work during the day time. Women are always in need of something especially while cooking; it seems they developed their social activities and interaction during everyday life. Beside the social, cultural and religious values, the physical layout also

8. Private houses and clusters of houses in a Muslim city are the determining component of the urban fabric, not only because of their sheer quantitative dominance, but also due to the particular attitude of Islam towards formal civic institutions and relatively low emphasis on monumental public buildings.

9. In a traditional society, despite differences in culture the use of courtyard or backyard is seen to be the most essential space in the dwelling. Especially in agricultural societies, courtyards are the most important place for multi-purpose activities and economic productivity (Rapaport, 1969; Samizay and Kazimee, 1993).

accelerates these activities, developing strong bonds among families even if they are not relatives.

In a traditional Muslim house (8) as the grown-up sons got married, the *dar* often had to undergo a division in order to accommodate a new individual unit. Thus one room or a group of rooms were arranged to become a house within a house (Bahammam, 1998). An extra storey could be added, new units could be attached to the main house, or existing neighbouring house would be connected to the main house. Such an architectural transformation process that linked the social evolution of families could be a common characteristic in many Muslim cities. Although the development of Dhaka in its initial phase was mainly dominated by Hindu rulers, it reasonably resembles the Muslim characteristics of the incremental development, as well as the nature of the transformations it underwent.

To summarize a traditional Muslim house, one can understand the interior disposition of the dwelling, based on a number of major cellular units grouped around a central distribution space, that is the courtyard (Figure 6). The space organization of such a dwelling reflects the user need, the spatial requirements and the incremental developments with mutual understanding among neighbours. The courtyard house (9) was indeed the favored typology of most Arab-Islamic cities and their enclosed and introverted domestic space responded ideally to the requirements of Islamic social order. Besides there are valuable environmental and climatic advantages: the walled precinct provides protection for families and provides social space for women to interact, while the male is outside in the neighbourhood. The physical entity of the over all plan helps these families to share the same space and develop an emotional attachment and involvement. Therefore, it is the hub of the family that epitomizes the entire dwelling and its life (Erman, 1997; Saini, 1998).

Veranda is another important domestic space, often regarded as the semi-open space in a dwelling. In Dhaka, the veranda and rooftop space are mostly dominated by women in different times of the day, when their male counter part is not at home. There is visual access from verandas and rooftop spaces where women converse: these are spaces for their socialization which create an informal relationship between neighbours. Unfortunately the presence of both spaces do now decrease, for the sake of providing more habitable spaces and rental units for extra income. As a result all social spaces are getting limited, which hinders social action among the women household.

Although this particular space is present in modern urban apartment buildings, the use of such spaces, especially in Arab societies, has less impact while in other Muslim societies this space is an essential one. A common observation in most apartment buildings is that, they convert this space into bedroom or storage if necessary, just by covering with temporary partitions or other materials. *Liwan* is another common space in the Muslim society, especially in dry climatic regions that resembles veranda, but the major difference is that they are placed in the interior and have no visual connection with the exterior. Both veranda and *liwan* protect the household from unfavorable climatic conditions.

Like the courtyard, rooftop is also an important workable domestic space in some societies. In some indigenous housing, rooftop becomes the space of architectural significance as they complement the courtyard in use and social function. In countries with hot climate, rooftop can function as a sun deck for drying things and in the evening can serve for social

10. '*Mafraj*' is an enclosed space for men's social ceremonies, including the popular sessions in the late afternoon and evening (Bianca, 2000).

activities to escape the heat inside the house. Rooftops are also favorite places for children to play different games and they may serve as links to other roofs to form a complex network accommodating another level of neighbourly interaction (Kaizer, 1984, Bulos and Teymur, 1993). Roof top space in Yemen for example, is in contrast to other Muslim houses, as the male reception could also be located on the top of the house. The relatively recent habit of building a *mafraj* (10) on the roof, with windows offering generous views of the city skyline, has in effect marked the townscape of Sana'a.

As this physical setting is gradually transforming and social spaces are diminishing, neighbours are now visiting shopping malls and restaurants. Their interaction with people from the same neighbourhood is now replaced by interaction with other people. Thus community bonding and community events are fading away, having a direct impact on the neighbourhood bonds and identity. In most cases, there exists no defined boundary or territory of outdoor spaces, as they are used commonly with neighbours. Thus, the domestic space of households can extend well beyond the actual dwelling (Samizay and Kazimee, 1993; Chaskin, 1997).

TRADITIONAL *FEREEJ* SYSTEM FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD IDENTITY

Fereej comprises the basic structure of social interrelationship that we might call an extended clan. This concept expresses the intimate relationship between people and the physical environment. It also expresses their collective identity, as well as their individual membership to a specific group and the whole of society (Al-Naim, 2006). Being a member in a *fereej* means that a link with people and place both, has been developed. The sense of home in this sense stems first from the feeling of being part of this social and physical entity. It implies a sense of the group, and is considered both as a point of reference for individuals and groups, and a link between them and the whole community. When we say "this is a *fereej*", we mean that a minimum set of shared values, norms and habits already exists and are practised by those who live there, thereby forming a homogeneous residential community to achieve identity.

It is difficult to attribute the origin of the *fereej* system to this phenomenon alone, for in many cases, groups of people collectively moved from one place to another and created a *fereej*. Still, in the traditional Hofuf, division of the house due to the expansion of an extended family was one of the main mechanisms creating this system. Most of the cul-de-sacs had an outer door to enable inhabitants act freely in the street. For example, women could visit each other without covering their heads or faces and in the absence of men, the front door usually remained closed to provide women with maximum freedom. This physical representation can be seen as a symbol of identity, saying to other members in the community 'this is our place'.

Thus, in the concept of *fereej*, the physical meaning works as a mediator between the most private parts of the home environment, the dwelling, and the whole community, while in its social meaning it was employed to define different groups in society, to provide them a certain level of security developing a mechanism to define places and the corresponding people who lived in them. This reflects the need to project clan identity by defining its territory both socially and physically. Territoriality, therefore, can be understood as a 'self-other boundary mechanism that involves



Figure 3a. The inorganic layout shows the *fereej* system and the *sekkas* (paths) connecting backdoors and the common courtyard as the main women domain. (Al-Naim, 1998, 44-45).

Figure 3b. The roof path and connection between different houses in old Hofuf. (Al-Naim, 1998, 44-45).

personalization or marking of a place or object, and communication that is 'owned' by a group'.

The *fereej* system in the traditional home environment defined the domain of women and children and was supportive of a lively social life for women. Through the roof path, women would meet their neighbours and socialize with them without using external spaces. Parents also never stopped their children from playing outside home because there were no hazards for them (**Figure 3**). Children knew the *fereej* boundary and practised their activities within intimate spaces outside their homes. This is not the case for the contemporary apartment living, in which women have no outside space to meet their neighbours and children are forced to play inside their homes because people and places have not yet been defined by inhabitants.

DEGREE OF TRANSFORMATION IN THE TRADITIONAL HOUSES

Transformation of a traditional house is inevitable as they are dynamic and ever changing; however, such transformation varies according to family requirements; their comfort; duration of living; and above all, the tenure security (Kellett, and Tipple, 2000). Brand (1994) proposes two categories of transformation namely 'add-In type' and 'add-On type', where the former refers to changes done within the existing building and the 'add-On type' means the additional construction done on the building or within the premises, which increases the floor area.

Beside these two types, the transformation of traditional buildings of Dhaka and Hofuf in our case studies will be evaluated in four main categories, namely 'slight adjustment'; 'addition and division'; 'total conversion'; and 'reconstruction'.

Transformation by Hindu Owners

The houses that belonged to the Hindu owners in the old part of Dhaka were the most gorgeous and aristocratic residential areas for the higher income group. Majority of these houses were constructed during the British time and ornamentation of classical style is visible by Greek or Roman columns and arches in the front façades. These houses had three portions; the front portion namely the '*bahirmahal*' belonged to the male guest. Much later, these rooms were slightly adjusted and changed into offices or other business enterprises for the owner without changing the physical setting (**Table 3a**). Major changes occurred during the marriage of their sons who needed a more private area and a separate toilet or bathroom. In the initial phase, these houses had animal area and servant quarter which ultimately had to be changed to bed rooms, due to lack of spaces and for subletting purposes. One important feature of these houses is having boundary walls with empty spaces as backyards, which in case of need can be developed incrementally as the family size is getting bigger.

Transformation by Muslim Occupiers

A major transfer of ownership of the traditional houses in old Dhaka to the Muslim families took place after 1947, during the separation of the Indian sub-continent. In 1971, a second phase of such transfer of the land-title was experienced, when many Hindu families finally decided to move to Calcutta permanently. The transformation in the hands of Muslim families was gradual and in the initial phase, changes started by converting *Puja Ghar* into bed rooms; altering the orientation of the toilets; and the position of the kitchens (**Table 3a**). A major transformation took place in the last

<i>a. Transformation by Slight Adjustment</i>	b. Transformation by Addition and Division	c. Transformation by Total Conversion	<i>d. Total Transformation by Reconstruction</i>
Slight adjustments are usually done by functional change rather than the physical change of spaces, especially in the interior. Most of the traditional houses were adjusted to be used similar to the new housing types and this change is due to electricity and availability of modern household equipments such as refrigerators and automatic air coolers. It is a common practice in both cities that there is a need for bed rooms that are produced by transforming the function of drawing rooms or <i>mejlis</i> , <i>liwan</i> or storage areas.	Transformation by addition and division are commonly used in the traditional houses. This kind of transformation enables to increase the number of rooms in the houses to satisfy the needs of the dwellers as well as the owners, who sublet their houses. Moreover, most additions are done to provide the services that are compatible with the modern lifestyle. Addition of bathrooms and kitchens within the premises are important as rental units are created. Similarly addition of rooms in the rooftop is common in Dhaka, but in Hofuf the addition of rooms is with temporary materials. Division is also encouraged for the protection of maximum privacy, since the space is shared by more than one family.	The transformation by which the places were completely converted physically into another use may be called total conversion. As the life style changed, the need for area for animals has also diminished and therefore, the majority of animal areas have almost always been converted into some kind of new spatial use. Total conversion is mostly observed for economic production of spaces, such as rooms converted into shops like grocery, clinic or barber shop. While the courtyard is difficult to convert, it is possible if there were two courtyards for one of them to be converted to another use.	The demolition and reconstruction of the traditional house illustrates how much the people are influenced by new house plan-types, materials, and technology in their decisions on houses. Conversion of many areas into commercial uses increases the land value. New streets and urban clearance in the traditional fabric are the main factors that encourage these methods of transformation. The location of the house played an important role with regard to its ability to undergo reconstruction: the more the houses were close to the main street, the more likely the transformation by reconstruction would occur. The more close the house to the commercial area, the more likely it is to be reconstructed as a commercial facility.
Slight adjustment did not have any impact that made obstacle for usual social contact.	Addition and division diminished the social spaces to some extent. However, it transfers the social activities to other spaces, which may not be suitable.	This conversion actually injected some economic activities as a way of survival strategy and using home spaces for income generation, may also bring some social interaction.	Total transformation encouraged people to adapt the apartment living and also to bring people from outside the community. The residence is transitory and not able to achieve neighbourhood bond and identity.

Table 2. Four Different Categories of Transformation as a Tool for Evaluation.

two decades which were inevitable due to increase in the number of family members, married sons needed individual living units. As family members of the second generation got involved in various jobs, rather than taking over the same family business, they started to move to newly developed areas of the city and rent their old dwelling units. Thus, the vacant units were occupied by middle class and lower middle class tenants working within the proximity. The heavy demand for rental units encouraged owners to subdivide the house into individual family units (**Figure 3b**). As a result, some basic requirements such as separate entrances, toilets, kitchens and washing areas were created by converting and transforming other domestic spaces. There are also cases where the landlord resides in the same house, subletting a portion for extra rental income to minimize the maintenance cost.

Dhaka	Adjustment	(%)	Addition	(%)	Conversion	(%)	Reconstruction
Dhaka Gupta Bari (Dalpotti)	-bed room into chamber and study room	4	-toilet and bathroom in the courtyard	2	-animal area into toilet	1	
	-bedroom into family sitting in first floor	4	- tubewell and <i>chowbachcha</i> (11) in the bathroom first floor	1	-kitchen into study room for children	2	
	-bedroom into <i>Puja ghar</i>	2	- new apartment in the second floor	15			
	-animal area at the open backyard.	3	-store room, kitchen and servant's room at the back of the house	5			

Dhaka	Adjustment	(%)	Addition	(%)	Conversion	(%)	Reconstruction	(%)
Dhaka Gupta Bari (Dalpotti)	*Five rental units	3	-tube well in the courtyard	1	-drawing room and bed room into printing press	9	-Demolishing the back part and reconstruction of the two-storied dwelling unit.	16
	-study room into printing press office	4	-bedroom and bathroom in the 2nd floor	7	- <i>puja ghar</i> into kitchen	3		
	-veranda for binding books	3	-guestroom in the first floor	3	- WC in the drawing room both first and second floor	5		
	-guest room in the second floor							

Table 3. Physical Transformation in Gupta Bari, Old Dhaka.

a. Transformation by Hindu Jamindars.

b. Transformation by Muslim Occupiers.

11. '*Chowbachcha*' is a traditional way for water reservoir, where water is collected from tube well or from well in the open courtyard of the houses. It is common in almost all traditional houses, from the times the tap water was not introduced and these reservoirs are used for bathing and washing purposes even today.

12. '*Mejlis*' and/or '*majlis*' is one of the most important units of a traditional house, where they receive the guest. This space can be in the ground floor as well as in the first floor (Al-Naim,1998).

Transformation by Saudies

Saudi landlords starting to transform their houses from the beginning of the modernization, with oil discovery bringing increase in the GNP, is important factor for the redevelopment of Hofuf city. The first transformation brought in modern bathrooms and kitchens. These utilities were added to the house after the introduction of the new housing types in the area. Moreover, the addition of bathrooms occurred in the guest area and also in the *majlis* lobby at the main entrance, to guarantee the privacy for family members and to separate the private and semi private spaces. The new electrical appliances encouraged many Saudi inhabitants to transform the animal area or the *liwan* to a new kitchen (Table 4a). The family area had no essential transformation in terms of use. However, new needs arose for rooms for any special function in the house, such as the women *majlis* (12) and the dining room. The need for special room for every person in the house forced inhabitants to increase the number of rooms by adding rooms on the roof level.

Transformation by Expatriate Labourers

The evacuation of many Saudi families from the traditional areas created vacancies, which were ultimately filled by expatriate labourers. Most of the transformations done by expatriate labourers were adjustment of the function of some domestic spaces to use them as bedrooms or sewing workshops (Table 4b). Some important functions in the traditional house were superseded by other functions, such as the reuse of the *majlis* into

Hofuf	Adjustment	(%)	Addition	(%)	Conversion	(%)	Reconstruction	(%)
Hofuf (Anna' athil)	-Murabba as bedroom	12	-Bed room in the roof	6	- Liwan to kitchen and storage	7		
	-dar as bedroom	7	-Bedroom in Majlis saifi	11				

Case Hofuf	Adjustment	(%)	Addition	(%)	Conversion	(%)	Reconstruction	(%)
Hofuf (Anna' athil)	- Women Majlis as bedroom	8	-partition in majlis for bedroom	2				
			-kitchen in the courtyard	3				
			-bathroom in the courtyard	2				

Table 4. Transformation by Saudi Households by Adjustment, Addition and Conversion.

- a. Transformation by the Saudis.
- b. Transformation by Expatriate Labourers.

bedrooms or workshops. Also, some *murabba'ahs* were changed into sewing workshops. Other features of this transformation were the addition of more than one kitchen and bathroom to the house and dividing the *majlis* into several bedrooms to serve a larger number of users.

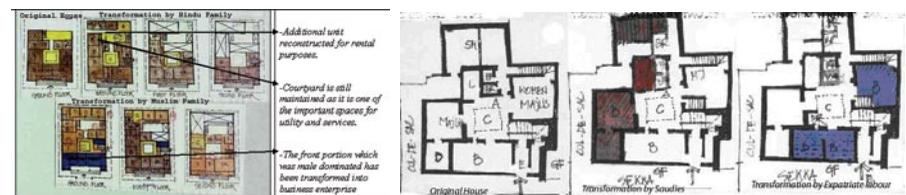
THE FEREEJ SYSTEM IN TRANSITION IN DHAKA AND HOFUF

The traditional dwellings in the old Dhaka have a social network which is also reflected in the physical layout. The old dwellings have experienced several owners and every time they have gone through some alternations for various reasons. Usually the dwelling was subdivided due to married sons and in time for making rental units. Although the houses were divided with some walls, there were common places, especially the inward looking courtyard which was used by all family members. The common spaces were also for water resource, where a number of activities were taking place (Figure 9b). One house was connected with another through back doors and *golis* (narrow path with in neighbourhoods). There were visual access from the roof-top spaces and social interaction was very much active during daytime exclusively for women. In the evening, women usually met either on the rooftop or in the verandas. This connectedness gradually diminished due to the transformation of these spaces for making more rooms for renting out and extra income.

The socio-economic status of Saudi citizens changed dramatically after the oil discovery, which had an impact also on their home environment and life style. The *fereej* system was one among many cultural and physical targets for such changes (Figure 3). The new roads ignored the social tissues that bound the physical environment together. They divided the traditional quarters into small pieces, each containing parts of different *fereejs*. They broke the hidden social and physical boundaries, because the new physical

Figure 4. The Transformation and Gradual Increment of Gupta Bari showing Subdivision and Rental Units.

Figure 5. The Gradual Increment and subdivision of the house among three brothers and showing connections within three units (Al-Naim, 187).



boundaries divided the unitary mass of the traditional quarter. This situation created a chaotic physical and social environment which made the traditional home environment uninhabitable, and so people started to move to other places.

The original owner moved out of the house for newly developed areas and used very temporary materials for the separation of units, which later deteriorated losing the physical liveliness and social interaction. This impact could be felt in the neighbourhood identity. Though the tenants are residing there, they have interaction with only the places they work. Some houses were also transformed into apartments where the only common space is the stair case or the lift area. People hardly know each other and their next-door neighbour. It will be wrong to call this as the reason for the new physical design of apartments, for it is true that families have different lifestyles, jobs and social status, changing their concern about whom to mix with. Equally, spaces for children entertainment and play also decreased substantially, forcing them grow within four walls, with very little scope for their physical development.

FINDINGS OF SPATIAL FORMATION: TRANSFORMATION REFLECTED IN SOCIAL ACTION AND NEIGHBOURHOOD IDENTITY

Despite the significant differences in socio-economic, cultural, political and in climatic condition between Dhaka and Hofuf, a number of similarities are present in their physical layout, as well as in the process of transformation of their domestic spaces in home environment (**Figure 7**). Although the argument based on transformation of old dwellings calls as the main reason the decrease in social interactions, which brings the decline in neighbourhood bondage and identity, findings show other important factors for losing neighbourhood identity besides the effects of transformation.

It has been observed that in both cases, physical obstacles hindered social interaction among families. However, it is more the mental understanding and way of lifestyle that caused the crisis in achieving neighbourhood identity. In Dhaka transformation of the physical environment could not make a significant impact, as tenants are more interested to earn extra money for survival than prefer social interaction with neighbours. **Table 3** shows that adjustment, addition and conversion during Hindu Jamindars are 13%, 23% and 3% respectively, while the Muslim occupiers mainly converted and reconstructed. Unlike the Hofuf case, the typical landlord in Dhaka lives with the tenants, sharing the same space. Previous occupiers complain as they had to adapt with apartment living which they hated and felt extremely monotonous, as they are restricted themselves within four walls in the new environment. The previous generation especially mentioned that they missed their old dwellings and lifestyle more than the younger generation.

As in the traditional houses, courtyards are essential spaces for the daily activities and interactions; however, while these spaces are used for developing extra rooms for rental purpose, there is a decline in the social activities (**Figure 9b**). The later addition and transformation of dwellings in the old buildings made the living completely isolated from each other and as a result, social interaction has gradually decreased. Other important issues are that people are now more mobile than before, their social interaction being only among their colleagues and friends

13. 'Rushan' is a small rectangular opening usually located in the upper part of the wall and is used for taking in light, air, ventilation and also can be decorative. 'Agasi' is a gallery looking to the inner courtyard on the first.

with whom they work with. As many people work during daytime, for both men and women there is hardly time for social interaction within the neighbourhood. Other options are available for entertainment, such as the shopping malls, restaurants and cinemas.

The organizational principle of the traditional house in Hofuf is primitive in its formation and typically divided into three portions: the front portion *mejlis* hall is surrounded by rooms, the middle portion the courtyard is surrounded by rooms and the back portion the animal area surrounded by rooms (Figure 6).

This organization resembles the case of Dhaka. Most traditional houses in Hofuf are two storied with a prominent organic form (Al-Naim, 1998). Only some construction in the courtyard and on the rooftop are later additions for rental purposes. However, the house is prototype as a two-storied courtyard house, with the female section located in the deepest part (Figure 6). Two unique features of the traditional houses here are *rushan* (ornamented ventilation) and *agasi* (Figure 7) (13). Unlike Dhaka, in Hofuf, the openings in the neighbourhood and the later expansion of the road for motor vehicle are prominent. The AC outlet and the dishes for satellite television channels are also visible (Figure 8).

For the Hofuf case, the amount of transformation done for adjustment, addition and conversions are 19%, 17% and 7% respectively (Table 4). This transformation has decreased sharply to adjustment 8%, addition 7% and 0% conversion when it was occupied by the expatriate labourers who were only the tenants (Figure 5). The reason is simple, as tenants have no right to change or alter and in addition, landlords intended to accommodate maximum number of expatriates without investing in such transformation. In fact, the number of rooms increased is not proportionate with neither kitchen nor bathrooms and in many cases the kitchen and animal areas are also converted into bedrooms only by little adjustment and partitions (Table 4). As reconstruction was not cost effective, the Saudi landlords were less interested although some reconstructions were only done in the buildings that are on the main street or adjacent to the old centres for offices or commercial enterprises (Table 4).

A general difference between Dhaka and Hofuf with the current occupiers (who are from the same nation) gives the pattern of living. In Dhaka for instance, subletting the rental units for families is a common feature, whereas in Hofuf, the whole unit is converted into multiple units for bachelor expatriates, where privacy is perhaps the least maintained.

In Hofuf, the original Saudi landlords have now moved to the newly developed areas whereby they have again built the detached single unit houses. On the other hand, landlords of Dhaka are now living in apartment houses. In both cases these families now complain that in the new areas they are unable to maintain social interaction they used to have before. The new housing areas and modern plans lack human scale and they do not have the backdoor connection they used to have. Women now feel isolated. Their neighbour and friends are now living far from each other and can not make social meetings as before. The modern lifestyle with shopping malls and restaurants offers only social spaces with declined neighbour bondage, unable to achieve place attachment in new settlement areas. For the expatriate labourers, the rental units are like dormitories with only male partners living temporarily and therefore, neighbourhood attachment, feelings or bondage is not considered at all. It is also not possible to have any interaction with the Saudi neighbours for different reasons. The

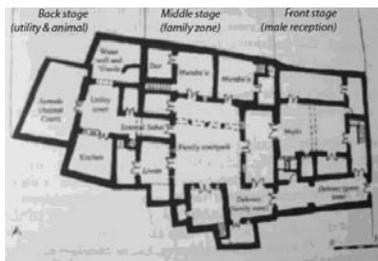


Figure 6. A house in Anna'athil, showing three parts (Al-Naim, 2006, 237).



Figure 7a. The hanging balcony emphasizes the courtyard, as an element for casting shadow, and also a symbol for aristocracy among Hindu families. (Author, Dhaka, 2006).



Figure 7b. "Agasi" meant for the same purpose among the Muslim families in Hofuf. (Author, Hofuf, 2005).



Figure 8a. Kitchen converted into bedroom for low-income expatriate.

Figure 8b. Building façade shows the traditional ornamentation and the later addition of AC as a contrast to this expression (Author, Hofuf, 2005).



Figure 9a. Conversion of balcony into storage or additional bed room became necessary due to the lack of spaces in Dhaka (Author, Dhaka, 2006).

Figure 9b. The courtyard getting smaller as new addition of other functions are increasing (Author, Dhaka, 2006).



infiltration of the low-income expatriate further made the restriction with physical boundaries that destroyed the neighbourhood identity which the Saudi residence used to hold.

The positive side for the old part of both cities is that their locational importance and the land value did not fall. Proximity to the city centre also encouraged the middle income dwellers and the expatriates to occupy these traditional houses, who could involve themselves in economic activities using domestic spaces. The degree of adaptation and adjustment by the expatriate and their transformation and conversion of spaces into new functions shows the potentiality of the traditional houses.

The observation also revealed that although physical quality of traditional houses differs widely between Dhaka and Hofuf, the degree and stages of transformation in these localities show similar features. Perhaps owner security is the prime factor for the transformation of traditional houses, as the Saudi landlords have more freedom for all four types of transformation than the expatriate labourers. In addition, transformation done by the Saudis is more permanent in nature than the expatriate labourers who are only confined to slight adjustments, addition and divisions. In Dhaka, the nature of such change varies; if the landlord is residing in the same premises, the tenant has less freedom of changing or altering according to his demand, whereas if the landlord comes only to collect rent, the tenant not only changes the spaces but also sublets a portion of his house, leading to slums. One important question may be about the reason why landlords are not interested in making reconstruction as the land price is very high. One reason is the high interest rate which is not cost effective, and secondly narrow roads and permanent traffic jams do not encourage developers invest in the old town of Dhaka. For Hofuf, reconstruction is taking place for office buildings and apartments, but only on the sites that are adjacent to the main road in the old centre.

CONCLUSION

This study focused mainly on two issues, physical transformation of home environment in the old dwellings and identity loss in the traditional neighbourhoods of the Muslim societies. The process of transformation in the old dwellings of traditional neighbourhoods is perhaps an earlier phenomenon; however, the more recent concept of market economy in global scale has an enormous impact on such transformation, as it is mobilizing huge numbers of labourers in search for jobs and accommodation. One important drawback of such research is to collect genuine data and reliability as this solely depends on the past and current user's explanation and description about the way they used and transformed their domestic spaces. Another problem is the sample size, which is very small, and therefore coming to a conclusion is rather difficult.

Characteristics of traditional houses that was once formed by socio-cultural and religious values have drastically diminished as the context has changed to accommodate the maximum number of families in Dhaka and expatriate labour in Hofuf. Though we have tried to compare the physical environments of two Muslim societies, to understand the physical home environment, we have hardly found any dissimilarity as far as social interaction is concerned. In fact, in both places it is obvious that socio-cultural factors are more influential than religious factors and that there are similarities in the formation of physical layout as their main active space was the courtyard. Although in Dhaka the original landlords were Hindu, the male reception area was separated from the female area, where in both cases privacy seems to be the most important factor. Interestingly, for the Dhaka case, to provide privacy became more problematic when Muslim occupiers came in the second phase, where the entire house was subdivided into smaller family units. However, this opens a further debate whether the ever changing social relationship in the modern time and the transformation of the dwelling space are unable to provide the desired privacy which once played the prime role in a Muslim society.

It has been observed that in both cities, old dwellings in the traditional neighbourhoods have gone through substantial change and transformation mainly due to economic reasons. Also in both cases, landlords converted their old houses either into economic enterprises or to rental units.

Accommodation became the main priority rather than the social interactions and the replacement of homogeneous people with a more heterogeneous was realized. Thus, differences in the income level and job status made such neighbourhoods more disintegrated and hostile. Similarly in Hofuf, in order to accommodate the maximum number of low-income expatriates, some important social spaces are occupied with other important functions such as living, toilet or kitchen, thus their traditional *fereej* system also diminished. It is also difficult for the expatriates who come for a transitional period to acquire some sort of place identity, while neighbourhood identity is almost impossible to achieve. As these units are converted into dormitory type units, they lack the sense of real home environment.

To emphasize the importance of physical forms, Erman (1997) pointed out that, neighbourhoods consisting of multi-storey apartments are less cohesive and have weaker sense of community than neighbourhoods with single-family dwellings. This is also true for Dhaka as it has been tested to a number of apartment buildings which have been examined. People are now getting used to the new lifestyle where social interactions, community

participations and social events are now taking place in big community centres outside the neighbourhoods. These features also indicate the changes in the lifestyle of the residents of our contemporary age where not only the physical transformation but the social action also created long term impact that is slowly declining the neighbourhood attachment and therefore identity. For Hofuf, clustering in contemporary neighbourhood is not limited to certain clans or restricted to one area. It exists in every new neighbourhood. We can say that the traditional community system has continued, despite all the constraint of regulations and physical planning during the past four decades. The traditional clans are now redistributed in the new neighbourhoods, but with clear physical boundaries and less physical connectedness.

This study helped to illustrate the mechanism of transformation that leads to the revelation of latent potentiality of traditional houses. Adaptation of traditional dwellings and its capacity to accommodate diverse functional requirements of users, reveal the potentiality that may encourage these transformations without losing architectural values and may set new opportunities and events that may bring the neighbourhood identity to some extent. It also shows that the housing demand of the middle class in Dhaka and the low income expatriate in Hofuf is accommodated with the help of such transformation that solve the scarcity of housing but due to the transitional stage and lack of tenure security they were deprived to achieve community or neighbourhood identity.

REFERENCES

- ABUGHAZZEH, T. (1996) "Reclaiming Public Space- The Ecology of Neighbourhood Open Spaces in Town of Abu-Nuseir, Jordan." *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 36 (3)197-216.
- AKBAR, S. (1998) "Home and Furniture: Use and Meaning of Domestic Space, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia", Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of New Castle Upon Tyne, Newcastle, UK.
- ALTMAN, I. and WANDERSMAN, A.(1987) *Neighbourhood and Community Environments: Human Behavior and Environments*, Plenum Press, New York.
- ALTMAN, I. and WERNER, D. (1985) *Home Environments: Human Behavior and Environment*, Plenum Press, New York.
- AL-FAQIH, S. (1989)"Islamic Style in Contemporary Arab Architecture", *Mimar: Architecture in Development*, v: 32; 48-52.
- AL-NAIM, M.A.(1998) Potentiality of the Traditional House: A Case of Hofuf, Al-hasa, GCC Folklore Centre, Doha.
- AL-NAIM, M.A. (2001) Cultural Continuity: Comparing the *Fereej* System and Modern Housing Development in Hofuf, Saudi Arabia, in *Building Sustainable Urban Settlements*, ed. by S. Romaya and C.Rakodi, YIDG Publishing.
- AL-NAIM, M.A.(2006) *The Home Environment in Saudi Arabia and Gulf States: Growth of Identity Crisis and Origin of Identity*, V.I, Pubblicazioni dell'I.S.U. Universita Cattolica, Milano.
- AL-SAID, F. (1992) "Territorial behavior and the Built Environment: The case of Arab-Muslim Towns, Saudi Arabia", unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Glasgow, Glasgow.

- BAHAMMAM, A.(1998) Factors Which Influence the Size of Contemporary Dwelling: Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, *Habitat International*, v: 22, n: 4; 557-570.
- BIANCA, S.(2000) *Urban Form in the Arab World*, Thames and Hudson Ltd., London.
- BRAND, S. (1994) *How Building Learnt - What Happens When They are Built?* Phoenix, illustrated, London.
- BROWER, S. (1996) *Good Neighbourhoods: A Study of In-Town and Suburban Residential Environments*, Praeger, London.
- BULOS, M. and TEYMUR, N. (1993) *Housing: Design, Research and Education*, shgate Publishing Limited, Avebury.
- CASTELLS, M. (1985) Urbanization and Social Change: The new Frontier, in *The Challenge of Social Change*, ed. by O. F. Borda, Saga Publications, Beverly Hills, California; 93-106.
- CHASKIN, R. (1997) Perspective on Neighbourhood and Community:A Review of the Literature, *Social Service Review*, 71 (4) 521-547.
- CHOWDHURY, T. (1998) Segregation of Women in Islamic Cultures and its Reflection in Housing: A Study of Spaces for Women in a Bangladeshi Village, in *Shelter, Women and Development:First and Third World Cities*, ed. by H.C. Dandekar, George Walir Publishing Company, Ann Arbor; 338-346.
- DAVIES, W. and HERBERT, D.(1993) *Communities within Cities: An Urban Social Geography*, Belhaven Press, London.
- DRAKAKIS-SMITH, D. (1997) *The Third World City*, Routledge, New York.
- EL-SHAKHS, S. and SHOSHKES, E. (1998) Islamic Cities in the World System", in *Globalization and the World of Large Cities*, ed. by Yeung, Y. and Lo, F., United Nations Press, New York; 228-269.
- ERMAN, T. (1997) Squatter (Gecekondu) Housing versus Apartment Housing: Turkish Rural-to-Urban Migrants Residents' Perspectives, *Habitat International*, 28 (1): 91-106.
- FLANAGAN, W.G. (1990) *Urban Sociology: Images and Structure*, Allyn and Bacon London.
- ISLAM, N. (1996) *Dhaka from City to Megacity*, Dana Printers Ltd, Dhaka.
- KAIZER, T. (1984) *Shelter in Saudi Arabia*, Martin's Press, New York.
- KELLETT, P. and TIPPLE, G. (2000) The home as workplace: a study of income-generating activities within domestic setting, *Environment and Urbanization*, 12 (1) 203-213.
- Mc ANDREW, F.T. (1993) *Environmental Psychology*, Brooks and Cole Publishing Company, California.
- MAHMUD, S. (2001) "The Interaction between Physical Space and the Way of Life in Low-income Settlements: Case of Bustees and Resettlement Camps in Dhaka", unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Bilkent University, Ankara.
- MANNING, G., CURTIS, K., Mc MILLEN, S. (1996) *Building Community: The human side of Work*, Thomson Executive Press, Cincinnati.

- MOMRA (1980) CH2M Hill International and Consulting Engineering Group, Technical Report No.18A, Dammam Metropolitan Areas.
- MUNTASIR, M. (1993) *Shriti Bishritir Nagari*, Dhaka: Bangle Academy.
- PROSHANSKY, M., FABIN, K. and KAMINOFF, R. (1983) Place-Identity: Physical World Socialisation of the Self, *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, n: 3; 57-83.
- RAPOPORT, A. (1969) *House Form and Culture*, Prentice-Hall Inc., USA.
- RIVLIN, L. (1987) Group Membership and Place Meanings in an Urban Neighbourhood, *Journal of Social Issues*, 38 (3) 75-93.
- SAINI, I. (1998) Using the home for income generation: The Case of Kumasi, Ghana, *Cities*, 15 (6) 417-427.
- SAMIZAY, R. and KAZIMEE, B. (1993) Life in between residential walls in Islamic cities", in *Housing, Design, Research, Education*, ed. by Bulos, M. and Teymur, N. Athenaeum Press Ltd., London.
- TIPPLE, G. and AMEEN, A.S. (1999) User initiated extension activity in Bangladesh: "building slums" or area improvement?, *Environment and Urbanization*, 11(1): 367-376.
- UNGER, D. and WANDERSMAN, A. (1983) Neighbouring and its Role in Block Organization: An Exploratory Report, *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 11(3): 291-300.
- WARREN, D. I. (1977) Exploration in Neighbourhood Differentiation, *Sociological Quaterly*, 19: 310-331.

Alındı: 12.03.2006; Son Metin: 29.09.2007

Anahtar Sözcükler: eski konutların dönüşümü; mahalle kimliği; geleneksel konut; ev mekanları; Dhaka; Hofuf.

KONUT ÇEVRESİNİN DÖNÜŞÜMÜNE BAĞIL OLARAK KİMLİK BUNALIMI: ÖRNEK KENTLER DHAKA VE HOFUF

Kentlerin merkezlerinde yer alan geleneksel mahallelerdeki dönüşümün nedenlerinin büyük ölçüde küreselleşmenin getirdiği etkilerden kaynaklandığı; kent merkezlerindeki iş gücünün niteliğinin bu doğrultuda hızla değiştiği; karmaşık kültüre sahip geçici toplulukların bu merkez mahallelerdeki konutları yoğun biçimde kullandığı, söylenebilir. Bu geçici işgücü nüfusu, geleneksel merkezleri ve geleneksel mahalleleri akıllamaz bir hız ve boyutta dönüştürmektedir. Bunun sonucunda yaşanan dönüşüm kaçınılmaz biçimde merkezdeki konut içi ve çevresi niteliklerini hırpalamakta, topluluk yaşamını tehdit etmekte, özgün mahalle ve konut niteliklerini ortadan kaldırarak kimliksizleştirilmiş çevrelerin ortaya çıkışını hızlandırmaktadır.

Bangladeş ve Suudi Arabistan'da iki tarihi şehir olan Dakka (Dhaka, Bangladeş'in başkenti) ve Hofuf (Al-Hofuf ya da El-Hufuf), kendine özgü nitelikleri olan iki eski İslam şehri olarak, son yıllarda özellikle eski merkez mahallelerinin geçirdiği kapsamlı dönüşümler nedeniyle burada birlikte ele alınıp karşılaştırılmaya çalışılmaktadır. Dakka'nın merkez mahallerindeki eski konutların sahipleri, evlerini alt birimlere bölerek kira gelirini artırmanın yolunu bulmuşa benzemektedirler. Benzeri bir biçimde Hofuf'taki ev sahipleri de, geleneksel evlerini yatakhane biçiminde bir kullanıma ya da ticari mekanlara dönüştürerek, onları ülke dışından

gelen düşük gelirli gruplara kiralamaktan kaçınmamaktadırlar. Hofuf'ta bir zamanlar bir topluluğa ait olma hissini yaratan ve aynı zamanda onun sonucu olan mekan bağımlı *fereej* sistemi, yavaş yavaş ortadan kalkmaktadır. İki ülke, iki farklı sosyo-ekonomik oluşum ve iki farklı kültüre sahip iki toplum tarafından kullanılıyor olsa bile iki eski kent merkezindeki geleneksel konutların yaşadığı dönüşümler, benzerlikler göstermekte ve küreselleşmenin etkilerini taşımaktadır. Ortaklık yalnızca dönüşümün örüntülerinde değil, mahalle kimliğinin yitiminde de yaşanmaktadır.

Çalışma, Dakka ve Hofuf kentlerinin merkezindeki geleneksel mahallelerde bulunan aynı sosyo-ekonomik ve kültürel yapıya sahip olan kullanıcılar tarafından yerleşilen eski yapıların karşılaştırılmasını amaçlamaktadır. Alan araştırması ve gözlemlere dayalı olarak geliştirilen çalışmada, ayrıca bu konutların kullanımları süresince nasıl bir dönüşüme uğradıkları ve bunun nedenleri, geleneksel mahallelerin bugünkü kullanımının zorunlu olarak ortaya çıkardığı kimlik yitiminin altında yatan gelişme ve nedenler tartışmaya açılmaktadır.