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Housing Communities between Islamic Freedom and Capitalist Kaleidoscope[1]

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Abstract. Throughout history, achieving the "Good Society" was a prime concern for many scholars in the Western culture. Plato's normative theories embodied in *The Republic* initiated what was later called "Utopianism" which prompted the creation of the "Good Society" within the "Ideal City". The concept of the "intentional community" was a manifestation of that dream. Since the Renaissance, many related urban theories emerged. However, with the fall of Modernity and its housing utopian theories in the 1960s, a new post-modern housing utopianism was created in the forms of "Housing Coopertaives", "Co-housing", "Condominiums", "Ecovillages", "Gated Communities", and recently "New Urbanism" which emerged in the 1990s aiming at fulfilling the long awaited dream of the "Good Society".

This research critically examines such approaches at their "deep structure", i.e. production mechanisms, property ownership, and administrative system, to prove that despite the apparent differences (in titles, territoral structure, and ownership patterns for example), they all stem from the same deep structure in terms of their driving mechanisms and general societal system, i.e. capitalism. In other words, all those approaches are bounded by the capitalist kaleidoscope.

To explore this, a substantially different perspective that exists outside the boundaries of capitalism, such as that of Islam, is used to review those approaches. It was found that Islamic residential communities have achieved democracy, equity, justice and freedom more than contemporary capitalist housing communities. Islam, through its mechanisms, power structure and decision making process has achieved the Western dream of the "Good Society", in its Western sense.

Introduction

Scholarly interest in housing developments throughout history has fluctuated between two approaches: housing developments, which focus on meeting the pressing housing needs physically, and the development of housing community, which focuses on the community/inhabitants of the housing. During periods of housing crises as in cases of natural disasters and wars, the focus was on the quantitative production of housing units[2], whereas in normal circumstances the most important issue has always centered around the housing community *per se* and how to produce housing projects that can create a community characterized by social cohesion and a good life.

Since the 19th century, many studies, including sociology pioneers Weber, Durkheim, Tonnies, and Wirth, investigated the weak social relationships prevalent in the modern capitalist society, and the causes of its transformation from *Gemeinschaft* (i.e. community) into *Gesellschaft*

(1) This paper was presented in the First Housing Conference entitled "Towards a Sustainable Housing Development" organized by Sheikh Zayed Housing Program, in collaboration with UN-Habitat, held in Abu Dhabi, UAE, 13-15 October 2008.

(2) In light of the housing crises Britain faced after World War II, both government candidate parties, the Labour and the Conservative, were competing in the number of housing units they will provide for their electors annually to fulfill their motto of "a dwelling for every citizen". In 1968, the government announced the accomplishment of its target of producing half a million houses a year (Towers, 1995: pp. 39-43).

(society)[3]. The reason for changing the pattern of social relationships among members of modern society was attributed to the capitalist system and its embodied norms of citizenship, individualism, rationality, competence, and social stratification. As a result, several concepts emerged reflecting problems inherent in the modern capitalist society such as the issues of social equity in resource distribution (land, housing, etc.), democratic planning[4], decision-making mechanisms, and alike. In an attempt to resolve such issues and other negative social consequences of capitalism, many paradigms and urban approaches emerged, rejecting the capitalist mechanisms and its resulting social relationships and aspiring to systemic emancipation. The main issue became that of creating a "Good Community" (of non-capitalist built environment).

Despite the opposition of most of those approaches to capitalism and modernity and the quest to break free, they performed under the umbrella of capitalism as a general societal system. Their attempts to create a good society were no more than attempts to resolve partial problems produced by capitalism and not comprehensive schemes. Such approaches adopted the modern methodology of determinism reflected in social engineering. Also it accepted the modern concept of power and its mechanisms of the decision-making process, as prevalent in the modern capitalist society. They are thus utopian approaches placed in the sphere of capitalist actuality and bounded by its restraints. They stem in accepting, rejecting, or replacing it from this very same actuality. In other words, those utopian approaches are moving in the capitalist kaleidoscope that they criticize and reject. They could not attain total liberation which restricted their scope of action to finding alternatives for housing communities that perform within the framework of capitalism, hoping that the culmination effect of those small communities could create the good/utopian society. However, what are the criteria of the "good society" as depicted by those approaches?

The underlying principle of most of those housing communities revolves around the concept of "who decides?" They seek, against the modern capitalist system based on central planning and hierarchical power structure, to attain freedom and control over the decision making process, to be in the hands of the community members instead of in the hands of the higher authorities (the State). They aim at changing the dominant power structure by shifting power and control over decision making from the State to its people, which contradicts substantially with the concept of "power" in the modern capitalist society. Its intention is to accomplish autonomous decentralized housing communities that are self-built and managed. However, did those housing communities achieve their utopian goals?

Accordingly, this research is a critical reading of those approaches, clarifying their production mechanisms, management, and property ownership to prove that despite the apparent differences between them (in titles, territorial structure, etc.) they all share the same deep structure of its driving system, the capitalist system. They are placed within the kaleidoscope of capitalism and confined by its restrictions. To elucidate this, those approaches have to be read and investigated from outside that kaleidoscope through the prism of a substantially different perspective such as Islam, focusing on the mechanisms of the decision making process and the power structure dominant in the production and functioning of their built environments.

The research analyzes some different approaches of utopian housing communities and explores the concept of Islamic residential communities. Using the tools of investigation set in this research, a comparison between the two approaches is presented based on two examples of contemporary housing communities, the cooperative housing and New Urbanism.

Intentional Communities

How could we create a community in which cooperation, social solidarity and the spirit of community prevail? This dilemma has preoccupied many sociologists and philosophers throughout history. Plato, in *The Republic*, is considered the pioneer in this respect initiating what later came to be known as "Utopianism" that embodied the dream of the "Good Society" within the "Ideal City". Many utopian theories emerged afterwards, the most prominent of which are the social reformation theories of the Renaissance age.

In light of the wide urbanization drift that followed the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century and its consequential social, ecological and health

(3) The German sociologist Tonnies distinguished in his studies of urban social relationships between two types of societies: first, *Gemeinschaft* (usually translated as *community*) which refers to relationships that are spontaneous and affective, and occurs in a context of cultural homogeneity, such as the relationships within families and within small-scale and premodern societies, including peasant societies. The second type is *Gesellschaft* (usually translated as *association*). It refers to relationships that are individualistic, impersonal, competitive, calculative and contractual, often employing explicit conceptions of rationality and efficiency, such as the relationships in modern urban industrial societies (Jary and Jary, 1995: p. 259).

(4) Refer to Al-Lahham, 2008.

crises and the decline in the standard of living and housing conditions for many residents of industrial cities (particularly the workers), a number of social reform propositions occurred as those of Charles Fourier and Robert Owen(5) who emphasized the influence of the built environment on its people. The concept of the "Intentional Communities" was thus set out. It denotes a democratic, planned housing community based on collaboration and collective work among its members in a manner that exceeds what exists in other capitalist communities. Intentional Communities in that sense aim at accomplishing the dream of the "good/utopian society", where their central issue focused on the means and methods of creating the good society. The foundation of the good society emanated from the rejection of many aspects of the modern capitalist society, specifically the issue of democracy where power, according to those approaches, should be in the hands of the community itself and not in the hands of external parties(6). This, according to intentional community approaches, will achieve the collaborative community in which strong collaborative social relationships prevail between its members. Many of those approaches adopted insights of socialism that prevailed at that time as a substitute to capitalist societies characterized by materialism and mechanical relationships.

However, what are the main features of democracy and how can they be achieved in intentional utopian communities? Democracy, as depicted by Al-Jabiri (1994), is equality in possibilities and potentials (can be interpreted as life chances and means). In other words, it is the equality in the opportunities for empowerment. It embodies the concept of freedom with the capability (that suggests possession of power) of enjoying it, especially freedom of choice and decision-making. If we perceive the power contained in the concept of democracy as a right, then democracy denotes equality in opportunities (chances) and rights, which is consistent with the capitalist concept of democracy. The difference lies in the concept of rights *per se* and in its structure and mechanisms of indoctrination and enforcement.

With the advent of the Age of Enlightenment and Modernity and their reformation notions of creating the good modern (capitalist) rational, progressive, organized society, based on freedom, justice and equality to achieve the desired human happiness not based on a belief in religion, emotions, customs and traditions, and relying on science, logic and rationality, the notion of the "Modern State" emerged as an organizing body and regulator responsible of implementing the modern reformist project. It was in essence based on the concepts of modern power and authority which bestowed it the right to intervene in its society's affairs under the banner of organization. It thus manages and shapes the lives of its people (Al-Lahham, 2005).

As a reaction, modern utopian theories started to emerge that either supported or criticized modernity and capitalism. Many urban planning and development approaches adopted those theories and their intentional communities, whether based on modernity's principles and norms, or anti-modern and anti-capitalist norms such as the "Anarchist movements" that sought to create an alternative society that does not hold any capitalist or socialist characters and eradicate all forms of authority especially that of the State. Those anarchist theories contained perceptions of how to establish liberate societies based on democracy and collaboration where its members live and work in small self-managed communities (Hall, 1996; Friedmann, 1987). Most of these utopian theories to create intentional communities then revolved around the concept of democracy based on the concentration of power and authority, and the right of decision making in the hands of people and not with external parties such as the centralized State.

Of the planning theories that adopted such utopianisms was the "Garden City" of Howard. The garden city approach introduced a reformist program that contains the establishment of self-managed, owned, and built communities, characterized by collaboration and freedom especially from the restrains of the State intervention, i.e. they experience the spirit of community. These communities could be established gradually through housing cooperatives.

(5) In the early 19th century, Charles Fourier proposed the concept of "Phalanstere" as a new type of building designed to accommodate a utopian community. This self-contained community ideally consists of 1,620 people working together for mutual benefit. Phalanstere buildings were four-level apartment complexes where the riches had the uppermost apartments and the poorest enjoyed a ground level residence. Likewise, Robert Owen's work had been that of a philanthropist. His proposals for the treatment of poverty embodied the conception of self-contained communities, mainly agricultural, that consist of about 1,200 persons, each settled on a land of 1,000-1,500 acres (4-5 km2), and living in one large building in the form of a square, with public kitchen and mess-rooms, and each family has its private apartment. Owen's ideas were put into operation in England (in Orbiston near Glasgow, 1825) and in the US (New Harmony, Indiana); however, they were doomed to failure due to the lack of individual sovereignty and private property (Wikipedia, July 2008).

(6) The term "party" refers to an individual, a group of individuals (e.g. family, tribe, group), an association or it might be the higher authorities, i.e. the State (Akbar, 1992: p. 41).

Howard alleged that, through the garden city[7], he put forward a systemic economic alternative to replace capitalism and bureaucratic socialism which initiated what came to be known as the "Social City" (Alexander, 1992).

Evolving from Howard's garden city, Perry introduced in 1929 the idea of the neighborhood unit[8]. Perry's theory was based on the modern concept of determinism that believed in the effect of the built environment over its people, i.e. good collaborative communities can be accomplished by means of good physical design of neighborhoods. Its goal was to create the good community but within a specific urban planned space. It can thus be identified as "Territorial intentional communities".

Against the dreams of the late 19th and early 20th century utopian approaches to achieve the good society, most of them, especially in the US, turned out to be planned non-democratic communities characterized by discrimination where the blacks were excluded due to racial reasons, and the poor were ruled out due to high rent, lack of job opportunities, and poor local facilities and services (Hall, 1996). The main reason for this was the inability of those intentional communities to emancipate from the State's hegemony and the dominant modern power structure. The State, through its mechanisms of decision-making, practiced its power and control over such communities in terms of land acquisition and planning and development of the housing project. It adhered to the modern centralized planning method based on top-down decision-making process and not bottom-up, as it was originally planned. As such, those communities were subject to the modern capitalist society's mechanisms of decision-making and power distribution. They became similar to other modern planned communities where external parties possess and exercise power and control over them, and their members lack the freedom and power to construct their own built environment or to self-manage their affairs. In that sense, they were transformed from being intentional utopian communities into intentional capitalist "organized" communities that pertain to the State and not to its society. They were thus confined by the capitalist kaleidoscope like other modern capitalist planned communities.

On the other hand, and as an example of the utopian approaches that adopted the modern project and sought to implement it in its intentional communities, is that of Le Corbusier. He contends that through his modern multi-function vertical residential neighborhoods he could produce the modern, rational, organized society[9]. Le Corbusier's approach, to the contrary of the other utopian approaches mentioned before, was based on modern central planning which is entirely dependent on professionals in the decision making process without any kind of citizen involvement.

With the decline of modernity in the 1960s and the failure of the modern utopian approaches in realizing the dream of the ideal city and the good society, the failure of multi-storey housing projects in engineering the society according to modernity's norms and principles, as well as the consequent effects of modernity on the built environment, and the alienation that occurred between the population and their surrounding built environment especially in the newly post-war planned cities concerned many scholars and planners. Their concern shifted from focusing on upgrading the living standards and conditions of the population (mostly the poor and workers) as in the intra-war period to focusing on the mechanisms of housing production and the role of inhabitants and their subjective needs. That is, modern housing projects based on modern central planning and State intervention such as zoning and land use categorization led to increasing crime rate and lack of social solidarity among the population or what is known as the spirit of the community. Ideologically, the functional split led to social split, transforming the concept of intentional utopian communities from creating a good society into a mere production of housing projects. The American dream was thus disseminated as well as the European housing utopianisms. Consequently, several reactionary approaches and studies emerged seeking to investigate the problem and find solutions, as in the study of Jane Jacobs (1961) which criticized the modern central planning and its land use and zoning

(7) The "Garden City", as suggested by Howard, consists of 32,000 inhabitants living on 1,000 acres of land surrounded by a permanent green belt (Hall, 1996: p. 93).

(8) To achieve his socio-cultural goals in the neighborhood unit, Perry depended on developing local schools into community centers through the involvements of the parents. The neighborhood's central features would be the local elementary school and an associated playground, reachable within half a mile on foot; local shops placed at the corners of several neighborhoods, and a common place for the encouragement of community institutions (Hall, 1996).

(9) Le Corbusier's approach embodied an increase in city density and a concern of inner city traffic and movement through the construction of high-rise buildings or residential towers called "cells", or as he later named them "*Unitès*". They contained common facilities, such as shopping, entertainment and sport facilities as well as collective services for all inhabitants such as children care, cooking and cleaning. However, this approach enhances social stratification due to its differentiated spatial structure corresponding to the segregated social structure. That is, buildings' locations and types depended on the social strata of its inhabitants. As such, Le Corbusier's city was a completely class-segregated city (Hall, 1996: p. 210). Practically, his approach did not succeed; it was not put into operation in any city, however, its only implementation was in the "*Unitès*" in Marseille.

policies, favoring the mixed-use planning of pre-industrial cities.

"Community Architecture" approaches emerged at that time as a response against the centralization of modern planning and dominance of professionals (architects, planners, etc.) on the decision making process of built environment production. These approaches emphasized the importance of fulfilling inhabitants' needs and desires through working by their sides, whether by enlightening them with the necessary knowledge or through facilitating their tasks at the concerned higher authorities. Of those approaches is John F. Turner's "Housing by people" which calls for the production of the built environment by people themselves. Also the "Support" approach led by John Habraken and SAR group in the Netherlands, developed today into the "Open Building System", which calls for increasing the potential space of freedom for user's participation in the decision-making process of the production of his own built environment and home.

Most of those oppositional approaches departed from the acceptance of capitalism and the Modern State and its control over the production of the built environment (including the residential). It did not seek to change its power structure and the mechanisms of built environment production. It only sought to change slightly the role of the professional in the production process. It called for engaging the user in the decision-making process, however, not taking the place and prime role of the professional in this process. The State as well as the professional have retained their role and authority in the built environment production, as there was no significant change in power distribution in that respect. In other words, those approaches were no more than responses and resolutions for partial capitalist problems, using the same tools and mechanisms of capitalism itself. They are bounded by the kaleidoscope of capitalism and its constraints. Moreover, the main concern of those approaches was confined to the production of residential built environments, and less with the residential communities. As such, they cannot be considered as approaches of intentional communities but only housing development trends.

Such approaches called to restore communication between the user and his built environment by means of democratizing the process of the residential built environment production through involving the user in the decision making process of producing his own house and meeting his subjective needs and desires. They are centered on the belief that user participation will ultimately lead to improving the built environment and alleviating the sense of place belonging and achieve the desired communication. The concept of democracy was dealt with in the field of built environment through increasing the space of freedom for the user and granting him the ability to express his own needs and opinion in producing his own home. However, the final decision was retained by the professional (architect, planner). It is thus a limited freedom led by the power and hidden agenda of the professional himself, and performs within the framework of the power structure of the capitalist society (Al-Lahham, 2008). Referring to the above mentioned definition of the concept of democracy (freedom with capability or power), the democracy embodied in those approaches is but a superficial deceptive democracy that did not grant its people the necessary power of decision-making. Hence, one of the main criterion of creating the good housing community was not met.

Those approaches did not spread widely due to their confined scope compared to other urban planning and housing theories. Therefore, their applications were limited to providing housing projects for the poor and low-income people. Such housing development projects failed to achieve the good housing community characterized by social solidarity and collaboration, as was the case in the pre-industrial cities. Subsequently, the question of how to create the good housing community persists.

With the emergence of the postmodern call to regenerate communication between the built environment and its users and to reinstate the spirit of place through reviving the relationship between space, its history and context, and stemming from Jane Jacobs' call to reconsider mixed-use planning that prevailed in many European pre-industrial cities (instead of land-use and zoning policies of modern planning), several postmodern urban trends have occurred since the 1970s claiming that the good housing community can be found by referring to the ideals and social systems of pre-industrial cities of the Western world. Those pre-industrial ideals (e.g. the commune)[10] constituted a prime reference in the production of new utopian intentional communities, whether for or against capitalism notions. Examples

(10) A commune is the smallest administrative division in some countries in Western Europe. It emerged at the beginning of the medieval ages in Europe as a walled, self-governed city. The commune emerged in France in the wake of the French Revolution, in the 18th century. It consists of people living together, sharing common interests, property, possessions, resources, work and income. Consensus decision-making and non-hierarchical structures are core principles for many communes (Wikipedia, July 2008).

of those trends are the "Housing Cooperatives"[11], "Co-housing", "Condominiums"[12], "Ecovillages", "Bioregionalism", "Gated Communities" and the like. Those trends had their impact on many housing development projects in the US and Europe. However, the most prominent approach since the late 1980s is the "New Urbanism" movement. This movement aims at reformulating the urban residential areas based on post-modern criteria derived from traditional cities in pre-industrial European age. It is so consistent in its reference with other intentional communities approaches, therefore it received wide acceptance in the US and Europe, and its impact is spreading to other parts of the world. However, have those utopian approaches accomplished the dream of creating the good, democratic housing community?

To answer such a question we have first to review some of these approaches. Examples of two approaches different in bases and principles will be examined: Co-housing and New Urbanism movements. The Co-housing movement refuses capitalism's mechanisms and power structures, whereas New Urbanism is a pro-capitalist movement that is considered as a product of capitalism as well as its exponent. To assess the ability of these different movements to fulfill their goals, they will be read from outside the framework of capitalism, using a substantially different perspective, one of Islam. The concept of democracy is used as a tool of comparison, as it constitutes one main criteria of the good society, as delineated by intentional communities approaches. The focus in this comparison will be on the territorial structure and ownership patterns in those communities and the prevailing pattern of dominance and control. Territorial structure here denotes the urban tissue or the pattern of distribution of properties and places and their relationships, as well as other related issues such as property ownership, control, and power distribution. The territorial structure of Islamic cities is different from that of contemporary built environments in terms of spatial distribution and patterns of control.

(11) A housing cooperative is a legal entity—usually a cooperation—that owns real estate, consisting of one or more residential buildings. Each shareholder in the legal entity has the right to occupy, not own, one housing unit, i.e. it is similar to a lease. Shareholders do not own the real estate they occupy, but a share in the legal entity that owns the real estate. Housing Cooperatives have a board of directors elected by and from amongst the shareholders (Wikipedia, August 2008).

(12) A condominium is a form of housing tenure that consists of multi-unit dwellings where each unit is individually owned and the common areas are jointly owned by the owners of all units, represented by the Homeowners Association. This association, consisting of all members, manages the condominium through a board of directors elected by the membership. Residents in the condominium are subject to certain rules and bylaws set by the association's board of directors to govern the internal affairs of the condominium (Wikipedia, July 2008).

The research methodology is mainly based on a comparative evaluation of the power structure prevailing in the residential communities of both systems (Islam and capitalism) and their ability to empower their people with rights to decision-making. A brief review of Islamic residential communities will be demonstrated first, to be compared afterwards with the two examples of contemporary intentional housing communities.

Islamic Residential Communities

Lapidus (1967), in his book *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages*, depicted neighborhoods in Islamic cities of the Mamluks period as:

> The cities were divided into districts called *harat*, *mahalat*, or *akhtat*. These were residential quarters with small local markets and perhaps workshops, especially for weaving, but characteristically isolated from the bustle of the main central city bazaars… Many of the quarters, though not everyone need have been a **solidarity**, were **closely knit** and **homogeneous communities**… The solidarity of some districts was based on religious identity… Among the Muslims, different ethnic or racial groups lived apart... The solidarity of some Muslim quarters depended on sectarian religious affiliations… There were also economic bases for the homogeneity of particular quarters. Some were named after a market or craft. A common occupation often gave these quarters their spatial character. Mills, lime works, brick kilns, dye works, and tanneries drew workers into separate districts at Aleppo (pp. 85-86, emphasis added).

In his book *Middle Eastern Cities*, Lapidus (1969) added:

> Almost universally, Muslim cities contained **socially homogeneous** quarters. In Aleppo and Damascus the **basic units of society** were quarters, which were **social solidarities as well as geographic entities**. Small groups of people who believed themselves bound together by the most fundamental ties—family, clientage, common village origin, ethnic or sectarian religious identity, perhaps in some cases fortified by common occupation—lived in these neighborhoods (p. 51, emphasis added).

As confirmed in Lapidus's description, the Islamic city consisted of residential districts that formed residential communities characterized by close relationships and social cohesion among its members. In other words, they experienced the spirit of community that contemporary intentional

communities strive to achieve. However, did these Islamic communities enjoy democracy and freedom of decision-making to qualify as residential utopian communities, as depicted by the West?

The territorial structure of traditional Muslim cities consists of a group of contiguous and interrelated places, where ownership of and control over each of these places refer to a certain group or party. Those places are called *Khitat* (singular *khitta* or territory). The dead-end street and the surrounding houses form a *khitta*, and the neighborhood is a *khitta*. *Khitta*, as used by historians in manuscripts about Islamic cities, is indicative of control. It denotes a specific area of domination, controlled and managed by a specific party (Akbar, 1992). A dead-end street, for example, is in effect owned and controlled by inhabitants of abutting houses which open onto the dead-end street, constituting a *khitta*. The through street is owned and controlled by all Muslim passers-by collectively(13). Gates at the mouth of the *khitat* are good demarcation of their boundaries and indications of their autonomy and control over their designated area. *Khitat* have different levels; they may be small or large according to their inhabitants, or small, contained within a larger territory.

The word *khitta* in Arabic is derived from the verb *khatata*, where it is said *khitta* (the noun) for the land that a person/party demarcates for himself. *Ikhtitat* (the closest term in English is "territorialization") is the act of marking out the physical boundaries of a specific land by the inhabiting party, with the ruler's permission. *Khatta* (as a verb) refers always to the acting party. Islamic residential quarters constitute *khitat* (sing. *khitta*) that interact physically and in terms of their associated rights. They form territorial communities associated with their places or *khitta*, i.e. they are territory-based communities.

The association between street names and the identity of its community (as declared in Lapidus's description, cited above) is but a confirmation of the relationship between the place or *khitta* and its residential community. Streets were named after the identity of their inhabitants, such as the Blacksmiths street (*Darb al-Haddadin*) and the Kurdish street (*Darb al-Akrad*). As the dead-end street was legitimately owned by its inhabitants, it was named after their main identity whether it was an ethnic, religious, social, or economic identity (belong to one occupation). These names were decided upon by the residents themselves to represent their identity or, in some cases, to describe the *khitta*'s condition or location. This reveals the autonomy of those communities and their inhabitants' control over them.

The mechanisms of producing such territorial communities were relatively self-directed and applied. Inhabitants themselves mark out (*ikhtitat*) their houses and *khitat*, however with the ruler's consent. It was a decentralized mechanism with bottom-up(14) decisions taken by the inhabitants in their sites, without any external intervention, i.e. it was a decision-making mechanism directed by the inhabitants themselves. The ruler's approval was limited to the *khitta*'s location only and not marking out the organization of its internal details. Ibn Manzur (d. 711 H.) states in that regards: "The property is marked out (*yakhtatuha)* in an unowned land by a man who demarcates it and builds over it, this is if it was approved by the ruler for a certain group of Muslims to mark out properties on a specific location and build their houses on it as did in Basra, Kufa and Baghdad" (Vol. 1, p. 858). Al-Baladhuri (d. 279 H.) also describes settling in Al-Basra; "... the people marked out and built their houses ..." (p. 342). In addition, Abu Yusef (d. 182 H.) mentions about Kufa: "people marked out Kufa and settled in it" (p. 30), and Al-Ya'qubi states about settling in Al-Kufa: "... Yazid bin Abdullah marked out the area towards the desert, and Bajla marked out around that" (Vol. 2, pp. 150-1). Hence, the territories (*khitat*) and its internal spaces of streets, squares, open spaces, and dead-end streets were owned and controlled by its users without any external intervention (from the ruler or the State). It enjoyed autonomy and freedom in decision-making, which are significant criteria of achieving democracy in utopian residential communities. In Kufa, for example, each tribe had its autonomous *khitta* which included different functions and facilities to serve its population. Each tribe had its mosque, market and cemetery inside its *khitta*. Accordingly, each *khitta* constituted a small village or a mixed-use neighborhood, in the contemporary sense. Streets between neighborhoods or territories (*khitat*) were defined according to the external borders of neighborhoods, delineating the dividing lines between them (Akbar, 1992).

(13) As revealed by many contemporary studies (Akbar, 1988, 1992; Al-Hathloul, 1994).

(14) The reader might think that the term "bottom-up" as a decision-making mechanism in Islamic residential territories (*khitat*) implies a positive denotation compared to the "top-down" mechanisms of decision-making that may include a negative denotation. The social and territorial structure of Islamic cities is non-hierarchical; it does not encompass a ladder of decision-makers, i.e. there are no top or bottom levels. However, the use of the term here is merely because it is very common and widely accepted among researches in the field of planning and built environment related disciplines. Nonetheless, it is not intended from using the term "bottom-up" here to denote its exact meaning that reflects its innate hierarchical societal structure.

Despite the autonomy of *khitat* in Islamic cities, they did not constitute gated or isolated communities but were interconnected through the system of rights brought about by the Islamic legal system (*Shari'a*), which governs relationships between society members and their built environments. Through their interaction and cohesion, these *khitat* (territories) altogether brought into being Muslim cohesive societies and not mosaic, fragmented societies (as the case in contemporary built environments). The mechanisms that control the production and management of these *khitat* are the same mechanisms that operate on the larger societal level and built environment, thus, there was no contradiction but homogeneity and integration of what is inside and outside the *khitta*. The accretion of small decisions that formed the *khitta* and the residential community are those which, through their culmination and totality, formed the Islamic city and the Muslim society at large. Moreover, several mechanisms existed in the Islamic city that urged the inhabitants of those communities to interact and communicate, as explained below, which led to more cohesion and interconnectedness between residential communities, generating what is known today as the spirit of community (which most contemporary housing communities lack), and increasing the solidarity of Muslim society in general.

Due to limited space in this research, it would be difficult to describe all Islamic mechanisms that operate in the production and management of Islamic residential communities. Therefore, the following case (*nazila*) will be demonstrated as an example of some of these mechanisms, exploring their effect in shaping and regulating the relationships in and between the *khitat*, i.e. residential territorial communities.

If an owner of a house located in a dead-end street, which backside faces a through street, wanted to open a door in the back facade of his house to enable the passers-by in the through street to pass to the dead-end street through his house, then this is not permissible. An-Nawawi (d. 676 H.) justified this in his book *Al-Majmou'* by: "as the dead-end street (*darb*) is owned by the abutting residents no outsider can pass through their street without the owning party's consent. However, if he [the owner of the house] gets permission from the owners of the street saying that he wants to open the door and not turning it into a passageway, but he will make it a door with locks and bolts so that no one can pass through it except his family and guests, then the case could have two views..." (Vol. 13, pp. 411-412). Regarding this issue, Ibn Qudamah (d. 620 H.) states in his book *Al-Mughni* (Hanbali rite): "If the door of the house was to open onto the street and the backside of the house is towards the dead-end street and he wanted to open a door to the dead-end street to benefit from it (*istitraq*), he is not allowed to do that as he has no right in the dead-end street which is associated with its owners..." (Vol. 4, pp. 570-1). In brief, if the owner of the house wanted to open the door to enable the passers-by to pass into the dead-end street then he is not allowed, as he granted the right of passing (*istitraq*) to the passers-by who do not have it, thus increasing the number of passers-by and users of the dead-end street[15].

From the previous case, several facts and statements can be deduced:

1) Dead-end streets in Islamic cities are owned, controlled, and used by their people.
2) The decision to carry on any physical changes on the dead-end street lies in the hands of the dead-end street party themselves; thus their consent has to be sought before any physical change. Decisions emanated from the inhabitants, i.e. it was a bottom-up mechanism without any external intervention from the ruler or his representatives. This grants these territories (*khitat*) a great degree of autonomy in the production, development, and management of its built environment and internal affairs.
3) Decision making in the territory is carried on by the inhabitants themselves without any representative bodies (e.g. homeowners's association in contemporary housing communities). It was thus consensus-based decision-making process. As an example, Ibn Ar-Rami (lived in the 8th century H.) states in that respect: "if there were houses on a dead-end street, and some residents wanted to establish a gate at the mouth of the street, they are not allowed to do so without the consent of all inhabitants" (p. 336). It is clear from this statement that no action is allowed in the dead-

(15) The principle of "*Istitraq*" identifies the rights of each residing party in the dead-end street according to the location of his house door in the street. It is not permissible for the resident of the house at the mouth of the street to object on the acts of the resident of the house at the end of the street, if not affected by this act due to the distance between the two houses. Al-Izz bin Abd Assalam (d. 660 H.) writes regarding this principle "the doors open onto dead-end streets denote the sharing of these streets just till the location of each door, so the first door is a partner from the beginning of the street until his first door, and the second is a partner from the beginning of the street until his second door, and so is the third and the fourth until the last door which becomes a partner from the beginning of the street until the last door, where the area after the last door until the end of the street pertains only to him" (Al-Izz bin Abd Assalam, Vol. 2, p. 118).

end street without the consent of all its inhabitants; it is a collective consent.

4) A dialogue exists between the involved parties: the acting party and the dead-end street (*khitta*) party consisted of its inhabitants, which increases the communication and interaction and thus cohesion between the *khitta* members (which is a significant criterion of contemporary intentional communities).

5) The interconnectedness of adjacent residential communities through their properties and physical structures sustain and intensify the interconnectedness and interaction between its inhabitants. The owner of the house of two doors in the previous case, if allowed to open the door at the backside of his house, will be a member in the parties of two territories (*khitta*), which will trigger off communication and dialogue between the two parties.

   In another case, one of the houses abutting a dead-end street but did not have access to that street had a small, covered, long disused septic tank within the dead-end street. The owner of the septic tank wanted to reuse it again; the owners of the street could not stop him from doing so, as the septic tank preceded their dead-end street (Al-Wansharisi, Vol. 9, p. 32). In this case the two adjacent territories (*khitta*) become interconnected by means of their property rights (the septic tank). The owner of the septic tank who is a member of one territory (*khitta*) onto which his house-door opens communicated with the members of the adjacent territory (dead-end street) in which his septic tank is located, leading to the interrelatedness and bonding of residential territories and their members, and ruling out fragmentation and isolation. Despite the autonomy of these territories (*khitat*) in their decision-making process, they are still linked together with adjacent territories (*khitat*) through the rights of their inhabitants and properties. Moreover, what enhances these coherent relationships is the consistency of mechanisms of built environment production and reproduction in these territories. The mechanisms that perform in one *khitta* are the same mechanisms that perform in the others. All are derived from the Islamic legal system (*Shari'a*) and not locally invented by the inhabitants or other controlling parties (as the case in contemporary housing communities).

   Through the repetition of such cases and other shared physical elements and properties (e.g. *Sabat* or overarch between territories, party wall, water discharge, etc.) territories-based communities turn in its totality into a one well interweaved network, physically and socially, which has its impact on the Muslim society as a whole increasing its solidarity and cohesion[16].

6) There exists a clear set of rights derived from *Shari'a*, related to built environment properties (dead-end street in the above cases), regulating their relationship with other properties and places (e.g. ownership rights and related right of control and benefit, *istitraq* right, easement right, etc.). In addition, a set of rights that pertains to inhabitants themselves exists in those residential territorial-based communities, regulating the relationships between inhabitants as to their properties and restricting the domination of one party over the other, such as the rights derived from the Prophet (PPUH) tradition of damage: "No harm no reciprocal harm"[17]. The inhabitant has rights in his house, in his territory, and in the street. In addition, there are rights associated with the house, the street, the dead-end street, and so on. These rights bestow their parties with power to decision-making at their respective sites (Al-Lahham, 2005). The owner of the house in the last case mentioned above was able, by exercising his right of precedent (property right), to continue his action of reusing the septic tank despite objections from the dead-end street party. As noted, those rights were self-implemented except in cases of dispute between parties concerned (then the judge's ruling is binding to all disputable parties).

   Through these rights, relationships between territories (*khitat*) and their inhabitants in Islamic cities were regulated. Moreover, by means of empowering inhabitants with the necessary power derived from their rights they managed to generate solutions from within their sites, thus were commensurate with their subjective needs, values, and specific circumstances of their *khitta* (territory). As rights were transparent and well known to all parties, each party was aware of its rights in its *khitta* as well as the rights of others. This produced a territorial structure with minimum hierarchical relationships between parties, if not eliminated altogether. The structure of power and rights in Islamic residential

(16) For more on the interdependence of residential territories (*khitat*) via properties and shared built environment elements, refer to Akbar (1992: p. 362).

(17) For more information about the concept of harm, refer to Akbar (1988, 1992) and Al-Lahham (2005).

communities can thus be portrayed as a non-hierarchical structure. This led to the fulfillment of equality and justice among inhabitants, a matter that qualifies those residential communities to be identified as utopian residential communities, that are democratic and collaborative (in the Western sense)[18].

The mechanisms of decision-making in Islamic residential communities opened the doors of enablement to its inhabitants and granted them the necessary freedom to make decisions (without harming others), thus freeing them to generate appropriate solutions from within their sites. This instigates developing and enriching built environment knowledge and thus provokes more creativity and invention. Through inhabitants' everyday experiences and recognition of their sites, conditions, and problems, they build up expertise and built environment knowledge that generates proper solutions. Through the deployment, circulation, and reproduction of those solutions in residential communities, the built environment knowledge is spread out and developed, thus transformed into a shared, common knowledge preventing the monopolization of knowledge by specific groups as professionals. This produces a society that has knowledge and awareness of its built environment (contrary to the capitalist society which people are ignorant as to their built environments). This knowledge will be directed in the production of the built environment, as Akbar (1992) contends, towards serving its people's needs and desires first. It can thus be said that the key motivation for developing the knowledge of built environment lies in the hands of inhabitants at their sites and not with professionals outside the site.

Based on this, it can be said that Islamic residential communities within their territories (*khitat*) achieved the spirit of community because of the social solidarity, synergy, and cohesion maintained among their members. These communities, through their enabling mechanisms that bestowed their inhabitants freedom of decision-making, constituted collaborative communities. They have achieved exemplary standards of the utopian intentional communities and are qualified to be labeled as such.

It is worth mentioning here that Islam does not strive to achieve democracy (in its Western sense) in its residential communities. Democracy denotes the rule of the majority, but what if this majority is ignorant? Then the result will be destructive. Democracy does not necessarily lead to the optimal solution. In residential territories (*khitat*) in Islamic cities, each party had control over its property as part of its responsibilities. This leads to multiplication of the number of controlling parties in residential communities, thus increasing the richness of built environment experiences and production of better solutions.

Why did the inhabitants of Islamic cities make "proper" decisions and produce appropriate solutions (economically, climatically, socially, etc.), yet today we, as professionals possessing all the tools of advanced knowledge and expertise, are incapable of generating appropriate solutions, particularly as regards creating utopian residential communities? The answer is that inhabitants of contemporary cities do not possess the driving force that enables them to produce solutions and to develop their awareness and knowledge of the built environment. They are inside a closed kaleidoscope; however, inhabitants of Islamic cities possess the interrelated knowledge as they hold the mechanisms that enhance and intensify that knowledge through constant direct contact with the built environment, thus nourishing creativity and invention in the built environment production and reproduction. This will be demonstrated next through reviewing some approaches of contemporary intentional communities.

Contemporary Intentional Communities: Closed Kaleidoscope

Co-housing approach

Co-housing is a type of intentional residential community approach that aims at reviving the spirit of community in residential complexes as existed in the pre-industrial age. The co-housing approach originated as a grass-root movement in Denmark in the 1960s in response to the fragmentation and disintegration of social relationships between society members particularly in residential areas and against the housing choices available at that time[19]. This movement aimed, as other utopian movements, to create a residential collaborative community

(18) There is a lucid divergence between democracy that Western societies sought to achieve since the Enlightenment and the allegedly lived democracy in contemporary Western societies. The former is a utopian democracy that is unattainable under capitalism and the modern State. Thus, using the term "democracy" to describe Islamic residential communities in this research refers to the utopian conception. For more about this, refer to Al-Lahham (2008).

(19) The first co-housing community (Sættedammen) emerged in Denmark in 1967 by Bodil Graae containing a group of 50 families. The first co-housing community in the United States was Muir Commons in California. The movement spread in northern Europe and the US, as today there are more than 113 operating communities in the United States with more than 100 others in the planning phase. In Canada, there are 9 completed communities, and approximately 15 in the planning/construction process. There are also co-housing communities in Australia, the UK, and other parts of the world (Wikipedia, July 2008).

dominated by collaboration relationships between inhabitants and is based on the concept of social capital[20]. Several co-housing communities were founded on shared principles and ground rules such as retirees or schoolteachers co-housing, or that of artists and similar professions[21]. Co-housing communities, as mentioned by Diana Christia (the author of *Creating a Life Together* and the editor of *Communities* magazine), in contrast to the situation in the 1960s, seek to achieve equity in ownership and a collaborative shared decision-making process, as well as a solidify social structure characterized by social solidarity and cohesion among its members (Yeoman, 2006). These communities aim at achieving democracy in society in the sense of accomplishing freedom and equality and of granting the capacity of decision-making to its people and not to any external parties or authorities. Co-housing communities seek to become self-managed communities that adopt a consensus-based decision-making model founded on agreements between inhabitants. Members of the residential communities hold a few managerial responsibilities, such as coordination of meetings and organization of resident's participation. Moreover, co-housing communities feature a non-hierarchical social structure based on collaborative relationships among inhabitants. Power and authority distribution is non-hierarchical leading to equality in inhabitants' rights and their general acquired power in contrast to the situation in the surrounding capitalist society outside the co-housing community. In other words, the main objective of these communities is the emancipation of the capitalist power structure and centralized mechanisms of decision-making process prevailing in the modern capitalist society and casting its negative impacts on its people.

To realize this, mechanisms of the decision-making process are implemented in all stages of the co-housing community production process, starting from the design stage through the end product that realizes its goals and finally in the operation and management stage and daily practices of inhabitants. The main principle in designing these complexes is the attempt to meet its inhabitants' needs, values and desires and not the wishes and ideas of the designer, the developer, or any other external party. Therefore, there is no predetermined design and spatial principles for all co-housing communities; they vary from one complex to another according to the different site conditions and circumstances as well as inhabitants' values and needs.

The production process of co-housing communities is based on self-production mechanisms. The design process is carried out either by the inhabitants themselves or through their extensive participation. According to the pioneer of this approach in the US, Charles Durrett, the co-housing approach does not seek to revive the traditional forms of housing and elements of medieval cities as those forms and elements are incapable of addressing the dramatic demographic and economic changes in the modern capitalist society (Lee, 2006). Hence, similarities might seem to exist between co-housing communities and Islamic residential communities or *khitat*, on the theoretical level. Both seek, each from its perspective, to create the collaborative coherent society characterized by freedom, democracy and equality in opportunities (life chances) and rights as opposed to what is prevalent in the capitalist society. It is worth mentioning here that the concept of freedom in Islamic residential communities is substantially different from that of Western co-housing communities. Freedom in Islam is not absolute but restricted by rights of others, i.e. it is a restricted freedom (Al-Lahham, 2005). There is also a difference in the concept of democracy between these two modes of residential communities. That is, there is no democracy in Islam in its Western sense, but the entitlement of control and capacity to decision-making for each party in its site.

Ownership patterns in co-housing communities are of two types: individual ownership of relatively small residential units, and collective ownership of common services and public spaces between houses. Ownership, right of use, and control of the latter properties refer to all inhabitants collectively. Co-housing complexes comprise generally of 20-40 private housing units and common services that benefit all inhabitants to consolidate their social relationships and interaction[22]. The total plot area of the co-housing complex is often limited and of compact built-up area, i.e. of high density in order to provide green areas for recreation and landscape purposes. Pedestrian streets and public spaces are very common in co-housing complexes to increase opportunities for interaction among

(20) The concept of social capital refers to social cohesion and connectedness within and between social networks (Wikipedia, July 2008).

(21) One third of the population of co-housing communities established in the United States since 1991 are retirees. Also, there exist some seniors-only co-housing communities in the US (Lee, 2006).

(22) Common facilities in co-housing communities vary but usually include a large kitchen and a dining room where residents can take turns cooking for the entire community. It may also include recreational facilities such as a TV room, pool, game room, gym, as well as laundry, childcare facilities, offices, internet access and guest rooms (Wikipedia, July 2008).

inhabitants. Most areas in the co-housing complex are vehicle-restricted, and parking lots are provided on the periphery of the complex.

Despite the pursuit of these communities to empower their inhabitants through the disposal of professional's (architect, planner) authority over the production process of these complexes, and shift power and right of decision-making of the production, operation and management of those communities from the hands of authorities into the hands of inhabitants themselves, i.e. they attempt to bring about the key drive and generator of built-environment related knowledge to inhabitants within their sites so as to produce appropriate solutions; however, these communities have become no more than small closed (gated) residential neighborhoods that can be perceived as small islands in the middle of the capitalist society. The production process of co-housing communities is practically the same as that of any other capitalist project. It is subject to the very same capitalist building codes and planning rules and regulations such as land-use zoning, and access to infrastructure services (water, electricity, telecommunication, sewage system, etc.) as any other project. In other words, inhabitants do not have absolute freedom of decision-making in their communities but were restrained by building rules and bylaws of the higher authorities. The State has thus retained its authority and acquired the right of development control over the production process of these communities transforming them into introverted communities equivalent to the gated communities. Thus and despite the seeming similarities between co-housing communities and Islamic residential communities on the theoretical level, the practical results of these communities were radically different. While mechanisms of Islamic residential communities achieved cohesion and integration with its neighboring communities, co-housing communities failed to achieve this. Co-housing communities can thus be visualized as individual endeavors with no positive impact on the larger society; on the contrary, they may possibly intensify its isolation and fragmentation.

As to the design process of these communities, three types of design models emerged in the US. The first, known as "Resident-led model" is led entirely by the inhabitants themselves, with the assistance of professionals. People in this model design their complex by themselves according to their immediate needs and values. The second model, the "Partnership model", involves a sort of partnership between inhabitants and the developer to counterweigh the lack of skills and building expertise (skills of dialogue and achieving agreements) and limited knowledge of inhabitants, thus precluding physical risks and relevant hazards. That is, the production process of these communities lies within the framework of capitalism where production, reproduction, and circulation of knowledge are confined to the professionals' realm. This evidently sustains the concept of professionalism and its related market as two resources of capitalism that lead to its reproduction. The inhabitants of these communities in this design model seek to obtain built-environment related knowledge through partnership with developers and professional architects. Despite this sort of partnership, inhabitants still have a significant role in the production of their community, yet it is performed within the capitalist kaleidoscope. As such, the key drive and generator of related knowledge and appropriate solutions that meets inhabitants' needs and values is partially inoperative in this model, unlike the first model where the generator is active. The third type, the "Speculative model", is similar to other types of planned residential complexes where top-down centralized planning methods, controlled by the developer, are dominant. Inhabitants have no role in the decision-making process and design process (Williams, 2008). They are selected after the completion of the complex. According to Williams' study of these communities in the US, the second model of design is the most popular in California, followed by the first model (Williams, 2008). In other words, the limits of capitalism (as to planning and knowledge production) confined inhabitants' freedom and capabilities of choice and decision-making with regard to the production process of their own homes.

The territorial structure of co-housing communities encompasses a clear ownership pattern within its boundaries. However, the use and control of its areas is subject to the rules set by the community itself. Each community has its own internal rules set by its members to regulate the management of the community, leading to differences, or even disharmony, between co-housing communities. The fundamental principle in the operation and management of these communities is based on the interdependency of its members. As such, this approach turned into that of industrialization of a life style rather than an intentional community approach. Seeking to achieve its goals of creating a collaborative democratic society, rules of co-housing communities prioritize the collective interest over the individual interest, which limits the space of freedom granted for individuals in conducting their own lives and daily practices, and restricts their freedom of choice. Thus,

one of the most significant foundations of democracy has vanished via the co-housing community approach.

Despite the pursuit of the co-housing intentional community approach to achieve the notion of "collaborative community", its performance was limited inside its spatial territory and did not exceed its borders to surrounding neighborhoods, thus isolating its inhabitants from neighboring districts. Ultimately, this has led to the fragmentation of the larger society and to its transformation from a coherent society (as intended) into a mosaic society, where each co-housing community is but one part of this configuration (see Fig. 1). Mechanisms that perform outside these co-housing intentional communities belong to the modern capitalist system and its prevailing hierarchical power structure. Subsequently, these capitalist communities are subject in their production process to the modern centralized, top-down mode of planning which contradicts substantially with the fundamentals of co-housing intentional communities. In other words, these communities' introverted tendency and isolation from the external world can be viewed as isolation from the external capitalist system from which they strive to be emancipated. However, this isolation restricted them from fulfilling their dream of the open democratic society or even changing the dominant societal power structure. Conversely, Islamic residential communities maintained interaction and strong relationships with their neighboring territories (*khitat*), thus attaining a coherent, interconnected, well-bonded society. Through their Islamic mechanisms, rights, and power structures, they achieved the dream of the co-housing intentional community.

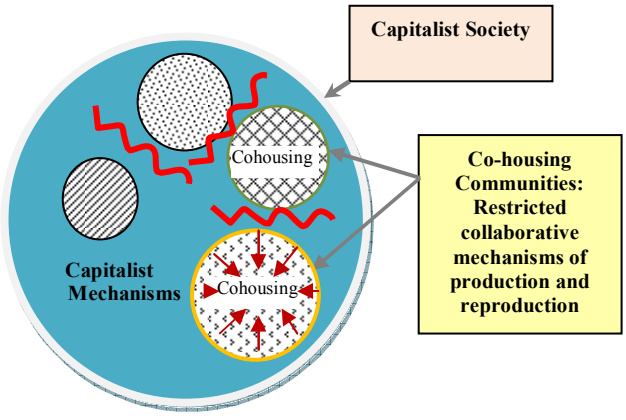

Fig. 1. The transformation of the capitalist society based on the co-housing community approach into a mosaic society with incoherent relationships between its parts.

It can be deduced that the approach of co-housing communities, despite its calls for changing the power structure and granting its inhabitants capacity to decision-making from within their sites, thus motivating built-environment knowledge production and proliferating the creativity of producing proper solutions, was unable to meet the criteria of the utopian intentional community, thus was not eligible to hold its title. This approach was confined in its performance to the capitalist kaleidoscope limits that restricted its attempts to accomplish change, except for relatively minor changes that accept and adopt capitalist notions. No built-environment knowledge or know-how skills are sought for people, but dependency on off-site professionals to create related solutions. Referring to Islamic residential communities, it is believed that since professionals' knowledge was developed outside the site, i.e. they are not acquainted with inhabitants' essential needs and desires, they are incapable of generating appropriate solutions compared with inhabitants' capabilities, if possessing the necessary knowledge, expertise, and skills.

New Urbanism movement

The "Neo-Traditional Development" approach had emerged in the US in the 1980s. A decade later, the New Urbanism movement began. The latter movement referred to a set of conceptions that refer to traditional wisdom to learn lessons and extract principles to be applied in the planning of contemporary neighborhoods. Some New Urbanism (NU) concepts are the "Traditional Neighborhood Development" introduced by Duany and Plater-Zyberk and the "Transiet-Oriented Development" pioneered by Peter Calthrope, Doug Kelbaugh and Daniel Solomon (Bohl, 2003)[23]. The movement was founded on the denunciation of modernity's ideology and principles of development and urban growth and substituted by notions of post-modernity derived from the theories and philosophies of Leon Krier, Jane Jacobs (1961), Lewis Memford, as well as Perry's concept of the "Neighborhood" (1929).

The New Urbanism movement (henceforth NU) aims at creating a utopian society with predetermined characteristics. Therefore, it belongs to the planned intentional communities approach which principles based on the repudiation of some aspects of

(23) New Urbanism, as explained by Bohl (2003), is an umbrella term encompassing the traditional neighborhood development (TND), or "neotraditional" town planning, of Anderes Duany and Elizabith Plater-Zyberk; the pedestrian pocket concept of Kelbaugh; the transiet-oriented design (TOD) articulated by Peter Calthrope and Shelly Poticha; and the "quartiers" approach by Leon Krier. All approaches advocate the use of traditional neighborhood design to build walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods and towns that emulate places of enduring quality and provide an alternative to the modern development pattern, commonly referred to as "sprawl".

the modern capitalist society, and conversely the call for finding alternative societal characteristics within the context of capitalism. Precisely, it does not refuse capitalism as a societal system. Also, it does not reject its mechanisms of decision-making process and of built-environment production and reproduction, but it rejects the end-products of the built environment produced by modernity. It accepts the power structure prevailing in the modern capitalist society and does not aspire to change it. It is thus at variance with the co-housing community movement that repudiates mechanisms of the capitalist society and its prevailing power structure in the production of the built enviornment.

To resolve the dilemma of social heterogeneity created by modernity and the decline of the notion of community, and the consequent rupture between the building, its context, the built environment, and its users, and the domination of the concept of "space" over that of "place", NU aspires to retrieve the spirit of community as existed in pre-industrial societies. This, according to NU, can be achieved by maintaining communication between the user and his context through restoring the sense of place or what is known as "Genius Loci", as well as reviving the concept of the public space. Since the concept of place implies the existence of values and meanings associated with the user that will operate to foster his sense of belonging and intimacy towards place, and strengthen cohesion and interaction among users and their attachment to place, which in turn gives place its own identity, unlike the identity-less concept of space that enfeebles its relationship with users. Therefore, NU links the built environment with its spatio-temporal context to reinstate the sense of place, belonging and intimacy, at variance with modernity's effects.

The distinction between space and place, according to NU, cannot be determined physically as much as socially through the pattern of social relationships that prevail among inhabitants and their association with place itself. As such, NU linked between place and community, where community is defined in relation to its place; it is a place-based community. This resembles to a certain extent the concept of *khitta* in Islamic residential communities, physically, however, the divergence lies in the system of rights associated with place and its inhabitants, especially the right of control. Seeking to re-establish the spirit of community, NU adopts the same notion of determinism that modernity affirmed and was the underlying reason behind the disappearance of the spirit of community in modern residential districts; however, it is used by NU in a postmodern manner. Explicitly, the NU movement renounced modernity and its consequent built environment end-products, yet it implements its tools and mechanisms to meet its desired goals.

Some postmodern architects and planners (e.g. Aldo Rossi, Leon Krier) relied in their attempts to achieve communication between the user and his context and to restore the sense of place (Genius loci) on activating users' "urban memory" through associating the building with some images from users' mental background (spatial and/or temporal). History and context are perceived as sources for eclectic disjointed physical images to be used as signs of connotative meanings related to user's memory. In that sense, they relatively froze history and transferred it into the present through its images; thus they dealt with history as a static entity, annulling its dynamic character, changeability, and continuity through time.

Based on this conception, the NU movement looked into traditional residential neighborhoods that existed in pre-industrial cities and in rural communities, which enjoyed a distinct built environment identity, maintained a spirit of community, and lived a safe, peaceful life, in order to discern the place-making guidelines that shaped their identity, socially and in terms of the built environment. Those inferred tradition-based guidelines are used as the underpinning conceptions in contemporary city and residential neighborhoods planning, taking into account the current conditions and requirements such as the existence of the vehicle and the need for public transportation and transit routes to produce utopian residential communities with social solidarity and coherence, instead of the fragmented communities produced by modernity.

Some of the prime principles of designing the residential neighborhood according to NU is its advocacy of the concept of "smart growth" as opposed to the modern concepts of "growth" and "sprawl" (Gottdiener and Budd, 2005). Also, its attempt to develop a distinct identity, socially and as regards the built environment, and the re-establishment of the notion of "public space" (missing in the modern built environment) by means of guiding the neighborhood design to serve pedestrians as its first priority rather than the vehicle. In view of that, the NU residential neighborhood is characterized by its high density relatively limited area that does not exceed a radius of about a quarter mile which allows inhabitants on the outskirts walking access to public facilities and services at the center within a period not exceeding 5-10 minutes. In addition, neighborhood streets are designed in a manner that respects the human scale, so they

resemble the relatively narrow boulevards with sidewalks, dim lighting, and trees on both sides.

The public space in NU residential neighborhoods is made up of streets, public squares, and plazas that are spatially defined by adjacent buildings. In that sense, buildings shape the public space, generating what can be called "urban rooms", in contrast to the dispersed, identity-less urban space generated by modernity (Walters and Brown, 2004). A number of parks, small gardens, and civil institutions are found in prominent locations all over the neighborhood.

The concept of mixed land-use as opposed to the modern concept of zoning is adopted in the NU neighborhood design, where it contains a variety of commercial shops and services to meet the daily needs of inhabitants and provide employment opportunities linking the home and workplace. Moreover, residential buildings are of different types to serve the needs of different population groups in the neighborhood, which in turn promotes social interaction and integration among inhabitants and precludes the conversion of the neighborhood into a ghetto.

Several neighborhoods have been implemented in the US and Europe following the principles of the NU movement. In the US alone, more than 600 towns, villages and neighborhoods have been executed(24). Examples of such neighborhoods are Seaside in Florida (1981), and Poundbury village in Dorchester in the UK, designed by Leon Krier in 1993. Recently, such NU-based neighborhoods have emerged in the Arab world, particularly in the Gulf area, with prominent examples in Dubai.

Adopting the notions of postmodernity that emphasize the built space (i.e. the physical space including its characteristics and synthesis, its impact on our perception and behavior along with its connotative meanings) more than the social space (produced by the social system), the NU movement employs physical aesthetic solutions to resolve social problems. This movement is thus viewed by many as merely an architectural style. A question arises here: are neighborhoods and residential communities considered as objects that can be designed (or industrialized) in a comprehensive manner, or should they be developed as a result of the interaction of several factors together such as the political, social, economic, cultural and the like? Pragmatically, the NU movement bears a resemblance to the concept of "Comprehensive planning" introduced by modernity and rejected by postmodernity on which NU is based. This constitutes an internal contradiction in the NU movement.

The NU movement in its employment of past images to reproduce the formal qualities of the built environment that traditionally created the sense of place is stemming from a nostalgic standpoint amalgamated with a consumerist attitude towards history. As such, it is a process of commodification of nostalgia in which the nostalgic feeling towards history has been converted into a consumerist commodity related to the user's urban memory. However, is this nostalgia realistic or is it a fantasy invented by the architect simply to achieve some consumerist, capitalist, commercial goals?

This design method encountered vast criticism that denied dealing with history as a frozen and figurative, aesthetic entity and the commodification of its nostalgic feeling; claiming that this methodology resulted in the production of what is known as "Café society", i.e. a consumerist society founded on fascinating people through the industrialization of attractive architectural scenes, rather than the desired utopian intentional society(25). Therefore, cafés and restaurants appeared in public places in NU neighborhoods, aiming at increasing inhabitants' interaction and cohesion. Architectural metaphors from history have been increasingly used in these places as a means to attract people through communication with their urban memory. As such, capitalism and its consumerist attitude have overshadowed this movement and its built environment production. But the persistent question remains: did the NU movement under these circumstances manage to industrialize the sense of community in neighborhoods as planned?

Several social studies in this respect confirmed the unattainability of establishing an absolute relationship between the built environment and the social relationships among inhabitants inside residential neighborhoods in a deterministic manner. They rendered this method as imperfect and limited, thus cannot realize the spirit of community(26); a method that dissipates modernity's dream of social

(24) Retrieved on March 1, 2007, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_urbanism.

(25) The term "Café society" emerged in the 1920s. It signifies the so-called "Beautiful People" who gather in fashionable cafes and restaurants (Wikipedia, August 2008). Currently, the term is employed in many urban studies to denote a venue associated purely with the consumption of goods rather than a place for creative culture and democratic activities. It is a place where the richness and meaning of public life and public space, promoted by postmodernity, is simply reduced to industrialization of leisure and entertainment by the use of architectural metaphors to generate a manufactured spectacle (Walters and Brown, 2004).

(26) Such as the studies of Urry, Sayer and Giddens, which confirm the unfeasibility of considering space as a prime factor in examining the social system and its associated phenomena (Saunders, 1993). For more on this issue, refer to Al-Lahham (2007).

engineering (of social deterministic stance: changing society through changing its built environment), and of creating a community of social cohesion similar to that of pre-industrial cities. Nevertheless, the NU movement has adopted the concept of determinism as a foundation for fulfilling its utopian dream. As many studies investigating some NU-based residential neighborhoods such as "Celebration" neighborhood in the US have shown, the movement did not succeed in changing inhabitants' behavior and in creating cohesion and social solidarity. Therefore, it did not achieve the spirit of community in place, as intended by its designers (Gottdiener and Budd, 2005).

Mechanisms operating in the production process of NU residential neighborhoods are the same mechanisms operating in the capitalist built environment outside these neighborhoods. That is, as mentioned, the NU movement is based on accepting capitalism as a general societal system aspiring to improve some of modernity's effects in society and the built environment. These mechanisms employ the capitalist, centralized, top-down planning method, dominated by the designer (planner/architect) who is subject in the design process to building rules and regulations set by the higher authorities, as if the neighborhood is simply a big project that is designed by one party (individual or team) at one time. The inhabitant as such has a very limited and superficial role in the decision-making process that does not exceed voicing his opinion in some phases of the design, yet steered by the designer. This is fundamentally incompatible with the concept of democracy and social sustainability which the NU movement advocates.

Moreover, these neighborhoods are subject in their mechanisms to economic market forces that restrain inhabitant's freedom of choice due to the designer and developer tendency in design and implementation processes to gain utmost profit with least risk[27]. This reduces the freedom of choice granted to inhabitants according to the NU movement, thus diminishing its distinctiveness and making it equivalent to that available in other types of housing communities prevalent in the capitalist society. Solutions in NU built-environments are produced by external parties outside the neighborhood, unlike the situation in Islamic residential communities in which decisions and solutions are produced by inhabitants from within the site without any external intervention.

All NU neighborhoods in the US, due to their high purchasing or rent values resulting from the provision of costly facilities and services such as public parks and plazas, infrastructure and other public social facilities[28], became exclusive for inhabitants of above-average and high income, i.e. a certain social strata who have common qualities and desires such as economic status and tendency to live in quiet unpolluted area. Hence, the case has returned to where it started. The dwelling, according to the practical effects of NU, became a scarce resource that is inaccessible except for the affluent. This brings to mind the debate about considering the dwelling as part of the available life chances, and highlights the issue of equity in access to resources. By this, the prime goal of intentional utopian communities of achieving democracy and equality in life chances and rights has been negated. Dwelling in these communities became a sort of social luxury that is unattainable to many social classes. Clearly, the NU movement can be depicted as an exclusionary movement that sustains stratification and thus social fragmentation and heterogeneity, opposite to its initial objectives of achieving the intentional coherent utopian community.

Ownership patterns in NU neighborhoods can be divided into private and public. Houses belong to the private type whereas public facilities, public spaces, and plazas including the center of the neighborhood pertain to the public type. The management of and control over these properties is split up between two parties which necessitates continuous coordination. Those are, first, the "residential owners association" which is responsible of the residential area including all public spaces within it. This association acts as a representative of all residents in the neighborhood with an elected Board of Directors. Second, the "commercial property owner's association" is responsible for the neighborhood center that contains commercial buildings leased according to the neighborhood's land-use rules. It is also responsible of the public spaces, parks, plazas, and parking areas situated in the center.

With regard to the laws and regulations governing these communities, Duany and Plater-Zyberk (the pioneers of this movement) put forward a set of rules and by-laws to govern Seaside neighborhood that they designed, such as land-use rules (zoning) and public area usage. In 2003, Duany

(27) In the design process of NU neighborhoods, the developer either designs and constructs the entire neighborhood, or leaves the choice for inhabitants to build their own houses according to predesigned building models.

(28) The value of the small house in the Celebration neighborhood, which belongs to Disney Company in Florida, reached USD 600,000 which is considerably high proportionate to the total built-up area and the plot area on which the house sits, and the unattainable privacy between neighbors. That is, houses are only 20 feet apart, divided by a seven-foot wall (Davis, 1997).

and Plater-Zyberk developed these rules into a model to be applied in later neighborhoods, known as the "Smartcode"[29]. These rules were quite detailed to ensure development control over the neighborhood. In principal, they were design-based codes concerned with the three dimensions of the design and not only its planning dimension (two dimensional as in land-use rules or zoning) which extends the designer and developer's control over the neighborhood's built environment and inhabitants and reduces the space of relative freedom accorded to inhabitants; a matter that is inconsistent with the concept of democracy and empowerment of inhabitants in these communities[30]. Therefore, the territorial structure and the dominant pattern of control in these communities is hierarchical as in the capitalist society and its built environment outside the neighborhood which opens the door for domination to occur between inhabitants and properties inside these communities. Undoubtedly, this will obliterate equality, reduce freedom, and eliminate capacity to decision-making.

Apparently, the creation of the utopian intentional society according to the NU movement is operating inside the capitalist kaleidoscope in terms of its notions, mechanisms and power structure, thus its solutions were not substantial but partial and fragmented. The professional's control over the production process of these residential communities resulted in an inappropriate social and territorial structure that is considerably far from what those intentional communities sought regarding its utopian aspects. Moreover, the NU movement dealt with this dilemma through professionals on its perceptible level, treating its symptoms without investigating its roots and causes at the deep level. As a result, the movement failed to produce utopian solutions; hence, many of its practical experiments such as the "Uptown District" in St. Diego were not successful[31].

Conclusion

As inferred, all above investigated approaches to create utopian intentional communities, despite of their apparent differences in titles and territorial structure, adopt or are subject to the same general driving system, capitalism. They are confined within the kaleidoscope of capitalism and subject to its restraining mechanisms; hence, their solutions were incapable of producing the "good society", as intended. As long as these approaches do not liberate themselves from the capitalist framework, they will remain incapable of reaching appropriate solutions that fulfill their dream. As analyzed in this research, inhabitants in most of the above explored intentional communities have no substantial input in the decision-making process except for voicing their opinions, yet in a top-controlled hierarchy. All major decisions are made by decision-makers, whether professionals or the higher authorities (the State). Generally, decisions concerning land divisions, allocation of streets and plazas are in the hands of municipalities, whereas decisions related to the provision of public facilities, particularly infrastructure, are in the hands of big companies or institutions of public utilities such as those of water and drainage systems. However, design decisions whether regarding the dwelling or the entire neighborhood are mostly in the hands of professionals. As such, the prime conclusion of this research is that the key drive for producing the contemporary good society is idle. Comparatively, in Islamic cities, as proved by many studies (e.g. Hakim, 1986; Akbar, 1992; Al-Hathloul, 1994) the source from which all built-environment solutions come about lies in inhabitants themselves, at their site. Those inhabitants in the contemporary capitalist kaleidoscope are handicapped and facing an impasse.

Most of these approaches to create the utopian intended community are moving within the capitalist tunnel; however, to reach their dream of fulfilling the good society and the appropriate built environment this deadlock kaleidoscope has to be splintered by referring to the wisdom of Islamic cities. Consecutive research about Islamic cities constitutes a fertile source for ideas on how to open-up this blocked kaleidoscope.

This research contends that built-environment solutions for residential communities can be superior if their inhabitants are enabled so that solutions can be generated by themselves. This is very evident for a very simple and logical reason that inhabitants' daily practices, experiences, and interaction with their built environments resulting from its utilization and inhabitation, will inevitably make the built environment adaptable to the needs and values of its inhabitants. As residents have social needs, thus the built environment will respect and comply with these needs. Yet, this can only be true if professionals and related decision-makers adopted mechanisms that

(29) Retrieved September 2008 from the New Urbanism website: www.newurbanism.org.

(30) Planners and architects advocating NU called for adopting this model of building rules and regulations in all American cities and suburbs to achieve what is known as "smart growth" as opposed to "growth" produced by modernity and its consequent urban sprawl characterized by low-density, single-use, automobile-dependent, and costly infrastructure. These regulations have been applied in a few cities such as Davidson in Northern Carolina, and in Cornelius and Huntersville (Walters and Brown, 2004).

(31) For more about "Uptown District" and its failure in achieving its goals, refer to Gottdiener and Budd (2005: p. 98).

allow solutions to be produced by inhabitants, who with more experience have more related knowledge. That is to say, it is necessary to convert inhabitants into knowledgeable, insightful citizens regarding the built environment instead of ignorant ones as the case of inhabitants of the contemporary capitalist system that isolated, or at best, allowed user participation in the decision-making process of built environment production. The key drive and generator for residential communities and their built-environment solutions is obviously inoperative in the capitalist system, and it cannot be retrieved and activated without the employment of certain mechanisms as those existed in Islamic cities.

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المجتمعات السكنية بين حرية الإسلام ونفق الرأسمالية

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الكلمات المفتاحية: المجتمعات السكنية الإسلامية، المجتمعات السكنية المعاصرة، المجتمعات القصدية، حركة التحضر الجديد، الإسكان التعاوني، التركيبة العمرانية، القوة، الرأسمالية.

ملخص البحث. كيف يمكن أن نوجد مجتمعات تسودها روح الجماعة والتعاون وتتسم بعلاقات وطيدة فيما بينها؟ سؤال لطالما شغل علماء الاجتماع والفلاسفة عبر التاريخ، فكان أول من طرحه أفلاطون فاتحاً بذلك عهداً من النظريات المثالية Utopianism التي تنم عن أحلام لمجتمع جيد مثالي Good society ضمن مدينة مثالية Ideal city، فظهر بذلك مفهوم "المجتمع القصدي" Intentional community الذي يهدف إلى تحقيق حلم "المجتمع الجيد"، ليشكل بذلك أساساً للعديد من نظريات التخطيط الحضري والعمراني اللاحقة. فمنذ عصر النهضة والتوجهات المثالية متوالية الظهور، ولكن مع فشل مشروع الحداثة خلال الستينيات من القرن العشرين وفشل طروحاته المثالية في الإسكان ظهر جيل جديد من التوجهات المثالية التي اعتمدت في طروحاتها على فكر ما بعد الحداثة فظهرت طروحات المجتمعات السكنية القصدية كتعاونيات الإسكان Housing cooperatives، والإسكان التعاوني Co-housing، والمجمعات السكنية condominiums، والقرى البيئية ecovillages، ثم المجمعات المغلقة gated communities، وأخيراً حركة التحضر الجديد New Urbanism التي ظهرت في بداية التسعينيات لتعيد صياغة مفهوم المناطق السكنية الحضرية بأسس ما بعد حداثية تحقق التنمية المستدامة الاجتماعية والبيئية، هادفة بذلك إلى تحقيق حلم طال انتظاره.

في ضوء ذلك سيقوم البحث بقراءة ناقدة لتوجهات المجتمعات القصدية أعلاه موضحاً آليات إنتاجها وإدارتها ونظم الملكية السائدة فيها؛ وذلك لإثبات أن جميع هذه التوجهات، وبرغم اختلافاتها الظاهرية في مسمياتها وتركيبتها العمرانية territorial structure، تشترك جميعاً على مستوى بنيتها العميقة deep structure في النظام العام المحرك لها وهو النظام الرأسمالي، فهي بذلك تسير في نفق الرأسمالية وتخضع لقيوده. ولتوضيح ذلك لابد من قراءة هذه التوجهات من خارج هذا النفق من خلال منظور ذي اختلاف جذري في آلياته وأسسه كالمنظور الإسلامي والذي سيؤدي إلى تحقيق الديمقراطية والعدالة والتحرر والسعادة المنشودة بشكل أكثر كفاءة مما أوجدته مثاليات المجتمعات القصدية الرأسمالية، وذلك بالتركيز على آليات اتخاذ القرار والتركيبة السلطوية العمرانية.