Restoring Confidence in Islamic Traditional Architecture

-1-

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Spahic Omer

KIRKHS, IIUM

(The relationship between traditional and modern architecture in the Muslim world was never easy.

A "modern" and "traditional" building face off in the historic section of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.)

Modernization of the architecture of Muslim societies inevitably comes at a price. Modernizing architecture is not only about importing and applying some well-established architectural styles from the West. It is also about subscribing to and following - knowingly or otherwise - certain values and standards that are either in outright

conflict or just irreconcilable with the values and standards Muslims already have.

To make things worse, everything Muslims do within each and every domain of their cultural and civilizational presence is inspired and guided by the worldview and value system of Islam, directly or indirectly, and sometimes more and at other times less. That means that pursuing modernity – which is as much a philosophy and creed, as a mere historical period and an ensemble of modern-day technological innovation, governance and socioeconomics – is set to place the procedure, sooner or later, on a collision course with some of the most fundamental principles of Islam.

The biggest stumbling blocks to living peacefully with modernity - especially insofar as Muslims are concerned - are modernity's doctrinal mantra that the predecessors in every regard were antiquated, passé and outstripped; its association with individualism and subjectivity; its worship-like attitude towards science and technology; its adoption of rationalism and empiricism as the ultimate sources of knowledge and virtue; its rejection of religion and any form of spirituality, and also ethics that could be derived from the former; its rejection of tradition and native culture; and its espousal of rapid, often frenzied, urbanization and material consumerism.

Modernization as a poisoned chalice

Even though modernity has many good points and has brought considerable material goodness to mankind, it at the same time contributed significantly to mankind's most distressing misfortunes. It caused the destruction of natural environment; it increased pollution; it led to high population density and inadequate infrastructures in most cities; it divested man of any transcendental meaning, value and purpose; it augmented inequality whereby the rich get richer and the poor get poorer; it bred injustice, insecurity and ontological uncertainty; it destroyed the family institution; and it broke up the social ties that had held people together in traditional societies, making them no longer feel as connected to one another.

Thus, whenever and wherever Muslims embraced modernity, they faced grave problems as regards their heritage, tradition, culture, beliefs and values. The matter was proportionate. The more modernized a country was, the more alienated and even disconnected from its history, culture and religion it became. To some, modernization meant separation from the people, identity and self. It was kind of a cultural suicide. Modernity in its totality and as conceived by the West was not only discordant with Islam – in its capacity as philosophy, worldview, value system, and complete way of life – but also it modelled as its rival.

An example are several Muslim countries, such as Egypt, Turkey, Tunisia, Algeria, Indonesia and many others, who in the 19th and the first half of the 20th century embarked on a series of sweeping and all-encompassing modernization programs. The programs were completely after the Western model. In the end, modernization turned out to be the total secularization, westernization and desacralization of systems, history, culture, life, thought and spirit. However, since all Muslim societies were extremely rich in all of those departments – dominating for centuries the world's cultural and civilizational scene - modernization in the Muslim world was more concerned about, and busier with, destroying than building. It was more about confusing than enlightening, and more about problem-making than problem-solving. For instance, certain modernization drives were accompanied by intensive and well-thought-out campaigns against veil (face covering for Muslim women), *hijab* (head covering for Muslim women), Muslim traditional dresses, Islamic education, Islamic institutions, Islamic shari'ah law, Islamic personal, family and social values, Islamic ethics, the Arabic language and the Arabic alphabet.

In a nutshell, modernization for Muslims turned out to be a radical form of relativization, whereby all true goodness and virtues were rendered relative, and as such were bartered for spiritual, intellectual and functional discord, tension, rupture, incoherence and fragmentation. Modernization turned out to be not progressive, but

regressive. It favoured short-term gains at the expense of long-term losses. The best evidence for this assertion is today's scientific, technological, cultural, intellectual, political and socioeconomic standing of those Muslim countries as had chosen more than a century ago to go modern (and westernized). Most of them are not to be found anywhere on the cultural and civilizational map of the world.

Some people, and even institutions, were largely aware of the hidden modernization threat, proceeding with caution. However, modernization had been constructed in such a way that one cannot simply break it down into fractional and autonomous aspects - in particular along its philosophy-actuality divide - taking then what is needed or wanted, and putting the rest away. Modernization is to be dealt with in its entirety, regardless of how much, at the end of the day, is assimilated thereof, and how much is dismissed. Modernization is tantamount to fire; if one plays with it, one gets burned. Remaining utterly unscathed is an improbable prospect. Damage limitation, or control, is the only pragmatic solution left.

Housing as an example

Thus, for example, when the Muslim cities embraced modern housing at the expense of their traditional paradigms, a level of damage was unavoidable. The damage could be observed in terms of the negligence and abandonment of the cities' traditional houses and many other aspects of the indigenous cultures and heritages, together with the development of all the symptoms that are normally associated with the hasty and poorly planned as well as executed urbanization and development programs, such as pollution, overcrowding, traffic congestion, housing shortages, planning and building mediocrity, poor urban living conditions and low infrastructure services (especially in the traditional sections of the cities).

Equally worrisome were the changes in family and social life, which were subtly fashioned by the modernization onslaught. The changes were expedited by the ways new houses had been designed and built, in that modern housing systems stood as the physical loci of the

modern individual, family and social values. They also epitomized and encouraged the modernist worldview and aesthetics.

Hence, if one of the main principles of modern architecture and industrial design in general was "form follows function" - that is, the shape of a building, or an object, should principally relate to its intended function or purpose – then in the case of the modern housing of Muslims, the principle was "(multidimensional and home-grown) function follows (fixed and imported) form" – that is, the familiar function of a house is dictated by its unfamiliar shape.

This, indeed, was a perversion of both modernity and architecture. It was the last thing architecture is and should be. It was the last thing any respectable housing style could accommodate and be associated with. It was a far cry from what a universal architectural tenet implied, to the effect that the purpose of a building should be the starting point for its design. It was unlike what another tenet indicated, to the effect that form and function are fundamentally one. They are joined in a spiritual union where one supports and derives its meaning and forte from the other.

It is deemed that the principle "form follows function" has been misunderstood and misapplied by many. So important and in a mutually respectful relationship are form and function that it is rightly affirmed that "great architecture has this capacity to adapt to changing functional uses without losing one bit of its dignity or one bit of its original intention" (www.guggenheim.org).

This is why, for example, the people completely neglected their built environment heritage, and abandoned their traditional houses, while harbouring very little, or no remorse whatsoever. Indifference was overwhelming. They felt that they stood on the verge of a great future, and they wanted to be part of it.

As part of a modernity package, a number of poisoned chalices were passed. Some of them pertained to values, whether they are relative or absolute, and whether they fall under the purview of mankind.

Others were concerned with the core aspects of the worldview, such as the meaning and purpose of the house, human happiness, comfort and aesthetics. Some basic aspects of life as a whole were likewise affected, and challenged. There is more at stake if things do not improve. The new viewpoints and tactics are in dire and instant need of rethinking and adjustment.

Le Corbusier on housing

In this connection, Le Corbusier's book titled *Towards a New Architecture*, which advocates for and explores the notion of modern architecture, served as the latter's manifesto. It was an important work of architectural theory, and an indispensable source for studying the creed of modern architecture as an intended global phenomenon.

In it, the author articulates numerous modernist attitudes and norms, speaking primarily about housing. Some of them are as follows: "A great (architectural) epoch has begun. There exists a new spirit…Architecture is stifled by custom. The 'styles' are a lie…The business of architecture is to establish emotional relationships by means of raw materials (and overall form, rather than function)…Architecture has for its first duty, in this period of renewal, that of bringing about a revision of values, a revision of the constituent elements of the house."

Le Corbusier then proceeds to speak about all dead concepts in regard to the house, which ought to be eliminated from people's hearts and minds, if they wanted to arrive at the idea of an exemplary house as a machine to live in. In the process of doing so, he brands present housing "unworthy", for they ruin people's health and morale. "Our houses disgust us", the author concludes.

Then, as if to present a conceptual and operative blueprint for getting rid of traditional houses and for adopting the modernist housing paradigm instead, Le Corbusier says: "Our external world has been enormously transformed in its outward appearance and in the use made of it, by reason of the machine. We have gained a new

perspective and a new social life, but we have not yet adapted the house thereto. The time has therefore come to put forward the problem of the house, of the street and of the town, and to deal with both the architect and the engineer."

Calling the house a tool which prior to and during the initial stages of modernization has become bad, ineffective and out-of-date, Le Corbusier also writes that "it (the house as a tool expressive of progress, or lack thereof) must be thrown away and replaced. But men live in old houses and they have not yet thought of building houses adapted to themselves."

Modernity, modern architecture and the theory of evolution

The proponents of modernity believed that modernity was the pinnacle of mankind's intellectual, scientific, technological and, of course, architectural evolution. Rejecting religion, the past and traditions was, naturally, inherent in it. Such also connoted the starting point for modern architecture. Thus, modern architects felt that they could decisively affect people's lives and behaviour through changes in the physical surroundings. There was such a belief in progress and change that the past and its traditions seemed irrelevant and unneeded. There was also a belief that by eliminating those elements in buildings that served no practical material purpose - such as ornament, cultural and religious symbols - architecture could function in harmony with the laws of nature. Even the indigenous natural devices, or solutions, for boosting the environmental performance of buildings, was frowned upon.

Brent Brolin in his book *The Failure of Modern Architecture* reasons that all of these ideas were brought to architecture in part through an imperfect understanding of evolutionary theory. According to the popular, though erroneous, interpretation of the theory of evolution, progress was inevitable and society was forever moving towards something better. Evolutionary theory postulated that species were continually adapting to their surroundings, and as they evolved towards a more perfect form, useless organs, or entire species,

withered away. It was the law of nature and beyond man's control; man could only marvel and submit. Therefore, since the past was biologically obsolete, so it was culturally, socially and, of course, architecturally, as part of an absolute evolution. Applying this oversimplification to architecture, the modernist found scientific justification for ignoring, and every now and then destroying, traditional architectural styles.

Exposing the flaws of modern architecture

It is quite clear that as part of the task of restoring confidence in tradition and traditional architecture, unmasking the demerits and flaws of modern architecture will be vital. It should be made evident to all that Western-driven modernity and its preferences for the built environment are antagonistic towards traditions, heritage, local cultures, values, and even truth as well as religions. It favours its own version of beauty, which, however, is so one-dimensional, shallow, feigned and subjective that, when it is juxtaposed with the devastation it is inclined to cause to traditions, heritage and religions, the purported beauty, more often than not, comes into view as assertive repulsiveness and distaste. Sometimes it yet deserves to be called out-and-out ugliness. What is going on is in full consonance with the chi of contemporary global capitalism as modernity's engine of growth and expansion.

Modern architecture is not beautiful, in the spiritual sense of the word. It is only functional, mechanical, non-natural and often impressive appearance-wise. It does not stimulate, soothe and nourish the soul, for it does not believe in it. Even its interpretation of mind, consciousness and emotions, and how these interact with architecture, are interpreted along the lines of what could be understood as philosophical materialism. They are no more than the by-products of certain material processes without which they cannot exist. They are epiphenomena (secondary phenomena that occur together with or in parallel to primary phenomena).

Traditional beauty and modernity are mismatched. The former is regarded by the latter as prejudiced, cluttered and a bourgeois value. The latter's version of beauty, on the contrary, is about truly profound "ideas, politics and the sublime". However, modernity gives pleasure only to the senses through its emphasis on perceptible symmetry, harmony, balance, utility and "honesty", thereby either manipulating or prejudicing the mind and spirit. It provides only for the body and its biological needs, cravings and desires. Its architecture can be rightly called "hedonistic architecture", as it only promotes and aids corporeal pleasure-seeking. Its twin is "hedonistic sustainability", which is "sustainability that improves the (physical) quality of life and human enjoyment."

Modern architecture developed its own universe, oblivious to myriads of other universes around it. Such could be dubbed at once arrogance, self-centredness and obstinacy. Satiated with a deep sense of exclusiveness and superiority, modern architecture looked down on any other style and school of thought. It tolerated neither competition nor peaceful coexistence. It was a destructive force, so to speak. The past, old, traditional and metaphysical ideas and looks were the bane of its revolutionary existence. As part of its precarious character, modern architecture was proselytized globally. In terms of intensity and scope, the proselytization of modern architecture was just about on a par with Christianisation. Little wonder that both of them existed and were popularized for and in the name of the absolute truth.

The fallacy in modern architecture was the idea to create a universal style and language, discounting the social, cultural and religious differences. Discouraging different architectural styles, the advocates of modern architecture tried to standardize the building industry to set principles that would create a consistent modern architecture worldwide. They attempted the impossible and the abnormal: the universalization and globalization of the modern architectural style. Doing so was as inappropriate and anomalous as calling for the unity of world's cultures, climates and geographies. If

the latter is absurd and unfeasible, so is the former in equal measure, in that the realm of authentic architecture typifies and mirrors the realm of the preordained cultural, climatic and geographical diversity on earth.

The theory of isolating the buildings to serve an 'intended function' was at the price of 'actual function', creating buildings that are plain, anonymous, repetitive, boring and even undemocratic. Their meaning and actual significance were superficial and hollow, reflecting the actual intellectual and spiritual nature of the modern man. Le Corbusier once described his work as "pure prisms raised against the sky" – a beautiful image, but not related to the way people lived inside them. Nor did those "prisms" care about the aggregate needs people and their lives needed, or about forging the organic and undisturbed relationships between them and their natural and man-made surroundings wherein the "prisms" had been planted.

The supposed advantage of modern functional forms was often more illusionary than real. Steel and reinforced concrete for columns allowed for "open planning" and "flowing spaces" by making walls unnecessary. But this had social implications as different societies had different social needs. Although the buildings were no longer dense in mass but instead, open spaces, enclosed by light, thin curtain walls and resting on slender piers, they were however, more expensive to maintain, and heat and cool (www.uddhavnaik.com). Privacy and human interactions were also affected. The first consideration for making the aspirations of modern architecture real, was to look for a new building material that would be weatherproof, soundproof, lightweight and insulating. It was believed that modern architecture would then come into its own. But it turns out there really is no new material that is all these things (Lee Wohlfert). It similarly turns out that diversity, flexibility, consolidation and unceasing evolution – rather than revolution and rupture – are the only key.

A true architecture is not imposed upon people. Nor is it prefabricated, assembled beforehand off-site and then dumped on

the unwilling and innocent population. Rather, a good architecture is participatory and adapts in response to people's needs. It is dictated by the life its people live and bring to it, in lieu of the private thought and fancies of individuals who every so often have nothing to do with the place and its people, culture, heritage and current needs.

Undeniably, architecture is a testimony of people's aspirations, struggles and identity. Their architecture is them, and they, in turn, are their architecture. People are what and how they build, and how they make the most of their built environment. Architecture is an undeniable proof of people's existential triumph, or failure.

The relationship between tradition and modernity

It is in this light that tradition in architecture is to be viewed and appreciated. Tradition is not to be cherished, nor rejected, for its own sake. By the same token, neither modernity – as part and consequence of the natural flow of time - is to be embraced, or spurned, just because it is, or it's not, perceived as an end in itself.

Neither modernity nor tradition is good or bad by its very nature. Rather, they are both permanent realities of life that complement each other. They are two sides of the same coin. Whether they are good or bad, useful or otherwise, depends on how people conceive and use them.

Certainly, there can be no tradition without modernity, the latter being understood as a regular chronological period and a way of life that exists in the present or a recent time, and that uses or is being based on recently developed ideas, methods, or styles. Nor can there be modernity without tradition. Today's tradition was yesterday's modernity, and today's modernity will be tomorrow's tradition.

It follows that tradition and modernity are inseparable. They draw and depend on each other. The strength of either one of them is also the strength of the other, and *vice versa*. A separation, or a rift, between them means distortion of the natural order of things,

following which both tradition and modernity are set to suffer proportionately with how damaging the separation, or rift, is.

A total split-up between modernity and tradition signifies in the long run demise for both of them. As far as today's situation in the Muslim world is concerned, after slightly more than a century of the existence of modern architecture and its ceaseless conflicts with the past and traditions, both traditional and modern architecture suffered greatly. Neither won, nor lost. They both became on life support.

Modernity caused more damage than benefit to itself and its conceptual and operational contexts, a far cry from its initial firm belief that in creating a better (purely modern) architecture a better world would ultimately follow. Some aspects of modern architecture still survive today, but as a style, for the most part it has been absorbed and eclipsed by the post-modern architecture style. By and large, the latter is the outgrowth of the former, bringing about its own problems and dilemmas.

Tradition, on the other hand, also survived, but it lost its momentum, scale and influence. It is somewhat recovering under the care of many international and local conservation and restoration initiatives, plans and programs. Such schemes were conceived and put in place when modernity and its hostile sentiment towards traditions were at their peak. Traditional architecture was battered in the process. It survived firstly by chance, and later by design. Firstly it moved from mere survival to dedicated restoration and conservation. The next phase should be the gradual processes of revitalization, relevantization, activation and use of traditional architecture, consistent with the spirit, needs and achievements of the contemporary era. Put another way, that phase would mean modernization or contemporization of traditional architecture.

Keeping alive and active Islamic traditional architecture signifies paying homage to earlier cultures, generations and mentalities. It means making sense of the present, and securing both the sense and

fate of the future. Elements of traditional architecture can be redefined, reconfigured and even recycled, giving buildings a new dimension, a new function, a new beauty, and a new appeal. Adaptive reuse should be pursued come what may. The pros and cons of modernity and modern architecture, at the same time, are to be carefully studied, accepting and integrating the advantages, and discarding the proven disadvantages.

The problem is that today, especially in the secular and materialistic West, people find it difficult to understand the meaning and importance of tradition, values and religion. People look to the future and the self for the good life, partly because all religion and spiritual values have been deserted, and partly because people worship progress in the form of science and technology, which they believe can solve all problems and provide all happiness. In other words, people deify themselves and their human potentials, making science and technology their religion, and perennial change their tradition. Machines at home, at work, and elsewhere, are "holy relics". Every building that characterises this ideology and the technological advancements of mankind, has been turned into a temple of modernity. Empathizing and supporting traditions in any way is a sacrilegious act; following them is apostasy.

Hence, Le Corbusier depicted the house institution as "a machine for living in". To him, every component of the built environment was a machine. "An armchair is a machine for sitting in and so on." Mechanizing life, however, connoted mechanizing man in so many ways. Even man's thought and emotions were to be looked at against this backdrop only. If the arrival of modernity spelled the death of heritage, traditions and traditional architecture, it also spelled the death of the traditional man. The signs of a machine life were on the horizon. They were the signs of a new social order, of a newly born civilization, and of a newly established ontological truth.

Why people resist tradition

People hesitate not to change for fear of falling behind. They do not subscribe to traditions lest they should be labelled backward and regressive. They find it difficult to conceive the value of continuity, and the past as well as traditions as integral elements in the equation. "But as long as continuity does not imply rigidity, it is a powerful and positive force" (Brent Brolin).

With this, architectural creativity can be significantly enhanced. Tradition by no means should be regarded as an obstacle to the creativity of modern times, diminishing and suppressing it. On the contrary, the bounds of creativity can be broadened, and new vistas unlocked, in the refined exploration of the craft of architecture, encompassing such problems as how skilfully the designer can evoke the spirit of a modern or traditional place; how he can adapt the new built environment to the traditional, albeit still extant and relevant, living patterns; and how he can bring closer traditional architecture to the new ways of doing things, and aspects of modern architecture to the riches of traditional values and norms. All these can be achieved through mass, design, plan, detail, texture, decoration, and the other tools of the designer's visual craft.

"By using what exists as a stepping stone for what is to come, the architect can reinforce rather than undermine the character of neighbourhoods and cities every time a building is added. If each new building retains something of the old at the same time that it brings something new, the desirable character of a specific place need not be lost. The extensive 'pre-modern' cityscape that still remains is not historical refuse, to be tolerated until it can be bulldozed and replaced by something modern. It is an asset that should be used as a bridge to the future" (Brent Brolin).

However, for most modern architects – including Muslims - creativity became synonymous with "new", "different" and "nonconformist". Therefore, to design in order to fit in, to conform, to amalgamate, to borrow, to reuse, to adjust, or to compromise, rather than to stand out and be conspicuous as new, innovative and unique, seemed a

terrifying sacrifice of the designer's ego (Brent Brolin). It was unacceptable as it violated the modern architectural creed. Every architect craved to become somebody, rather than anybody. His buildings likewise were aimed to become something special, rather than something conformist and conventional.

But they were wrong in understanding and interpreting the terms "somebody *versus* anybody" and "special *versus* conventional". At any rate, certainly, it is better to be just anybody and conventional with reference to affirming and preserving one's identity, calling for continuity and integration between old and new, creating bridges between the past, present and the future, respecting established and proven customs, culture and the contributions of the forefathers, creating a solid platform for the future undertakings, and showing respect for the existing traditional behavioural patterns – rather than being somebody and special but with reference to jeopardising one's identity, traditions, heritage, history and culture in favour of championing some foreign and unrelated alternatives. It is better to be a decent and little-known member of a decent community – an anonymous soldier of goodness and truth - than its distinguished dissenter and rebel – a commander of dishonesty and fallacy. It is better to be a fitting part of a harmonious whole, than pretending to be a discordant whole in itself.

The role of architectural education

Last but not least, the role of the architectural education and its institutions is pivotal. The right things ought to be taught to students, especially with regard to the subjects of history and theory of architecture, and such as pertain to its social and environmental dimensions. In studios, students are to be both challenged and guided to execute projects that will promote a peaceful and constructive coexistence between tradition and modernity. Nonetheless, all this should be part of a bigger picture - yet a new architectural culture - in which academics with their research projects, writings and consultancy, practitioners with their various services in connection

with the design and construction of buildings, and municipalities and other local and national authorities – will play their respective roles.

They all need to be of a similar vision, mission and purpose, and to act in unison towards the realization of identical sets of goals. Suffice it to say that this new architectural culture, in turn, ought to be part of a bigger national revolutionary culture, and the new architectural education part of bigger national educational reforms.

This is so because there will be no change in the modernity-tradition dialectics unless new generations of architects – other professionals and also ordinary people – are taught and trained to make changes. There will be no genuine interest in respecting, safeguarding, reviving and integrating tradition so long as new generations of architects – and others – are not taught and trained to do so. It is architects who produce architecture. They are the cause, architecture is the effect. Thus, good architects will always produce good architecture, and *vice versa*. Moreover, it is architectural education that produces architects. The relationship between them is causal as well, confirming that only good architectural education will be able to produce good architects, and *vice versa*.

When in terms of understanding and appreciating tradition, incompetent and misguided modern architects are faced with the existential dilemmas of traditional architecture, their responses are generally the same. Having been educated in modern building styles and methods only, they can think merely in modern terms. They fail to come to terms with the profundity and wealth of traditional architecture. They also seriously underestimate, or dismiss altogether, the noble and sophisticated talent of the traditional architects and artisans in general. They never question the appropriateness of their education and training, even though the conflicts with life realities abound. Nor do they examine the validity of their methods, because they assume that eventually all people will change or abandon their traditions and adopt their modern architectural philosophy and approach. Everybody is anomalous,

ignorant and wrong; it is only them who are normal, enlightened and right. Everybody dwells in an architectural conundrum and darkness; it is only them who can salvage the situation.

As a consequence, most modern architects normally complain that people are architectural illiterates, unable and unqualified to penetrate through the layers of traditionally accrued intellectual impediments and appreciate true beauty and true architectural achievements. Local traditional architectural skills, technologies and styles are seen as outdated and invalid, bordering on primitivism. They are being disparaged. Modern architects' assessments are compounded when they embark on modern architectural undertakings and find out first hand that for completing the tasks they have to surmount numerous obstacles concerning expertise, technology, equipment, and the availability as well as quick supply (importation) of building materials.

To most modern architects, the only thing that exists in the universe of built environment is modern architecture. It is the measure of all things, and the ultimate source of all architectural value. Everything else is to be viewed and appraised only through the lens of modernity and modern architecture. In their eyes, furthermore, "the role of the architect is not to give people what they want, but what they should want if they were intelligent enough to have good taste…Architects should impose taste from above rather than deferring to democratic desires" (Brianna Rennix & Nathan J. Robinson).

It is truly surprising why modern architects – in particular in developing countries, including the entire Muslim world - do not see that their words and actions unceasingly contribute to making their previously-rich-in-tradition cities nothing but burial grounds for theirs and their people's cultures, heritages and traditional identities, and also exhibition arenas for all sorts of alien modern styles and sub-styles. Even some quasi-styles find their way for an experimentation in those once-genuinely-beautiful cities.

In the context of historic Jeddah and the plight of its traditional built environment, with housing leading the way, Abdulla Y. Bokhari writes: "All in all, municipality is doing its best to restore the historic centre of Jeddah, but that effort, however energetic, will not be sufficient so long as the preservation or conservation effort does not involve the total city. The architecture schools also have to assume some of the responsibility: instead of teaching students to design in the style of Corbusier or Frank Lloyd Wright or the Beaux-Arts, they ought to be teaching them to preserve traditional areas and integrate them with the new structures that they are about to design in a way that will preserve the dignity of Saudi tradition and the city's character and life."

The way forward

The only way forward is a modernization of tradition and a traditionalization of modernity. The two should converge along this wide two-way course. Indeed, there is no fully functional tradition without a delicate modern feel, just as there is no completely progressive and constructive modernity without tradition as its foundation and *elan vital*. In the long run, neither can survive on its own, let alone realize its full potential.

It follows, therefore, that bringing modernity and tradition closer to each other, and eventually somehow merging them - both in form and function, and in theory and practice - ought to serve to architects and designers as a main source of inspiration and guidance. It could also be an everlasting source of an architectural audacity and creativity. It may yet lead in the end to the deletion of demarcation lines between traditional architecture and modern architecture. In essence, there should be neither traditional, nor modern architecture. There should be only the architecture, that is, the existing, functional and present-day architecture of ours.

Integration between traditional and modern architecture should likewise be comprehensive and genuine. It should be as natural, spontaneous and smooth as possible. Artificial, shallow, patchy and

dishonest works must be shunned at all costs. For example, just grafting some elements of one onto the other – like placing *rawashin* and *mashrabiyyahs* as mere symbols on purely modern buildings, or awkwardly incorporating air-conditioning and modern building materials and systems into the makeup of purely traditional buildings – is not the way things need to be done. This does not solve anything. It only complicates and perpetuates the problems.