

Questions that will not go away

Traditionally, architecture has been the primary means of expression and communication of ideas, values, and beliefs in Arabian culture. The question that now presents itself in the context of post-oil architecture is whether architecture in the Arabian Peninsula region actually represents the collective mind of the culture in which it exists. One answer would be that with the "scapes" of flows there is no one collective mind that can be conceptually utilized to generalize or to build upon; rather there is plurality and multiplicity. In the Arabian Peninsula, architecture at the beginning of the twenty-first century requires a more thorough study and development of its capacity for symbolic representation, if it is to sustain itself as a form of human expression used to characterize the physical environment of the past. With this understanding, many of the projects and the emerging place typologies, while undoubtedly successful in responding to global flows of the present era, raise many questions. These include the following: what are the sustainable qualities that should be associated with international ideas on entering the host culture especially those pertaining to social practices? What are the socio-cultural and socio-behavioral impacts those ideas have on the locale and how can their negative effects, if they exist, be reduced or hopefully eliminated? What will be the running cost of embracing such international ideas and how will they affect the everyday activities of the average citizen? Can there be a position within socio-global aspirations for traditional ideas that are still relevant to today's culture in this region? While these questions deserve continuous in-depth analysis and investigation, it appears that they are not yet integral to contemporary cultural discourse, nor realized in future practices.