ANALYZING CONTEMPORARY MOSQUE PHILOSOPHY AND DESIGN

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Abstract. Mosques have been materialized as important architectural magnets. The functions of mosques exceeded being worship spaces. Historically, mosques have symbolized state power and manifestations of glorious art and architecture emerging from communities where they are located. This paper aims to evaluate the architectural expression of contemporary mosques based on authenticity vs clichés. A brief introduction will primarily discuss how mosques reflected the essence, needs and philosophy of communities, referring to various geographical locations. Following that, selected contemporary mosques will be analyzed qualitatively, according to their philosophy and architectural expression. The cases will be selected based on being architecturally valuable additions, with reference from Aga-Khan and Al-Fozan foundations. The paper concludes with guidelines for contemporary mosques design, which is expected to drift designers' attention to the importance of de-mystifying mosques' architectural expression from repeated clichés in favor of quality, suitability and innovation.

1.   Introduction

While addressing contemporary Mosque design, it is essential to understand the effect and importance of the Mosque as a comprehensive typology in Muslim societies. Throughout various eras, Mosques remained as the most important, dominant structure which didn't change in spite of upraises or falls of nations. The Mosque is a representation for collective identities of Muslim nations, thus, it is the most respected and conserved typology in their cities, taken into account the emotional and spiritual bond the Mosque plays. Mosques have been historical magnets for Muslim populations during various eras, not only as spaces for worship, but their roles also extended to act as political anchors, social hubs, educational centers, governmental centers and administrative institutions. Depending on their geographical locations, the mosques reflected the essence, needs and culture of communities. With the wide spread of Muslims in various countries, the Mosque identity has been shaped and became identifiable via special architectural elements, which are not the core of the constituents of the very first Mosque in "*El-Madinah*", built by Prophet Mohammed (Peace Be Upon Him). The stereotyping of forms has started with the expansion of the Muslim state. The inherited forms across generations have been repeated without clear re-questioning of their reference. The paper aims to shed light on the contemporary architectural language of mosque design, with special focus on the necessity of re-use of inherited elements vs the new vocabulary, forms and architectural elements which are introduced. The range of contemporary mosques selected refer to being built during the past 50 year, opposing to historical referencing.

This time span is specifically chosen since it reflects to the era of pluralism in architectural thought, where post-modern ideologies have weakened, and the architecture of the possible, whether structurally or formalistically has boomed. Accordingly, it is the era of re-thinking architectural form. In this respect, it is necessary to observe and criticize the extent to which a deeply rooted typology has been preserved or adapted to the spirit of the era. The paper concludes with guidelines to help architects in regarding the mosques today as cultural products of their communities, rather than forced outcomes of repetitive architectural elements, which are devoid their original meanings.

It is important to understand the background of emergance of the Mosque as a unique typology since its first initiation. The very first Mosque was built by the prophet "pbuh" and his companions in Qubaa', Medina in 1 H/622 AD. With a rectangular plan and a wall that became a barrier around it, the first mosque was fairly simple and unpretentious. Later, *"Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi"* was the spot where it was chosen to act as the ruling and gathering place in Medina, which also included a place for the prohet's home and a place later added for the poor muslims, (Fig.1). As Taib and Rasdi (2012) discuss, the emerging group of Muslims have seen the act of building of the mosque as a political as well as a religious act. Ahmad et al. (2016) explain that the following expansions and additions established via the following four Caliphs have been characterized by being simple, without extravagant or monumental appearances. They have acted as platforms for "equality, unity and brotherhood", Ahmad et al. (2016). There have been some constraints in the design of mosques since its early emergence, such as the defined orientation towards the "*Qibla*" direction towrads Mecca, the clarity and transparency of the space and the transition from "secualr to spiritual". During the following eras, the influnces of cultural and geographical environemnts have changed the simplistic appeal of the mosque. The most skilled architects and craftsmen have been engaged in the building process. The diversity of meanings embedded in the mosque over various eras have strengthened the cognitive system to idividual perceptions and attitudes, (Taib & Rasdi, 2012).

Figure 1. Re-generation of the first Mosque in Madinah at the time of the Prophet (PBUH), 2022, (https://madainproject.com/masjid_al_nabawi_at_the_time_of_prophet_muhammad, retrieved on 4/7/2022)

Taking into account the belief delivered by the Prophet (PBUH), which beholds the inherit meaning that all clean land can be considered a mosque and used for worship, the early mosques were mostly characterized by minimalistic architecture. However, with the widespread of the Muslim nation, some elements have become repetitions, based on inheritance from various dynasties, rather than being deeply rooted in the functionality of

the mosque. This has given a floor for rooted stereotypes, such as the usage of domes, vaults, minarets, *"mehrab"*, etc... (Ahmad *et al*., 2016).

Lastly, based on Allahham's (2019) observation, explaining that adopting the temples from pre-Islamic eras into Muslim's spaces of worship likewise the case in the Umayyad dynasties witness the flexibility and adaptability of the Mosque architecture; since the populations regarded the values rather than the shape of the spaces. It is further observed that several records from Muslim cities have defined the Mosque by its function, and the related events, not by their physical architectural description. This raises the question of whether the Mosque nowadays is defined by its original intent as a spiritual socio-cultural magnet, aiming to unify the nation and get the community engaged in several activities besides worship, or is it transforming into a stylistic building typology, regardless of its functionality or the cultural product of the communities where the Mosque is located (Fig.2).
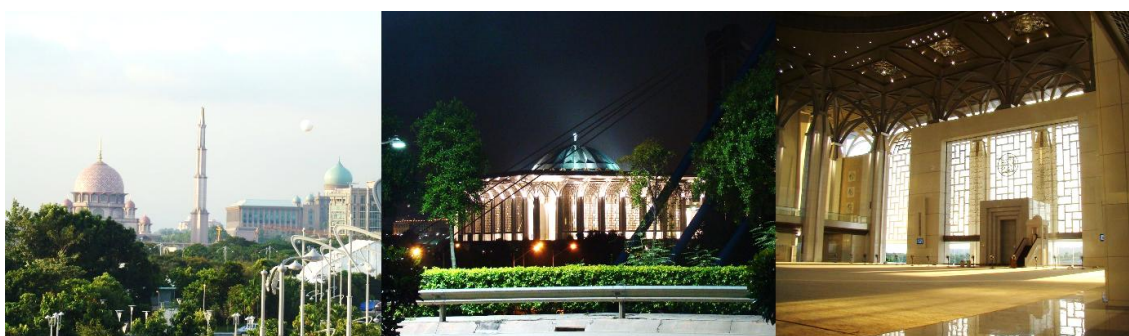

Figure 2. Contemporary Mosques from Putra-Jaya, Malaysia, Showing Contemporary Expressions and borrowing from Tradition, 2022 (Author)

Witnessing the era of eclecticism, mosques have been impacted by re-use of historical elements and architectural vocabularies as identity representation of the typology. The problem stems from the gap which exists between the needs of the current era, the contemporary layer of philosophical transitions related to science, current community needs, technological advancement from one side, and the stereotypes of mosques inherited through generations. As Taib and Rasdi (2012) explain, the architectural history of mosques' need to be re-addressed, especially in the shadows of the verifications of formalistic design. An additional attribute which needs to be regarded in contemporary mosques are how they are perceived sociologically, in addition to the behaviors and perceptions of their users. It is further elaborated that special features, like the dome, minaret, *mihrab* and *mimbar*, have been reproduced as familiar architectural imagery, as a result of repetition down centuries. It is important to regard other values and aspects especially in the current era, to add new meanings and understandings related to historicity, sociological, anthropological and psychological perspectives.

Ahmad et al. (2016) further argue that the main objective for a Muslim community from building a Mosque is not merely as a place to perform the prayers, but rather the act of building is loaded by many religious and social practices. This is also advocated by Ghouchani (2019), who reflects on the core function between mosques and the social cohesion of communities, communal safety and security, functionality, diversification, place making and enhancing the sense of belonging. The mosque is a direct metaphor for the symbols of the Islamic way of life. Thus, the mosque strongly represents the identity of the community. In accordance with this, Saniei (2012) represents the mosque as a

typology resembling the cultural center for Islamic communities. The main dilemma (Ahmed *et al.*, 2016) deploys is that modern mosques are more oriented towards the appreciation of architectural over-design, above contextual and environmental aspects. This is seen as a reflection to self-pride and arrogance in design, in order to produce the feel of awe by the grandeur in the built product. Whereas, the architecture of Mosques have been historically influenced by regional and cultural diversity aspects. Finally, it is argued that the act of stereotyping have been associated with the acts of self-imposition of familiar ideas, which leads to reduced qualities limiting the innovation of architects. Additionally, Allahham (2019), regards that although the mosque is today's sole contemporary edifice with meanings related to cultural continuity, the confusion can be resulting from the "crisis of meaning", not distinguishing between collective cultural codes of what is sacred and which possible to alter.

Asfour (2016) additionally highlights that there is an ongoing discussion between contemporary architects regarding the representation of the contemporary mosque. The familiar tradition of re-using historical examples devoid their meanings and understandings is controversial. Understanding the evolvement of Mosques should help the architectural community to re-introduce the mosque procedurally as an outcome of socio-political and tectonically relevant outcome of diverse geographies. This causes a challenge to architects, thus exposes the conflicts between modernized architecture from one side and adopting vernacular techniques in mosque design from another side (Asfour, 2016; Khan, 1990), additionally the lost sense of place (Bahauddin, 2021) and finally self-orientalism (Batuman, 2016). The following figure, (Fig. 3) expresses the tension between the expression of mosques as cultural identity reflections of communities and the conceptual challenge of declaration of the mosque as a symbol for grandeur in architecture.

Based on the previous debates regarding the historicity of simplicity in Mosque architecture, the diversion into stereotyping related to forms and extravagance, this part aims to shed light on how cultural identity has affected the Mosque forms and architecture. This is important in relevance to Wirakusumah et al. (2021), since comprehensive studying of the diversity of Mosque architecture is mainly about how architecture has the ability to accommodate the needs and the activity. Accordingly, this is how diversity is created. Furthermore, Erzen (2011) regards that although the mosque is one of the most common typologies, there should be no generalization of the typology traits, since the diversity of cultures where the mosques are located affect their complexity. Khan (2008) asserts by regarding the mosque as an expression of collective identity. Mosques architecture reflects the identity of the community where it is located. Thus, to understand the Mosque, it is important to understand its region and place. That's why mosque architecture shifts in accordance with the changing social and cultural contexts. Khan (2008) finally concludes that "architecture is not about buildings, it is about people."

This is evident in various mosque architecture responses in various contexts. As Sujak (2021) explains, Mosques' architecture in Malaysia reflects the influences of different cultures. This is effective on the interior as well as exterior appeal. The use of blending elements exclusive to the context, the abundant material, and the dominant spirit of architecture of the era. Furthermore, Sujak (2021) declares that mosque designs also represent the architectural traits of varying societies, the influences of colonialism, external influences, tectonics, and political powers. While Adi (2016) argues that the semiotics of architecture of mosques vary in various locations, this leads to influences on

the physical shape of the buildings. Mosques are distinguishable and identifiable between the regions, from Indonesia, Middle East, Turkey and Africa.
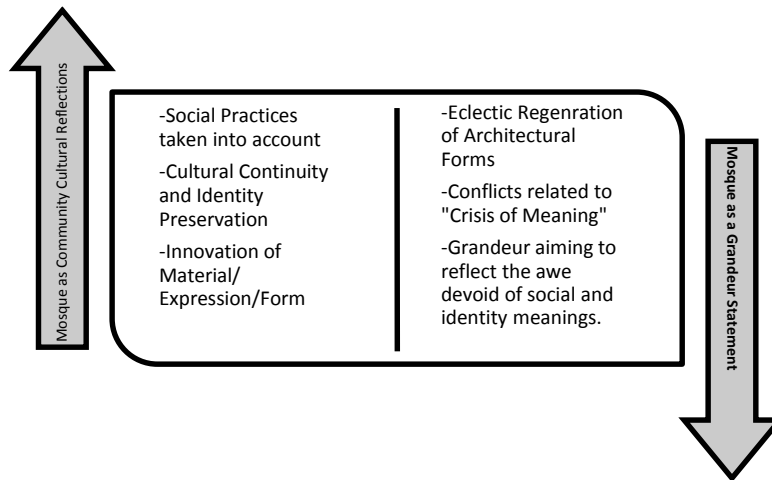

Mosque as Community Cultural Reflections

-Social Practices taken into account

-Cultural Continuity and Identity Preservation

-Innovation of Material/ Expression/Form

-Eclectic Regenration of Architectural Forms

-Conflicts related to "Crisis of Meaning"

-Grandeur aiming to reflect the awe devoid of social and identity meanings.

Mosque as a Grandeur Statement

Figure 3. Mosque Expressions between Community Mirrors and Grandeur Manifestations, 2022, (Author).

With special reference to African architecture, it is noteworthy to mention the case of the Djenne Mosque in Mali, which is an effective manifestation to cultural identity relevance in Mosque architecture. Marchand (2013) explains that The Djenne Mosque is witnesses the largest mud structure still existing in the world as a single structure. The yearly act of re-plastering the surface of the Mosque by the community, led by the elders in the community who are wise and trusted, creates a communal bond which brings the town's citizens together. This also encourages the younger geenrations to get exposed to their architectural heritage as well as their identity. Also, Marchand (2013) explains that this helps the youth to understand the building techniques that they can use in the maintenance of their private dwellings. Accordingly, this ceremony preserves both identity and knowledge and they are continually renewed and reinforced. Finally, (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004: 61) presents the Mosque as an expression for tangible and intangible heritage. The annual re-claying ceremony help rooting the community to the pre-colonial identity, authenticity and sustained tradition, (Fig. 4).

Figure 4. The Annual Ritual of Re-plastering Djenne Mosque by the Community Members, 2013, (https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9789048518340/html).

2. Material and Methods

This part aims to present the analysis of contemporary Mosque design, with special regards to how architects respond to the challenges of the era. The methodology used in the analysis is a critical review of selected case studies, which are acknowledged through renowned architectural awards, in order to focus the study on the high edge projects appreciated by the architectural community. The analysis results with a set of common factors among the selected cases for theorizing a new approach to address contemporary mosques design, depending on the current needs. The three methodologies of analysis extracted from the previous literature debates are shown in the figure below (Fig.5). Those three ideologies of historical relevance, added value vs stereotyping and finally cultural identity as a form driver are used to analyze five selected case studies. The cases are selected based on their recognition via two important architectural awards, which are the Aga-khan Award for projects with excellence in Muslim societies. And Al-Fozan Mosque architecture, acknowledging the innovation in Mosque design in various world regions. The next part highlights the awards philosophies, the selected cases studies and the analysis methodology based on the outcomes of the literature review.
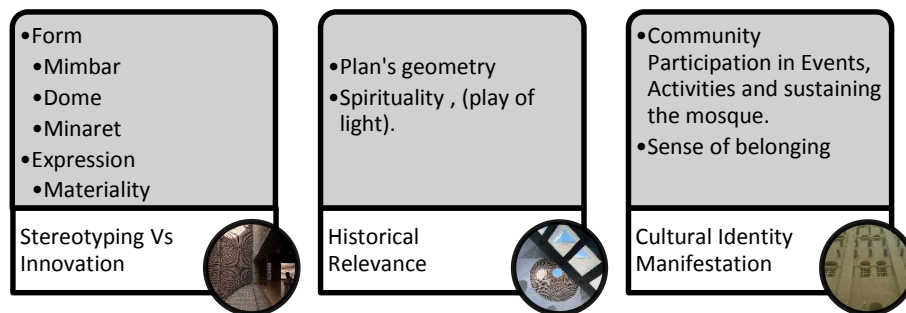

Figure 5. Criteria of Analysis used in the Critical Analysis of Selected Case Studies, 2022, (Author)

The two selected awards used as benchmarks to select from the cases important to the analysis and discussion of this paper are the Aga-Khan Award, and Al-Fozan Mosque Award. According to the description presented by the founding entities of the awards, the mission statements and the establishment of the awards along the years give them the credibility to rely upon, based on the scope of the discussion of this paper.

The Aga-khan Award for Architecture, as declared on the official website, is awarded every three years to architectural projects which produce excellence and novelty in standards of architecture, planning, preservation or landscape. The award is perceived as one of the most reputable and distinguishable architectural awards. Additionally, it is highlighted that the Award looks for concepts, ideas and projects which responds positively to the needs and aspirations of the communities where they are located. The award has been running since the cycle of (1978-1890), till the present time.

While Abdallatif Al Fozan Award for Mosque Architecture, according to Allahham, (2019) was established in 2011, with the aim of setting-forth the futuristic visions of mosque design. Its mission as officially highlighted by the foundation is to showcase the distinguished contributions mosques design in the twenty first century, through maintain the spirit of traditional mosque in the novel essence. It aims to reveal new ideas for mosque design globally through the encouragement of innovative ideas in

how technological aspects, planning strategies, and design innovations play an important role in the identification of mosques in the current era.

Thus, the selected cases are considered among the best contemporary examples to analyse the design philosophy, based on their suitability to express the identity of the typology, while providing innovative solutions expressing the challenges of contemporary mosque design. Although the cases are not equally distributed between the two awards, however, the reason for this is the criteria of selection of Mosques which cover a wide range of geographical locations primarily and to adhere to the designs which are considered more spread over a considerable time frame, including the past five years. Accordingly, the research was limited to the selection of the last case study from Al-Fozan Award to ensure the novelty of the analysis.

The five selected case studies selected among the numerous award winning Mosques in various cities in the world, aim to highlight the contemporary approaches in dealing with the inherited elements and treatments in Mosque architecture. The five cases are, Bait Ur-Rouf located in Dhaka- Bangladesh, Chandgaon Mosque located in Chittagong- Bangladesh shortlisted for Aga-khan award, Niono Mosque in Mali, Sherefudin's White Mosque in Bosnia-Herzegovina and lastly, Basuna Mosque-Egypt. The first four cases have been awarded or shortlisted for the Aga-khan award in cycles; 2014-2016, 2008-2010, 1981-1983 for both Niono and Sherefudin's Mosques. While Basuna Mosque has been awarded Al-Fozan Mosque Award in the 3rd cycle in 2021. The following table highlights the main technical information of the five cases (Table 1).

Table 1. Technical Information for the 5 Selected Case Studies
(https://www.akdn.org, https://alfozanaward.org)

	Bait Ur-Rouf	*Chandgaon Mosque*	*Niono Mosque*	*Sherefudin's White Mosque*	*Basuna Mosque*
Architect	Marina Tabassum	Kashef Mahboob Chowdhury	Lassina Minta	Zlatko Ugljen	Waleed Arafa
Location	Dhaka, Bangladesh	Chittagong, Bangladesh	Niono, Mali	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Basuna, Egypt
Size	754m²	1048 m²	1'980 m²	435 m2	450 m²
Completion	2012	2007	1973	1980	2019
Distinguished Addition	Stereotyping Vs Innovation in Natural ventilation and the light effects light turning the mosque into an asylum space for spirituality.	Stereotyping Vs Innovation manifested in re-presenting the historic role of the mosque as both a spiritual place and as a community arena.	Historical Relevance manifested in the unique mud brick mosque, by local master masons.	Cultural Identity manifested in serving as a religious and cultural center for the community.	Stereotyping Vs Innovation manifested in iming to react to the context's environmental challenges while addressing tradition and heritage in a contemporary mode.

The cases are analysed based on the following points, extracted from the literature review, in order to reflect on the extent they have re-defined traditional elements belonging to the Mosque as a typology. The points to be analysed are the break-down of

the three main criteria explained above; Stereotyping Vs Innovation, Historical Relevance and Cultural Identity Manifestation which have been grouped previously based on the debates relevant to the scope of the study,

- Plans Geometry
- *Mimbar*
- Dome treatment
- Minaret treatment
- Materiality
- Spirituality and play of light
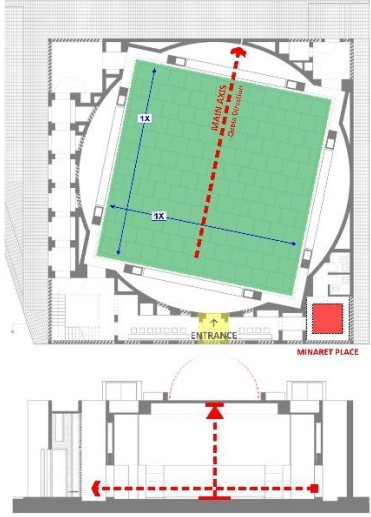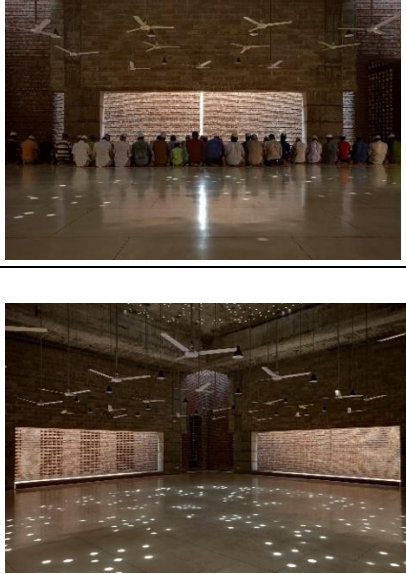- Cultural Activities
- Community Participation

"Stereotyping Vs Innovation" is manifested in re-presenting form: (*Mimbar*, Dome, Minaret), expression: (materiality). "Historical Relevance" reflects plan's geometry and spirituality as in the play of light. While "Cultural Identity Manifestation" is reflected in community participation in events, activities, sustaining the mosque and the enhanced essence of belonging.

All material related to the cases as based on the declaration of the award entities (Aga-kan foundation and Al-fozan Foundation). While those data have been further qualitatively analysed by the author to associate the reasons of excellence to the architectural qualities embedded in the Mosques design. This will be explained and discussed for each case individually, afterwards, the cases will be read in accordance to one another in the cross-reading in the upcoming part.

The first case study, Bait Ur-Rouf, which was completed by the owner's grandchild, the architect who took the responsibility to establish the Mosque, in one of Dhaka's most crowded neighbourhoods. The Mosque architecture is characterized by its pure form and simple geometry. The building was raised on a base on a site axis creating a 13-degree angle with the prayer direction. The volume, which consisted of a cylinder was superimposed into a square, so as to create a rotation of the prayer hall, and thus forming light wells in-between the two pure forms. The prayer hall structure depends on eight peripheral columns. Complementary utilities of the Mosque are located in spaces created by the intersection of the outer square and the cylinder. According to Aga-khan foundation, the base was dynamic throughout the day attracting children play and elderly men socializing while awaiting the prayers to start. The most remarkable community participation aspect lies in the self-funded system. The Mosque is naturally ventilated through the porous brick walls, which acts to maintain the coolness and ventilation of the prayer hall. Natural light from the skylight further adds a layer of spirituality to the praying space. The following table (Table 2), further analyses the Mosque based on the previous points.

As to Chandgaon Mosque, it is located in a suburban location at the edge of the port of Chittagong in Bangladesh. The architect was aiming to re-energize the role of the mosque as a spiritual worship place in addition to a place for community engagement. The main elements of the mosque were identified to create new forms. The geometry resulted in a monolithic square, divided into two identical cuboids. The first cuboid forms the front court, with a half elliptical opening above, to open up the heavy masonry walls to the landscape. While the second cuboid allows the *miharb* wall to be naturally illuminated, with a balance of an iconic abstract dome. In the morning the openings naturally light up the mosque and at the evening, they radiate light from inside in a symbolic appeal.

Table 2. Analysis of Bait Ur-Rouf Mosque, (https://www.akdn.org and analysis by author)

Stereotyping Vs Innovation	*Historical Relevance*	*Cultural Identity Manifestation*
Dome-less treatment of prayer hall. Light wells and broken entrance emphasized through the tilt of the prayer hall towards *Qibla* direction. Elimination of minaret and *mimbar*.	Framing of Qibla Direction through light penetration. Spirituality through light transitions between the circular form and orthogonal walls. Masonry work used to delicately revive traditional contextual architecture.	Presence of strong community engagement with the mosque as a cultural religious magnet.

This case succeeded in reducing many inherited historical elements, to create stark geometrical clarity. It created a distinguishable architectural statement, through utilizing the contemporary, to generate a willingness to utilize the space which embodies the universal values of the current era, (akdn.org, retrieved in 14-4-2022). The following table (Table 3), further analyses the Mosque based on the previous points.

The case of Niono Mosque highlights a special monument, constructed using local materials and by local master masons and workmen from Niono. The traditional method of construction, which is wall-bearing mud brick walls with arches supporting slabs of wood has been the traditional way of building for ages in the locality. As to the jury who selected the project for the award, they highlighted the sophistication of the primitive traditional forms, and the actual preservation of the vernacular character and cultural identity in a large scale modern construction. The following table (Table 4), highlights the qualitative analysis of the mosque design based on the criteria of analysis.

Sherefudin's White Mosque, claimed to have resemblance with the cathedral of Ronchamp and the church in Firminy. Although the architect did consider older Ottoman Mosque on the site and in general Ottoman architecture in the Balkans, but avoided replication of historical precedents and moved towards contemporaneous architectural solution. The design beholds geometrical simplicity and purity of ornaments, further assured by the plain white form. The typical Bosnian mosque encompasses a simple square plan, crowned by a cupola and entered from a porch. This plan setting was preserved in the White Mosque, however, the roof was freely deformed and encapsulated

five skylights. The elements of the *mihrab*, *mimbar*, minaret and fountains are re-introduced using avant-garde geometries. Additionally, the five skylights in Sherefudin mosque are related to five daily prayers and five pillars of Islam. The project was selected for the award for its originality and innovation, and for its strong attempt to re-connect the future with the past, as shown in (Table 5).
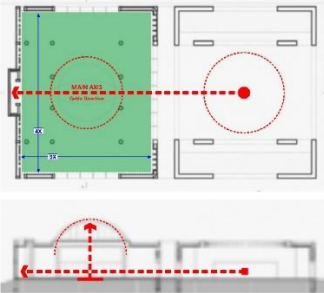
Table 3. Analysis of Chandgaon Mosque, (https://www.akdn.org and analysis by author)

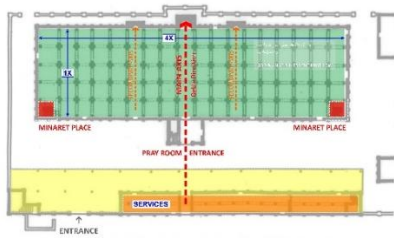| *Stereotyping Vs Innovation*	*Historical Relevance*	*Cultural Identity Manifestation*
Centrality and pure axially geometry towards *Qibla* direction. Abstract Dome form to increase sunlight exposure in prayer hall space. Elimination of minaret.	Strong connection with nature in the periphery of the mosque. Glass eye form dome allowing natural light penetration of the prayer space.	Connection created between local community and mosque.

Table 4. Analysis of Niono Mosque, (https://www.akdn.org and analysis by author)
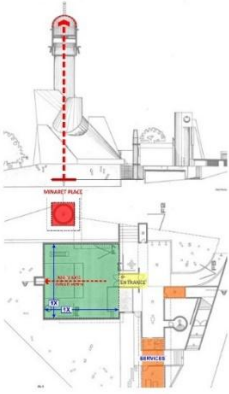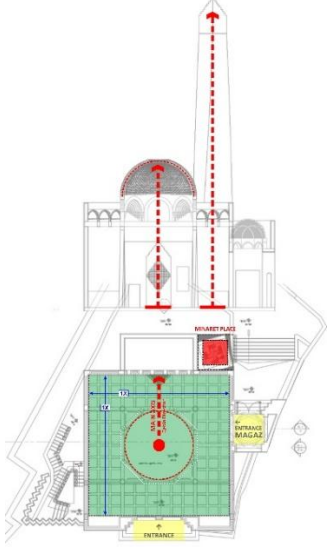
Stereotyping Vs Innovation	*Historical Relevance*	*Cultural Identity Manifestation*
Vernacular construction organizing prayer lines, through columns repetition. Increased width of 1st row to abide with Islamic ritual. Dome-less treatment of prayer hall.	Re-introcuing vernacular architecture in a culutral preservation mode of traditioanl architecture. Preservation of contextuality.	Strong communal connection with activities and with the construction process.

Table 5. Analysis of Sherefudin's White Mosque, (https://www.akdn.org and analysis by author)

Stereotyping Vs Innovation	Historical Relevance	Cultural Identity Manifestation
Sculptural masses used to create dynamic interplay of light penetrations. Dome-less treatment of prayer hall, While maintain the minaret for verticality.	Light treatments penetrating the inner spaces in mornings and acting as light beacons in the nights. Simple white surfaces, reflecting purity of forms.	Connection between Muslim community and worship spaces.

Finally, the last case study of importance to this paper is Basuna Mosque in Egypt. The project has been recently awarded Al-Fozan Mosque Award excellence in 2021. The design of the mosque aimed to blend traditional architecture, heritage values from mosque's spiritual essences with new statements of excellence of the era. Inherited symbolic elements of the dome, *mimbar*, minaret and even the structural columns, were introduced based on an understanding of evolving, dynamic, ever-changing inter-relations with the cosmos, the Arabic calligraphy "*Tholoth*", and the abstraction of stalactites used in Islamic Architecture to growing structures. This is evident in the *Mihrab's* cantilevered composition with the 99 cubes reflecting the documented names of Allah All Mighty in Islamic belief, the dynamic exposed structure of the dome, which depended on light sand bricks to create the dynamic interplay with light and space which seeks to connect with heaven in the sky. The columns heights were distributed into seven equal spaces, a number loaded with symbolic importance in Islamic belief as well. However, the inclined rotating form stemming from the motion of the centre in space highlights the excellence and innovation in contemporary construction techniques, while maintaining simple construction modes. Lastly, the mostly solid facades respond to a minimalistic Islamic conceptual approach, which also responded to the climatic qualities needed in the hot arid zone where the mosque is located. The qualities of Basuna Mosque aided in creating a strong sense of belonging for the community to their locality. This has been witnessed during the inventory field trip to the village, where the mosque acted as a magnet for the local community for various activities. Further analysis of the qualities of importance to the scope of the study are illustrated in the following table (Table 6).

Table 6. Analysis of Basuna Mosque, (Author, 2022)

Stereotyping Vs Innovation	*Historical Relevance*	*Cultural Identity Manifestation*
Re-interpreting traditional elements of Mosque design, as to the presence of the Minaret, *Mimabr* and dome in an introvert expression related to spatial experience.	Dome genuine form adds a layer of ever-changing dynamics in light penetration and projection with cast shadows from the sand-bricks projections. Skylights	Active community participation in events related with the Mosque as a social interaction hub.

3.   Contemporary Mosques between Clichés and Authenticity

The previous qualitative analysis highlighted the effect of inter-twining the inherited identity representations of mosque architecture with the needs, aspirations and values aimed for in contemporary architecture. The re-interpretations of elements such as the minaret, the dome, the *mimbar* and the overall monumental feeling created higher levels of meaning in the mosques studied, related to community engagement, spirituality, metaphoric embedded meaning, play with light and the sort. Mosque architecture succeeds when re-interpreted and re-defined as a cultural product for the community to fulfil the needs and aspirations. Tackling community values, meanings, lifestyles though the manifestations of upper levels of meaning, and addressing the worldviews refers to what Amos Rappaport previously debated in the understanding of architecture as a cultural product of communities where it emerges (Rapoport, 2005).

Therefore, the table below showcases the possibility of adopting several meanings and values as extracted from the five case studies previously analysed to help in formulating the results of the paper. This can be implemented with the help of the three previously used axes of analysis applied on the case studies. The concluding table aims to highlight the main points of difference and the points of similarity common between the cases. This helps in formulating the conclusion which aims to explain the possibility of balancing between the innovations and the spirit of the era, while enhancing the spirituality of the mosque without compromising its added value in the community to engage the users even more and to aid in establishing a better sense of belonging.

Table 7. Cross-reading between the 5 selected case studies in relevance to the analysis criteria, (Author 2022)

	Bait Ur-Rouf	*Chandgaon Mosque*	*Niono Mosque*	*Sherefudin's White Mosque*	*Basuna Mosque*
Historical Relevance	Traditional Architecture.	Contemporary, Simple Structure.	Vernacular Architecture.	Contemporary, Simple Structure	Blending Traditional and Contemporary Structures.
Form	Pure Forms.	Pure Form and Unprecedented Treatment of Dome.	Stemming from Structure and Vernacular Architecture.	Brutalist, crude form	Solid outer skin treatment, Growth analogies in main features.
Expression	Traditional Contemporary	Minimalist.	Traditional, Contextual.	Contemporary, Formalistic.	Traditional Contemporary.
Spirituality	Spirituality related to play with light.	Connection with nature.	Connection with communal traditions.	Spirituality through directional natural light.	Connection through philosophical Islamic ideologies and inter-play with light in the dome eye.
Stereotyping Vs Innovation	Absence of Dome, Minaret and Mimbar.	Absence of Minaret and Mimbar.	Absence of Dome and Mimbar. Minaret treatment in the form of a tower stemming from vernacular architecture.	Innovative expression of Dome, Minaret and Mimbar treatments to introduce a new brutalist expression.	Re-interpretation of traditional meanings in heritage associated with mosque architecture to produce unprecedented vocabulary.
Community Participation in Events, Activities and sustaining the mosque.	Present, (Based on Aga-khan foundation).	Present, (Based on Aga-khan foundation).	Highly Present, (Based on Aga-khan foundation).	Present, (Based on Aga-khan foundation).	Present.

4. Discussion: New Interpretation of Mosque's Architecture

As explained in the theoretical debate, the analysis of the case studies and the cross-reading, the typology of the Mosque has gained its significance, sustainability and power from the spiritual meaning it beholds to Muslim communities. Mosques resemble not only as spaces for worship, but as the "house of God" on Earth and the gateway to heavens. They create additionally a strong social magnet and connector.

The challenges of contemporary mosques are reflected in the tension between the re-generation of historic forms and architectural elements, even if they are devoid a core meaning or necessity from one side, and the possibility of re-interpreting historicism to produce meanings, values and patterns of use more adequate to communities in the current era.

It has been evident that there is a need to re-define what is suitable for Mosque architecture nowadays, based on research and acceptance for a new architectural

statement. Having this applied would enhance the user's experience, add a valuable print in the future history of mosques as well as allow the phenomenological growth of the typology. The importance of such mobilization would be the representation of holly values for a significant number of users around the globe.

5.   Conclusions

The research aimed to de-mystify mosques' architectural expression from repeated clichés in favor of quality, suitability and innovation. This has been achieved through a brief theoretical review of different points of view regarding the emergence, meanings and qualities of mosque architecture. Following that, five renowned case studies have been qualitatively reviewed, aiming to shed light on what is relevant to contemporary mosque architecture nowadays. The lessons learnt from each of the five case studies can be summarized as follows:

- Bait Ur Rouf Dhaka: elimination of stereotyping and the innovation in spatial experience through community self-help.
- Chandgaon Mosque: re-defining new non-familiar forms in the search of spiritual user experience and connection with nature.
- Niono Mosque: community engagement in a higher value to preserve vernacular architecture representing the identity of the place.
- Sherefudin's White Mosque: acceptance of un-expected sculpture forms to re-define the traditional mosque vocabulary and create a uniqe experience at all times.
- Basuna Mosque: philosophical interpretations of heritage meanings to come up with innovative ideas apart from stereotyping Mosque architecture.

The research concluded with a strong need to regard mosque architecture with higher levels of meaning, related to aspects, which strengthen the mosque visual image as it represents the identity of the Muslim nation, however, without disregarding its role as a cultural product, which reflects the communities they serve.

It was apparent from the analysis of the award winning projects that the concepts of modesty, minimalism, sustainability, and suitability as inherent in Islamic philosophical and theological values were highly respected. Those aspects although not clearly set as a guidelines or codes, yet, are highly applied through the creative collective conscious of contemporary architects. This reminds us with the extent of homogeneity previously existing in Muslim communities, as to Mosques architecture precisely and urban settings in cities from a more general perspective.

Accordingly, a new statement for Mosque architecture is crucially important to be regarded, which blends the sacred functionality of the Mosque as a space for worship, through the longer sides facing Qibla directions, the spirituality, minimalism, humble values, avoidance of distractions and lastly, through the positive values to be delivered to their communities.

The points used in the analysis criteria and the breakdown of the analysis can be further accomplished on other case studies in order to create an understanding of whether those new additions can fulfill an enlightenment message or can be considered further consumption of clichés in Mosque architecture design. If this is regarded by architects and founders of Mosques, especially in the current era, where the architecture of

extravagance is playing a great role, the Mosque architecture would be a real beacon for sustainability, suitability and for adding a value in communities. It is becoming an irony that the spaces where the person is reminded to give more and be more connected to upper levels of meaning and spirituality are in themselves at times using exaggerated decorations and resources the people themselves are in desperate need for. Thus, the re-application of values in Mosques architecture, would not only add to the communities where they are located, but will additionally open doors for architects to be creative in the means they would deliver the contemporary mosques messages of faith and well-being through humble and innovative spiritual architecture.

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