

ARCHITECTURE IN A QUIET REVOLUTION

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Qatar's rapid development over the past fifteen years can be examined through its architecture. Qatar is a young country that gained independence in 1850 and is known to be proud of its culture, religion, and traditions. These elements are what gave Qatar, and the Gulf region, a unique identity and these elements are what unite its people. Culture in the Arab world is portrayed through behavior, fashion, dialect, interior and exterior design. In the past, everything in Qatar, from peoples' lifestyles and fashion to their buildings and homes, reflects who Qataris are as a people, and reflects their country. Identity is a series of characteristics, extracted from culture, that make someone or something unique enough to distinguish them from others; these characteristics are depicted in history, buildings are architecture, and in peoples' lifestyles and clothing. Recently, all these aspects have been gradually changing to give Qatar a more recognized and respected international status. The West recognizes in Qatar an aspect of familiarity that is depicted in the country's style in architecture, homes and fashion. I have personally witnessed this change over the past fifteen years in Qatar.

When I first moved to Qatar in 1994, it was what many people have called it "just a desert." Today, it is competing with many of the richer and more developed countries in the Arab world with respect to architecture, education and business. Qatar constantly strives to surpass other Arab countries in innovation, development and progress. Certain countries in the Arab world, like Dubai, have become extremely developed and have essentially become a visual phenomenon when it comes to architecture. Yet some would argue that these developed Arab countries have paid a price for their development and innovation- their culture and identity. Many of these Arab countries are difficult to distinguish from Western countries since their architecture looks as though it was taken directly out of certain major cities in the United States. It is important that Qatar does not attain this same fate. Qatar is developing, and through its development, it risks losing its culture and identity. This change is expressed in many ways but is mainly visible through its architecture. Qatar's development and architecture will be examined to determine whether Qatar is destined to become a country devoid of culture and identity, like some countries in the Arab world.

Many projects in Qatar were created and supported by the government with hopes to increase Qatar's international recognition. Qatar is a young country. The major developments and changes that are occurring in the country will come to shape its future. Essentially, this paper will determine whether this impact will be positive or negative. When His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani became the new Emir (ruler) in 1995, he led the transformation that has occurred over the past 15 years. Initially he began by welcoming new immigrants to help shape the country's development. He welcomed and encouraged western change through the new shopping malls, theaters, fast food chains and high-rise towers. With all of this, Qatar became more similar to the West in terms of entertainment and architectural design. Afterwards, Sheikh Hamad's wife, Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al Missned, started building an "academic city." Sheikha Mozah focused primarily on the educational development of Qatar and on providing its citizens with the best schooling in any field they wish to study. With these universities came the innovative and essential research that started to help further develop Qatar, and invest in its future.

Researching in Qatar

I travelled back to Qatar for two months earlier this year to begin a study of the architecture and how it is affecting the country. I photo-documented contemporary examples of Western-influenced Qatari architecture and the traditional forms of Qatari architecture. In particular I documented an untouched area that has been abandoned: this area reveals how Qatar once looked and how its people existed. In this area, I recorded the distinctness of what was once Qatar- the old faded patterns on mosques, the punctured walls of homes that were created to make space for air-conditioners, the small windows in each house, the narrow alleys between homes, and the small streets with only Arabic names. My photographs show the details and richness of this area, and illustrate the simplicity of peoples' lives that once existed throughout the country, and now only exists in this small area. A few

examples of this simplicity are how people in this area will use a bed sheet for shade instead of umbrellas and patio awnings, and how people will use a tree to park next to, to protect it from the elements, instead of a garage.

Houses were mostly small, modest and consisted of only one floor (single-story). They had simple gardens that encircle the entire house and high walls around the garden to protect the house from outsiders' eyes. In a home, one would only find certain things, such as air-conditioning, high walls, and a few small rooms. People generally just relied on bare necessities and did not fill their homes with luxury items and expensive things. Presently, people in Qatar enjoy certain luxuries, such as walls made of rock flown in from abroad, or a garden maintained by a full-time gardener. However, people in Qatar were not like this before. Previously, it was a much more simple existence for most Qataris. The important thing was having a simple and modest home, and one that was livable and only contained what one needed to live a comfortable life. However, currently Qataris care more for appearance and are more concerned with what people think of them, so their homes have to be full of the newest and most expensive luxury items.

On each block, there is at least one mosque. Men need to go to prayer five times a day, starting at the break of dawn. It is the government's responsibility to customize the country in order to accommodate citizens' religious obligations, which is why the government built numerous mosques among the houses in Qatar. In the past, homes and buildings were simple and did not cost much to build. As the country became wealthier and more exposed to other countries, especially in the west, it started focusing more on luxury, and necessity became an ideal of the past that people no longer care for. Qatari citizens and other residents became more willing to spend larger amounts of money on bigger homes and gardens, and started taking ideas from the West to develop and modify their homes and buildings with new designs and furniture, all of which are brought to them as imported goods. As homes became more sophisticated, so did stores, offices and schools. I documented how homes began installing Georgian brick roofing in Qatar, essentially replicating the many homes in the West that use

this type of material. The reason homes in the West use this material is because their climate is much more different than the Arabian Gulf region. They have rain and snow, whereas there is just one season in Qatar: summer. Qatari homes do not need this kind of slanted roofing and material, as they can have flat roofs. However, it is much more about appearances and image for Qataris, instead of a matter of necessity or practicality.

Qatar has come a very long way in the past few decades, and has essentially taken a large step forward that has brought it out of the past and into the present, complete with the latest technology. Many homes around the country look as if they modeled from a magazine advertising five-star resorts. The top interior designers are flown in from around the world to create an avant-garde design that is unique and modern for the wealthy families of Qatar. The best designers are also hired to construct most touristic attractions, large real-estate projects and many companies' buildings in Qatar. The designers in charge of the interior and exterior of establishments and homes are generally not Arab, let alone Qatari. One is able to see the impact this has on their work in my photography. The international designers often spend a certain period of time studying Qatari culture to incorporate it in the concept of their design, yet they usually make the dominant factors in their design Western-looking, and barely a touch of Qatari culture remains. These designers claim that the reason for this Western influence and lack of Qatari culture is that the 'past meets present.' However, this is simply an excuse, and Qatari culture is not opposed to modernity. Therefore, it does not make sense that it should be excluded from current development and architectural design, and that Western influence should predominate. Qatari culture was always integrated a fair amount in development projects and with new creative ideas, until the last large real-estate project in Qatar, 'the Pearl.'

The Pearl is Qatar's first international urban development venture. I studied the Pearl thoroughly. The results I have found are very similar to the opinions of the people I interviewed. They believe that the Pearl is essentially a significant step away from the country and Qatari culture, and a major step toward European culture and identity. The Pearl could be perceived as an attempt at trying

to expand the minds of Qataris into accepting a Western lifestyle. As Dina Murad Al Rashid, one of my interviewees, states, “I feel the Pearl was made to westernize Arabs.” Many people saw the Pearl as a positive change and would like to see more changes like this in Qatar. This kind of mentality belongs to people who regard the progression that the Pearl brought as all that matters, and are not concerned with the heritage this development and change left behind. As Alhussain Wanas, a non-Qatari resident mentions, “It is a very interesting project. The Pearl project is an innovation from Qatar. I think that it's something we all should be proud of and something that shows that Qatar is worthy of change, improving and keeping up with the technology around the world.” The reason why he is not so concerned with the lack of Qatari influence may be because he is a non-Qatari citizen and may not have the same patriotism a Qatari would or should have. Perhaps the fact that the ratio of Qatari citizens to Qatari residents in the country is so small helps projects like the Pearl succeed. A problem for the government, in this case, is the fact that the Royal family does care a great deal about the opinion of their people.

The Pearl is not only a milestone for Qatar in way of entertainment; as a result of the Pearl, a benchmark in education was also attained. I have illustrated these accomplishments and changes in my documentary by capturing the impressive campuses for Qatar. In my work, I also managed to capture the massive park areas, sports facilities and franchised cafes- all created for students to use and enjoy. I documented Qatar's past and present, as well as the perceptions of Qataris on these different times and stages in the country's development. The people I interviewed were working professionals and students in the fields of arts and business. I chose these specific people because they would have a critical view on the changes, and most play, or probably will play, a role in Qatar's transformation.

After gathering the material I needed, I created a documentary revealing the visual changes of Qatar and expressing peoples' opinions, as well as including my own, on the change and development in the country. The documentary gives a glimpse of what has been happening in Qatar and serves as a visual translation of this paper.

Education and Architecture

There has been a significant increase in the number of academic institutions in Qatar. With this increase came options of what kind of education one may choose for their children. There is a large selection of schools and universities with different educational systems to choose from. This step towards better education is displayed in the schools' campuses, and in the competition that exists among each other for the best facilities and most modern design for their buildings.

Education in Qatar has been shifting towards the British and American systems. One can observe the major changes occurring in the educational system- school syllabuses are changing, faculty is being brought in from the West, and the buildings have also assumed new forms to reflect this new way of learning. Qatari schools and universities are known to have state-of-the-art facilities and technology. Each academic institution is unique in what it offers and the establishment it is in reflects the amount of care that is involved in preparing it to be the best.

In the past, government schools mainly used the Arabic language for all subjects in schools; however, now they use English for many subjects. In this case, any child who is being educated in government schools or private schools (as the majority of private schools' first and only language is English), will have a weaker Arabic language and knowledge than the older generations in Qatar. Again, this is another route to changing Qatar and its people, through a less tangible path. A change that affects children's language and dialect makes it more normal for them to be exposed to Western influence. As a result, they will not be likely to perceive a problem with Qatar changing and developing, even if this means the country will lose its culture and identity.

RAND (Research and Development) has been welcomed in Qatar from California to take effective change in the school curriculums of the country. Dominic Brewer, the Director of RAND's education unit claims, "Changes like more openness in the economy, entrepreneurship and ultimately

democracy require a population that's used to these things. This was the opportunity to really build a model school system, to combine the best elements from around the world" (Glasser, 2003, P. 4).

Do Arabs agree with this change led and encouraged by the United States? This is an interesting question and one that is difficult to answer. I addressed this issue, and attempted to answer this question through my research and extensive interviews with Qataris.

Nawal Alshaikh, the Director of the Curriculum and Textbook Department in the Education Ministry of Qatar, made this comment: "Last year, English instruction became mandatory from first grade, onwards. And to make way for more hours of English, classes in Islamic studies and Arabic were cut back." Most Arab government employees, university professors, and the public had a negative reaction to this sudden, American-driven change. A professor at Kuwait University, who asked to remain anonymous, posed a similar question: "How can the Americans know what is right for Qatari schoolchildren?" Reform is something that must come from within, it cannot be bought (Glasser, 2003, P. 4). People are reacting harshly to the change and development in Qatar because it affects the foundation of children's beliefs, the history, the language and religious beliefs they are taught. These children will shape Qatar's future, and the children they raise will be raised with different values. The changes that are occurring presently will continue to impact future generations.

The Qatar Foundation is seen as a positive change by many Qataris, even though the idea of this institution is not unique, and is very similar to what has also happened with schools throughout Qatar. Current students and their parents dream of them getting accepted in Qatar Foundation's Universities instead of Qatar University: Qatar University is a traditional institution where there are only Arab professors who teach in Arabic language. It is commonly accepted that attending the Qatar Foundation University will provide students with a degree from a reputable institution and ensure a successful career. Dr. Daniel Alonso, Dean of the Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar, claims that the "extraordinary quality" of United States' education is the core of its appeal in the region (Robison, 205, P. 7).

Qatar Foundation University was founded by Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Al Missned. The theme of this city of education is to bring the top universities from the United States, and implement American education into each of the fields that are offered in order to create a diverse selection of careers for their students. The students graduate with accredited degrees from the United States. Qatar Foundation is unique in the Arab world and has become a student ‘magnet’ for many people in the region, as well as for students around the world.

The first university in Qatar Foundation is Virginia Commonwealth University (School of the Arts). Its structure was inspired by old Qatari buildings and was even small in scale to reflect the country's identity and modesty. As Qatar Foundation introduced more universities, it started constructing innovative designs for each one, to make it as unique as possible. Texas A&M (School for Engineering) has an exterior, extremely similar to the Pyramids and its interior is like a maze. The exterior of Texas A&M is completely covered with red bricks, which is in no way a reflection of the Arab world, let alone Qatar. Carnegie Mellon (School for Business) looks something like a resort. It has high ceilings, marble walls, a spacious reception area, water fountains and an ornate cafe at the right of the entrance. The creativity of each building is extensive, yet these creative solutions are moving further and further away from the root and foundation of Qatari culture. The designs do not have a Qatari look because they were completely created by foreigners. Foreigners can do a thorough study of Qatari culture and try to mimic it, but if they do not have any Qataris in the development and design stages, it is very likely they will disregard minor details that represent Qatar's rich heritage. Therefore, as an unavoidable result, it will reduce the authenticity of their work. As Qatar Foundation's website states, “the campus spreads over 2,500-hectares on the western edge of Doha and is made up of open spaces and numerous iconic buildings designed by signature architects such as Arata Isozaki, Legorreta + Legorreta, Cesar Pelli, OMA and Rafael Vinoly. The Master Plan was designed by Arata Isozaki” (Website 3, 2010). Also, the faculty and staff working in these universities hardly reflect the

locals of Qatar. One mostly encounters Westerners and Arabs from different countries. One does encounter some Qataris who are still wearing traditional clothing, but this is rare.

Before Qatar Foundation, there was one local university, Qatar University, founded in 1973. This institution was a major development; “having foreseen education as a principle contribution to its expanding society, the Emir of Qatar issued a decree proclaiming the establishment of Qatar’s first national College of Education” (Website 4, 2010). This university captured Qatar's core essence, in its courses and teachings, faculty, teaching methods, and building design. The architect who designed the overall plan of Qatar University is Kamal El Kafrawi. He submitted a report in 1992 detailing the process of this project and revealed the purpose of his design and what inspired him:

“The material for this study is the environment and the people within it, the entire university; which is unique in that its basis is local, not imported, and its objectives are far from those of commercial projects. These aspects set it apart from many buildings in the Gulf and Arab Countries. Architecture is a tangible expression of a civilization, the product of the intellectual, social, economic and political activity of a whole people; construction technology is simply the tool with which to give form to this expression. One has therefore closely to analyse the environment of villages, towns and cities in the Arab world, to determine the effects of Western contemporary Architecture. Since the technology has been applied without the philosophy which underlies it, the modern buildings are foreign to the area, which shows how far Arab Architecture has lost direction, and the profound effect this has on the individual and his environment. One has to reconcile the immediate need for the import of modern technology with the need also to adapt it for use in the local environment. This implies considerable study of the needs and aspirations of the individual. As a philosophical principle in the design of the university, I posed this problem of the conflict between local culture and imported technology to experts in various disciplines. I would suggest that education in the effects of the conflict should be principle aim of the new University of the State of Qatar” (Kafraw, P. 7, 1992).

From Kamal El Kafrawi's statement, it is clear that foreign visual invasion entered Qatar and impacted it, and he wanted to create a design that was authentic and customized for Qatar's culture, and which

embraced its identity. The shapes of the buildings were geometric, the windows were small, the colours were light desert shades inspired by Qatar's environment, and the buildings had towers of wind that enhanced air circulation to decrease humidity (El Kafrawi, P. 9, 1992). The basic concept is to design buildings with consideration to the country's weather is extracted from old traditional architecture; with these old methods, the architect did not rely on modern methods of cooling, such as air conditioning.

ASPIRE is a secondary school for children who wish to excel in professional athleticism. They have unlimited possibilities as the selections are endless in this school. ASPIRE brings in the best trainers, coaches, doctors and directors from Europe to help build the reputation of ASPIRE internationally. This institution has a private hospital that focuses on athletic injuries and rehabilitation therapy. Many famous, internationally-recognized athletes come to recuperate at this world-renowned centre. ASPIRE's state-of-the-art facilities and campus have given it international recognition. ASPIRE has the largest dome for sports training and competition in the world, as well as several outdoor soccer pitches, an indoor soccer pitch, diving pool, Olympic-sized pools, dormitories, a private centre for women's training, and much more. The walls of this institution are covered with inspiring messages from world-renowned athletes. The interior is spacious and is an open-air concept with large windows all around the buildings, permitting the interior to be filled with sunlight. The campus as a whole does not relate to Qatar at all. The walls are plain, with no texture or pattern, the shapes of the buildings are less geometric and more organic (geometric structure reflects Islamic and Arabian designs), the dorm rooms have a magnificent view of the fields students train on, and are all placed on a balcony overlooking the game area made for students.

This campus was initially built to hold the 2006 Asian Olympic Games. After the Olympics, Sheikh Jassim (the Emir's son) started a sports academy for children in secondary school (grade seven to grade 12) and used the campus for it. ASPIRE does not ask for anything in return from the students. It provides them with housing, education, training, healthcare, career counselling and publicity- all free of charge. There are no fees to be paid by students, as most of the students here are locals, but ASPIRE

does go to other less fortunate countries and recruits students to be part of the academy, all expenses paid.

ASPIRE is part of a larger institution called ASPIRE ZONE. ASPIRE ZONE's objective is to make Qatar a global destination for worldwide sports. Their goal is to hold the 2022 FIFA games in Qatar, and are working extremely hard to find solutions for their country's harsh weather. The designs of the new stadiums are not only being customized to accommodate hot weather but are also being designed to honour the heritage of Qatar, in contrary to what the ASPIRE campus looks like currently (very Western). On the ASPIRE ZONE website, the new look and construction of the stadiums are explained:

“To support this national dream, ASPIRE ZONE decided to showcase the nation’s ability to maintain its calibre through building an international standard football stadium. The architectural form of the stadium represents a shelter from the region’s harsh weather conditions, in addition to its magnificent illumination of Qatar’s ancient heritage and artistic aspects. The name of the spectacular stadium has been taken from Qatar’s traditional terminology. It’s called ALBAYT Stadium?, meaning a tent that is made from animal hair. Tents are usually woven from goats’ black hair with occasional additions of other colourful threads, which gives the tent a streaked appearance. The external framework of the playground reminds us of this safe haven, where Bedouins have lived in for generations. Aspire ZONE Foundation expressed their hope that other concerned parties will adopt these projects to make them reality. The new generation benchmarks utilize advanced technology to create the most modern venues of comfort and safety within contemporary architectural buildings, in harmony with the real values of the long standing traditions in Qatar ” (Website 9, 2010).

What ASPIRE ZONE teaches us is that Qatar is trying to achieve a harmonious creative solution between Qatar's past and the West's present. This kind of solution is possible and can encourage and initiate a major change Qatar's architecture. Ideally, ASPIRE ZONE intends to maintain Qatar's heritage, but this is difficult, and ASPIRE ZONE does not have full control over this aspect as long as they continue to employ foreign architects and designers.

The development and change in education in Qatar was one of the main elements that contributed to the advancement of women's rights and the country's democracy. Women had the right to be educated, and they began to take advantage of this right. The number of women who were being educated in the 1960s was quite small. This gave them a limited lifestyle- one that mainly included serving the men in their family. Their lifestyle did not permit them to pay much attention to themselves and their own personal development and growth. However, this has changed. Qatar is now known to have intellectual and career-driven women in the country who aspire to be like their role model, Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Al Missned.

These changes that are affecting the minds and lives of the children and women in the country are the first steps to transforming the Qatar and its culture. If women are concentrating more on themselves and less on their children, and children are learning Western languages, history, and even culture in school, it will no longer be difficult for them to accept foreign ideas and influence, at the expense of Qatari traditions and culture. It will no longer be strange for them to grow up in a world that is less Qatari and more Western, and they will slowly detach themselves from their Qatari identity and heritage. These projections are all possible if Qatar continues on its current path.

Women and Architecture

In Qatar, before 1968 hardly any girls were taught at a high-school level. It was even less common for women to attend graduate programs or achieve a higher education. The diagram below portrays the number of male graduates versus female graduates during the past fifty years in Qatar's high-schools. It is an annual report from the ministry of education in 1988.

Table 1: Growth of High School Graduates, 1963-88

Year	Boys	Girls	Total	% of Girls
1963-64	28	4	32	12.50
1968-69	254	111	365	30.40
1973-74	590	373	963	38.71
1978-79	739	775	1,514	51.10
1983-84	1,475	1,538	3,013	51.00
1987-88	1,474	1,715	3,189	53.70

(Bahry & Marr, 2005, P. 104)

As mentioned, the first university in Qatar, Qatar University, was established in 1973. With two segregated sections, one for men and one for women, education for women from conservative and strict families became possible. The ratio of women to men being educated began increasing in 1963 and skyrocketed in 1976, with the university's inauguration. The diagram below represents the increase of women's education in Qatar, at a higher level. These are statistics from the *Guide to Graduates from the year 2002* (Doha: University of Qatar, 2002).

Table 2: Qatari Students at Qatar University⁶

Year	Male	Female	% Female	Total Students
1976-77	184	356	65.9	540
1980-81	468	1,180	71.6	1,648
1985-86	1,163	2,548	68.8	3,711
1990-91	1,220	3,783	75.6	5,003
1995-96	2,114	5,533	72.3	7,647
1997-98	1,770	5,316	75.0	7,086
2001-02	1,700	5,416	76.0	7,116

(Bahry & Marr, 2005, P. 106)

The success female students have achieved during their studies and in their careers, after school, has made Qatar realize how valuable women are in their professions, and how valuable women are to the country and its economy. The above statistics demonstrate how females are more motivated than males in university. This was one of the main reasons Qatar established its second university, to only cater to female students. Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar (VCUQ) was the second university to be founded there.

Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar accommodated the cultural privacy women requested. Even the university's building was custom-made to maintain privacy as much as possible. Similar to older traditional architecture, the building was smaller, did not have many large windows; the cafeteria was small and modest, there was a prayer room for females only and the rooms were smaller and some did not have windows. The patterns on the walls were geometric, and the designs and patterns were Islamic-inspired. The use of colour all over the university is traditional and warm, and consists of earth tones. For Qatari families, walking into VCUQ was comfortable, familiar, and they could see that their culture and religion were respected and protected through the interior design of the

institution. The design was extremely clever because it allowed parents to be content with their decision in educating their daughters at this school. Socially, VCUQ is regarded as the safest institution for girls to study.

VCUQ worked on developing the minds of women, as well as encouraging their design and artistic skills. It teaches women how to become successful, even in a male-dominant workforce. It gave women possibility and opportunity, shaped and encouraged their ambitions, and taught them how to achieve their goals. It prepared them for the world after education and inspired them to play a part in Qatar's transformation. With a change in education comes a change in the careers of Qatari women. Qatar was a country where most of its women were housewives, but it is quickly developing into a country that empowers women and encourages them to actively participate in the workforce. This is occurring and women are becoming leaders in their places of employment. This is seen as a positive change globally, and locally this helps women expand their traditional roles. These red lines were narrow and restricted womens' social lives, marital choices, and freedom. As Bahry and Marr claims:

“In this movement Qatari women are helped by two forces: the support they are getting from the ruling family and the impact of reforms and social change in surrounding regions, especially in neighbouring GCC states. Nonetheless, Qatari society remains relatively traditional and conservative. Indeed, the slow pace of social reform is one of the common complaints of progressiveness. But the foundations laid in the last two decades in women's education, employment and civil rights may be reflected in the next generation” (Bahry & Marr, 2005, P. 117).

As evidenced above, we can see that there is some criticism projected towards the idea of women's liberation. This is because it challenges the authority of men in a culture that is predominantly male dominant. Unfortunately for those critics, this is only the beginning.

Qatari women are restricted to wearing the traditional clothing (the Abaya), which eliminates women's uniqueness and individuality. Women in the Western world use fashion as a way to distinguish themselves and project a certain distinct image of themselves, but the Abaya prevents this in Qatar. In the professional workforce in Qatar, women are trying to create an identity for themselves, essentially making the best of what they have at their disposal. A couple of years ago, women would decorate their offices or classrooms in a different and unique way to create an identity for themselves. Yet in a classroom, this identity had to be shared amongst all the students. Today, women have begun customizing their traditional Abayas to create a distinct identity. There are now fashion designers in Qatar and the Gulf who custom-design unique Abayas, accommodating a woman's taste through the fabric, fit and accessories blended in the design process. The designers' theme and unique selling point are that no Abaya design is ever repeated again. So a woman is guaranteed that her design is only worn by her, giving her her own identity and distinct individuality, whilst embracing her traditions.

Most buildings in Qatar, such as banks, schools, universities, mosques, recreational clubs, et cetera, are now built with a 'women's' only' section to allow them privacy. This new-found value for women has accorded them rights in their own country that permit them to exercise their freedom in learning, praying, socializing, and in basically living their lives. They now have the right to request a space for themselves, and if not granted, they will find a solution versus simply surrendering, as many women would have done in the past. Many aspects in Qatar are slowly changing but the pivotal factor in all these changes is education. This is the socially acceptable entry point conducted by the government to convert Qatar into a democratic, developed nation. Magdalena Rostron explains this in her study, *Liberal arts education in Qatar: intercultural perspectives*; she includes various opinions regarding the changes happening in Qatar. As mentioned earlier in Bahry and Marr's study, there is a great deal of harsh criticism regarding Qatar's progression:

“Although the transformations accomplished in Qatar since 1995 are quite revolutionary in essence, they have been carried out as cautiously as possible, given the country’s less than progressive character. Even so, many Qataris consider the pace of change too fast and see the increasing modernization of the country as its westernization, if not an outright betrayal of indigenous cultural and societal values and standards” (Rostron, 2009, P. 221).

The majority of people who seem to agree with the changes are foreigners, westerners and the people who are playing a large role in this change.

Culture and Architecture

The ethnological study I carried out about the residents and citizens of Qatar, the amount of change in Qatar and the culture that Qatar's government is trying to protect helps me determine if the changes happening to Qatar are a positive or negative transformation. I photographed and documented the older, untouched areas in Qatar. This portrays the old Qatar, as it was originally, and as mentioned, I found the “old Qatar” in the single last-standing untouched neighbourhood in the country.

It was a challenge for me to take a step back and look at Qatar from a distance and clearly see the change that has happened. I feel I have participated in this change. The fact that I spent the last year in Canada helped give me a fresh perspective on the rapid change happening to the country. Others would say as Bahry and Marr put it, “Qatar, where a quiet revolution may be taking place. Qatar, a new rich, country that only achieved its independence from Britain in 1971, is undergoing rapid change” (Bahry & Marr, 2005, P. 104).

What the architects of Qatar are doing now is mimicking the details, patterns, and structure of older buildings to maintain the look and feel of Qatar in the newer buildings, by slowly integrating large glass windows and simplistic designs adopted from the West. Qatar's skyline started off by having older, low rise buildings, that were mainly covered in high walls and Islamic patterns. They did not

have glass buildings, so that they can keep out the heat, and there was no need for high-rise buildings, because Qatar, for the past one hundred years, had a very small population and did not need much space.

In 2000, the Barzan Tower was created on the corniche (Qatar's waterfront/skyline). This tower welcomed change into Qatar's architectural culture. It was planned and designed by one of Qatar's acknowledged best local architects, Ibrahim M. Jeidah, for commercial purposes. The first nine floors are covered with an exterior traditional pattern and design extracted from historical buildings, and the rest of the twenty-one-story building is a glass clad tower (Website 1, 2000). The Barzan tower was the first step outside of the box, that paved the path to Westernization in the county. After this tower, many Western-looking, tall glass towers were developed to create Qatar's skyline. The corniche is now unrecognizable compared to 15 years ago. There is one new area in Qatar that is an accurate replica of Qatar's old souks (market), Souk Waqif. To design Souk Waif, a thorough examination of Qatar's culture was performed and professional designers were brought in to modify the visual chaos that depicts the original souk. A detailed description on the reconstruction of the market on Souk Waqif's website explains the process:

“The restoration plan involved replacing the metal roofs made of “dangeal” wood and bamboo covered with matting, as well as a layer of clay and straw to hold them together. The layer of clay also provided insulation, protecting the buildings' inhabitants from the scorching heat. Today we are able to admire the results of His Highness's efforts to preserve Qatar's historical past, and in so doing experience a special kind of aura. Thanks to the newly installed, highly sophisticated lighting system, at night the renovated alleyways are bathed in a beautiful, romantic glow” (Website 6, 2010).

As well as artificially weathering and de-colorizing walls, a great deal of effort, time, money and research was poured into this project to emulate the feeling, lighting and atmosphere that represents Qatar's heritage.

Souk Waqifis designed to look like an old market place, where merchandise is sold, that usually cannot be found in modern commercial stores and malls. Products such as fabrics, Arabian instruments, spices, swords, et cetera, is found in this location. The marketplace for business is a number of narrow paths between buildings, filled with goods, and people manning their stalls and small stores. The ceilings are supported by long rough logs of wood, the walls are carved with geometric shapes and patterns, and the pillars are tarnished and eaten away. There is also an area that is filled with cafes, some Arabian cafes with shisha(hookah), and some Western cafes that have an Arabian exterior coating them, giving them a traditional appearance. Souk Waqif holds Arabic and Western cafes and restaurants to accommodate everyone's preferences in this touristic area. Places like Dunkin Donuts are designed with Arabian patterns, textures and materials, and even the ATM and phone booths are custom-designed like that as well, to give it that traditional appearance. One could say that here Qatar's past meets the rest of the world's present.

The Pearl, a major project in Qatar in 2007, was what put Qatar on the 'map' internationally. This is basically a man-made island, created for residential and commercial purposes. It costed billions of dollars to create this island. Walking into the Pearl is like stepping foot into a new country. The architecture slightly resembles Qatar; the geometric patterns and the one or two domes they have placed as designs resemble traditional Qatari environment and atmosphere. The finishing is clean, the buildings are skyscrapers, the waterfront is a parking lot for yachts, the cafes are American and the stores are Italian. The Pearl is far from being Arabian, let alone, Qatari. The only part that does represent Qatar in the Pearl is the shape of the island and its name. The island is actually in the shape of a pearl (from a bird's eye view) because Qatar is called the "Pearl of the Gulf."

The architects and designers who worked on constructing the Pearl and the residences on the island are foreigners. There were no local Qataris involved actively in the design or developmental stages of this project or anything in it. The people involved were westerners and Arabs from other countries. The lead consultancy company that designed the "Venetian themed city of some 407 000,

complete with a twin of the Rialto Bridge, the most important landmark in Venice” (Website 7, 2007), is Serendipity, a Dubai-based architectural and interior design consultancy. Even if they tried to incorporate some Qatari culture in the look of the island, it would not be accurate enough, because that was not their focus. In fact, they focused on incorporating European-inspired designs into the project.

The houses and apartments in Qanat Quartier (a residential section on the island) have little if any privacy as they have no high walls gating them. They are small spaces, in order to fit as many apartments as possible, and make more profits. This is extremely unusual for Qatar, because, in the past, locals have been living in large houses surrounded by large gardens (to hold celebrations or to enjoy the outdoors in the privacy of their own homes) that are protected from peoples' eyes, with high brick walls. This amount of space and seclusion are required for each Qatari family to help protect the women from being exposed to anyone outside the family. These boundaries have always existed out of respect for religion and tradition, and these boundaries have existed in the most important part of the peoples' lives, their homes.

The Pearl is not a realistically livable place for locals or even Arabs because it does not comply with their lifestyle. Local Qataris and people from the Arabian Gulf are stricter about their women's privacy than the rest of the Arab world. This is because they protect their women for traditional reasons and not just for religious ones; whereas Arabs abide by these rules mainly just for religious reasons. So of all Arabs, Qataris will be the most unlikely to purchase a house in The Pearl, because it does not meet their needs. As well as this, Qataris are accustomed to living a financially comfortable lifestyle because they are an extremely small population in a very wealthy country. The overall population in 2010 is about 1,638,644 people (Website 8, 2010). Qataris live luxuriously in large houses and many in mansions and have gotten used to such living. At this point, it will be too difficult for them to re-orient themselves into smaller spaces, especially if they have larger families, as many do.

The Pearl was the next major project and touristic site in Qatar after Souk Waqif. What is shocking is the extent of contrast between the two, especially since they were both developed at almost

the same time. Souk Waqif was mainly designed to capture the essence of Qatar, in all its history, exploding through the details of the flooring, colours, lighting and even the people placed to work there.

Many people feel that the Pearl is an attempt to change Qatar from being an extremely traditional country to a more modern one. This change can be perceived through the European-inspired architecture on the island. Architecture is how one can visualize Qatar's transition. The dimension of buildings are larger, the patterns are more refined, the interior design is simpler, the colours are calmer, the finishing is cleaner and the materials used are similar to the ones used in Western cultures because Western ones are deemed superior. With time, Qatar is losing its grasp on traditional architecture and design. Even if Qatar seems to be embracing its culture with Souk Waqif, it is still slowly changing and becoming less and less authentic.

Herrle and Schmitz in their book, *Constructing Identity in Contemporary Architecture*, explain why each country has a certain style of landscape design:

“A common line of reasoning among architects and planners, irrespective of their regional or cultural background, starts with the complaint that local architecture traditions and identities have given way to uniform urban landscapes characterized by global architectural stereotypes. The process of homogenization by a universal 'modern' architectural language is perceived to be a loss of the 'own', onto which changes are forced or which is completely destroyed by the 'foreign'. The 'own' is associated with local traditions that are to be defended whereas the 'foreign', i.e. global architectural fashions, is perceived as a threat, eating away local identity” (Herrle & Schmitz, 2009, P. 7).

You can see why Qatar's architecture, which reflects other countries' influence and culture, more than it does its own, is starting to worry its citizens. Many Qataris think they are losing their identity, or as Herrle and Shmitz put it, their “own.”

Qatar has gained a great deal from this evolution and is becoming a more developed country, according to Western or global standards. Unfortunately, they are paying a high price for it- their

heritage. The main aspect that seems to be slowing down this loss is the fact that Qatari citizens are against it. Qatar's government and Royal family care a great deal about the opinions of their people and are trying to accommodate their needs as much as possible.

Conclusion

Qatar is changing dramatically, just like its government and Royal family has intended. This process has been transpiring for approximately fifteen years. Although many developments could be perceived as potentially negative, many positive changes have also occurred. It has resulted in many accomplishments and successes, one prominent example being the advancement in women's opportunities. Architectural and educational progress, which occurred simultaneously, are also main examples.

It is possible for Qatar to develop while maintaining its culture, but it will need to start trusting its own citizens and including them more in the country's development, instead of empowering foreigners. They need to believe in the knowledge of their people and allow them to play a prominent role in the stages of Qatar's development. Qatar is attempting to give Qataris advantages in the workforce. For instance, Qatarization, which is very similar to affirmative action in Canada, is a law that makes every company in Qatar hire a certain percentage of Qataris. However, many of the high management positions for engineering, construction and development are filled with Europeans and Americans. Qataris are hired to fill in smaller administrative positions to abide by the law. On the surface, Qatarization has helped Qataris. However, Qataris are not motivated due to the lack of competition. If one is provided a job, one will not strive for greater success.

In this paper, I explored the changes and developments occurring in Qatar. I found that Qatar's people are more resistant to change, as a result of its Western direction. Qataris want their country to develop and modernize, but not at the expense of their culture and identity. Qataris are still attached to

their country's culture and are proud of their identity. On the road to further development and change, this reality could save Qatar from becoming a country devoid of culture and identity. Qatar needs to examine its history, reflect on its culture and identity and embrace them. When it comes to Western influence, the only thing Qatar needs to take from it is inspiration. Qatar needs to go from there on its own, and with the help of its people, it can certainly accomplish its goals.

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