Transforming the Street into a Place: A Practical Study of Souq Hamada in Baghdad

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Abstract
All over the world, countries strive to establish development and space-making policies to improve their performance and quality and to support urban development and the welfare of society. Traditional places have had their share of these interventions, some of them have been positive, and others negative. This paper seeks to find the best urban solutions to address the negative outcomes resulting from demolishing a large portion of the traditional fabric in the area of Souq Hamada to cut out a main road, without adhering to the policies of preservation, rehabilitation or development. In addition to not taking into account the principles and strategies of urban design and contemporary place-making policies. This study focuses on how to transform Al-Tala'i Street (the street cut out from the traditional urban fabric) into a place by repairing the damaged urban form. This street is located in the center of the old city of Baghdad next to Al-Karkh, and it was developed in the early eighties of the last century, which led to the loss of many important landmarks that were important points of attraction, including the Hamada Heritage Souq, which was a main attraction adjacent to the newly established street. The study will be based on the idea of transforming the street from a path of movement to a place (reviving the Souq Hamada) as a catalyst for urban revitalization and improving the quality of life for the old area and rebuilding the urban memory of the local community through the use of the urban fill policy. The research discussed several design scenarios that contribute to the revival of the urban memory, restoration of the urban body, reuse of land, organization of movement paths, and the separation of cars from pedestrian movement, concluding a suitable design solution to respond to these challenges the area suffers. Therefore, the importance of using an inclusive urban mass to restore and repair the urban fabric and transform the street into a place to be an important urban focus in the region has emerged.

Keywords: Street as a place, Urban infill, Urban acupuncture, Urban memory, Urban structure, Urban densification.

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1. Introduction
Since its emergence in the nineteen sixties, urban design theories have been focusing on the art of place making and creating livable spaces that respond to modern urban, economic, social, cultural, environmental, sustainable and aesthetic challenges. This can be achieved by identifying vulnerable aspects of the urban environment and enhancing urban development. These challenges produced several strategies and policies that aim to transform places into viable, attractive, and coherent living environments. The goal is to build balanced living and working settings that are suitable for all types of daily activities.

These policies and strategies became world-class due to their advantages for human health and urban sustainability. As a result, new procedures to replenish the urban environment have emerged. These procedures include transforming streets, public spaces, and unexploited spaces into active, sustainable as well as integrated areas.

Thus, the urban voids and the streets that penetrate the traditional and contemporary urban fabric became one of the weaknesses that penetrate the body of the traditional fabric. As it has cut off the continuity of economic, social, cultural and urban activities and events, and created a disruption in the land use, quality, fragmentation, and isolation of regions from each other. Furthermore, this fabric lacks urban life in addition to break the urban memory and its social structure, destruction of the ecosystem, and organic planning of the old city.

This research addresses these urban problems, answering the vital question, how can one of the streets that were created in the eighties of the last century be transformed into an urban area. It also studies the imbalance in the traditional fabric and urban memory of the center of the old city of Baghdad, after transforming this street into a spacious space with no attractive events or activities and does not attract urban tourism, which is one of the motives of urban sustainability.

This study discusses the idea of reviving Hamada Heritage Souq as one of the urban and symbolic landmarks that remain in the community’s memory. This area was of an urban focus where various activities and events were practiced.

It is also one of the important arteries in the traditional fabric of the Karkh area, as it is a linking component to the heritage shops in the old Baghdad region.
Public places are common grounds that trigger social, economic, and cultural development and improve public spaces. They also help to attract investment, encourage the establishment of small or medium enterprises, and strengthen the local identity of the community, they also increase the social organization and the construction of urban memory.

The process of building or restoring the urban memory and enhancing the sense of belonging raise the idea of loyalty to the place, expressed through oral and written history, such as stories, legends, and rituals; as well as religious buildings, museums, galleries, markets, and the formulation of perceived ideas. The aforementioned factors contribute to developing the collective memory of a place (Lovell, 1998), as people gradually form and adjust their surrounding environment by imposing themselves upon it through working and living to suit their needs and express their values. Furthermore, the inhabitants form their physical environment to adapt to their attitudes and behaviors.

Place making is the development of places, squares, and urban paths, which is the process of adding value and meaning of public beauty through reviving values rooted in the local community (Grabow, 2011). It is the art of making places for people. It contributes to enriching the quality of life, the sustainability of the community, increasing the social capital, building the local community and providing investment opportunities for people and owners of real estate and investment of local and international capital. It also helps improve public safety, reduces crime, promotes cohesion between neighborhoods, and raise awareness of the importance of co-existence.

Taking into consideration the elimination of unexploited spaces between public places in cities, considering historic structures, landmarks, prominent features, local heritage, national events, and promoting cultural and social activity in the targeted places by attracting artists and owners of cultural projects (Forman & Creighton, 2012), many strategies and policies of place making emerged to improve the quality of life and urban sustainability to meet the needs of society and respond to local challenges and global competition. These strategies include, but are not limited to, the tendency of the sustainable place making, and the smart growth of mixed-use places. Besides, introducing walkable, secure, healthy, vibrant, ecological future places, and transforming some of the streets into places.

These trends or contemporary policies combined share the same main goals of the idea of sustainability and urban tourism that support development, achieve an environmental, economic, social, and cultural balance and preserve natural, historical, and traditional resources.

As a result of these trends, many interventions have emerged to revitalize urban environments, some of which have clear visions and strategies, and others that have unfortunately failed. Al-Jumaily classifies these interventions according to the type of urban environments into six categories:
1. Historical-archaeological environments: intervention is restricted by local and international laws and legislations.
2. Traditional-Heritage environments: intervention is constrained by local and international laws and legislations (preservation, rehabilitation, infill, and urban development).
3. Contemporary environments: intervention here is constrained by contemporary strategies and trends for urban design and urban sustainability.
4. Environments surrounding the historical and traditional environments: intervention is constrained by policies of transformation and transition to new environments.
5. Common places between historical and traditional environments: intervention is constrained by maintaining a balance between the characteristics of the two environments to create a state of complementarity and continuity.
6. Common spaces between traditional and contemporary environments: Intervention is constrained by the policies of transformation and transition from the characteristics of traditional environments to contemporary environments which are constrained by contemporary strategies and trends for urban design and urban sustainability, (Al-Jumaily, 2013).

Different strategies can be used to guide these interventions, and many have been explored by previous scholars. For example, Neo-Traditional Planning aims to integrate every part of life from, living, working, shopping and recreation and encourages pedestrianism and local transport whereas discourages private transit (An and Gu, 2018).

Streets in the urban context encourage people to walk. Encouraging pedestrians requires an attractive interaction between the physical components of the urban environment. This interaction determines the character of the street and the quality of the larger neighborhood (Gibbs, 2004).

Infill development, on the other hand, focuses on strengthening development patterns, filling in gaps, and restoring the urban fabric (Gibbs, 2004). Listokin, in (Listokin, et al., 2007), defines Urban infill as the process of filling the gaps in the urban fabric that have historical links to urban characteristics. It is one of the mechanisms of intervention in traditional environments that have several aspects. Also, Infill development is a key component of smart growth. It generally occurs in central cities and inner suburbs on scattered sites, including vacant lots (Listokin, et al., 2007).

Urban Infill is the first indication that an area is ready for residential regeneration, and allows larger footprints...
and denser residential projects than prior uses, creating a new “Density of Investment” for financial institutions based upon expected future values. Urban Infill relies on the dramatic transformation of former uses into higher intensity environments, mixing workplace and housing with retail (Buckley, 2020).

There are several policies related to urban infill to bridge the large urban gaps that occur as a result of removing an essential part of the traditional urban fabric.

2.1. Types of Urban infill Intervention policies:
2.1.1 The Urban Acupuncture intervention policy
Urban acupuncture is a socio-environmental theory that combines contemporary urban design with traditional Chinese acupuncture, by intervening on a small tactical scale throughout the urban context that results in a transformation in the large urban layout, relying on ripple effects. Urban Acupuncture seeks to integrate site-specific local knowledge (Casagrande, 2020).

2.1.2. Urban Intensification intervention policy
Intensification, a main compactness achieving strategy, uses urban land more efficiently by increasing the density of development and activity. This process includes the development of un-exploited land, the redeveloping of existing sites and buildings, adding expansions and extensions to existing land use (Jabreen, 2006). An and Gu, (An and Gu, 2018). define it as an approach to create areas with higher compactness and density regarding buildings, and promoting a safer urban environment by providing efficient public transport apposing to private transport.

2.1.3. Urban Revitalization intervention policy
Urban Revitalization deals with problematic urban areas, using a set of urban management strategies that promote economic, social, environmental, cultural and historical development (Garcia et. al, 2012).

Many terms have been used to refer to this process and have been used interchangeably according to (Garcia et. al, 2012), these terms include: regeneration, renewal, redevelopment, rehabilitation, conservation, restoration, reconstruction and refurbishment (Ramlee et. al., 2015).

2.1.4. By Using Collective urban form intervention policy i.e. (mega- form/ compositional form/ group form)
The term “urban form” is used to describe a city’s physical characteristics. It refers to the size, shape, and configuration of an urban area (Živković, et al., 2019), (Williams, 2014).

Mixed land use is a way of achieving one of the goals of sustainable urban form, which is reducing the need for travel, by bringing different activities together, therefore, reducing the need to commute by car for different needs since many various commodities are available in a close by area (Jabreen, 2006).

In a previous study, (Maki, 1964), established three major approaches to achieve a collective form which were the compositional form, the mega-structure form and the group form.

2.1.5. By Using Urban Megaform intervention policy
Frampton defines the megaform as: A large form extending horizontally rather than vertically, not freestanding, and oriented towards a densification of the urban fabric, (Frampton, 1999).

As a summary, these policies highlight the importance of using a significant urban mass that achieves the goals pursued by the concept of urban infill dictated by filling the voids within the urban fabric extending and linking with the traditional fabric to preserve the characteristics of the organic system, ecosystem, and urban memory to ensure intensification and urban revitalization. The following figure (1) shows the levels of urban infill.

![Figure 1: Levels of urban infill](image-url)
3. Study Area

The city of Baghdad in the mid-twentieth century was not what it is now. It was a small city with a limited area and a small population divided into two right and left sides according to their location from the Tigris River that runs through the old city. The right side called the Karkh area, and the left side called the Rusafa area.

The traditional Karkh area includes several residential neighborhoods that are penetrated by organic alleys, which are the arteries linking this organic-traditional fabric. Baghdadi traditional houses are characterized by an internal courtyard, basements, and the use of natural ventilation in addition to the use of local brick material in the construction.

The most important intervention that penetrated the traditional fabric or the old city in the Karkh area is the establishment of Haifa Street in the early eighties of the last century which was a new main street parallel to the Tigris River and was surrounded by high buildings dedicated to housing, and this intervention caused multiple problems, including isolating and tearing the urban fabric and removing many important landmarks still present in the urban memory of the indigenous people, one of the most prominent landmarks is the Hamada Heritage Souq, figure (2). This intervention also caused the tearing of the organic arteries linking the city's organic fabric in addition to multiple social and psychological problems.

As for the second intervention, which is no less important than the first, it was the construction of a wide street that penetrates and mediates the organic fabric without constructing any new buildings. Rather, parts of the residential houses became the surroundings of this street and forming its main facade with the disruption of the proportional relations between the width of the street and the height of the buildings surrounding it. This street is called Al-Talae’ Street, figure (3), which is perpendicular to the vital Haifa Street.

Figure 2: The traditional area of Al-Karkh with a highlight of Souq Hamada, (Sousa, 1952).

Figure 3: The traditional area of Al-Karkh after the intervention of cutting both Haifa and Al-Talae’ streets (by authors).

3.1. Hamada Souq neighborhood:

It is one of the old Karkh neighborhoods and one of the most popular traditional markets in the Karkh area that includes retail shops, which is considered one of the most important urban nodes, as it was a place for meetings, gathering and shopping. These social events and activities have ceased to exist due to replacing the market and its old buildings with newly constructed buildings and streets. This market is one of the important landmarks that are still present in the urban memory of the locals. Therefore, it is essential to revive and reshape it in a contemporary style to support urban development.

A study was conducted on the city of Kadhimiyah which explained the importance of preservation of alleys of
organic fabric (Warren and Worskett, 1983). These alleys are considered the linking arteries of that fabric when preparing any study or intervention in addition to preserving the urban memory of the community.

However, the authors pointed out the challenges of preserving traditional houses, due to their poor structural conditions and difficulty to rehabilitate. Further, the study emphasized the necessity of replacing them with contemporary residential buildings and blocks with local characteristics such as using local materials and reviving the concept of the inner courtyard.

These characteristics include the Karkh area with its various neighborhoods, meaning that there are difficulties in the processes of urban preservation and infill at the level of individual buildings, so it must deal with in a different way, including the restoration of parts of the fabric, markets or individual buildings. This method will be the process of reviving or restoring the Hamada Heritage Souq and the removed urban fabric.

3.2. Study area analysis
The most important planning and design problems experienced by the area after removing part of the urban fabric and transforming it into a street are:
- Degradation of the organic and environmental system of the urban fabric.
- Weakening the urban memory.
- Dividing the area into two segregated parts.
- The weakness of the economic and social activities and events.
- Imbalanced land use.
- Weakness in population and housing densities.
- Disappearance of craftsmanship activities.
- Transforming an important part of the urban fabric into a broad street for cars.
- Irregularity of the street facade buildings.
- Imbalance in the proportional relationship between the height of the buildings and the width of the street.

3.3. The goals of reviving the Hamada Heritage Souq are to:
Achieve an urban balance in land use and provide new job opportunities to support urban development.
- Strengthen and support the urban form of the traditional fabric.
- Support, revitalize, and revive the traditional and local industries that have receded.
- Transform the street into a place to support and develop the local economy to be of an efficient attraction to the public.
- Restore the old fabric by adding an urban block to enhance the urban form and link the two sides of the traditional fabric.
- Rebuild and restore the urban memory and enhance the confidence of the community and feel of belonging to the place.
- Reform the ecological and organic system that has deteriorated as a result of opening the street.
- Strengthen the urban landscape by reviewing building heights, densities, and space containment in a way that suits the street’s width.
- Separate the movement of cars from pedestrians.
- Support urban tourism by making the place vibrant and walkable, to expose people to the characteristics of the old city.

4. Proposed scenarios
Four scenarios were prepared as design proposals to revive Souq Hamada and transform it into a place and an effective attraction point that brings the two sides of the area together in a vital area. These scenarios are:

4.1. Scenario No. (1):
This part focuses on restoring parts of the traditional fabric to fill the urban gap resulting from removing parts of the urban fabric, alleys, paths, some famous landmarks, and heritage markets while preserving the traditional scale by using local materials and restoring urban memory. This goal is to be achieved by shifting car movement to an underground level and isolating it from the pedestrian movement. Moreover, reuse the land to convert streets from a passage for movement to a group of temporary and permanent spaces for gathering in a way that guarantees urban coherence to achieve unity and harmony between the two sides. Also, linking the movements via corridors with the alleys of Haifa Street to achieve urban sustainability.

Strategies and elements used: the restoration of parts of the traditional fabric; the revival of the Hamada Heritage Souq; the urban place- and space making; urban interconnection (urban sustainability); the preservation of the human scale – the use of local materials – the revival of traditional corridors.
4.2. Scenario No. (2):
This scenario focuses on establishing an urban block for activities with a variety of uses (both horizontally and vertically) with six-story height components compatible with the height of the buildings on Haifa Street. This urban block will be like a city mall (reviving the heritage Hamada Souq) and an attraction point with various activities that work day and night to activate the area that lacks urban densities and activities. The project also ensures the urban interconnection of both sides of the area by reviving some of the old alleys in a contemporary style that penetrates the urban block (Hamada Heritage Souq) on the ground and first floor.

Moreover, separating pedestrians and vehicle movements and shifting it to an underground alternative interspersed with side parking lots with elements of vertical movement of people and goods. Also, re-utilization of the ground floor to encourage the creation of public spaces and revive Souq Hamada.

Strategies and elements used: an inclusive urban block – land reuse – places making – diversity of activities – the revival of Souq Hamada – urban revitalization – the revival of heritage alleys – urban sustainability (ecological, cultural, historical, community participation, economic, political, infrastructure).

4.3. Scenario No. (3)
This scenario focuses on setting up a giant multi-storey block that rises from the ground floor by six floors to create a mall with modern technologies related to vertical movement with the activities and activities of Hamada Heritage Souq on the ground floor that will be at the level of the traditional fabric with movement and height, in addition to creating gathering places, meetings, events, and various popular activities that complement the activities and activities underground and floors at the top. While maintaining the coherence of the two sides of the project through the extension of the alleys and tracks of the two sides of the region, with the establishment of parking lots and green areas, and the revival of the corridors linking it to Haifa Street, with the treatment and maintenance of building facades on both sides of the street.

Strips of traditional fabric that have been removed, including alleys and paths, and some important landmarks, markets, and schools, including the Hamada Heritage Market that has been removed in Haifa Street, are being restored to restore the urban memory of the local community on the ground floor, and the movement of the car through the construction of a tunnel for the movement of cars underground (Under the markets).

Strategies and elements used: the restoration of parts of the urban fabric – the revival of important landmarks – the revitalization of urban memory – a giant block – the revival of Souq Hamada – the revival of arcades – the maintenance of building facades. Mixed uses – urban sustainability (ecological, cultural, historical, community, economic, political, infrastructure).

4.4. Scenario No. (4)
This scenario focuses on intensification and urban revitalization through establishing large residential buildings that rise six floors above the ground floor, along with restoring the old shops of different commercial uses. These shops will vertically serve the residents of the buildings and horizontally serve residents on both sides of the project. Moreover, reviving some of the projects’ landmarks, and the corridors linking them with buildings of Haifa Street to ensure the continuity of movement, intensification, and urban revitalization.

Further, the scenario focuses on the maintenance and conservation of the facades of the old buildings surrounding the project. Also, it considers establishing a cultural wall that reflects the identity of the region.

Further, constructing parking lots, side parks to reconnect both sides of the project, converting the old alleys and vital roads into covered pathways to ensure the movement of residents to both sides of the project, in a way that supports urban sustainability.

The first underground floor is dedicated to restoring important parts of the traditional fabric that have been removed for the traditional practice of the old city, such as handicrafts, activities and daily activities to ensure urban cohesion and urban memory.

The second floor under the ground is dedicated to the movement of cars through a tunnel that penetrates the project while working to ensure the vertical movement of people, services, and emergencies.

Strategies and elements used: a group of high-rise apartment buildings – the restoration of old stores – neighborhoods of Souq Hamada – neighborhoods of extinct monuments – corridor neighborhoods – urban intensification – urban revitalization – land use – urban sustainability (environmental, cultural, historical, societal, economic, political, and structural participation Infrastructure).

5. Analysis and comparison of the proposed scenarios
All proposals were studied and analyzed by the authors and a comparison of all scenarios was undertaken as shown in table (1), which is a table showing a summary of the intervention elements and strategies for the proposed urban infill scenarios to convert Al-Talae’ Street in Baghdad to an urban place:
Table 1. A summary of intervention elements and strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario No: 1</th>
<th>Scenario No: 2</th>
<th>Scenario No: 3</th>
<th>Scenario No: 4</th>
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<td><strong>Element Interventions</strong></td>
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<td>Restoration part of fabric</td>
<td>Collective Urban Form</td>
<td>Urban Mega-form</td>
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<td>Mackling Places</td>
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<td>Tactical places</td>
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<td>New: Shape</td>
<td>Urban Revitalization</td>
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<td>Group Form</td>
<td>New Size</td>
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<td>Mega-Structure Form</td>
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<td>New Land-use</td>
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<td>Participation</td>
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<td>New Layout</td>
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<td>Political</td>
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<td>New Building Types</td>
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<td>Rehabilitation</td>
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<td>Urban Local Scale</td>
<td>New Urban Scale</td>
<td>New Urban Scale</td>
<td>Higher Density</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Each scenario was later studied regarding the elements of urban infill each scenario has achieved, see table (2).

Table 2. The relationship of the proposed scenarios with the elements of urban infill

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urban Infill Strategies</th>
<th>Intervention Elements</th>
<th>Scenario No: 1</th>
<th>Scenario No: 2</th>
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<td>Urban Intensification Intervention</td>
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<td>Urban Revitalization Intervention</td>
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6. Conclusion
The urban fill policy aims to restore the damaged fabric, regenerate the region, strengthen the urban landscape and reconsider the landuse. It also aims towards providing new job opportunities and events that meet the contemporary needs of the local community while preserving folklore, local traditions and professions and also contributes to revitalizing the urban memory of the region. Especially in cases like the case study of this research, where planning decisions lead to the process of removing an integral part of the traditional fabric, which caused loss of its heritage and urban value, in addition to dividing the fabric into two isolated, non-integral regions. On the other hand, this isolation led to the loss of control over the traditional houses and their distinctive architectural features.

After studying the area and the proposed intervention scenarios, and comparing each scenario and its potential to achieve urban sustainability from an urban infill point of view, the importance of using an inclusive urban mass to restore and repair the urban fabric and transform the street into a place to be an important urban focus in the region has emerged. Scenario (4) had a slight advantage over the second and third proposals. However, it is recommended that designers take into consideration all three scenarios keeping in mind the potential of each strategy.

References