THE RULING ON PROMOTING IDEAL ISLAMIC NEIGHBORHOOD IN HOT ARID CLIMATE: CASE STUDY NIZWA CITY-OMAN

By

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AH……..... the year of the Hijra, (Islamic calendar)

AD……..…….…… Anno Domini

OIC ……..…….…….Organization of Islamic conference

UN……...…….. United Nations

BC..... Before Christ

LIST OF ARABIC TERMS

Al-akl…… mental strength

Al-Deen…… Islamic Religion

al jar…… Neighbor

al-musakanah…… inhabiting, lodging, residing or dwelling

Al-Nafs…… self

Al-Nasl ……..……..descendents

Al-Maal…… wealth

Hadith ……..…...Prophet Mohammed Peace Be Upon Him sayings

Haram ……...forbid in Islamic law

Ibadah……worshiping Allah alone

Ilm …….……knowledge

la dharar wa la dhirar.....There should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm

mihrab ……...a place where the Imam stand

minbar.……...type of platform inside the mosque

qiblah ……..…..direction of Ka'bah

Salat…….....prayer

Shariah ……Islamic law

Sujud ……..prostration at prayer

Sunah……...The second source of Islamic jurisprudence, the sayings and deeds of the Prophet Mohammed, Peace Be Upon Him

Souk……..market

Sur ……...……...…….….city wall

Zuqaq……..……...….cul-de-sac road

Ummah…….…….Social solidarity

Fiqh……...…...……islamic jurisprudence

Fina ……... ……. an open space around or along a building

KEPERUAN MEMPERKENALKAN KEJIRANAN ISLAM YANG UNGGUL DI KAWASAN YANG BERIKLIM PANAS GERSANG: KAJIAN KES DI BANDARAYA NIZWA- OMAN

ABSTRAK

Warisan negara yang menggambarkan tentang kemajuan dan prospek, harus dikekalkan. Untuk mencapai matlamat ini, sains moden dan kebijaksanan lampau boleh digabungkan sebagai satu usaha untuk mencari keharmonian sebagai sumber untuk pembangunan. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mencapai pemahaman yang lebih baik terhadap mutu serta kelebihan perancangan Islam tradisional, melalui kajian terhadap kemungkinan untuk menyesuaikan prinsip-prinsip perancangan bandar tradisional yang mana akan digunapakai dalam rangka untuk mengekalkan identiti dan kebudayaan bandaraya Islam kontemporari di dalam suasana iklim yang panas gersang.Kajian ini telah menggabungkan tiga kaedah: pemerhatian secara langsung, temubual dan tinjauan bagi tujuan pungutan data. Tujuan penggunaan kaedah campuran adalah untuk menggunakan sinergi dan kekuatan yang ada di antara ketiga-tiga kaedah tersebut untuk memahami fenomena dengan lebih menyeluruh.Untuk pungutan data secara tinjauan, kajian ini telah menggunakan borang soal selidik dan diedarkan kepada pakar-pakar dalam bidang perancangan Islam. Data tersebut telah dianalisis melalui analisis deskriptif, kebolehpercayaan dan penjadualan bersilang dengan menggunakan SPSS versi 16. Berkenaan dengan kaedah pemerhatian secara langsung, pungutan data telah dilakukan melalui pemerhatian langsung dibandar Islam tradisional di Oman (bandar Nizwa) dengan memfokuskan pada kawasan perumahan lama. Ia meliputi kawasan bandar fabrik tradisional, kota Nizwa, gerbang utama, Nizwa Souq lama (pasar tradisional Nizwa), persekitaran kejiranan Al-Farid dan masjid utama di bandar tradisional Nizwa.Disamping itu, kajian ini telah menemu bual 10 responden (perancang dan arkitek) yang berkerja dengan kerajaan tempatan (kota Nizwa). Tujuan utama temu bual dijalankan adalah untuk mengumpul maklumat yang cukup bagi menjawab

persoalan kajian, mencapai objektif kajian dan untuk memberi pertunjuk yang jelas terhadap kaedah lain kajian (Permerhatian secara langsung). Disamping itu, untuk mengenal pasti ciri-ciri bersejarah kota tersebut. Penemuan kajian ini telah mendedahkan bahawa bandar tradisional Nizwa telah mencapai tahap fungsi yang maksima. Sebagai tambahanya, ia telah membawa pendedahan terhadap kelebihan prinsip-prinsip perancangan bandar tradisional dan penggunaan strategi kepadatan, pemusatan dan privasi yang dapat mencapai bentuk pembangunan bandar yang lebih lestari, mengekalkan identiti dan kebudayaan yang boleh dilaksanakan di dalan permodenan bandar kita di negara-negara yang mempunyai iklim yang panas gersang. Seterusnya, ia dapat memberi gambaran yang berharga tentang pembinaan bandar tradisional dan bahan binaan tempatan.

THE RULING ON PROMOTING IDEAL ISLAMIC NEIGHBORHOOD IN HOT ARID CLIMATE: CASE STUDY NIZWA CITY-OMAN

ABSTRACT

A nation's heritage, a reflection of its progress and prospects, must be preserved. Towards this goal, modern science and ancient wisdom can work together in the task of seeking harmony as a tangible resource for development. The present study aims to achieve a better understanding for the qualities of traditional Islamic planning by adapting the principles of traditional urban planning which will be adopted in order to safeguard identity and culture in the contemporary neighborhood in the hot arid climate of Muslim countries. This study manipulates three methods: direct observation, depth interviews and a survey for data collection. The purpose of mixed methods research is to build on the synergy and strength that link the three different research methods to completely understand a phenomenon. As regards the survey, the study utilized a questionnaire circulated to experts in the field of Islamic urban planning. The data was analyzed through descriptive analysis, reliability and cross-tabulations by using SPSS (version 16). With regard to the direct observation, data was collected through over going to the traditional neighborhood in Oman (Nizwa city) by focusing on old residential areas. This covers urban fabric of traditional area, Nizwa fort, main gates, old Nizwa Souq (traditional Nizwa market), Al-Fariq neighborhood and the main mosque in traditional Nizwa city. In addition, the study has carried out interviews with 10 respondents (planners and architects) who work in municipality of Nizwa. The main purpose of these questions is to collect enough information for answering the research questions, achieve research objectives and to give the researcher a clear bath to other methods of data collection (direct observation). In addition distinguish the characteristics of historical Nizwa city. The study findings revealed that the

traditional Nizwa city had maximum functional performance. Furthermore, it brought to light the principles of traditional urban planning and the application of compactness, centrality, privacy and safety strategies in order achieve sustainable urban forms, maintain culture and identity which could be implemented in our modern neighborhoods at hot arid climate Islamic countries. Furthermore, it provides valuable insights with regard to the traditional urban fabric and local building material.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Islam is not just a religion or a state, it is also a civilization, a culture and a reforming message, with science and knowledge represented therein. One of the most obvious manifestations of the Islamic culture is its traditional neighborhoods. In fact, the oldest yet most contentious concepts in the study of Islamic history and culture are those related to the Islamic urban form. As a religion and a way of life, Islam was originally contextualized in a city, specifically the city of Al-Medina. That initial model was supplanted by a series of models that were either adopted from various cultures that Muslims came in contact with or developed in response to the dynamic cultural, environmental and social conditions that have existed throughout history (Rabbat, 2009).

Islamic urban pattern contributed significantly to the evolution of human civilization. Islamic cities emerged in the first Hijra century or 622 AD together with the spread of Islam (Hakim, 1986). The newly conquered territories welcomed and implemented the teachings of the Muslim faith in their daily life. The reason was evident: Islam surpassed the boundaries of ceremonial rituals and was perceived as a comprehensive way of life. At that time, the Islamic faith was reflected in the way of urban form were planned, given that the urban fabric represented the framework within which Muslims were to live and practice their faith.

The 13th and 14th centuries witnessed the so-called "golden age of Islamic cities". Sarton believed that for five hundred years Baghdad had been a city of palaces, mosques, libraries, and colleges. Its universities and hospitals were the most up-to-date in the world (Sarton, 1950) and this was the time when Islamic planning principles and ideals left their distinguishable marks on cities from India and Central Asia in the east to Andalusia in the west and from Southern Italy in the north to Yemen in the south as shown in (figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1: A Map of the Islamic world
Source: www.lib.utexas.edu/.../muslim_distribution.jpg

A map showing the extent traces the spread of Islamic faith in the three continents. The entire Islamic historic urban pattern that existed in the aforementioned regions appears to share some common characteristics and similar urban forms.

This urban form enabled the traditional Islamic cities to be united in terms of the way they facilitated the implementation of Islam as a way of life. At the same time, however, Islamic planning principles became very adaptive and sensitive to the different environmental and cultural values prevailing throughout the different Islamic regions. Thus, the concept of unity in diversity emerged in the Islamic built environment that spanned three continents.

In a previous study, Al-Hathloul (1992) revealed the traditionalization of contemporary Muslim-built environment. Al- Hathloul has shown that there are currently two groups theorizing on urban planning at the Islamic world: the modernists (whom only believe in western urban principles) and the traditionalists (whom believe that can be matching between traditional and modern urban principles). The first group not only rejects the authority of Islamic tradition as a controlling authority, also it also does not believe that this tradition could be a source of modernity. Indeed, modernists consider tradition as an obstacle to development. They believe that the only approach to cope with world development is to ignore every traditional value and start from the very beginning. This zero point is represented by the principles upon which Western modernity is based. It likewise suggests that the Muslim society needs to import ideologies and technology from other contexts.

On the other hand, the traditionalists argue that the tradition of Islam is the only authority and alternative to shaping the future. This means that the Muslim society requires isolation from contemporary reality and everything becomes a mere imitation

of the past. Traditionalists do not reject modern imported technology due to its essential role in Muslim society; however, they make restrictions for its acceptance as evidenced by the careful evaluation of the cultural significance of this foreign technology. Al-Hathloul (1992) is of the opinion that traditionalists relinquish their rigid point of view with such an acceptance.

Generally, many studies on traditional architecture and urban planning practice have indicated that all traditional architecture and urban forms have a cultural base (Grabar, 1976; Norberg, 1985; Rapoport, 1989; Mitchell, 1990; Seidel, 1994; Herschberger, 1996). Every traditional neighborhood has a tradition of ideals towards a socio-cultural system, and each tradition is different in the sense that the underlying culture is different in its hierarchy of values. In this regard, architecture and urban planning are considered expressions of cultural language (Norberg, 1985).

The traditional urban form refers to structures built by people who took into consideration their societal conditions, environmental elements and local materials, characterizing a process, which is a systematic study and analysis of the heritage of its urban buildings. One could formulate a discussion tracing the intellectual development of a given society's history. The urban environment is shaped by the culture of its inhabitants, and that shape is the result of thousands of events performed in by many generations (Johnson, 1977). The same rule applies to Islamic neighborhood, where traditional buildings and settlements reflect a specific culture and can illustrate the manner in which aspects of the originating culture developed. Traditional Islamic

neighborhood has a strong local identity, which reflects both Islamic values and the cultural norms of its users.

1.2 Operational Definition of Terms

The following are definitions and descriptions of main important terms used in the present study.

1.2.1 What Neighborhood, Town and Urban Form are

The well-known historian Ibn Khaldun asserted that towns are dwelling places that nations use when they have reached the desired goal of luxury and what accompanies it. Then, they prefer tranquility and quiet and turn to using houses to dwell in (Ibn-Khaldun, d. 1406).

Neighborhood is term used to describe a geographically localized community within a larger city or town. Frequently, such communities are social with substantial face-to-face interaction among members who have some distinctive characteristics. Moreover, there are spatial units in which face-to-face social interactions occur among those members as well as personal settings and situations where residents seek to recognize mutual values, and preserve effective social control **(**Schuck, 2006).

In his study (Determining a sustainable city model), Egger thinks that neighborhoods are far more than physical containers storing people, goods and knowledge. Cities, in his opinion, are in themselves an expression of society, requiring

a form of management, governance, commerce, culture, education and community to facilitate a milieu for human existence and interaction (Egger, 2006). Whereas Bijker believes that cities are in a process of being built and rebuilt all the time; they are never finished but always under construction, always in a process of being realized (Bijker, 2005). Towns are not natural, they are the result of centuries of decision-making by individual owners and developers and government intervention (Greed, 1996).

Greed defines the town planning as the art and the science of ordering the land-use and communication routes of buildings so as to secure the maximum level of economy, convenience and beauty (Greed, 1996). Another definition of town planning is planning policies reflect changing viewpoints and fashions as what is right at a particular time in a particular place often with amazing swings in opinion as evidenced by the present condemnation of modern architecture and return to traditional styles and an emphasis on conservation (Greed, 1996).

Handy defines the urban form by regarding it as a composite of characteristics related to land use patterns, transportation system, and urban design (Handy, 1996). Whereas Kevin contends that urban form is "the spatial pattern of the large, inert, permanent physical objects in a city." Form is a result of compiling of more or less repetitive elements. Urban form, then, is a result of the bringing together of many elements-concepts: the urban pattern. To a large extent, urban patterns are made up of a limited number of relatively undifferentiated types of elements that repeat and combine (Kevin, 1981).

1.2.2 What the Ideal Islamic neighborhood is

Islam presents solutions for every aspect of life and housing is not an exception. A Muslim should keep up good relations with his relatives, but this does not mean unreasonably favor them over others. Further, a Muslim, according to prophetic Hadith, is commanded to be well-mannered in his relation to neighbors, regardless of their religion. From Islamic perspective, "Neighbor" is equivalent to "*al jar*" in Arabic terminology. It is derived from the root verb "*jawara*". Literally, "*al-jar*" has been defined as "*al-musakanah*" which means inhabiting, lodging, residing, dwelling or living side by side. Indirectly, it also refers to believers and unbelievers, religious and nonreligious, friends and enemies, foreigners and fellow countrymen, those who treat you well and those who would do you harm, relatives and strangers, those whose houses are near yours as well as those who are further away.

On the other hand, ideal Islamic neighborhood is a place to rest, relax inhabitants and their mind, enjoy legitimate worldly delights, worship, teach, learn and propagate Islamic wisdom themes. As Allah S.W.T said in the Quran: "And Allah has made your habitations homes of rest and quite for you…" (An-Nahl:80). *Shari'ah* is the behavior in Islamic teaching which aims at creating the healthy and virtuous individual, family, society and eventually the ideal world (Moustapha, 1986). The identity and vocabulary of Islamic architecture evolved as a means for the fulfillment of the concerns of Muslim societies. Islamic architecture was never an end in itself. It was the container of Islamic culture.

Islamic culture is a Muslim's habits and their values ethics and civilization reflecting the cultural identity and the level of the Muslims' creative and aesthetic consciousness (Ben-Hamouche, 2009). However, many questions that arise from the growth of neighborhood can be attributed to planners and designers tasked with the design of these neighborhoods without appropriate knowledge of Islamic culture. The lack of town planners and architects results in the inability to realize valuable knowledge into urban design and planning.

The traditional Islamic neighborhood is vital to maintain friendly environment which make significant opportunities for climate-friendly homes and communities through using local natural building materials and Improvements in the design of subdivisions for optimal building orientation, shading for passive solar heating and cooling, and efficient building shells, windows, cooling systems, and appliances are the key to reducing energy consumption.

Islamic neighborhood is the architecture of form, design and function which are inspired primarily by Islam, permeated with its spirit and stand for the embodiment of Islamic principles and values (Spahic, 2004). It facilitates, fosters and stimulates one's ceaseless worship (*ibadah*) activities entrusted to him by his Lord, thus helping him to elevate his status over that of the angels and honorably live up to his reputation as the vicegerent on earth. Almighty Allah says: "I have only created Jinns and men, that they may worship me" (Quran, Al-Dariyat: 56). Centrally, the neighborhood is a function with overall physical appearance, is inferior and matters only when it comes into

complete conformity with the said criterion. The word “Islamic” employed before neighborhood thus does not denote a mere cultural phenomenon, philosophy or just another religious conviction but a genuine faith and its enduring inclusive belief and value system. In fact the word "Islamic" is an adjective defining an extremely important discipline and craft which, like every other discipline and craft in Islam, reflects its framework loosely held sway over by the special qualities inherent in Islam **(**Spahic, 2004**).** However**,** traditional Islamic neighborhood encompasses a wide range of both secular and religious styles from the foundation of Islam to the present day, influencing the design and construction of buildings and structures in Islamic culture.

1.3 Problem Statement

At the beginning of the 20th century, Islamic urban form began to lose their status and prominence; an event that coincided with the rise of the Western civilization (Mortada, 2003). The manifestation of this decline was a city that lacked a cultural identity. The current study attempts to resolve the issue of the lack of identity of modern Islamic cities by identifying the features of the historic Islamic neighborhood in hot arid climate and specifying the principles on which these features have been based.

In many parts of the Islamic world, the replacement of traditional planning and urban environments with those of the global type is not always in harmony with the culture, climate and social milieu of their inhabitants. Despite the validity of this observation, minimal attention has been paid on this subject. The debate about globalization and the importance of international relations have been amongst the major

issues of countries for the past decades. Thus, town planning and architecture are affected. However, Western concepts are being implemented in almost all developing countries. Local planners and architects, as well as political authorities push the import of urban development features from the West. Other international agencies, such as the World Bank and the UN support these ideas (Mumford, 1970).

Saleh confirmed that planning current urban problems and issues in the Middle East are the result of many factors. Consequently, the call for national spatial development strategies and urban policies should be based on a comprehensive understanding of the urbanization process and its structural and behavioral impacts. The changing patterns in the form and structure of regions and cities and the design and capabilities of urban institutions should thus be underscored in order to manage urban problems and optimize urban development opportunities (Saleh, 2004).

In his study entitled, The Decline vs. the Rise of Architectural and Urban Forms in the Vernacular Villages of Southwest Saudi Arabia Saleh stressed that the decline is manifested by the abandonment of vernacular villages and deterioration of existing buildings (Saleh, 2001). The transformation is also viewed in the remodeling and preservation of certain buildings. On the other hand, the rise of new architectural and urban forms is manifested in the new buildings occupying the expansion spaces of villages and towns. This urban change is apparent in the form of infrastructure and buildings to accommodate population growth and verify political and social expectations. Although vernacular settlements have been extensively transformed to

meet the cultural life requirement, they are totally abandoned in several places. The new development lacks integration with the old, an occurrence which this study tries to investigate. The decline of transformation and the rise of architectural and urban forms is an observed phenomenology considered part of the changes sweeping an Arab Saudi culture and society (Saleh, 2000).

The modernization process exhibited in the dramatic socio-cultural and technological changes taking place in most Muslim countries since the beginning of the twentieth century is associated with a confusion about the compatibility of Islamic city with these changes. Due to the demands of modernity, many Muslims view their religion in a spiritual rather than a practical sense. Islam has become a spiritual entity rather than a reference to daily life and an aid to solving its problems. Many Muslims, particularly those who are less intellectual and represent the vast majority of contemporary Muslim society, tend strongly to associate modernization with the notion of Westernization (Mortada, 2003). This, in turn, will enable us to examine features into the design of modern Islamic city and think of ways on how we can improve and modify such features so that our modern cities can regain their lost identities.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the problem statement, the general literature, the research background and the objectives of study, the following research questions are formulated:

1. How does a traditional neighborhood differ from contemporary neighborhood?

2. How to implement the planning principles of centrality and compactness in the contemporary Islamic neighborhood in hot arid regions?
3. What is the relationship between privacy concept and social and environmental relations?
4. What the urban form of modern Islamic neighborhood reflects the Islamic identity and culture?
5. Which are the building materials which currently applying in hot arid climate Muslim countries suitable with their environment?
6. What are the differences between Cul-De-Sac and grid iron road network system in the Islamic neighborhood?

1.5 Research Objectives

We have stated that the aim of the present study is to explore and identify the outstanding features of the historic Islamic neighborhood in hot arid climate by going through the immense heritage and traditions that were left behind by the Muslim planners throughout our illustrious Islamic civilization. Acquiring such knowledge will give us the ability to examine the practicality of implementing and incorporating such features and characteristics in the design and planning of current Islamic cities. It will also give us directions of how to improve and modify such features in contemporary Islamic neighborhood. The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To examine the privacy and safety principles in contemporary Islamic neighborhood in hot arid climate.

2. To investigate centrality and compactness concepts in the traditional neighborhood and applying them in modern Muslim neighborhood.

3. To explore the urban identity and culture in traditional Islamic neighborhood and possibility adopting them in hot arid climate contemporary Islamic neighborhood.

4. To investigate the social ties and environmental relationships in traditional hot arid climate neighborhood.

1.6 Scope of the study

The present study will determine the challenges and problems in contemporary Islamic neighborhoods at the hot arid climate around Muslim countries particularly the decline in concept as well as form. The study will attempt to go through the vast heritage and tradition in the field of planning Islamic neighborhood.

Moreover, the study will analyze the ruling on ideal Islamic neighborhood in hot arid climate in terms of services and facilities. This part of the study will assist in examining the possibility of implementing the features and characteristics of the historic Islamic neighborhood in the design of the modern Islamic neighborhood, and how such features can be modified to adapt to new realities of designing a modern city with an Islamic identity. Specifically the study will be focusing on the applicationof urban planning principles, social relationship and identity-cultural references in contemporary Islamic neighborhoods.

1.7 Research Methodology

The main aim of this section is to describe data, methods and techniques. In fact, this study utilizes three types of data collection methods: direct observation, in depth interviews and a survey. For the primary data collection, the study used a questionnaire survey (Appendix-A) that was distributed to experts in the field of this study in order to gain an insight into their opinions regarding the features of the historic Islamic neighborhood. After collecting the data, it was analyzed and evaluated. For this purpose, the primary data was analyzed through descriptive analysis and Cross-tabulations by using SPSS to strengthen and prove the outcome of the study.

Data was also collected through direct observations in the traditional city of Nizwa in Oman. Furthermore, the study made in depth interviews with 10 leaders in Nizwa municipality. The study offered 16 main questions for interviewers with 4 questions for each objective. The questions will be discussed in chapter 3 with full details. The researcher will employ the inductive methodology in extracting the prominent features of recognized Islamic neighborhood from various books, articles, journals and e-journals that tackled the historic Islamic city (secondary data) to identify the characteristics of historic Islamic neighborhood and the validity of implementing Islamic planning principles in the modern Islamic neighborhoods.

1.8 Structure of Research Methodology

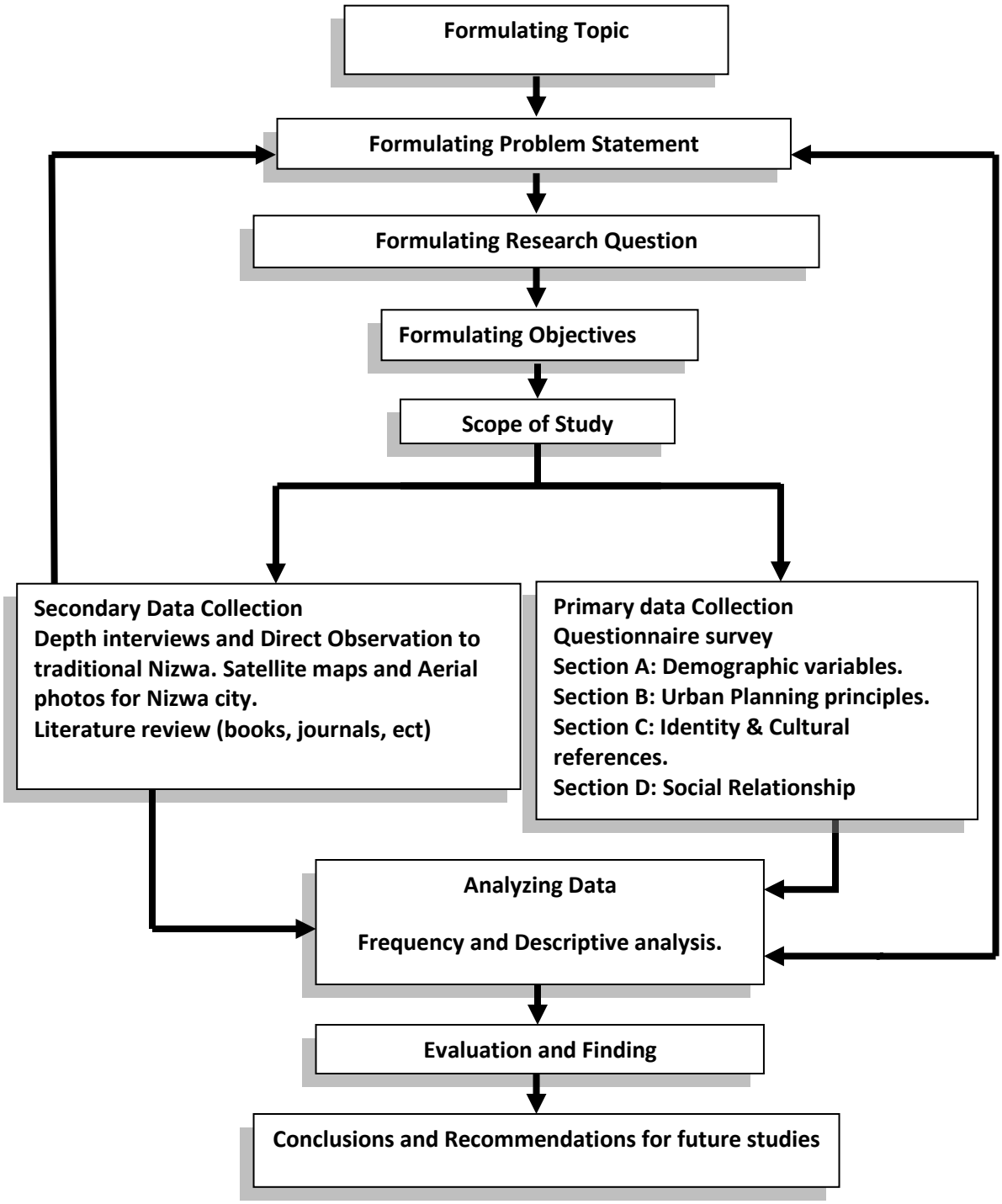

Figure 1.2: Structure of Research Methodology
Source: Researcher

1.9 Significance of the Study

The present study is expected to contribute to the theory, organizational learning and resource bases in conceptual guidelines for the design and implementation of contemporary Islamic neighborhood in hot arid climate. In terms of theoretical significance, this study will contribute to the physical environment knowledge. The results of the study will provide some insights and information of social relationship and the urban environment derived from *Shari'ah* (Islamic jurisprudence). It is also will contribute to the few studies done on this aspect by focusing on Islamic urban traditional principles and will attempt to advance the comprehension of the factors that affect to the transfer knowledge process and key impediment to learn better understand Islamic neighborhood. Indeed the traditional principles have been set up for the life and are meant to build environment of Muslims. Accordingly, the present study will explore these principles.

1.10 Thesis Organization

The present thesis is organized in six chapters. In chapter one, the introduction as well as the research problem were presented. It gives the details about the background, definitions and descriptions of main important terms used in the present study. It also comprises research questions to be answered, research objectives to be achieved and scope of study as well as the outline of the thesis. Chapter two reviews the literature about the Islamic urban planning concepts and ultimate objectives of Islamic *Shari'ah*

(Islamic Law) as well as their relations to other aspects. This chapter also outlines the benefits of using the elements of traditional Islamic neighborhood. Chapter three introduces the background of Nizwa city and Sultanate of Oman in general, as the study area. Moreover, this chapter dealt with the elements of traditional and contemporary neighborhoods in Nizwa city as well as traditional architecture, geography, climate in Sultanate of Oman. Chapter four gives details of the data collection methods adopted. This chapter also presents the research design and data collection strategy. The variety of methods and approaches that were useful fall within the paradigms of direct observation, depth interviews and a survey for data collection. Chapter five gives the results of the study at the ideal level and the analysis and discussions of responses obtained. Finally, chapter six concludes with details about key findings and suggestions. It also offers recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Traditional Muslim neighborhoods were characterized by their complex urban fabric, which resulted in a cumulative process of activities over time. In shaping their homes and environment, people were subconsciously guided by rules of conduct that originated from the Islamic jurisprudence (*Fiqh*). Literature in many parts of the world and the preservation of prominent elements of the traditional built environment are in harmony with the culture of society (Harrisman, 1990). In recent century, as a result of political and economic changes in the Islamic world, the form of the urban and architectural environment as well as some or many aspects of traditional architectural styles have been changed or are in the process of changing. These changes have affected the traditional values of the society. The loss of prominent traditional structures in the built environment is not only a cultural loss, but also has diverse, often irreversible, effects on the way the citizen live. (Saleh, 1998a).

The formation of the characteristic physical urban fabric of the pre-modern Arab-Islamic neighborhood can be seen by looking at the aerial photo of the older parts of traditional Arab-Islamic neighborhoods from Fez in Morocco to Aleppo in Syria (Figure 2.1). As these are out of a large number of miniscule residential units that have no apparent geometrical order or definition, shouldering each other in a continuous

fabric without any setbacks, they have been attributed, in great measure, to the specificity of land succession mechanisms that are dependent on Islamic thinking. Almost there is no research, however, has yet been done in urban areas to determine what role these processes might be having on the present form and future prospects of the physical urban environment in the contemporary Arab city (Abu-Dayyeh, 2006) .

Figure 2.1: Aerial photo of traditional Fez in Morocco and Aleppo in Syria.
Source: http://travelblog.viator.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/07/fez1.
Source:http://www.onlinetravelpictures.net/wpcontent/uploads/2011/04/Aleppo.

2.2 Historical Background

According to the historian Ibn Khaldun Al-Maqdisi, the purpose of building towns is to have places for dwelling and shelter. Therefore, it is necessary in this connection that harmful things are kept away from the towns by protecting them against inroads, and that useful features are introduced and all the conveniences are made available in them (Akbar, 2002). According to Ibn Khaldun these requirements can be divided into two main types:

a. Requirements that are in connection with the protection of towns against harmful things.

b. Requirements that are in connection with the importation of useful things and conveniences into towns. Ibn Khaldun talked in details in his "introduction" about both types and it is vital that we mention his views regarding the two types of requirements that he had mentioned (Ibn Khaldun, d. 1406 AD). As for requirements that are in connection with the protection of towns against harmful things, these can be caused by humans as well as by nature:

1. Harm caused by humans: Regarding this type of harm Ibn Khaldun suggested in his introduction that all the houses of the town should be situated within a protective wall. Furthermore, the town should be situated in an inaccessible area, either upon a rugged hill or surrounded by the sea or by river, so that it can be reached only by crossing some sort of bridge. This way, it will be difficult for enemies to conquer the town. Its inaccessibility to fortress will be increased (Ibn Khaldun, d. 1406 AD).

As for coastal towns which are situated near the sea, the houses should be situated on a mountain or amidst sufficiently numerous people in order to defend during attacks by enemies. The reason for this is that a town which is near the sea but does not have within its area tribes who share its group feeling, or is not situated in rugged mountain territory, is in danger of being attacked (by surprise) during the night. Its enemies can easily attack it with a fleet and do harm to it. They can be sure that the city has no one to call to its support and that the urban population, accustomed to tranquility, has