Birmingham City University

Changing urban identity and character in Libyan historical cities: a case study of Tripoli

By

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Declaration

I hereby affirm that this thesis is presented as a fulfilment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree at Birmingham City University, United Kingdom. I confirm that none of the content within this thesis has been previously submitted, in part or in full, to support an application for any other qualification or degree at Birmingham City University or any other educational institution. I further attest that this thesis is a product of my own original work, with proper acknowledgement of citations and quotations. I accept full responsibility for any omissions or errors that may be found within the thesis.

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''In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful''

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Abstract

This thesis examines the dynamic transformation of traditional Arabic-Islamic cities' identity, with a focus on Tripoli, Libya. Since the mid-twentieth century, globalisation's influence on urban form and function has yielded both advancements and disruptions that reshape culture, identity, and human activity. Increased urban migration has brought significant social, economic, and cultural changes in cities, often leading to urban decay due to the degradation of the built environment and urban fabric.

This thesis offers a holistic framework to better understand the factors impacting the identity of traditional Arabic-Islamic cities through the case of Tripoli. It employs policy analysis, expert interviews, resident input, and observations to identify key contributors to the evolution of urban form and identity in historic Tripoli. These factors include socio-cultural influences, the built environment, economy, law, and decision-making processes. Most notably, migration-induced social changes and specific property-related legislation have shifted urban identity, leading to urban decay.

This study has produced, first, a theoretical contribution that extends conceptual understandings of urban decay in contexts of Arabic-Islamic cities. The largely Western-dominated literature often cites economic factors as the driving force behind urban decay; however, this study reveals that urban decay also stems from a range of other factors, including the law and decision-making. Secondly, this work offers practical insights for academics, university students, planners, architects, and urban designers working on urban development projects and urban regeneration.

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Definitions:

Arabic-Islamic cities

The focus of this thesis is on cities having a particular shared form of culture, derived from the Islamic religion and particularly from the North African Arabic region. The shared culture and geography leads to similarities in urban form (Hakim, 1986; Bianca, 2000). Hence this thesis uses the term “Arabic-Islamic”. The context for this shared culture is as follows.

In Arabic, the term for city is *madinah*, which, according to Al-Attas (1995), derives from the root of *al-Din* (religion) through the term *dana*. This term reflects a city or town characterized by a structured societal life governed by law, order, justice, and authority. It shows a picture of civilized living; of societal life of urbansim. Al-Attas emphasizes the deep and significant connection between the concepts of *din* and *madinah*, noting that the former pertains to individual believers' spiritual duties, while the latter relates to their collective life within a governed community. Al-Attas further highlights the historical importance of renaming the town of Yathrib to al-Madinah or Madinah al-Nabiy (The City of the Prophet, *''may Allah bless him and grant him peace''*), which marked a pivotal shift. This renaming signified a transformation where the city became the embodiment of Islamic socio-political order under the Prophet Muhammad's authority. The designation "City of the Prophet" thus represents the ideal realization of Islamic principles and governance, establishing the city as a model of Islamic societal order.

Given the crucial role of cities, it is unsurprising that the Islamic community (ummah) expanded cities (mudun) across the Middle East and beyond from the first century Hijrah onwards. For Muslims, understanding city life and its extensive history in various arts is essential for comprehending Islam and its civilization. In this context. Hiorns (1956) notes that city-building is not only one of the most comprehensive but also one of the earliest major arts of civilization. Hiorns highlights the significance of urban development as a fundamental aspect of cultural and societal evolution, reflecting its integral role in shaping Islamic civilization and urban identity.

Lapidus (1984) observed that Muslim cities were products of Islamic civilization, serving as microcosms that reflect the broader historical forces shaping Islam. He emphasized that political institutions, religious values, and social organizations within these cities were created by their residents. This perspective underscores the integral role of urban environments in the development and manifestation of Islamic civilization.

Ibn Khaldun, a prominent medieval thinker, explored urban issues in his seminal work *al-Muqaddimah* (as discussed by Mahdi, 1964). His analysis includes several key concepts such as ‘umran, hadarah, badawah, dawlah, ‘asabiyyah, and mulk. According to Mahdi (1964), the term ‘umran refers to the cumulative social heritage of a group—including ideas, attitudes, and activities—expressed through institutions and conventional practices in a specific time and place. This concept aligns closely with the modern sociological and anthropological understanding of culture. Conversely, the term hadar denotes city or town dwellers, reflecting the sedentary nature of urban populations. The term dawlah (state) is linked to the advancement of civilization, highlighting that the rise and decline of cities are

closely tied to the fortunes of the state. Ibn Khaldun's framework thus provides understanding of how urban and political structures interact and evolution within the context of Islamic civilization.

Character

Character is a concept relating to intangible heritage and covering a broad range of cultural, historical and spiritual factors (Lenzerini,2011). It has become used frequently in conservation and heritage planning legislation and policy (eg from the UK 1967 Civic Amenities Act) and is often linked with "appearance", a more easily-definable physical characteristic (Swanwick and Fairclough, 2018).

International heritage conservation guidelines emphasize the importance of place identity and its cultural significance, underscoring the need for protection. The Burra Charter (2013) defines cultural significance as encompassing aesthetic, historic, scientific, social, or spiritual values that are embodied in a place's fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places, and related objects for past, present, or future generations. In addition to economic, environmental, and social sustainability, cultural sustainability is recognized as the fourth pillar of sustainability (Birkeland & Birkeland, 2008; Soini & Birkeland, 2014). Consistent with the guidelines and principles set forth by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), achieving cultural sustainability in the heritage field often involves preserving and enhancing the place identity of heritage sites (UNESCO, 2019). (Swanwick and Fairclough, 2018).

Identity

Identity, initially explored in fields such as logic and the philosophy of psychology, has expanded in scope to include human-made environments. In this context, a city serves as a platform for shaping society and urban identity, which is crucial to national identity. Urban identity blends physical heritage, local culture, and geographic context (Cheshmehzangi, 2015). It reflects the distinct characteristics of a city at different times. Therefore, discussions about urban identity encompass the relationships between people, their environment, and the city itself. Factors contributing to urban identity also include individual identities (Nasr and Majedi, 2013).

Urban identity refers to the unique characteristics of a place that distinguish it from other areas. It is shaped by the experiences of both its residents and visitors (Boussaa, 2018). The traditional form of a city evolves over time. This evolution occurs because cities are continually developed to address changing needs on various scales (Alexander, 2002). Hence the identity of a city will also change over time. How a person perceives a place is shaped by physical (landscape), mental (image), and behavioural factors. In a key and much-cited book, Lynch (1960) emphasized the importance of understanding the sense of place, authenticity, and character in urban design. He argued that these concepts should be informed by the views of those directly involved. Building on this, Jivén and Larkham (2003) advocated that designers should develop more theoretically grounded conceptions of these elements, further integrating the perspectives of the people directly affected by design decisions.

Researchers have proposed various conceptual frameworks for understanding urban identity. Kaymaz (2013) suggests that urban identity can be assessed through spatial, social, cultural, and economic dimensions. Relph (1976) focuses on place identity, identifying three key components: physical features and appearances, activities, and meanings and symbols. Emphasizing the physical dimension of urban identity, Ziyaee (2018) argues that it can be comprehended through a combination of physical urban elements such as streets, squares, buildings, public spaces, urban furniture, and sculptures. Additionally, urban identity frameworks often integrate both physical and non-physical characteristics. Lynch (1960), proposes analyzing a city's image through three facets: identity, structure, and meaning.

Lynch (1960) identifies five key elements that contribute to the imageability of cities: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks. While these elements are physical attributes that enhance the imaginability of cities, Lynch also highlights the importance of meanings and emotions, which are often considered intangible. Similarly, Montgomery (1998) and Punter (2007) emphasize aspects that shape the sense of place in urban public spaces, including physical settings, activities, and meanings. In line with Montgomery's findings, Ziyaee (2018) categorizes elements influencing users' perceptions of a place into forms, activities, and images. Carmona (2014) further notes that physical and non-physical aspects of urban identity are frequently interrelated. The concept of urban identity becomes even more pertinent when viewed through the lens of heritage studies, as heritage plays a crucial role in shaping urban identity by reflecting the relationship between the community and its environment. Historical buildings and artefacts embody collective connotations from historical, cultural, and material perspectives, thereby enriching urban identity (Geng et al., 2023).

Migrant

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) characterizes 'migrant' as an umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common lay understanding of a person who moved away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons. The term includes several of well-defined legal categories of people, such as migrant workers; persons whose particular types of movements are legally defined, such as smuggled migrants; as well as those whose status or means of movement are not specifically defined under international law, such as international students (Displacement Tracking Matrix in Libya (DTM LIBYA, 2023)).

Urban change

It has been noted above that the traditional form of a city evolves over time. This occurs because cities are continually developed to address changing needs on various scales (Alexander, 2002). This continuous process of change ranges from slow to rapid, and from large to small scale (am & Adams, 2019). This process is often described as "evolution" (e.g., Scheer, 2017; Tümtürk et al., 2024), though some debate persists about whether this metaphor is appropriate (Larkham, 1999). The term "urban transformation" has increasingly been used to describe not just general urban change, but also a specific type of directed

change. As noted by Hölscher and Frantzeskaki (2021), urban transformation "epitomizes the hope that cities provide rich opportunities for contributing to local and global sustainability and resilience." Research on urban transformation is building a rich and consistent agenda that integrates multiple perspectives and disciplines aimed at fostering radical change toward more sustainable and desirable urban systems (Hölscher & Frantzeskaki, 2021, p. 1). So, this thesis uses the term of “urban change” to express all of this.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Introduction:

Throughout history, urban transformations have been shaped by dominant forces. Cities are complex, difficult to manage, and affect individuals in direct and indirect ways (Lynch, 1984), both positively and negatively. Cities also continually change and, in some instances, must adjust to changes brought by new migrants (Scarce, 1996), and there are some periods in history – and some locations – where migration has resulted in sudden and substantial urban change. Change can bring improvements but does not always have a positive effect: it can be threatening or unsettling for long-established residents. Cities have long been moulded by the most influential contemporary forces (Lynch, 1984), and from the mid-twentieth century these include globalisation, which has diminished the significance of time and space in shaping human activities (Friedman, 1992; Robertson, 1992). This has increased the power of disruptions in fields such as culture, identity, and locality (Clark, 1997; Farnen, 1994). Identity is a key factor here, as it links the values of individuals, groups in society, to the scale of the city and even the country. This study uses the term 'character' to discuss identity, as character has a significant role in urban identity according to the Western urban literature, particularly in older, historical cities (Sepe & Pitt, 2014). In this thesis, the character of the city encompasses both its identity and visual appearance (Krier, 2009).

Globalization has led to the migration of broad segments of the population from the non-oil producing parts of the Arab world to the oil rich parts and from developing to developed nations as well as from poor to rich ones (Asfour, 2006). Urban transformations stemming from the industrial revolution and globalisation have altered family relationships, degraded neighbourhoods, and reduced conventional social ties (Maqbool, 2019). This has led to increasing migration to cities and subsequent issues such as overpopulation, housing challenges, infrastructure strain, unemployment and informal labour, environmental degradation, social Inequality, the breakdown of traditional social ties, crime and security concerns, and public health challenges. These issues have resulted in the neglect of certain parts of some cities (Power & Mumford, 1999).

Social and cultural values shape the character of a city, but can also be affected by myriad factors. For instance, new migrants bring their own culture, potentially changing the existing urban culture and society (Susser & Patterson, 2011). This two-way interaction between city and culture can affect both the physical shape of the city and the culture of its resident population. New migrants, for example, can significantly affect the city's lifestyle and change its culture, and they can bring new requirements for physical and infrastructure changes.

Koser & Salt (1999) explore the relationship between cities, culture, globalisation, and immigration to understand how new migrants influence and change the culture of existing populations and how this process shapes the city. New residents' adaptations to the built environment can be complex (e.g., in French cities with significant immigration from North Africa). Migrants are often housed in high-density suburbs and dissatisfied with the conditions of their homes, lack of job opportunities, and limited facilities, leading to a lack of adaptation (Kaplan, 2015) and social unrest. However, this is a two-way process—new residents also bring changes to the environment, such as converting former Christian churches into mosques in the UK (Villis & Hebing, 2014). Historic buildings may become neglected, altered, demolished, or replaced with new structures that align with the newcomers' cultural identity, leading some others to perceive these changes as a change of local heritage or a change to character and identity (Gale, 2004).

This phenomenon is not exclusive to Western cities, but it is much less well-researched in other cultural contexts in other parts of the world. It also occurs in historical cities in the Arab world, where immigrants from various regions often encounter existing urban structures, histories, and architectural styles that may seem unfamiliar or at odds with their cultural values and beliefs (Al-Mansoori et al., 2010). As Bianca (2000) elucidates, newcomers in these settings frequently confront challenges stemming from cultural disparities in historical Arabic-Islamic cities. In historic urban centres across the Arab world, immigrants from diverse regions grapple with cultural disparities that manifest as incongruities between their own cultural values and the long-standing urban fabric steeped in the city's rich history and architecture.

Immigrant workers began coming to Libya with the discovery of oil in the late 1950s. They settled in major urban cities such as Tripoli and Benghazi. Libya's small population made the country dependent on foreign workers and their experiences in many of its development projects (Belgasem, 2005). A large influx of immigrants, however, began arriving in Libya in the mid-1980s looking for jobs and a better life. Immigrants were of two types; immigrants who came from rural areas and immigrants who came from foreign countries; Arab and non-Arab. Both types of immigrants shared certain characteristics; they were generally poor and looking for better life, different jobs, and different life style (Belgasem, 2005).

For example, the Old City of Tripoli, famous for its long history and heritage architecture, was subject to rapid urban growth. Although this growth happened beyond the old city walls, it brought about fundamental changes within the old city's physical environment. New urban development sprang up almost everywhere around the old city, disturbed the socio and economic living pattern of the old city residents and caused most of them to move out. The old city's former residents who sought "better" living in suburbia and other areas outside the old city abandoned their houses, which were then occupied by "illegal" * immigrants who came to the country looking for work and better earnings. These immigrants found in the houses of the old city cheap, if not free, accommodation.

Few were paying rents or utilities. Moreover, they brought large households. Many old (ie traditional) dwellings housed more than one family. This migration led to a change in the demographic characteristics of the old city and, in turn, its traditional urban structure (Datta, 2012). Within the context of the old city, immigrants have influenced its living environment a great deal. Taking place in an era of urban economic restructuring, the demographic compositional changes in the old city have the potential to produce major changes on the city's urban fabric (Belgasem, 2005). The old city faced great challenges including overcrowding, deteriorating buildings, and lack of adequate infrastructure (Belgasem, 2005).

As newcomers engage with the urban environment, they often experience a sense of detachment and may embark on initiatives to align the cityscape with their cultural norms. This interplay between incoming cultural influences and the pre-existing urban framework introduces multifaceted implications for the city's collective identity, its sociocultural dynamics, and the preservation of architectural heritage.

Urban anthropology and architectural studies have examined this intricate situation, particularly in long-established cities that bear distinct cultural and historical imprints that evolved organically over centuries (Zukin, 2012; Yun, 2017). There is a well-established idea in Western architectural theory and urban design that the built environment can impact people's lives – ideally for the better (Richards, 2016). This concept, known as 'environmental determinism', suggests that actions such as building better infrastructure (e.g., schools and hospitals) and reducing commuting times through improved access to amenities can lead to a higher quality of life (Richards, 2016). This is related to urban and regional planning which, as an organised field of human activity, emerged out of the unacceptable and inhumane living conditions prevalent in the rapidly expanding Western industrial cities of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The emergence of planning was intimately linked to a broader reform movement, which sought to redress the problems of unconstrained capitalism, through changes to the politics, economy and geography of cities (Cherry, 1988; Hall, 1988; Schaffer, 1988).

However, basic 'mistakes' are often committed in the planning and expansion of Arab metropolises due (in part) to a lack of trained town planners and architects (Bianca, 2000; Sheshtawy, 2004; 2010). The import of concepts and models of development from the West into other cultures has been a problem (Nasr and Volait, 2003). While local planners and architects know local habits and conditions better than foreign experts, they may not always be adequately trained in translating their valuable knowledge into urban design and planning. In contrast, well-trained foreign consultants are not well-versed in local characteristics and fail to effectively produce appropriate policies and planning solutions. It is vital to understand the characteristics of the traditional urban form in the Arab regions and how Western urban models have helped create a modern antithesis of the traditional Arabic Islamic city.

The initial proposal for this PhD research project originated from an examination of the deteriorating state of the built environment in the old city of Tripoli. The project aimed to understand why the ancient cities in Libya are deteriorating despite numerous maintenance initiatives, and why these efforts have not led to significant improvements in the built environment.

The researcher's connection to this topic is deeply personal and professional. Born and raised in Derna, a coastal city with a traditional Arabic-Islamic character akin to the old city of Tripoli, the researcher has a background in architecture and urban design. In 2012, the researcher was appointed as a lecturer in the Department of Architecture and Urban Design at the University of Derna, where field visits with students to historical cities, particularly the ancient city of Tripoli, intensified the researcher's focus on Libya's ancient urban environments.

Initially, the research centred solely on the physical aspects of the built environment in these historical cities, without considering other influential factors such as migration, cultural shifts, societal changes, and the evolving identity of the communities inhabiting these spaces. However, it soon became evident that understanding the broader societal, cultural, and identity-related contexts was crucial for addressing the research questions effectively. This realization led to a more comprehensive approach that encompasses not only the architectural and urban design elements but also the social and cultural dynamics that shape the urban form and its transformations over time.

1.2. Aim and objectives

This research aims to develop a holistic framework to better understand the factors impacting the identity of Arabic Islamic historical cities in Libya. Its objectives are:

1- To review the current state of knowledge on the changing form, character and identity of traditional Arabic Islamic city cores.
2- To identify and explain the current state of Tripoli's historic city core in terms of character, appearance and identity.
3- To explore professionals' and residents' knowledge and opinions about the current state of the historic traditional Arabic Islamic city centre in Tripoli.
4- To develop a framework that supports decision-making processes and leads to changes in the identity of traditional Arabic Islamic cities in Libya.
5- To draw conclusions and communicate findings to relevant stakeholders.

1.3. Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. This first chapter has justified the research problem and presented the aim and objectives.

Chapter 2 provides a critical review of the literature, first identifying and discussing the factors that have influenced the formation of, and changes to, urban form through history (e.g., migration, immigrants, culture, and society). Globalisation has created a new pattern of urbanisation that, together with the industrial revolution (a twentieth-century phenomenon in Libya), has changed familial social relations and driven increased migration to major cities. Two critical features—urban identity and character—have significantly affected social identity and urban culture in Muslim society, the division of urban spaces and their effects on Muslim society, and the role of social and cultural values in shaping traditional cities. The chapter concludes by identifying the research gap and research question.

Chapter 3, the methodology chapter, begins with a brief overview of the research philosophies and approach. This is followed by a detailed discussion of the data collection methods, the two stages of data collection, and a justification for qualitative semi-structured interviews. It then discusses the selection processes for professional and resident interview participants, documentation, and the use of on-site observation. Lastly, the qualitative content analysis method is reviewed and the use of Tripoli as the case study is justified.

Chapter 4 presents a historical overview of Tripoli, a traditional Libyan city, as the case study for this research. It examines the city's history from the fifth century, identifying key periods for the survival of the urban fabric (i.e., identity). Chapter 5 focuses on data analysis and the five main themes: economics, law, social culture, built environment, and decision-making. The analysis is based on transcribed interviews and documentary materials such as maps, photos, and observation notes.

Chapter 6, the discussion chapter, examines the primary factors responsible for changes in the urban form and urban identity of historic Tripoli. The migration of a particular group of people over time has resulted in a significant shift that can be characterised as "urban decay". The chapter discusses how social change can unintentionally contribute to urban decay and identifies decision-making, law and economy, and society/culture as crucial factors for understanding urban change. In Tripoli, migration-induced social change and a specific Libyan property-related law played a significant role in altering urban identity and subsequent urban decay. The respondents often used Arabic words and phrases synonymous with "urban decay," such as "crisis/disaster in the built environment". The lack of a truly equivalent Arabic term in the relevant literature is identified (and supported by the relevant Arabic literature in this field).

Chapter 7 offers conclusions, demonstrates progress made toward the research aims and objectives, and foregrounds the study's knowledge contributions. It develops a holistic framework for understanding the factors that affect and change the identity of historical Arabic-Islamic cities in Libya and beyond. Understanding urban identity requires a comprehensive understanding of social and economic perspectives, not only of the built environment. This framework will be valuable for city administrations, professional urban designers, planners, and architects who manage changing urban identities and built environments. It can help them shape better cities for the future, while retaining the forms of traditional Arabic-Islamic urban identity. Finally, the chapter outlines the limitations and challenges of this study and some possibilities for future research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Identity is a complex and multifaceted concept that shapes how individuals and communities understand and interact with the world around them (Hall, 1990). Specifically, urban identity and character help shape the physical, social, and cultural fabric of cities (Jacobs, 1961). However, globalisation has brought about changes in the construction and perception of urban identities, particularly in Western cities where the speed, scale and nature of urban change and the loss of cultural heritage are urgent concerns (Kara, 2019). On the other hand, Arabic-Islamic cities present a case study of how social, cultural, and religious values continue to shape the built environment and urban identity.

This chapter will explore the relationship between culture, identity, and urban spaces in Islamic cities. It critically examines the historical, cultural, and social factors influencing urban identity and character in Arabic-Islamic cities and how cultural and social values (e.g., religion, customs, and traditions) are embodied in the built environment and divisions of (Islamic) urban spaces. Finally, the chapter explores why cultural heritage is being lost in traditional Arabic-Islamic cities and the impacts of this deterioration on the social and cultural fabric of Muslim societies.

Throughout history, the city has undergone transformations shaped by dominant forces, and this holds true today (Kostoff, 1991, 1992; Knox, 1993). Cities are complex, challenging to manage, and can impact individuals in direct and indirect ways (Lynch, 1984, Gallotti et al., 2021). People can be influenced by cities in either a positive or negative manner. Cities must adjust to changes brought by new migrants. While change can bring improvements to some cities, it may not always have a positive effect. When new populations move to an existing city, they bring their own culture and are likely to change the existing city's culture and society (Lefebvre, 1991). This two-way interaction between city and culture can affect the shape of the city, as well as the culture of the indigenous people. For example, the new migrants can make an impact on the city's lifestyle, influencing and changing the culture of the existing population (Zukin, 1995). The shift in urbanisation, resulting particularly from the Industrial Revolution and globalisation, since the mid-twentieth century, has caused alterations in family relationships, the degradation of neighbourhoods, and the reduction of conventional social ties (Maqbool, 2019). This has led to a rise in migration to cities, potentially causing problems and resulting in the neglect of some cities or parts of cities (Power and Mumford, 1999).

There is a close relationship between the design of the built environment and the behaviours and lifestyles of those who reside in the city (Lynch, 1960). Modernist design—prevalent in architecture and planning in the second half of the twentieth century—aimed to change society through space. Such belief in environmental determinism and social engineering positioned society and space as mechanically interrelated (Madanipour, 1997).

At an urban scale, that environmental determinism and social engineering was principally carried out through town planning. However, this tended largely to focus on land-use planning, and urban design emerged during the 1950s and 1960s, in part as a reaction to modernism and in part as an extension to that land-use planning focus (Arida, 2008). Urban design has a wide range of definitions (see, for example, Rowley, 1994; Schurch, 1999). These definitions range from "a lot of architecture" to "the synergy of business, government, planning, and design" (Madanipour, 1997). However, the two most common definitions are "the interface between architecture, town planning, and related professions" and "the 3D design of people's places, care and management" (Madanipour, 1997). Designers must always consider the social aspects of their designs and urban space. This is, to a greater extent, being represented in the newer concept of 'placemaking' (Higgins and Larkham, 2024).

New residents' adaptations to their built environment often create complex issues. New immigrants may find existing city structures, history, and architecture to be unfamiliar and incompatible with their own cultural values and beliefs (Al-Mansoori et al., 2010). This can lead to the neglect, alteration, demolition, or replacement of historic buildings with new structures that align more closely with the newcomers' cultural identity (Nilson and Thorell, 2018). This chapter reviews these complex dynamics and their role in the transformation of historical cities. It identifies the gap between historical cities, their original cultures, immigration, and the resulting impacts on cultural preservation (Nilson and Thorell, 2018) and urban form and identity.

2.2. Background on labour migration to Libya:

Libya has historically been a major destination country for foreign workers from across sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, the Middle East and Asia (Hamood, 2006). Libya's geographic position makes it a key location for both transit migrations along the Central Mediterranean Route as well as labour migration to Libya.

In an anthropological study of the city of Tripoli, Elbendak (2008) discussed modernization and migration from the countryside to the city of Tripoli, as well as from Arab and African countries to Tripoli. He examined the phenomenon of the new urban social structure that was born from the old social structure of Tripoli. He identified the deterioration, closure or transfer of the industry that was the main economic source of the city. The Libyan cultural, political and economic systems changed with the discovery of oil, which led to pressures of

social change that led to modernization and urban transformation at the personal and societal levels. Elbendak also stated that urbanization and economy are closely linked to economic growth. In the case of Libya, urbanization has been boosted by oil, and its policies have been designed to encourage urbanization and modernization. Consequently, Libyan society has become highly urbanized but not highly industrialized (Elbendak, 2008).

As an example of the data, Tables 1 give urbanization rates of North Africa countries (as percentage) between 1950 and 2000. Table 1 indicates that the majority of North Africa's population lives in urban areas. Table 1 also indicates that there has been a rapid population growth in Libya, particularly in between 1980-2000. It is the highest urbanization rate in North Africa due to immigration (Elbendak, 2008).

Country	In Year 1950	In Year 1960	In Year 1970	In Year 1980	In Year 1990	In Year 1995	In Year 2000
Algeria	18	31	35	40	54	47	60
Egypt	43	50	55	60	65	67	69
Libya	20	26	45	62	78	79	88
Morocco	24	27	33	39	45	49	51
Tunisia	26	30	36	47	53	55	60
Mauritania	2	6	-	29	40	46	49

Table (1) Urbanisation rates of North Africa countries (as percentage). (Source Elbendak, 2008) [derived from United Nations, World Bank 1995 and other references].

Libya shares more than 4,000 km of borders with six countries – Egypt, the Sudan, Chad, the Niger, Algeria and Tunisia – altogether counting a population of roughly 200 million, of whom just over 6 million are in Libya, according to the last census, in 2006 (the next census was planned for 2016 but was postponed by the ongoing civil war) (Africa Housing Finance Yearbook, 2023). The majority of migrants in Libya are from Libya's neighbouring countries, particularly Chad, Egypt, the Niger and the Sudan (Borgnäs et al., 2019).

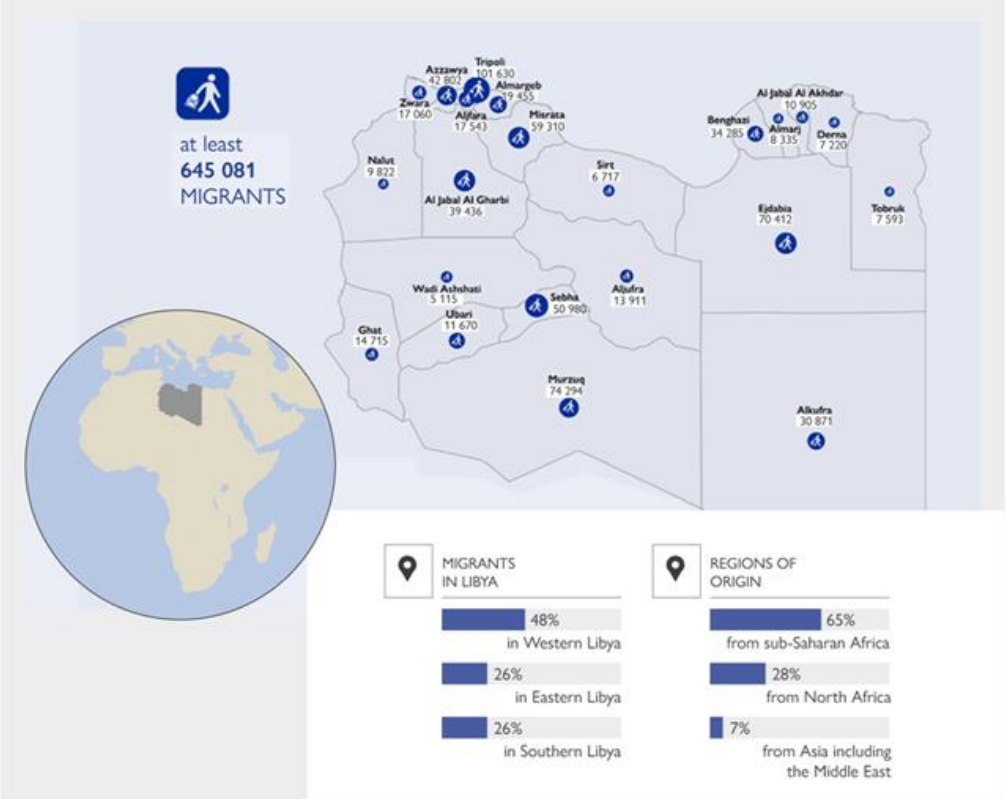

Figure (1) Migrants identified in Libya, by region.
(Source: International Organization for Migration (IOM) 2020).

Prior to the United Nations air and arms embargo (1992–2000), Gaddafi's policy of encouraging nationals coming from Arab countries had enabled Libya to attract large numbers of Arab workers filling employment gaps (Maghur, 2010). Migration policies in Libya have played a decisive role in shaping migration trends and dynamics, attracting foreign labour to the country (IOM, 2012). These have evolved in line with domestic and foreign policy developments. The main legal framework governing the entry of foreign nationals was adopted in the 1980s. Law No. 6 of 1987 outlines the general conditions for entry and stay in Libya applicable to foreigners. Law No. 10 of 1989 allowed nationals from Arab countries to enter and live in Libya, enjoying the same rights as Libyan citizens. Some important changes to the legal framework were introduced in the 1990s. The perceived lack of support from Arab countries following the United Nations sanctions caused Tripoli to shift its foreign policy towards Africa. This involved ending visa requirements for nationals of sub-Saharan African countries and opening Libya's border to migrant workers from East and West African countries such as Nigeria, the Sudan, Chad and Mali (Borgnäs et al., 2019). Seeking better live has led huge numbers of migrants toward large cities, and Tripoli in particular (the capital city has historically been the most attractive urban centre in the country) (Attwairi, 2017). By the 1990s, the Pan-African ambitions of Libya's leader, Gaddafi, led to the signing of labour agreements with other African countries and the large-scale arrival of sub-Saharan African labourers (IOM, 2019). Nationals from Arab countries were

also encouraged to stay, benefitting from advantageous conditions compared with other migrant workers in the labour market, including the enjoyment of some political rights, such as participating in the General People's Committees and holding high administrative and political roles (ICMPD, 2020). The largest migrant populations were in the coastal regions of Tripoli city (Displacement Tracking Matrix in Libya (DTM LIBYA, 2023).

NATIONALITY	NUMBER OF MIGRANTS	% MIGRANTS
Niger	172,907	24%
Egypt	160,163	23%
Sudan	131,207	19%
Chad	84,989	12%
Nigeria	29,854	4%
Syria	25,887	4%
Bangladesh	21,848	3%
Ghana	14,448	2%
Mali	13,507	2%
Tunisia	6,814	1%
Palestine	6,735	1%
Other	5,538	0.8%
South Sudan	4,150	0.6%
Burkina Faso	4,056	0.6%
Eritrea	3,814	0.5%
Senegal	3,565	0.5%
Pakistan	2,640	0.4%
Mauritania	2,628	0.4%
Côte d'Ivoire	2,419	0.3%
Somalia	1,862	0.3%
Morocco	1,862	0.3%
Ethiopia	1,280	0.2%
Unknown	1,255	0.2%
Guinea	1,211	0.2%
Cameroon	1,107	0.2%
TOTAL FOR LIBYA	705,746	100%

Table (2) Nationality and Number of Migrants
(Source: Displacement Tracking Matrix in Libya (DTM LIBYA), 2023).

Note: For the purposes of collecting data on migration, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) defines "international migrant" as "any person who changes his or her country of usual residence" (UN DESA, 1998, para. 32). This report only takes into consideration the "international migrants" in Libya as defined above (DTM LIBYA, 2023).

2.3. Identity

2.3.**1. Definition and concept**

Identity describes who an individual or group is (as defined by others or oneself) (Vignoles, 2017). The Harmoon Centre for Contemporary Studies explains that identity is not permanent but constantly changing and fluid—it is a process, not a fixed point (Al-Hamad, 2021; Cheshmehzangi, 2015). The Centre posits that the concept of identity is a recent problem and must be viewed from a shared perspective that combines its different definitions. The question of "who I am" falls between individual and societal spaces; it is both private and public (Al-Hamad, 2021). This relationship between public and private spaces is a key concern in modern society, especially in urban areas.

Private and interior space begins with the individual's personal space and radiates outward to the home, neighbourhood, city, and finally the most public and impersonal spaces. Such spaces are interdependent, and community identity is closely tied to the form and history of a place (Madanipour, 2003). It creates a sense of place over time, whether in a large region like a country or a small town. Therefore, it is essential to understand the concept of cultural identity from a historical perspective (Al-Hamad, 2021).

Another key concept related to identity – especially social identity – is the nation. Nationalities emerged in the struggles against major empires. The period of national division came after the defeat of the Napoleonic project and the convening of the Vienna project in 1814-1815. After World War II, polarization between the US, the Soviet Union, and the nonaligned bloc coincided with the emergence of international institutions concerned with human rights (Al-Hamad, 2021). Cultural identity then emerged as a political problem motivated by a concern for cultures that have long suffered exclusion and marginalization (Al-Hamad, 2021). The connection between social identity and personal identity is a crucial topic in the social sciences. Traditions and identity are key, yet sensitive, components of the social landscape (Cheshmehzangi, 2015).

Place identity, also known as locational identity, represents the pivotal connection between culture and place (Cheshmehzangi, 2015). It is a versatile concept that forms the basis of numerous psychological theories on human-environment relationships (Zimmerbauer et al., 2012; Qazimi, 2014). The concept of place identity was introduced by Proshansky (1978), who defined it as "those dimensions of self that define the individual's personal identity in relation to the physical environment by means of a complex pattern of conscious and unconscious ideas, feelings, values, goals, preferences, skills, and behavioural tendencies relevant to a specific environment" (Proshansky, 1978). Place identity is a complex cognitive structure comprised of attitudes, values, thoughts, beliefs, meanings, and behaviours that go beyond simple emotional attachments and a sense of belonging. Place identity

encompasses thoughts and beliefs about the physical environment and forms part of each individual's self-identity (Proshansky et al., 1983; Peng et al., 2020).

2.3.**2. Urban identity and character**

Urban identity is variously defined as “place identity,” “placeness,” “character of a place,” “image of a place,” “sense of place,” “genius loci” and “spirituality of place, “which all pertain to urban identity as the concept of ‘distinctiveness’” (see, for example, Cheshmehzangi, 2015). Urban identity draws on distinctive scales and stylistic properties in every city; it is shaped by physical, cultural, socioeconomic, historical and formational factors. It is formed by urban people and their lifestyles and develops continuously to maintain the concept of sustainability. "Character" refers to distinctive personality traits or features that make a city unique and distinguish it from other places (e.g., physical appearance, cultural heritage, architecture, history, and social and demographic makeup). It is dynamic and constantly evolving, encompassing not just the physical elements of a city but also the activities of its residents. A city’s character shapes its urban identity. Importantly, all the definitions of character understand places to be distinguishable from one another (Crang and Thrift, 2000; Crysler, 2003; Lynch, 1960).

Many scholars (e.g., Evans et al., 2011) ask why most modern towns and cities have a similar look dominated by identical buildings, multinational companies, and arbitrarily enforced urban design rules. Relph’s 1987 book, *The Modern Urban Landscape,* offers some wide-ranging answers. It builds on his earlier book *Place and Placelessness* (Relph, 1976) and uses many illustrations and examples to explore the origins and development of specific landscape features. He argues that modern cities radically differ from their predecessors in scale, style, details, and meanings. The book traces how interconnected changes in architecture, aesthetic fashions, planning, and economic and social conditions have created the landscape that now prevails in most cities. These insights have motivated a large body of work on the processes of urban change and how decision-making shapes places (e.g., Larkham and Conzen, 2014). The limitation of Relph’s work for the present study is its focus on the developed industrialised West: Arabic-Islamic cities are not considered, and there is no equivalent in the Arabic literature.

The concept of urban identity is formed by the values and appearance of a city, and the study of urban identity and transformation has gained popularity. Urban identity and character can be viewed as the result of experiences in a specific place, with urban scholars often using this perspective as their starting point in studying these phenomena (Evans et al., 2011). Changing socio-cultural and economic circumstances brought about by globalisation have reshaped cities (Sirel, 2005). Economic globalisation’s focus on individual consumers and material and economic interests has resulted in the common use of corporation identity programmes. However, identity has also become important in areas beyond commerce, with cities, charities, universities, and clubs, among others, now having

their own identities (Olins, 2017). Identity has become a comprehensive theme for the creation of new places and built environments (Cheshmehzangi, 2015). Every organisation performs numerous daily transactions (e.g., buying, selling, hiring and firing, manufacturing, painting, cleaning, and advertising), during which it presents itself or a part of itself to different groups of people. The totality of this presentation creates the organisation's identity (Olins, 2017). The appearance and performance of a product, like the BMW car, often significantly influences the overall image of the company (Olins, 2017). This concept extends to cities, where urban appearance and identity affect perceptions, resulting in activities such as place marketing, place branding and place promotion (Pol, 2002; Boisen et al., 2018).

Lynch (1981) defines identity as "the extent to which a person can recognise or recall a place as being distinct from other places." Diffusion provides a clear and nuanced understanding of urban identity and its formation process, which is essential for any student or professional working in the field of urban planning or urban design studies (Castells, 1996; Harvey, 1989; Sassen, 1991). Urban identity is a continuous process formed over time; it ensures a sense of sustainability (Pol, 2002). Identity is important for creating a sense of belonging and responsibility towards one's surroundings (Pol, 2002). Urban identity is shaped by physical, cultural, socioeconomic, historical, and formational factors and expressed through lifestyles. It is essential to preserve this unique identity during urban transformations that revitalise, rehabilitate, and protect the city (Pol, 2002). The smallest unit constituting urban identity is the neighbourhood, although this is often difficult to identify or define (Jenks and Dempsey, 2007).

2.3.**3. Social identity**

Social identity refers to the portion of an individual's self-concept that is derived from their membership in specific social groups (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, religion, nationality, social class) (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). This identity is shaped by shared experiences, values, beliefs, and norms and often serves as a basis for social comparison and self-evaluation. Social identity influences the individual's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours; it also shapes their interactions with others, both within and outside the social group (Turner, 1987).

For example, Pol (2002) explored the relationship between urban identity and urban transformation. The connection between various aspects that shape social identity, such as the quality of the urban environment, residents' satisfaction, community identification, and sense of cohesion and its relationship to sustainability. For example, the City-Identity-Sustainability (CIS) Network conducted a study in seven locations (Pol, 2002; Pol and Castrechini, 2002). in Latin America and Europe, using a standardised questionnaire and local qualitative research to evaluate the impact of these factors on sustainability. The results showed a strong correlation between the factors and sustainability, leading the CIS Network to suggest social and environmental intervention strategies to advance sustainability (Pol, 2002).

According to Pol (2002), an urban area's quality plays a role in its identity formation. However, modern urban life presents challenges for sustainable practices. Social issues such as poverty, anti-social behaviour and a lack of social cohesion limit the viability of sustainable development. Sustainability requires strong social networks; when this is lacking, it can only be achieved through the provision of expensive social services. In the early twenty-first century, many cities underwent significant changes (some planned and some spontaneous), resulting in unplanned growth, such as overpopulation in developing countries especially in Egypt (Bek et al., 2018). Changes to the physical structure of cities can disrupt the conditions and relationships that foster a strong sense of community (Pol, 2002). Urban planning may even lead to forced relocation, which can elicit strong resistance from affected residents and/or create stronger communities among relocated populations (for a UK example see Evans and Larkham, 2004).

Numerous urban design scholars have explored the (disruptive) impact of urban planning on community identity and social cohesion. For example, Jacobs' (1961) classic urban design text *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* argues that forced relocation and the demolition of communities for new development projects can destroy unique neighbourhoods and cultural heritage. For Jacobs, urban planning should prioritise the preservation of existing communities and their distinct identities over new developments. Similarly, Whyte (1980), in a similarly classic text, argues that successful urban planning should consider residents' social needs, not only physical design elements. He argues that urban space should foster a sense of community and encourage social interaction. Finally, Knaap and Ilie (1999) found that residents in a neighbourhood with a strong sense of community identity are more likely to resist changes imposed by urban planning initiatives. Therefore, urban planners should consider the social and cultural characteristics of a community before implementing changes. Urban planners should be aware of potential disruptions to community ties and work to minimise negative impacts on residents and neighbourhoods. As Lynch notes, in a classic text in urban design, highly cited and still in print,

> The city is a shared symbolic universe and as a community, and it is more than a mere organization of land; it is above all, de facto, a social entity. Where the city connects dwellers with their surroundings, enhancing the meaning of everyday life and strengthening the identity of the group and the self (Lynch, 1960).
>
> Therefore, "Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody" (Jacobs, 1961). Thus, bridging cultures is the ideal guide for mayors, public authorities, housing providers and citizens passionate about re-activating public spaces in the cities with the creative pulse of interculturalism (Nasser, 2015).

Social and relational fabrics do tend to regenerate; however, this process takes time and involves the formation of new relationships, individual and collective identities, and local-level organisations. Importantly, urban planning should not only preserve significant buildings and monuments but also existing social networks (Shirazi and Keivani, 2019b)

It is crucial to consider the historical context and evolution of an urban environment, including the interactions between human activity, built form, and nature. In this understanding, the local urban context creates a sense of place that plays a crucial role in fostering a strong sense of identity among urban settlers (Punter, 1991; Relph, 1976). The preservation of cultural and historical elements is also essential for creating a sense of place, a sense of history, and a sense of continuity in the urban environment. The neighbourhood is not just a means for participation but serves to strengthen the bonds between residents and their environment. A city's physical structure significantly affects how people interact and their attitudes towards the environment. For example, large cities consume more energy and create more pollution due to an over-reliance on motor transportation, and also sometimes influenced by urban planning processes, but these processes do not always consider the local population's preferences. This can lead to feelings of unease and disconnection if the surrounding environment seems unfamiliar (Pol, 2002; Hauge et al., 2009; Judd et al., 2024).

Housing design can play a crucial role in shaping the identity of a neighbourhood (Pol, 2002, Hauge et al., 2009; Judd et al., 2024). Dwelling units and complexes with a distinctive appearance can create a lively environment of pride and contentment among residents. Neighbourhood identity is formed through the ongoing relationship between the place and its inhabitants; it is both a cultural expression created by the residents and a means of preserving the cultural heritage of the city. Nature also plays an important role in this process, as residents often consider well-preserved greenery and mature trees to be the most attractive aspect of their neighbourhood (Odum, 2015, Prochorskaite et al., 2016; Azizibabani et al*.,* 2022). The incorporation of green spaces (e.g., parks and gardens) also enhances the overall urban experience by providing a respite from the built environment and opportunities for recreation, social interaction, and enjoyment of nature, as became very clear during the COVID outbreak (Lin et al., 2023). Planners and architects must consider the cultural significance of nature and the role it plays in shaping the identity of a city and its residents. As Berglund (1998) explains, "old trees, old houses, and old places urban places as well as parks – are all symbols of survival. They remind us of those who lived before and those who will live after us".

Lastly, the public spaces of a city—the streets, plazas, and parks—play a crucial role in shaping our perceptions of the urban environment (even more so than the city skyline's towering buildings) (Carmona, 2018). The public domain provides an arena for public circulation and space for additional functions and activities. Public city space is a communal area where individuals engage in both practical and symbolic activities that bring the community together, both in people's daily routines and during special celebrations (Carr et al., 1992, p. xi). The public domain, which encompasses these public spaces and the buildings that surround them, is immensely important in shaping the character and identity of a city (Madanipour, 1996). Public urban spaces have long had historical significance (Webb, 1990; Calabi, 2017; Zerlang, 2023). Even the earliest cities evidence the fundamental human desire to govern and beautify the streets and open spaces to make them more functional and visually appealing for residents (Mandeli, 2019).

The street has long been an essential source of public open space right in the heart of urban communities (Barnett, 1982; Moughtin, 1992; Anderson, 1992, Mehta, 2013). The street has dual characteristics closely tied to its form: it serves as both a path and a place. Jane Jacobs, the renowned critic of modern design principles, emphasised the importance of streets in cities: "Streets and their sidewalks, the main public places of a city, are its most vital organs. If a city's streets look interesting, the city looks interesting; if they look dull, the city looks dull" (Jacobs, 1961). The distinctive identities of many cities are shaped by their characteristic streets (e.g., the High Street in Oxford, the Ramblas in Barcelona, canal streets in Amsterdam, streets lined with Georgian brick terrace houses in London, and the narrow streets defined by traditional homes and courtyards walls in Istanbul (Ladd, 2020).

Narrow streets facilitate a range of social interactions between individuals and between individuals and their environment (Madanipour, 2003; Čulík et al*.,* 2019). They provide a sense of intimacy and create a more communal environment, as people are forced to interact with each other in close proximity. This leads to a greater sense of community and social cohesion since people are more likely to know their neighbours and establish social connections. However, Madanipour (2003) acknowledges that narrow streets can sometimes lead to conflict, particularly if they are not properly designed or managed. In some cases, narrow streets may lead to traffic jams or pedestrian congestion, creating frustration, tension, or even resulting in social unrest. Psychologically they may cause tension, dislike or even fear (Moughtin, 2007).

The factors leading to urban change—social change and changes in the built environment—are often coincidental, simply the product of various processes (e.g., migration and development) in a particular area. The outcome of these processes is not always positive. Recognising these complex and interrelated factors helps planners proactively address them to create positive outcomes for the urban environment and its residents.

2.4. Globalisation

Globalisation is the process of expanding and integrating the economy, politics, society, culture, science, media, and communication at a global scale. It takes many forms, including international trade, the movement of capital, migration, technology transfer, and the exchange of cultures, and is facilitated by multinational companies, information and communication technology, and the market economy (Hajjar, 2010). Globalisation shifts private to public, local to global, and internal aspects of life to external. It is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon with both positive and negative economic, cultural, and political effects. It involves the exchange and interaction between people, governments, and private organisations worldwide and is facilitated by tools such as multinational companies, information and communication technology, and market economies. Historically, it has been both viewed as an opportunity and a danger, reflecting its diverse impacts on society (Streeten, 1998; Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 2003).

Globalisation is a process of worldly gain, using worldly intellectual knowledge, skills, and cultures, maximising profit without consideration of other values to make a global one and uncontrolled economic, political, and cultural change (Rahman and Sayed Uddin, 2018). Early examples of globalisation include the connections established between ancient civilisations and the colonial processes during the Age of Discoveries. However, globalisation was expanded by the Industrial Revolution, nineteenth-century technological advances and post-World War II international political and economic agreements. The fall of the Soviet Union facilitated increased communication, trade, and immigration, placing the concept at the centre of academic and media circles. Globalisation was initially seen as a positive force for economic progress and growth; however, growing criticism has expounded on its negative impacts (Held, 2004; Yildiz et al., 2023).

Under globalisation, various entities use worldly intellectual knowledge, skills, and cultures to maximise profit and instigate uncontrolled economic, political, and cultural change, often without considering other values (Rahman and Sayed, 2018). Globalisation is often said to be a threat to civilisation and culture, as it leads to social alienation, the breakdown of national belonging, sectarian conflict, and the erosion of social values and religious beliefs (Hajjar, 2010). Moreover, globalisation imposes new cultural patterns, resulting in the loss of cultural identity and privacy and the suppression of local culture and heritage (Hajjar, 2010). These issues are cited by anti-globalisation movements, which may be supported by both anti-capitalist left-wing activists and conservative nationalist groups. However, scholars are still debating the extent to which globalisation is responsible for issues like unemployment, inequality, terrorism, and cultural homogeneity.

From an economic perspective, globalisation refers to the increasingly close economic ties between countries, including trade, travel, immigration, shared information, increased cross-border investment, and accelerated technological advancements (Hassan and Kabir,

2003). Steger (2003) uses the term "globality" to refer to a set of social conditions characterised by global economic, political, cultural, and environmental interconnections and flows that make many currently existing borders and boundaries irrelevant.

The British sociologist Anthony Giddens uses *globalisation* to describe broad contemporary changes, including the communication revolution, the weightless economy, the post-1989 world, increases in gender equality, and (most importantly) the spread of democracy (Giddens and Hutton, 2000, p. 12; Ziehl, 2003). Giddens positions globalisation as a dialectic: "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa" (Giddens, 1990, p. 64). He believes that globalisation is a dialectical process because local happenings may move in an observed direction from the very distant activities that shape them.

2.4.**1. Globalisation in Arabic-Islamic cities:**

Since the late-nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, the style of large Arabic Islamic cities has become substantially westernized. The transformation of historic Arab cities from traditional to modern Western urbanism led to a loss of Islamic cultural identity. Many factors led to the transformation of the urban structure of these cities including social, economic, legislative and functional which leads to loss of local identity by introducing new architectural and urban forms (Mohamed, 2021).

Traditional Arabic Islamic urbanism has been ignored for decades, and Arab architects have been unwilling to revive traditional features and they are complying with the new urbanism movement (Hassan et al., 2016). The Middle East cities are now the arena of globalization, and are increasingly connecting to the network of global cities (Chabi et al., 2015). Nowadays, globalization of capitalism is a tool for connecting Arabic Islamic cities and regions to global market. Hence, capitalism has resulted in the emergence of new cities whose function is different from old Arabic Islamic cities.

Indeed, with their traditional core, the cities of the Arab world are experiencing rapid growth whose design is based on the universal principles of urbanism and architecture giving birth to forms and urban structures which have no relationship with the local culture which raising the issue of the urban identity and character of the Arabic Islamic city (Chabi et al., 2015).

2.5. Western Cities

Economic globalisation and European integration have generated strong connections between European cities, many of which operate as a unified global network of competitive urban settlements. Some experts argue that individual cities have become a major driving force in the formation of a new Europe as the influence of nation-states wanes. However, mass migrations (both legal and illegal) have transformed European cities into heterogeneous, multi-ethnic, and multicultural societies, leading to identity crises. The question of new identities is a central concern for scholars and the general public alike (Gospodini, 2004).

Research has examined the impact of urban design elements (e.g., built heritage and innovative space design) on the identity of European cities. For instance, innovative designs allow for diverse interpretations and could align with values such as diversity, individuality, and modernity. They can also bring different ethnic, cultural, and social groups together by offering a common ground for experiencing and learning about new forms of space, fostering tourism and economic development, and creating social and economic solidarity among the population (Gospodini, 2004). As national identities become weaker, scholars such as Castells (1993) predicted that European cities will turn to their local (built and cultural) heritage to counter the crisis. Admittedly, since this argument was put forward in 1993, there has been increased nationalism in Europe and around the world. This includes breakaway nationalist movements in Scotland and Catalonia, for example. However, as heterogeneous populations are integrated into European cities, the shift toward local heritage may lead to xenophobia and place-restricted politics as people search for ancient truths and a stable place identity (Gospodini, 2004).

For example, in Birmingham, UK, new migrants not only build places of worship but also modify the spaces in their homes to accommodate additional family members. In predominantly Muslim areas (e.g., Coventry Road in Small Heath and Alum Rock Road in Saltley), many shops and stores now sell Arab and Asian goods, leading to changes in the lifestyle, identity, and character of the city, so such these changes are understood to threaten local heritage and identity (Bauer, 2021). These changes also have implications for the migrants themselves, who may feel trapped between two opposing cultures (see, e.g., Deacon, 2021).

Another Western city that has undergone physical, social, and economic transformations is Rotterdam, Holland's post-industrial port city (Nientied, 2018). In the past, Rotterdam's identity was collectively shared among the citizens of the Netherlands; however, the city underwent significant changes after the port facilities moved out of the city and towards the sea (Nientied, 2018). Citizens of Rotterdam now have widely varying opinions and feelings about the city (Heaven and Tubridy, 2004). Most of the population consists of younger

generations and new households, so Rotterdam is currently experiencing the evolution of a hybrid identity (Nientied, 2018).

2.5.**1. Built heritage and identity in European cities**

National identity is an abstraction that represents the collective manifestation of personal feelings of belonging to a nation-state as a socio-political entity (Woolf, 1996). Cities are continually reshaped by economic forces, architectural tastes, planning regulations, building controls, and public fashions. Some studies suggest that cities' attempts to establish identity have changed. The urban form in European cities has made built heritage less significant and one-dimensional to the multi-ethnic and multi-national European societies that are dominated by diversity and individualisation (Gospodini, 2004). However, certain structures, landscapes, and forms persist despite the rapid pace of change. For example, the urban morphologist and chartered town planner M.R.G. Conzen noted that street patterns tend to persist, sometimes for centuries, even as building and plot patterns change (Larkham and Adams, 2019).

Built heritage in European cities has been a central topic in architecture, urban design, and planning since the late 1970s (with the reaction against rapid change and the rise of post-modernism and typological design approaches). The EU has consistently supported built heritage through research projects and funding for restoration, conservation, renewal, and revitalisation. As a result, built heritage has become a significant part of design interventions to promote economic growth and urban tourism development in nearly all European cities (Gospodini, 2004). Enhancing the city's historic environment and sense of place is considered crucial for creating a new city image (Larkham and Adams, 2019).

Increasingly, urban governance seeks to create physically and economically attractive urban conditions in the context of inter-city competition and new urban politics. The city's image (particularly its built heritage) plays a critical role in the urban landscape and identity (i.e., setting it apart from other cities). This is confirmed by numerous urban renewal projects that conserve and repurpose underutilised heritage buildings (e.g., old harbour warehouses, industrial buildings, and railway stations) for cultural and leisure activities. Culture is positioned as a substitute for declining local manufacturing; lost factories and warehouses allow for a new city image that is more appealing to mobile capital and professional workers (Gospodini, 2004). According to Hall (2000), "culture is now seen as a magical substitute for all the lost factories and warehouses".

The advanced stages of economic globalisation and European integration transform cities into multicultural entities. Therefore, built heritage shapes urban identity through its impact on the physical appearance of the landscape. However, the meanings of European cities' built heritage have been reduced over time through two main factors: 'eradification' and 'museumification'. Eradification refers to the unintentional destruction or disappearance of

cultural artefacts, buildings, and elements due to war, natural disasters, or modernisation (eradication). On the other hand, museumification involves intentional changes made to the functional and/or physical form of cultural artefacts and buildings to transform their meaning and utilise them as tourism or economic resources (Gospodini, 2004). However, as Ashworth (1998) argues, the more European cities practice urban conservation, the more morphologically homogenised the cities will become.

2.6. Urban Change and Decay

Urban transformation has led to changes in neighbourhood relationships—from small communities to larger ones, from rural to urban, and from pre-industrial to industrial. This transformation can be understood through the range of duality theories presented by sociologists including Ferdinand Tonnies (from Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft), Émile Durkheim (mechanical and organic solidarity), and Charles Cole (primary and secondary groups) (Maqboul, 2016).

Throughout history, people have lived near one another (and, indeed, in prehistory, as seen in ancient settlements such as Gobekeli-Tepe, Turkey). People ate from each other's food, shared resources, and interacted with one another without the restrictions of class, culture, or sect. Human beings cannot live in isolation and society does not normally allow any member to be left alone. People even came together for small, everyday events to inquire about each other, show support, and make individuals feel the value of community (Maqboul, 2016). However, a new form of urbanisation associated with the Industrial Revolution, post-industrial society, and globalisation has brought about negative changes in social relationships. These changes include a shift from primary to secondary relationships, a weakening of family ties, the social decline of the family, a decline in neighbourhood relationships, and the erosion of traditional foundations of social solidarity (Maqboul, 2016).

Reduced material potential and an inability to provide job opportunities in people's places of origin has led to increased migration and displacement in search of employment. This, in turn, has resulted in a housing shortage for those who move to and work in the city (Mahgoub, 1990). Some parts of cities have become rundown and undesirable, rife with economic, social, and environmental problems. Cities and towns that once showed promise are neglected and attract crime and disease.

This multifaceted global phenomenon—the disrepair and decay of previously functioning parts of the city—is known as urban decay (Power and Mumford, 1999). It is evidenced by dilapidated buildings, poor housing, little open space, and the closure or relocation of industries. The causes of urban decay stem from various interrelated socio-economic factors such as poor urban planning decisions, strict rent control policies, and high poverty levels in the local community, suburbanisation that leads to population loss from the heart of the city, discriminatory real estate practices such as redlining, immigration restrictions and racial

discrimination. Another characteristic of urban decay is blight—the visual, psychological, and physical effects of living among empty lots, buildings, and condemned houses (Keeble, 1999). Akabuilo and Okeke (2018) also use the term 'urban blight' to describe the decline and decay of structures and older areas of major cities due to neglect, crime, or insufficient economic support.

Urban decay is a widespread phenomenon found in both developed and developing countries. However, the causes and effects of urban decay vary based on the specific circumstances of a country or city. The causes of urban decay are often linked to a variety of economic, cultural, social, environmental, and political factors, many of which are related to changes in identity caused by globalisation and its associated issues.

2.6.**1. Urban decay in developed countries**

There has been particular evidence of urban decay in North America and parts of Europe since the 1970s and 1980s due to population flight to the suburbs and exurb commuter towns. For example, the city of Detroit had to file for bankruptcy in 2013 due to a prolonged period of urban crisis. The city experienced significant population and job losses, leading to the collapse of real estate markets, a high rate of poverty, a sharp decline in average family income, an increase in crime, and a decrease in tax revenue (McDonald, 2013; Herstad, 2017; Feng, 2015; Schulte, 2022).

In the UK, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation produced a report analysing the twenty most unpopular council estates in the country (Power, 1997). Most were in East London, Newcastle upon Tyne, Greater Manchester, Glasgow, the South Wales valleys, and Liverpool. Their unpopularity was driven by the loss of key industries, population decline, and counter-urbanisation. In the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, both inner and outer city areas experienced population decline, though the decline was more rapid in inner city areas. Job losses were also greater in inner cities since outer areas saw job growth. During this time, the UK also experienced increased ethnic diversity in its urban areas. The Foundation considered empty houses, widespread demolitions, declining property values, and low demand for all property types, neighbourhoods, and tenures to be features of British urban decay (Keeble, 1999). The Foundation found that urban decay was "more extreme and therefore more visible" in the north of the United Kingdom. This trend of northern decline has been observed not just in the United Kingdom but also in much of Europe. Some seaside resort towns in the UK have also experienced urban decay towards the end of the 20th century. The UK's period of urban decay was exemplified by The Specials' 1981 hit single "Ghost Town" (Katharine et al., 1999).

Another example of this in the Western world is Wasco, California. The Wasco City Council issued Municipal Code 2010 to reduce the likelihood of urban decay in the city, and the City of Wasco enforces various zoning laws relating to property maintenance and nuisances (City

of Wasco, 2010). The municipal authority primarily relies on Chapter 17.79 of the Municipal Code, which outlines procedures for abating public nuisances and protecting the health, safety, and overall welfare of the community. The code requires that structures, equipment, walls, and fencing on properties be maintained without graffiti and mandates that owners of properties deemed public nuisances rehabilitate, demolish, remove, or repair the condition within a specified time frame. If the property owner fails to take action, the municipal authority has the right to undertake the necessary steps and charge the owner for the cost of doing so. Additionally, Municipal Code Section 8 declares all garbage, rubbish, or refuse to be a public nuisance and includes similar provisions for abatement on public, private, and vacant properties. The code also requires that all landscaping be maintained and free of dying, dead, diseased, decayed, discarded, or overgrown vegetation that is visible from a public street (City of Wasco, 2010).

Like many cities around the world, Wasco faces various challenges as it plans for the future of its community (City of Wasco, 2010). These challenges include financial stability, efficient resource management, preserving quality of life, and adapting to a constantly changing world. Financial stability and economic growth are major issues facing Wasco as the municipal authority primarily relies on property and sales tax as its main sources of revenue. Without continued residential and commercial growth, revenue sources will remain limited, resulting in limitations on funding community and staff services. According to the Wasco Municipal Code 2010, financial stability is crucial for the growth of Wasco City, and commercial development that boosts sales tax revenue is needed to sustain it. Additionally, water supply and quality are also critical to serving the community and promoting growth. Despite these efforts, the city faces challenges from the state-wide drought and California legislation requiring water source management, as well as increased audits from local, state, and federal agencies overseeing the community's quality of life, which is dependent on factors such as housing, employment, community services, health care, education, recreation, and transportation. The lack of full community services in Wasco often requires residents to travel outside the city to meet basic needs. To improve the quality of life in Wasco, the city must address these issues and provide the necessary services (City of Wasco, 2010). Furthermore, recent research shows that active public participation models can greatly contribute to managing social challenges (Policy Brief, 2022). The objectives and policies of the general plan for Wasco's future vision aim to provide guidance to decision-makers as they work to enhance the quality of life by preserving the small-town character of residential neighbourhoods, while offering a wide range of commercial, retail, and industrial services and facilities, and preserving the aesthetic qualities of the city's historical buildings and surrounding farmland views (City of Wasco, 2010).

In order to maintain and improve the quality of life for its residents, the City of Wasco must focus on preserving its existing assets, such as its historic city centre, and providing a diverse living environment. This includes providing adequate housing options, as well as

commercial, industrial, and public facilities that are compatible with the surrounding community and agricultural land use. Additionally, the availability of water supply is a crucial aspect of the city's development. The municipal authority must also prioritise the health and well-being of its residents by providing a range of housing, social, cultural, and recreational facilities. This commitment will support and enhance the overall community in Wasco (City of Wasco, 2010).

Guerrieri et al. (2011) developed a model to determine whether the neighbourhoods of a city decline (in income or population) equally or unequally. Their GHH model assumes that individuals are endowed with either high or low income, and all individuals have a preference for living around richer neighbours. This is a shorthand way to model individuals having preferences for amenities that are provided endogenously when neighbourhood income rises, such as lower crime and more entertainment. The authors use this model to analyse the housing market in Detroit and determine the characteristics of the neighbourhoods that decline the most during the period of decline.

Using the case of within-city properties of urban decline in Detroit, the authors determined the neighbourhood characteristics associated with the greatest decline. Neighbourhoods with the lowest average income and lowest share of high-income households experienced the largest declines in housing prices. These neighbourhoods were also the slowest to recover. Guerrieri et al. (2011) also found that the decline in housing prices was more severe in neighbourhoods with higher levels of foreclosure and vacancies. Therefore, policymakers should provide targeted support to these neighbourhoods to prevent further decline and promote recovery.

2.6.**2. Urban decay in developing countries**

The combination of displacement, migration, and a lack of suitable urban housing has led to informal construction around cities as people seek proximity to job opportunities and urban services. Poor maintenance and decay contribute to the growth of slum areas. Slums are characterised by the absence of proper planning and basic public utilities, security, and community services (e.g., education, health care, commerce and living facilities). Slums are often viewed as problem areas of underdevelopment; nevertheless, they remain a desirable urban environment for many people in search of job opportunities (Mahgoub, 1990). As Jacobs (1961) noted long ago, cities need areas in decline, as they form cheaper ‘starter areas’ for new businesses.

The positive aspects of slum areas often go unnoticed, and the prevalent view that slums should simply be eliminated has led to long-standing neglect. Communities are frequently deemed "non-existent" or "illegal" and, therefore, not deserving of services or care. This neglect has turned slums into hotbeds of extremism and violence, forcing the city to suffer from its disregard of these areas. However, slums remain an affordable housing option close

to the city and a place of work and entertainment for people with low incomes. The prices of goods in slums are more reasonable for those with limited finances, and they provide a social environment that helps individuals adapt and connect with those around them. Slums may even offer scenic views of natural and historical landscapes or be located in the heart of historical cities (Franco, 2021; Mahgoub, 1990). Finally, slums are characterised by the convergence of different economic and social classes and the ability of the people to communicate and bring about change. They are a form of human wealth, located near cities, where land values are high and different economic and social classes converge. However, slums also face significant problems due to a lack of services and facilities.

Slums support those who move to the city and need assistance finding employment. Young individuals often see slums as the only option for affordable housing to start their families. Residents in slums typically perform simple jobs (e.g., artisans, domestic workers, and sellers) that are crucial for the city. The slums themselves also contain a thriving economy—commerce, small businesses, and even illegal construction contribute to significant transactions. In light of this, slums should not be seen as a problem to be eliminated, but an ongoing reality to be managed (Mahgoub, 1990).

Slums play an important role in the social, economic, and demographic growth of countries worldwide. However, developing countries struggle with management due to the physical chaos caused by rapid growth (Enoma and Idehen, 2018). The principle of sustainability should be applied to slums to turn them into valuable urban, spatial, economic, and human resources (Mahgoub, 1990). Slums have the potential to provide a suitable urban living environment by harnessing their social and environmental capabilities to improve economic conditions. Ideally, "sustainable slums" would provide better living conditions while also promoting environmental sustainability and economic growth (Mahgoub, 1990). Such a comprehensive approach would include the provision of basic services, the development of infrastructure, and the creation of job opportunities in the slums themselves. It would also require residents' participation in planning and community management to ensure that their needs and interests are met.

Urban decay is common in many developing countries and other parts of the world (Enoma and Idehen, 2018). The decay of cities manifests in many forms and has multiple causes, such as unclean conditions, overcrowding, and a general decline in the urban environment due to poor facilities and amenities. Factors including inadequate regulations and poor planning, economic downturns, and a lack of database infrastructure also contribute to this urban decay. However, lack of interest from relevant government agencies and poverty are often the main causes of urban decay and are responsible for the decline of the city (Enoma and Idehen, 2018).

2.7. The Development of Arabic-Islamic Cities

In this section will discuss several examples of the historical development of Arab Islamic cities to demonstrate the nature and range of changes and the relationship with culture. In the early-nineteenth century, Tripoli, was a modest city with approximately 12,000 inhabitants, surrounded by fertile green areas (Lafi, 2003). By the 1870s, the population had grown to around 30,000, transforming it into a significant urban centre (Lafi, 2003). Its strategic location at the crossroads of East and West, as well as Europe and Africa, (Abubrig,2016), made it a hub for trade and development, contributing to the evolution of its urban society (Lafi, 2003). In 1835, during the "second Ottoman era", Tripoli came under direct administration of the Ottoman Empire from Istanbul, remaining under Ottoman control until Italian colonization in the early-twentieth century (Altaleb,2015). The Ottoman Empire's modernization initiatives, inspired by European models and encapsulated in the Tanzimat reforms, emphasized military and administrative reorganization. Cities became focal points for modernization efforts, reflecting the Empire's attempt to modernize its periphery and maintain influence over its provinces (Samourkasidou & Kalergis, 2021). As the westernmost bastion of the Ottoman Empire in North Africa, Tripoli's development highlighted its strategic and symbolic importance (Lafi, 2003).

Following the Italian occupation in the early-twentieth century, a new European-Italian section of Tripoli was developed, sharply divided from the traditional Arab Medina just outside the city walls (Holmboe, 1994). The urban evolution of Beirut, Lebanon, followed a distinct trajectory. During the nineteenth century, Beirut transitioned from an insignificant port town to the capital of a newly independent state, laying the groundwork for its role as a regional economic hub (Elsheshtawy, 2008). In October 1918, during the final days of World War I, French troops occupied Beirut, establishing a new state administration. The subsequent Etoile project, conceptualized by French engineers in 1927 and completed in the 1930s, introduced a modern urban composition that contrasted sharply with Beirut's previous local land-use patterns and highlighted French influence in urban planning (Elsheshtawy, 2008).

Cairo, Egypt, represents a unique example of urban transformation that did not coincide with European colonization. Instead, its transformation emerged through internal reform within the Ottoman province of Egypt. From the early-nineteenth century, the Khedivial dynasty spearheaded modernization efforts that reshaped Cairo's urban fabric (Volait, 2003). The city's development during Khedive Isma'il's reign (1863–1879) extended beyond administrative reforms to encompass urbanism, architecture, and culture (Nasser, 2000). Inspired by European models, these reforms were marked by the opening of the Suez Canal, a symbol of Egypt's modernization ambitions (Mahdy, 2017).

The urban fabric of Arab Islamic cities was shaped by their integration of social, religious, and commercial life. French scholars studying North Africa, such as Marçais and Massingnon, described the traditional quarters of these cities as self-contained neighbourhoods distinguished by the ethno-religious origins and occupations of their inhabitants (Dabbour, 2021). These quarters were often separated by gates and walls, creating a morphologically distinct but integrated whole (Dabbour, 2021). Public life unfolded in streets, alleys, and squares, while private life cantered around courtyard homes (Scarce, 1996). Although these cities often appeared unplanned (at least to western pereceptions), their road networks were rational and centralized, connecting residential and service areas (Scarce, 1996).

Religious and commercial structures played a central role in urban identity. Mosques, markets, and public amenities were frequently located near major roads or elevated areas (Jencks, 1997; Kostof, 1991). The Islamic charity system, or *waqif*, funded these structures, blending religious and commercial life (Anderson, 1987). In Istanbul, a city of critical influence on Arab Islamic identity due to its role as the Ottoman capital, mosques and grand public buildings dominated the skyline. The city's commercial areas featured bustling markets and inns that served as hubs for trade and social interaction (Al-Sayyad, 1991). Istanbul's highly developed water and transportation systems, modernized after the Ottoman conquest, were vital to its prosperity (Faroqhi, 2007; Freely, 2017).

Although Istanbul is not originally an Arab city, its identity and culture have been deeply influenced over centuries by Arab Islamic traditions. As the capital of the Ottoman Empire, Istanbul played a pivotal role in shaping and being shaped by the Arab Islamic world. Wealthy residents moved from the city's historic areas to its suburbs, following the Ottoman court's relocation to new palaces, further altering its urban character. European-inspired modernization efforts introduced tree-lined streets and spacious boulevards, reflecting the Ottoman Empire's engagement with Western urban planning ideals (Freely, 2017).

Urban expansion and modernization significantly impacted Arab Islamic cities' identity and character. From the 1850s to the 1870s, ambitious reconstruction programs transformed many cities, removing outdated areas and reshaping commercial landscapes (Scarce, 1996). These changes reflected the Ottoman Empire's close relationship with Europe and brought substantial lifestyle changes to local populations. Immigrants and cultural exchanges enriched these cities, although they also introduced challenges such as strained services and housing deterioration (Costa and Ewert,2014). Despite these pressures, cities such as Cairo and Istanbul retained their distinct identities, adapting traditional structures to new functions while integrating modern elements.

The preservation of historic Arab Islamic cities offers opportunities for cultural and economic development. By restoring historical buildings and cultural artefacts, these cities can become international tourist destinations, generating revenue and fostering cultural

education (Ashworth and Tunbridge, 2000; UNESCO, 2021). Efforts to preserve these urban centres require robust zoning laws, public education, and awareness campaigns to maintain their heritage and identity. The transformations of these cities over centuries underscores the dynamic interplay between tradition and modernization, reflecting their enduring significance as centres of culture, commerce, and religion.

2.8. Urban Identity in Arabic-Islamic cities

Significant changes rocked the Islamic world from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century as European thought and art increasingly influenced Muslim culture. During this time, the Islamic world was divided into three major empires. The Muslim Mughal sultans ruled the eastern provinces of the Indian subcontinent, while Persia was under the Safavid and later Qajar dynasties. The Ottoman Empire controlled the northern regions of Turkey, parts of Eastern Europe and Greece, and the Arab world around the Mediterranean and the Arabian Peninsula. This division was crucial for preserving artistic and cultural traditions inherited from the Middle Ages, especially in the Arab-Islamic world (Skeres, 2004). During this era, cities and villages in the East exhibited pre-modern daily life. However, this gradually faded away with advances in modern education and contemporary media. Both these factors had significant implications for the socio-political development of the region (Skeres, 2004).

Most major changes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were driven by shifting economic conditions and a decline in state revenue sources, so the state began directly or indirectly involving designated agents in revenue collection. During the transitional period, state officials were "awarded" the right to split half of the revenues they collected with the state treasury. This system, known as "ownership," later evolved into the *Tapu* system and eventually transformed into private property in the nineteenth century (Abou-El-Haj, 1983a).

2.8.**1. Culture and identity in traditional Muslim society**

Everyday traditional cultural and identity eventually experienced a significant (even existential) disruption (Skeres, 2004). For example, Cairo’s estimated adult population in 1798 was around 30,000, divided among different segments of the social hierarchy. The lower class, comprising male workers in low-level jobs (e.g., bedding, waterers, porters, and workers), constituted 45% of the population. Craftsmen and artisans made up 25% of Cairo's society, followed by the ruling Mamluks (15%). Landowners constituted 6% of the population, followed by the merchant class with 4%, including foreign merchants who conducted trade and then returned to cities like Constantinople, Izmir, Baghdad, Aleppo, Jeddah, and Yanbu (Skeres, 2004). These densely populated and ethnically and religiously diverse metropolitan areas served as ancient capitals and important commercial centres for the silk and spice trade between Asia and Europe (Barisitz, 2017).

In Egypt, Muslims were divided into four Sunni schools of thought: the Maliki, Hanbali, Shafi'i and Hanafi Schools (Skeres, 2004). Also, Egypt was divided into two distinct layers (Skeres, 2004). The upper class (sultans, princes, and the wealthiest residents) had luxurious homes filled with the finest local products and expensive imports that showcased abundance and prosperity. They spent their days in leisure—smoking, drinking coffee, listening to stories, and singing. Meanwhile, the poor—grooms who ran ahead of their master's chariot under the scorching sun and farmers who cultivated the land in challenging conditions—struggled to make a living. Poor women undertook household chores and assisted men in the fields (often doing the most work). Edward William Lane, who visited Egypt between 1822 and 1835, noted the difficult life of women from the poor classes, who were more obedient to their husbands than women from the wealthy upper classes (Skeres, 2004). Children from the poor classes contributed to their families by caring for sheep and goats in the countryside from the age of six or seven. As they grew older, they would marry and assist their parents in agriculture or crafting, preserving these skills from generation to generation (Skeres, 2004).

2.8.**2. The division of urban spaces in Islamic society**

The urban built environment is composed of different types of spaces, each with its own unique characteristics and functions. Hakim (1995) identified three main types of urban spaces: functional spaces, symbolic spaces, and representational spaces. Functional spaces serve a specific purpose (e.g., residential, commercial or industrial areas). They are characterised by their physical features and resource use, and are normally organised to optimise the performance of their intended functions. Symbolic spaces have emotional or cultural significance and are often associated with the place's history and identity (e.g., monuments, public squares, and religious buildings). These spaces shape the identity of a city and its people, and often symbolise the cultural values and traditions of a community. Finally, representational spaces reflect the image or identity of a place; they are a stage upon which to display cultural events and activities (e.g., festivals, markets, and parades). Representational spaces create a sense of place and community by bringing people together in a shared experience (Hakim, 1995).

Each of these spaces played an important role in shaping the identity of Arabic-Islamic cities and reflecting their socio-cultural elements. Hakim and Al-Sayyad provide additional information and perspectives on the relationship between different types of spaces and the identity of Arab-Islamic cities. They explore the cultural, social, and historical factors that shape the built environment of these cities and provide insights into the complex processes that give rise to their distinct identities, and further examine the intricacies surrounding the identity of Arab-Islamic cities and the impact of different types of spaces on their development and evolution (Hakim, 1986; AlSayyad, 1987).

For example, in the Arab-Islamic culture, urban housing spaces have evolved with a clear distinction between private and public spaces. Spaces were divided into multifunctional areas for living, entertaining guests, sitting, and sleeping and specific areas for activities such as cooking, storing goods and keeping animals (Skeres, 2004; Scarce, 1996). These spaces were built using materials such as stone, brick, wood and coloured glass.

A long history of Islamic jurisprudential rulings, legislation, and guidelines promoting modesty has shaped the character of Arab-Islamic houses and protected the sanctity of homes (i.e., they are not exposed to the public, including neighbours and passers-by) (Skeres, 2004). For example, Prince Omar Ibn Abd al-Aziz built (reigned from 717 CE to 720 CE) four minarets in the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, with one overlooking the house of Marwan Ibn Abd al-Malik. The muezzin responsible for calling the faithful to prayer noticed this and informed Abd al-Malik, who was the reigning caliph at the time. Upon learning of the minaret's location, Abd al-Malik was concerned about privacy issues and ordered the minaret to be demolished (Nayem & Ben Bella, 2022). Abd al-Malik's concerns reflect the importance of preserving personal privacy and respecting the boundaries between different types of spaces. The event also highlights the role of the caliph in managing the built environment (Skeres, 2004). That this event took place in Medina, one of Islam's holiest cities, reflects the significance of religious sites in shaping the identity of Arabic-Islamic cities. The Prophet's Mosque played a central role in the development of the Islamic empire and its influence on the built environment of Arabic-Islamic cities. Many *hadiths* (records of the Prophet Muhammad's sayings, actions, or habits) and rulings have been issued to protect homes and sanctuaries from intruders. These include regulations on the placement of doors and windows, building heights, and the establishment of shops in residential areas, dating back to early Islamic history (Skeres, 2004). The desire for privacy significantly shapes Muslim lifestyles, home designs, and daily practices to the present day (Osra and Jones, 2018).

2.8.**3. The effects of changing social and cultural values on traditional Arabic-Islamic cities**

Islam emphasises the importance of urban life and a suitable environment for essential religious duties, such as prayers (Osra and Jones, 2018). Although the Qur'an and Sunnah do not outline explicit regulations for city planning, Islam's socio-cultural framework plays a vital role in organising daily lives, regardless of social status (e.g., the five daily prayers coordinate Muslims' activities with the surrounding environment).

The concept of "nation" promotes social justice in traditional cities by alleviating potential social tensions between populations. Muslim believers promote brotherhood and provide equal opportunities for interaction with the urban fabric (Osra and Jones, 2018). Such social and physical frameworks of Islam are crucial for evaluating Islamic residential environments.

The Islamic legal system, Sharia, outlines the principles behind these frameworks. Sharia regulates community behaviour by providing guidance on social behaviour and morals, such as respect for the elderly, love for children and their care, and young men's sanctity and respect for their parents (Skeres, 2004).

2.8.**4. Culture and customs in Arabic-Islamic traditional society**

The examination of urban identity and the influence of urban decay on it is thoroughly researched in developed and partially developed countries. Nevertheless, understanding of these concepts in Arabic and Islamic cities is relatively limited. As the medieval period transitioned to the modern era, the Islamic world experienced a decline in the natural sciences and an increase in superstitious beliefs (in contrast to the Renaissance in the West). This included a widespread belief in mythical beings like ghouls and a heightened acceptance of magic and sorcery—a form of spiritual science. People sought protection through incantations and talismans that contained the names of elves and angels sewn into a green rag and attached to children's hats or worn as head coverings (Skeres, 2004). Historical scholars were critical of superstitious beliefs and expressions, which they viewed as low culture. In Arab and Islamic societies, there are multiple connected social classes including the general culture, the culture of commerce, the culture of senior officials, the culture of scholars, and the culture of the ruling class from the elite of scholars. These cultural layers are often influenced by their surroundings.

The people of eastern cities (Arab, Turkish, or Persian) have a shared preference for loose and long garments that vary depending on the city and region. The capital cities of the eastern world have undergone changes in taste throughout history, with the people of cities and major regions always eager to imitate the fashion trends of the capital's prominent figures (Skeres, 2004). Eastern social customs and traditions—rituals of hospitality, religious ceremonies, and celebrations for events like birth, circumcision, marriage, funerals, and Islamic holidays—resist extinction. Many pagan celebrations are still observed in rural areas. In Egypt, for example, the tradition of celebrating the Feast of the Nile continues and has been infused with Islamic elements.

2.8.**5. Islamic cultural identity and the spaces of Islamic society**

The most significant factor defining large cities is their population—both the original settlers and immigrant groups that make up multi-sectarian urban societies (Scarce, 1996). "Settler" refers to individuals who have lived in a particular city or region since antiquity, while “immigrant” refers to individuals who have recently moved from another place. Islam helps create a common cultural identity and the Arabic language used for Islamic rituals and worship, is a common ground for various groups with different native languages (e.g., Persian, Turkish, Armenian, Slavic and Berber (Scarce, 1996).

Challenges and problems exist in multi-ethnic cities, including the provision of housing and catering to diversity. Essential services include administrative and religious facilities, road networks, commercial areas, water and bathroom services, and private housing that accommodates different cultural classes in a multi-ethnic society. Islamic law influences notions of public and private property, the individual, the family, and the community (Scarce, 1996). It emphasises the role of the individual within the Muslim community, beginning with their role in the family, the basic unit of society. Islamic law also provides clear instructions for family relations, duties, property, and inheritance, leading to the division of spaces into public and private. While not unique, the specific regulations regarding such spaces distinguish Arabic-Islamic cities from other cities. According to Lefebvre, every physical space has its own spatiality that can shape and be shaped by society (Rashid, 2021). Buildings and spaces form the physical and spatial aspect of the city, and each space has its own existence separate from the objects it contains and from the discourses that bring it into existence.

Conventional approaches to understanding the social production of physical space have neglected the importance of urban immaterialities such as culture (Rashid, 2021). Islamic traditions embody many principles of social organisation and behaviour, which, when followed, create harmonious social and physical environments. However, ignoring these principles can adversely affect the social and material conditions of Muslim lives. Immaterial culture is a crucial part of the development process, as it helps to preserve a nation's identity and contributes to social and economic development. This view is affirmed by the 1982 UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Policies, which recognises the role of culture in the development process (Musa, 2013). Western views often frame Arabic Islamic cities only through the lens of colonialism—a lens that distorts physical and social space. Cities actively participate in social reproduction and manipulate space in an exercise of power. In contemporary Islamic environments, non-traditional values and systems are introduced under the guise of "modernity" (Mortada, 2003). That consumer capitalism controls much of everyday urban life is a conscious construction, not an inevitability (Rashid, 2021). The remainder of this study activates the relationship between design imagination and the reflective knowledge underpinning it, that is, the fundamental urban culture (Rashid, 2021).

2.9. The legal system in Arabic-Islamic cities

The legal history of the Arab region spans over a millennium. Islamic, non-Islamic, Arab and Western legal developments have been vast and have extended beyond the Arabic-speaking region. The Ottomans began an unprecedented period of reforms between 1839 – 1876. The empire sought to reform and modernise its institutions and society in line with the prevailing cultural, legal and political dominance of Europe. These reforms, called the *Tanẓīmāt*, were intended to modernise the empire from an old theocratic system into a modern state similar to European states (Ozekicioglu and Ozekicioglu, 2010). Two important

periods are associated with the introduction and eventual synthesis of Islamic laws with ideas from different Western legal cultures (Hallaq, 2005).

The first period relates to the final years of the Ottoman rule (1839-1922), and the second, to the establishment of Arab independence following the British and French mandates (mid-20th century) (Razai, 2019). In the nineteenth and twentieth, they were themselves drawn into a new world created in Western Europe (Razai, 2019). Mirroring Western legal developments, the code and appellate hierarchy have replaced to Ottoman Islamic law.

This required replacing doctrinal interpretation, custom and, more importantly, judicial discretion with a rigid and mechanical application of a comprehensive set of laws. The *Nizamyieh* courts were three-tiered and covered civil, criminal and commercial disputes *Sharīʿah* and other religious courts continued to operate alongside the *Nizamyieh* courts, but their jurisdiction was reduced to adjudicating on endowments and personal status laws particular to each religious denomination. Despite these centralising reforms, Ottoman suzerainty in the Arab region was implemented in a piecemeal fashion. The *Tanẓīmāt* influenced some places profoundly, and others only superficially.

For instance, Egypt, technically an Ottoman province, managed to acquire a degree of autonomy in the law throughout the 19th century (Razai, 2019). Dictated by foreign powers, the Mixed Courts were a hybrid series of courts, particularly established to deal with disputes between foreigners and Egyptians. The increasing number of British and American judges serving in the Egyptian courts, especially after the British Occupation in 1882, resulted in the, albeit limited, introduction of Anglo-American common law elements which came to be a source of influence on Egyptian judicial decision-making in later years (Hamad,2008).

Central Arabia (present-day Saudi Arabia and Yemen) and rural areas saw little of Ottoman legal influence. Instead, Shariʾa, tribal law and custom remained in full practice, and an Islamic version of Ḥakam remained the intercessor in disputes. In the late 19th and early 20th century, following the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the Arab Middle East underwent critical changes that affected the region's legal systems (Razai, 2019).

Ottoman rulers were replaced by Europeans. Territories taken from the Ottomans were divided between the United Kingdom and France as per the 1916 "Asia Minor Agreement". Although the extent of European colonial hegemony in Arab legal systems varied across the region, the imposition, adoption, and imitation of European models of legislation varied across the region (Razai, 2019).

In the context of British and French colonial dominance and the subsequent post-colonial legal reforms, many newly formed Arab nation-states sought to modernize their legal systems and judiciaries, influenced by the legal frameworks established during the colonial

period (Razai, 2019). Razai, Director of the IEDJA Programme, notes that alongside the British and French colonies, Italy also colonized what is now modern-day Libya, which was occupied by Italy in October 1911. Although Italian influence on Libya's legal system was relatively minor, it remained under Italian control until the British replaced the Italians after World War II, continuing their occupation until Libya's independence in 1951. Dr. Razai clarifies that Libya is not one of the primary countries examined in his study, in relation to judicial practices and legal frameworks (Razai, 2019). Following the end of World War II, Libya came under the administration of the United Nations in 1943. It became the first country to achieve independence through a UN-administered process, formally gaining sovereignty on December 24, 1951. The newly independent state was established as a hereditary constitutional monarchy under King Idris I.

One of the world's poorest countries at independence, Libya achieved international notoriety and significant new wealth with the discovery of substantial oil reserves in 1959. Most of this newfound wealth fell into the hands of the country's elites. This concentration of wealth led in part to a 1969 coup, which ended the reign of King Idris I and resulted in the establishment of the Libyan Arab Republic. Colonel Muammar al-Gaddafi, the leader of the coup, was installed as the head of the new regime. Following the overthrow of the monarch, a provisional constitution was announced by the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) in 1969, set to remain in force until a permanent version could be adapted. In 1977 this provisional document was replaced by a new constitution and Libya's official name changed from the Libyan Arab Republic to the Socialist Peoples' Libyan Arabic Jamahiriya. The new constitution incorporated a blend of Islamic and socialist theories espoused in al-Qadhafi's Green Book and his Third Universal Theory.

2.9.**1. The Libyan legal system**

Following the 1969 military coup, Colonel Muammar al-Gaddafi and his fellow officers formed the Revolutionary Command Council and established the Libyan Arab Republic (Blundy & Lycett, 1987). Under the Gaddafi regime, the Libyan constitution contained a mixture of Islamic and socialist principles espoused in Gaddafi's Green Book and Third World Theory(Gaddafi,1975). The country's legal structure was governed by two key constitutional documents: the Constitutional Declaration of December 1969 and the Declaration of the Establishment of People's Power, 1977. Officially, the political system emphasised direct authority from the people, while the social system operated under the guidance of the Holy Qur'an. Political institutions included people's congresses, committees, and professional unions representing the citizens' voices (Simpkins, 2008).

The Gaddafi regime replaced most existing Libyan legislation with a new legal framework built around the ideology expressed in his Green Book. According to civil law, the hierarchy of legal sources included (in order): legislation, principles of Islamic law, custom, principles of natural law, and equity. The executive functions were carried out by the head of state, the president, the government, and the Cabinet. The legislative branch included the 2,700-member General People's Congress, while the judicial branch consisted of four levels of courts, culminating in the Supreme Court (Simpkins, 2008). The previously separate court systems were merged in 1973, with Shari'a law gaining prominence as the primary legal authority in Libya. The prime minister—the president of the government as Secretary of the General People's Committee—was responsible for day-to-day governance.

In theory, Gaddafi propagated a system of direct governance by the ordinary public through Basic Popular Conferences. The population could (allegedly) actively participate in decision-making processes to achieve political, economic, and social goals and ensure a fair distribution of national wealth. Gaddafi's discourse emphasised the importance of self-governance and empowerment of the masses. However, the reality of Gaddafi's rule was far removed from the theoretical ideals he espoused. In practice, Gaddafi's autocratic regime became characterised by his absolute control and a suppression of political dissent. The rule of law was often subject to the whims and preferences of the regime. Gaddafi not only considered himself the supreme leader of the nation but also positioned himself as the foremost "Guide of the Revolution" and visionary thinker. While Gaddafi did not hold an official elected office, he held immense power and influence over the government. The General Popular Conference, which functioned as the Libyan Parliament, swiftly implemented his advice (El-Allous 2016).

2.10. The Research Gap

Changes affecting the built environment and urban form of the ancient Arab-Islamic city stem from the local place identity, cultural values, and character. However, little is known about how cultural values influence urban identity and character through urban decay in historical cities or how this problem can be addressed. The academic research literature has focused principally on the industrialised Western urban experience. The relatively recent literature covering Arab Islamic cities has tended to deliver individual case studies rather than comprehensive overviews.

Cultural values played a significant role in shaping the built environment and urban form of ancient cities, including the Arab-Islamic city. Traditional urban forms of these cities are characterised by their street patterns, building structures, and public spaces; they are deeply rooted in cultural heritage and reflect the social and economic values of the community (Hakim, 1986).

However, over time, these urban environments can deteriorate due to a variety of factors, such as urbanisation, population growth, economic changes, and technological advancements. The growth in the Libyan urban population was due to factors such as improved longevity, migration of people from rural to urban areas, an influx of emigrants from Arab and African countries and also influx of people from rural areas (Elbendak,2008). There is now a large proportion of foreigners living in the old city of Tripoli, including Arab, Asians and Africans (Elbendak, 2008). Some aspects of the traditional style remain at the social level, therefore, there is a mixture of cultures within the urban Libyan living experience (Elbendak, 2008), which contributed to changing in urban environments. The traditional urban forms and cultural values that define the city's identity are likely to be threatened, resulting in the loss of its unique character and cultural heritage.

However, there is very little academic research, or studies in relevant professional fields such as urban design, on how the Arab Islamic city has identified and addressed these challenges, although they are larger in scale than those faced by most Western cities. Again, the little recent literature consists mostly of case studies, such as Nasser's study of Cairo (Nasser, 2000). Observation also shows a change in the physical character of historic Tripoli, including more vacant sites. To address this issue, it is important to understand how cultural values shape urban identity and character of the city and how they can be protected and preserved through urban planning and design strategies. This might include preserving historic buildings, maintaining traditional street patterns and public spaces, and promoting cultural activities that reflect the city's heritage. The views of the local community could constructively inform the preservation and revitalisation efforts. Residents can provide valuable insight and help to ensure that any changes are in line with the city's cultural values.

2.11. The Research Questions

Some studies of the traditional old cities in Libya are concerned with the maintenance of 'tradition' within these cities (Elbendak, 2008). This can be typified by a conflict which tries to maintain a balance between traditional values and the pressures of social change (Elbendak, 2008). Once again, this theory can be applied to the case of traditional Arabic Islamic cities in Libya. The old city of Tripoli has become characterised by deterioration due to the closing or relocation of industry which had been the main source of employment. This can also be identified within the social movements from area to area in Tripoli which influences the place identity.

Urban place identity is a versatile concept upon which many psychological theories of human–environment relations are built (Zimmerbauer et al., 2012; Qazimi, 2014). Place identity refers to how people perceive and identify with a particular place, and how this connection shapes their experiences, attitudes, and behaviours toward that place (Zimmerbauer et al., 2012). This concept encompasses both the physical and psychological aspects of a place, including its physical characteristics, history, culture, and memories.

Place identity is widely used in the fields of geography, psychology, sociology and urban planning to understand how people form attachments to places and how these attachments shape their experiences and relationships with the environment (Qazimi, 2014). The importance of local social and cultural factors in the development of self-identity cannot be overstated. Place identity, as a component of a person's self-identity, is largely comprised of their perceptions and understandings of their physical environment (Proshansky et al., 1983).

The lives of residents in the historic core of Tripoli are now very different to what they were during the colonial era. Libyan cultural, political and economic systems changed especially after the discovery of oil which led to modernisation and urban transformation at personal and societal levels. These changes have largely followed the precedent of western industrialised cities, without maintaining Libyan cultural identity. The situation has resulted in a decline in some the old parts of the city. El-Hawat (1981) has written about development in Libya arguing that oil has contributed to the change from more traditional to modern society. The cultural exchange due to globalization and emigration has led to increased exposure to foreign influences. Urban place identity influences individuals' perceptions of their surroundings, their sense of belonging, and their emotional connection to a place (Zimmerbauer et al., 2012). A strong sense of place identity promotes a positive attachment to the environment and fosters a sense of community and social cohesion.

On the other hand, a weak sense of place identity leads to detachment and a lack of investment in the local community. Policymakers and practitioners can incorporate the concept of place identity into urban planning and design to create places that are not only physically appealing, but also emotionally meaningful and socially connected to the local community. Therefore, this study seeks answers to the following research questions:

1- Why do the built environments of some historical cities in the Arabic-Islamic world in general and in Libya especially tend to decay rather than improve?

2- What factors affect the urban place identity of Arabic-Islamic historical cities in Libya in general and the old city of Tripoli in particular?

3- What factors contribute to the changing character and identity of the old city of Tripoli?

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter offers a detailed explanation of the methodology used to investigate how local place identity and character shape the pace and magnitude of changes in the built environment and urban form in an ancient Arab-Islamic city (Al-Sayyad and Mejia, 2018). The research utilises a case study approach (Yin, 2018), drawing on the historical city of Tripoli, Libya—one of the oldest and most well-preserved examples of an Arab-Islamic city (Ahmida,2011). Old Tripoli was selected due to its historical and cultural significance in the Arab-Islamic world (Ejroushi, 2024), as well as its relevance to the research questions.

This study used a qualitative research design to explore complex phenomena in their natural setting (Mohajan, 2018). The methods employed were archival research, literature review, site observation, and interviews. Archival research and literature review were used to gather background information about the history, culture, and urban form of the ancient Arab-Islamic city. Site observation allowed the researcher to collect data on the current state of the built environment and urban form in Tripoli's old city. Finally, interviews focused on acquiring information on local attitudes and values concerning the built environment and urban form (Yin, 2018). The data were analysed using a thematic analysis approach, which involves identifying and interpreting patterns of meaning.

Issues of reliability, validity, research positionality, and ethics were considered throughout the research process (Creswell, 2014). Multiple data sources were used, and triangulation was employed to ensure reliability. Efforts were made to ensure the accuracy of the data collected and the analysis conducted to enhance the validity. Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent from participants, ensuring confidentiality, and protecting the privacy of participants. In terms of positionality, the researcher's professional experience and familiarity with the area were beneficial for the research, although care had to be taken to balance any bias that this familiarity might introduce. The remainder of this chapter continues to elaborate on the research approach, methods, and techniques used in the study. It also highlights the issues of reliability, validity, research positionality, and ethics. Lastly, the limitations of the methodology and challenges encountered during the fieldwork (and how they were overcome) are discussed.

3.3. Research Philosophies - positivism, interpretivism, and critical theory

A research philosophy encompasses the beliefs and values guiding the researcher's approach. Research methods and analyses are normally governed by one of three philosophical paradigms: positivism, interpretivism, and critical theory (Bryman, 2016; Ryan, 2018). Positivism is derived from foundationalism and empiricism; positivists value objectivity and proving or disproving hypotheses. In contrast, interpretivists see knowledge as subjective and reality as socially constructed through individuals' interpretations of their experiences (Chowdhury, 2014; Crotty, 1998). The critical theory tradition emerging from

the Frankfurt School centres power and the oppressive aspects of politics and society (Ryan, 2018).

Positivism is a philosophical approach that emphasises the importance of empirical evidence and scientific method for understanding the world. It originated with nineteenth-century French philosopher Auguste Comte, who believed that knowledge could only be gained through scientific observation and experimentation. According to positivism, only observable facts and events can be considered true knowledge; abstract concepts (e.g., morality, spirituality, and metaphysics) have no place in science. Therefore, positivism emphasises the use of empirical observation, measurement, and statistical analysis to develop universal laws of social behaviour, seek objective truths about the social world, and test theories and hypotheses.

Positivism has significantly affected many fields, including science, social science, and philosophy. It led to the development of the scientific method—the cornerstone of modern science. It has also influenced how we understand social phenomena through quantitative data and statistical analysis. However, positivism has been criticised for being reductionist and overlooking the subjective and cultural aspects of social phenomena (Hammersley, 2013). It oversimplifies complex phenomena by reducing them to quantifiable data and ignores how subjective individual experiences, culture, and context shape our understandings of the world.

Critical theory tackles the power structures and social inequalities that shape human experiences and behaviours, often employing a critical and normative approach to uncover and challenge dominant ideologies and practices (Lukes, 2005). While critical theory can provide valuable insights into social issues and power dynamics, it is also criticised for failing to offer practical solutions to address its many critiques (Calhoun et al., 2017).

Interpretivism seeks to understand the meaning and interpretations that individuals and groups assign to their experiences and actions. The philosophy of interpretivism is rooted in an eighteenth-century debate between Giambattista Vico and Descartes, with the former underscoring the differences between the natural and social worlds. Importantly, we perceive reality and truth through the organisation of our lives and our social experiences (Costelloe, 2016). This makes interpretivism a sort of anti-positivism (Flick, 2014). It emphasizes the importance of context and subjectivity in social research (Densin and Lincoln, 2017). Interpretivists deal with relish in the complexities of the contemporary social world and seek out nuanced and holistic understandings of social phenomena. Truth and knowledge are subjective, culturally and historically situated, and based on people's experiences and values. Therefore, values and beliefs cannot be separated from the researcher and invariably influence data collection, interpretation, and analysis. This study—like most work that employs qualitative methods—follows an interpretivist philosophy.

3.4. Qualitative Approaches

Research approaches are the general strategies or methods that researchers use to conduct their studies. The two primary research approaches are quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research involves the collection and analysis of numerical data, while qualitative research focuses on the collection and analysis of non-numerical data, such as text, images, and observations (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research is used to acquire a deep understanding of the complexities and nuances of difficult-to-quantify social phenomena (e.g., social norms, attitudes, and beliefs). It also allows researchers to uncover unexpected or unanticipated findings and explore the subjective experiences of participants in greater depth. Overall, qualitative research can generate rich and detailed insights into the human experience (Creswell, 2014).

Qualitative research is defined by its reliance on naturalistic and interpretive paradigms. Naturalistic paradigms focus on individuals' subjective experiences and interpretations, while interpretive paradigms emphasise the importance of social and cultural context in shaping human behaviour and attitudes. Nevertheless, all qualitative research methods—interviews, focus groups, observations, and document analysis—collect data that can help researchers understand the social and cultural factors that influence the phenomenon under investigation (Sutton and Austin, 2015). Observation and interaction with participants in their natural setting provides a more comprehensive understanding of their social context and the factors that may influence it. After all, the real world is subject to change, so qualitative researchers should be present and immersed to record events before and after changes occur (Patton, 2001). Qualitative research's naturalistic approach and focus on meaning and interpretation provide rich and detailed insights that are not captured by quantitative research methods. Qualitative researchers gain a deeper understanding of the social and cultural factors that shape human behaviour and attitudes and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of complex social issues.

Qualitative research offers different kinds of knowledge than quantitative inquiry. It focuses on understanding the meaning and interpretations of social phenomena, rather than simply measuring and quantifying them. Qualitative data can be analysed using coding, thematic analysis, and narrative analysis. These processes allow researchers to identify patterns, themes, and connections that emerge from the data. Qualitative scholars may also use statistical software to organise and analyse data before interpreting meanings behind the numbers. Both qualitative and quantitative researchers need to demonstrate that their studies are credible. Quantitative research relies on instruments, so its validity and reliability usually ascertain whether the research itself is credible. Qualitative research relies on the researcher-as-instrument, so credibility concerns the researcher's ability and effort. Although reliability and validity are treated separately in quantitative studies, these ideas are not separated in qualitative research (Golafshani, 2003). This study employed a combination of qualitative methods, including visual analysis, to mitigate reliance on any one data source. The researcher undertook field visits to gather data from participants, listen to their opinions, and transcribe and translate the data into 'usable' language.

3.5. Study Design and Methods

This study used an interpretivist qualitative approach to investigate Tripoli's old city. Primary and secondary data collection was undertaken in two phases: phase one involved archival research on the urban form and growth to understand the place itself, particularly in terms of urban change, and changing identity and character, while phase two involved interviews with professionals and residents to explore their knowledge and opinions about the current state of the place. During the first phase (August/September 2016), primary data was collected through archival research and by attending a one-week workshop on urban transformation and growth. The second phase of data collection took place during a second trip to Tripoli in December 2017. After this date, the changes in security conditions in Libya and specifically in the city of Tripoli, such as violent conflict, and the international effects of the COVID pandemic, prevented the researcher from visiting Tripoli to collect additional primary data reflecting inevitable changes in Tripoli during those difficult years. Changing personal and family circumstances and, again, the longer-term effects of the COVID pandemic have delayed the final thesis production.

This two-phase research approach thus included archival research, field visits, workshops, interviews, and surveys that allowed the researcher to collect a comprehensive and detailed dataset and analyse the identity and character of Tripoli's old city up to the start of the most recent conflict. Combined, these methods allowed a thorough understanding of the historical context, development, and current state of the area. Identifying appropriate data collection methods depends on the research question, type of information required, and availability of data sources (Al-Busaidi, 2008; Gabb, 2009; Naoum, 2007; Bergman, 2011). The use of multiple data collection methods can expand the scope of the study and generate a wider range of data (Thorne, 2008). This allows for triangulation, the use of methods to link information gathered in different stages of research (Tobin and Begley, 2004). Using multiple data collection methods can also lead to "crystallisation"—a better and more holistic understanding of research issues (Ellingson, 2015; Richardson, 2000).

Therefore, this study employed two broad data collection methods—document analysis and semi-structured interviews—to obtain a wide range of useful information about the changing urban form and conditions of Tripoli's old city. This helped ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. The semi-structured interviews gathered qualitative data about participants' experiences and perspectives on the changing urban form and conditions of the city. Meanwhile, the document analysis drew on various "texts" about Tripoli's old city (e.g., maps, plans, and reports) to further situate and support the interview findings. The following pages describe each of these methodologies in more detail.

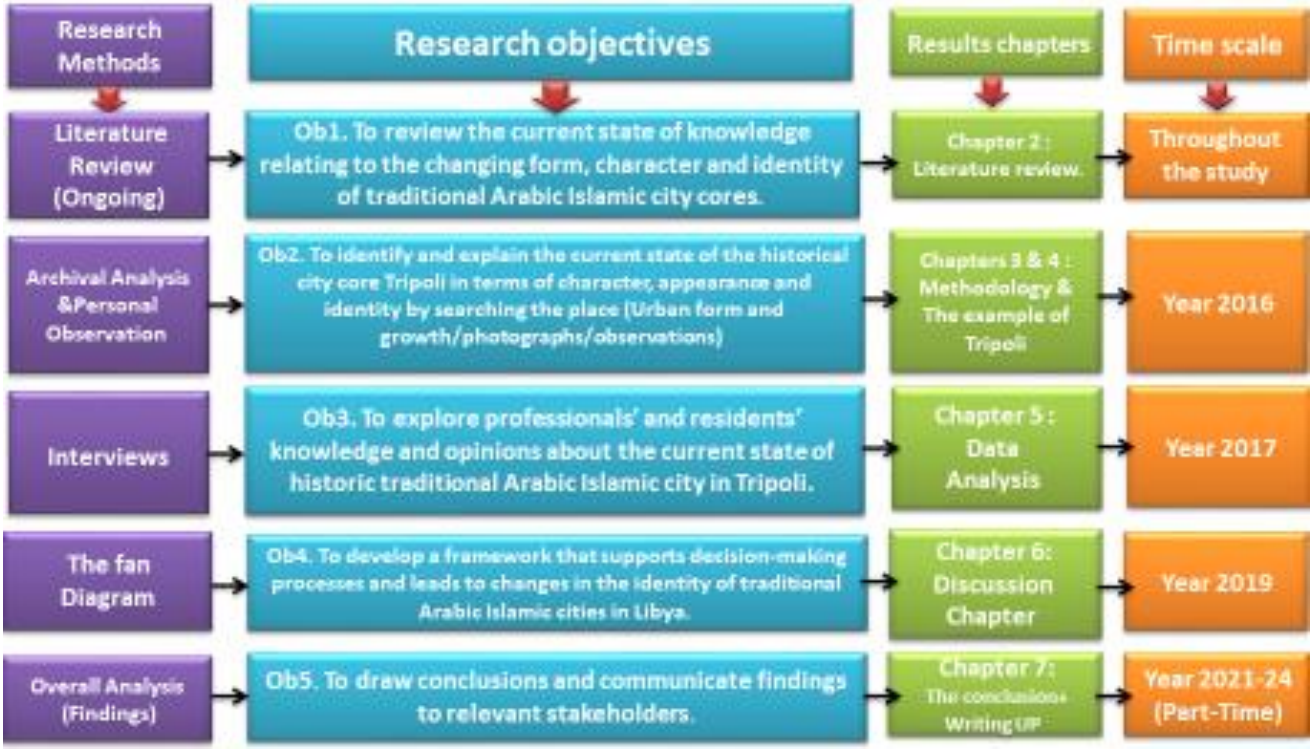

Figure2. Research overview: methods, objectives and findings.
(Source: researcher's own figure)

3.5.**1. Archival analysis of historical resources**

The researcher first conducted a thorough review of existing archival reports and visual materials (photographs, maps, etc.) about Tripoli's old city. Archival methods are commonly used in historical research to gain a deeper understanding of the past and the cultural, social, and political context in which it occurred (Ritchie, 2003) but are dependent on the completeness and legibility of records, and of access to them. This process uncovered the historical development and early conditions of the traditional city in terms of urban form (morphology) and urban fabric (the changing of patterns). Particular attention was paid to the following periods: the Italian colonisation period (1911-1943), post-independence (1951-1969), the Gaddafi regime (1969-2011), and the post-Gaddafi regime (2011-present). The data was subjected to both descriptive and content analysis to extract insights about the historical significance of the place.

The Libyan Centre of Archives and Historical Studies (LCAHS) holds many important historical records, documents, and scripts (e.g., official letters, chronicles, books, pictures, and maps) from many political periods, and these are easily accessible. Other archives visited included the Library of Al-Saraia al-Hamra Museum, the official historical libraries of the old city of Tripoli, the Department of Housing and Utility, and the Tripoli Urban Planning Department- Engineering Consulting Office for Utilities (ECOU). With the help of an academic known to the local authorities, the researcher was able to access to the private collections of some key informants (i.e., public figures, academics, architects, and historians). Also, the researcher accessed and, through comparisons, verified the

authenticity of several published and unpublished historical maps and photographs to map the old city. This allowed the researcher to develop a historical overview of the old city's public urban form and urban structure transformations. This, in turn helped the researcher to develop a general mental image of city form, character and identity of the old city. The researcher sought out a wide range of historical books detailing the experiences of Arab and foreign travellers who visited Tripoli in the past such as the famous book of Al-Telisi (1985), in its original Arabic version, by linking these narratives to other historical data and perspectives helped the researcher to form a mental sequence of historical events in the historic city of Tripoli.

Texts analysed included Arabic-language academic monographs, authoritative articles, and online publications that provided secondary historical data and illustrative material about Tripoli's history. These included, for example, publications of The Libyan Jihad Centre for Historical Studies such as *The Making of Modern Libya: State Formation, Colonization, and Resistance (2nd ed.). Albany,* NY: State University of New York Press*.* This book is a key academic resource on Libya's modern history, focusing on state formation, colonialism, and resistance movements(Ahmida,2011). Ten Years in the Court of Tripoli is a memoir written by Miss Tully, who is believed to have been the sister of Richard Tully, the British Consul in Tripoli during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The book provides a vivid account of life in the court of the Pasha of Tripoli, Yusuf Karamanli, during the Barbary period. It offers insights into the political intrigues, cultural practices, and social dynamics of the time, along with descriptions of Tripoli's geography and the lives of its people. Tully, Miss. (1816). Ten Years' Residence at the Court of Tripoli in Africa: From the Original Correspondence in the Possession of the Family of the Late Richard Tully, Esq., the British Consul. London: Henry Colburn (Tully,1816). This work is considered an important historical source for understanding the late 18th-century Libya states and their interactions with European powers. Also, The Jihad Centre for Historical Studies in Tripoli, established in 1978, is a pioneering institution that made oral history its primary research focus. It utilized Libya's rich oral traditions to document and reclaim the suppressed memories of anti-colonial resistance, constructing a "people's history" from indigenous perspectives. The centre became a hub for Libyan and regional historians, fostering the growth of oral history practices across North Africa through education and collaboration. (Chircop, 2007). Similarly, the book titled "History of Libya from the End of the Nineteenth Century until 1969" provides an in-depth examination of Libya's political, social, and economic developments during a transformative period. It covers significant events such as the late Ottoman era, Italian colonization, the Libyan resistance (including figures like Omar al-Mukhtar), World War II, the British military administration, and the eventual establishment of the Kingdom of Libya in 1951, culminating in the 1969 coup led by Muammar Gaddafi. The work is a comprehensive resource for understanding the historical forces that shaped modern Libya (Proshchin,2002).

Also, a book of *Tripoli: The Arab City and its Islamic Architecture.* This explores the history of Tripoli, Libya, as a representative Arab-Islamic city, highlighting its architectural features that embody the city's cultural and social identity across the centuries. It offers an in-depth study of aesthetic elements, and architectural styles that have defined Tripoli, serving as a valuable resource for those interested in the history and development of Arab-Islamic cities. (Amoura,1993).

Also, miss Tully's *Ten Years' Residence at the Court of Tripoli in Africa* (1816) is a primary source offering detailed accounts of Tripoli between 1783 and 1793. Based on 100 letters, this memoir provides vivid descriptions of the city, its urban spaces, and life under the Pasha Yusuf Karamanli during the Barbary period. It explores political intrigues, cultural practices, social dynamics, and the geography of the region, offering valuable insights into Libya's history and interactions with European powers (Tully, 1816). Secondary sources, such as Nura Lafi's Urban Policies and Reforms during the Ottoman Era (2003), complement this perspective by analyzing the administrative policies and urban reforms implemented in Ottoman Tripoli, providing a broader context for the historical development of the city.

This work, first published in 1935s, discusses Tripoli's historical and geographical importance as the "gateway" to the Sahara. It offers rich descriptions of the city's role in trade and its connections to the broader Saharan and Mediterranean regions (Piccioli,1935). The researcher also identified sources on Tripoli's relations with Western countries published by the Documentation and Human Studies Department in the Historical City Management (local authority) as part of a project to organise and manage the old city such as *The Building of the French Consulate in Tripoli on the political and cultural relations between Tripoli and France; and The US Consulate Building in Tripoli on Libyan-American relations*. Several other resources provided valuable information on the city's markets, hotels, archaeological sites, and political and economic relations such as *The markets of the old city of Tripoli*, *Dar Al-Qadi, Hosh Al-Bashawat*, *the big Leptis City*, *Guide to archaeological sites in Libya*, *Tripoli old city hotels*, *six years in Tripoli on the west coast*, and *Arab travellers and their role in writing the political and economic history of Libya*. Moreover, *Arch of Marcus Aurelius in Tripoli* is a significant source of information on ancient Tripoli. All of these important sources were identified and consulted at the Arab Book House, Dar Al-Ferjani publishing house and Tripoli University Library.

The most crucial reference documents were part of a series of planning and legal studies on the old Tripoli city produced in the summer of 2010. These ECOM-developed architectural and urban charters proceeded in five phases, which were all completed before the February 2011 revolution. Lastly, a guide to the historical landmarks of the old city, published by the Historical Cities Administration in 2010(The Old City Blog,2010), provided valuable information on the city's architecture and urban planning. The Old City Blog was an initiative launched in 2010 that focused on documenting and showcasing the historical and cultural significance of the old city of Tripoli, Libya. This blog served as an important platform for raising awareness about the architectural, urban, and cultural heritage of the medina (old Tripoli city) and its historical landmarks (The Old City Blog,2010). ECOM is Engineering Consulting Office for Utilities (ECOM), a Libyan-based organization known for providing consulting services in urban planning, architecture, and infrastructure development. It is involved in projects related to heritage preservation, urban regeneration, and modernization while respecting historical and cultural contexts.

Archival research involves analysing texts and sources such as those identified above, examining time series, and comparing methods across different temporal and spatial contexts to better understand historical evolutions, patterns, and trends. Abou-El-Haj (1983b) highlights the importance of causality and hierarchy in understanding history. According to him, any history that lacks a sense of cause and effect is static (Abou-El-Haj,

1983b). It only presents a series of events without explaining why they occurred or their relative significance. This might be acceptable when merely recording a historical timeline of major events. However, understanding how and why incidents occurred requires connecting as many historical narratives and data as possible to reach fresh explanatory grounds about the overall historical trajectory. Unfortunately, many historians of the story of change in Tripoli are absent from the archives (Abou-El-Haj, 1983a). Most available histories of Libya are overtly political, so scholars have called for a greater focus on the neglected aspects of Libyan history (e.g., social, economic, cultural, and legal history) to develop a more complete understanding of the country's past (Abou-El-Haj, 1983a; Ghanem, 1998). A comprehensive and analytical approach is needed for more inclusive representation of historical perspectives on Tripoli's transformation (Buckley, 2016). This effort requires the integration of multiple narratives and historical data. Therefore, the researcher sought out a wide range of historical sources by Arab and foreign travellers who visited Tripoli to link these narratives to other historical data and perspectives and generate new interpretations of historical events.

3.5.**2. Participation in workshop about *''a protection of cultural heritage''***

The researcher participated in a 2016 training workshop for national cadres on the protection of cultural heritage organised and sponsored by the Tripolitania Heritage Foundation and the Historical City Administration.[1] This workshop allowed the researcher to interact with professionals interested in Tripoli's old city, gain a better understanding of the area, and build relationships with potential interviewees. While attending the workshop, the researcher made field notes and observations to better understand the city's historical context and historical development. All of the participants and experts in attendance were later contacted for the second phase of data collection.

[1] The workshop was held from August 28 to September 1, 2016. The session titles were: 1) Documenting historical monuments by *Khoja Yusef,* 2) The national heritage between national legislation and international conventions by *Mahmoud Dadaq,* 3) Protecting museums in times of crisis by *Ramadan Al Shaibani,* 4) Mechanical assistance and classification of monuments during rescue operations by *Abdul Muttalib Abu Salem* 5) Rapid intervention operations to support the construction of historical and archaeological monuments by engineer *Hossam Bash Imam*, and 6) Negotiation skills during crises by *Al Seddeq Alrquq*.

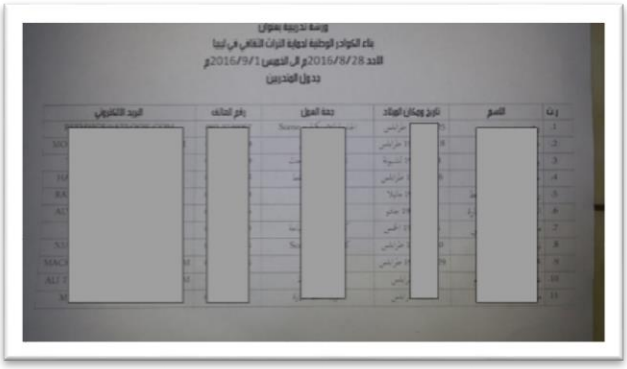

Figure 3. List of names of the participants (professionals with participants anonymised). (Source: researcher's own photograph)

Figure 4. Participants at the Marcus Aurelius historic site. (Source: researcher's own photograph)

Figure 5. Workshop participants at slem Al-Mashat mosque discussing the role of experts and professionals in historical building rehabilitation. (Source: researcher's own photograph with participants anonymised).

3.5.**3. Review methodology of similar studies**

The researcher reviewed a number of doctoral research papers on the old city of Tripoli, but on social aspects such as that by Al-Bandak (2008) *Urban transformation and social change in a Libyan city: An anthropological study of Tripoli*, in which he discussed modernization and migration. Al-Bandak collected information in interviews and compared it with other pieces of related research and quantitative and qualitative research methods. Then he analyzed the quantitative data from the study were using Excel. Despite the scarcity of research in the field of social transformation and change in Tripoli, as Al-Bandak mentioned, the methodology used in his research is a mixed approach using both quantitative and qualitative techniques.

Al-Bandak was able to interview about 300 participants using the question and answer method, which may be appropriate for exploring this phenomenon in general, but may not be appropriate for exploring or studying in-depth, looking for the causes and precise details of this phenomenon. The present study was designed to complement this wider survey and to clarify the details of the reasons behind this phenomenon from a different perspective to that of Al-Bandak (2008), as this research focused specifically on the old Arabic Islamic historical city of Tripoli from the specific perspective of changing urban identity and character in Tripoli's old core.

In this study, extended semi-structured interviews were used using the qualitative research method, some of which lasted for more than 4 hours. They were all in-depth interviews which have provided much detail. With some professional participants, for example, the interview began in their office and then going out to the main street of the old city to proceed as a walking interview (Evans & Jones,2011), in the street which this research used as a case study (discussed in section 3.5), where these interviews were therefore able to combine both observation and interview. The researcher was able to involve 12 specialists in separate open discussions, to ensure confidentiality and not to affect the course of the discussion. The researcher also involved 21 participants from amongst the residents of the main street of the old city, which was mentioned by the expert interviewees for its historical importance, as well as the fact that its residents stay longer in the old city than other residents in other areas of the old city. They are also more aware than others of the conditions of the old city and what is happening in it due to their strategic location in the old city.

3.5.**4. Semi-structured professional interviews**

Social research regularly draws on face-to-face interviews to gain insights into people's perceptions, understandings, and experiences of a given phenomenon. A successful interview is more than a conversation; it requires knowledge and skill on behalf of the interviewer (Frances et al., 2009). The interviewer asks questions to gather subjective information about a particular topic or experience from the interviewee. There is usually a dialogue guided by a flexible interview protocol and supplemented by follow-up questions, probes, and comments. This helps the researcher collect open-ended data, explore participants' thoughts, feelings and beliefs, and delve deep into personal (sometimes sensitive) topics (DeJonckheere and Vaughn, 2019).

The interviewer generally prepares a list of predetermined questions; however, semi-structured interviews unfold in a conversational manner that offers participants the chance to pursue issues they feel are important. Semi-structured interviews may be a stand-alone method or used in conjunction with other methods. They are useful for investigating complex behaviours, opinions, and emotions and for collecting information on a diverse range of experiences. Instead of offering a route to 'the truth', researchers elucidate partial insights about what people do and think. In-depth, semi-structured interviews have made an increasingly significant contribution to geographic research as debates about meaning, identity, subjectivity, politics, knowledge, representation, and power have gained momentum (Longhurst, 2009).

Upon arrival in Tripoli in August 2016, the researcher visited the architecture department at the University of Tripoli to meet a senior academic and mentor [The researcher had previously known this person in a work relationship since 2009]. This individual referred the researcher to the Consultant Office of Housing and Facilities (COHF), where the director expressed a willingness to assist the researcher with the study. An architect in the COHF was instructed to provide the researcher with the most recent studies of the ancient city (the last of which was conducted in the summer of 2010—before the February 2011 revolution). The researcher then visited the Historical City Administration's head office. This agency specialises in planning, arts, cultural programmes, and engineering consultant services to preserve and rehabilitate historic buildings in traditional Libyan cities. The agency also stores almost all of the documents and information about the historic town of Tripoli. All three institutions work together to manage educational and technical workshops, research studies, architectural brochures, and planning for the historical city, as well as providing expertise for maintenance and rehabilitation projects.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the professionals managing and designing the old town or working in the area. These had been identified and contacted during the workshop (section 3.5.2) and totalled 12 individuals. Most of these interviews were conducted in the participants' offices in the Historical Cities Administration building. However, one participant, a high-ranking academic at the University of Tripoli, was interviewed in his home office. Participants first described their educational background, professional practice, and how long they had been working in the old city of Tripoli. Other demographic information collected included property ownership, family size, and approximate family income.

The interviews then turned to the primary challenges residents faced in the old city, their awareness of city projects and plans, and their level of involvement in these initiatives. Interviewees noted any changes they had observed in the functioning of the old city since they started working or living there, including pressures for development, changes in building design and residential density, and common new activities. Other questions focused on the representation of cultures in the old city, and how different cultures spent time in the old city. Participants also reflected on their use of local and Western ideas in their professional practice and how the context of the historic city of Tripoli has influenced their proposed developments. The interview then turned to the participants' knowledge of the 2010 plan for the old city, its implementation, motivations, and effectiveness. Finally,

the participants were given the opportunity to share any other changes they had observed in the old city that were not discussed.

Table 3 presents details about the professional participants, including their educational background and field of expertise. Rather than try to achieve saturation based on sample size, the researcher generated abstract knowledge out of people's perceptions and other evidence. In a case study approach, having a small number of triangulation interviews is not a problem. The participants are identified using only a number (P# for professional) to maintain confidentiality.

Table 3. Overview of the professional interview participants

Participant	**Education background.**	**Experience (years)**	**Field of work**	**Participant [residents]**
P1	Civil engineering. Tripoli University. [Al-Fateh University formerly]	20 years Working in the old city.	Civil engineer and holding a senior city administrative post on in the historic city of Tripoli	Residing in the old city.
P2	Master in library and Information Management Tripoli University.	1991 to present.	Director of the Library of Anwuji House for Culture (Formerly British consulate)	Residing outside the city walls.
P3	High Diploma in Historical Studies.	2 years	Historical consultant	Residing outside the city walls.
P4	B.Sc. information management & Documentation Tripoli University. [Al-Fateh University formerly].	1985 to present.	Director of the Documentation and Information Office of the Historic Cities Administration.	Residing outside the city walls.
P5	University of Tripoli, B. Civil engineer 1973	Since 1985	Consultant to the Historic Cities Administration / Libyan Heritage Protection.	Residing outside the city walls.
P6	University of Tripoli, B.Sc. in Architecture 1979	1 year and 3 months.	Architectural planning, design and management.	Residing outside the city walls.

P7	University of Tripoli, B.Sc. in Architecture University of Pennsylvania, Ph.D., M.Sc., M.A	2 years (1989-1990)	Architectural design and urban planning.	Residing outside the city walls.
P8	Architectural & town planning. Arch, History of Arch, theories and design.	1 year.	Arch Design, Supervision, Arch and studies.	Residing outside the city walls.
P9	Town planning [Al-Fateh University formerly].	5 Months	Arch Design, Supervision, Arch and studies The Higher college for Town Planning/Tripoli	Residing outside the city walls.
P10	Department of Architecture and Planning, University of Tripoli	4 Months	Architectural design, architectural contests, supervision, workshops.	Residing outside the city walls.
P11	Architectural. Department of Architecture and Planning, University of Tripoli	6 months	Arch Design, Supervision, Site survey and architectural presentation.	Residing outside the city walls.
P12	Design, Supervision, Reports and site survey University of Tripoli.	6 Months	History of Arch, theories and design architecture.	Residing outside the city walls.

3.5.5. Door-to-door resident questionnaire survey of residents in the case study street

The main street of the old city was used as a case study (see section 3.5) and its residents were approached to complete interviews. Addressing equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in the recruitment of any research participants is crucial to ensure that the study is representative, fair, and sensitive to the differences within the population being studied. Incorporating EDI considerations allows the research to reflect the varied experiences, needs, and perspectives of different demographic groups, thus producing more comprehensive and valid results. Key EDI considerations for recruitment, and how this research dealt with them, are examined below.

3.5.5.**1. Equity in Access to Participation**

Inclusive Sampling: One street was used as a case study (see section 3.5) and all dwellings were approached. It was confirmed that all participants were residents of the same street (Turner, 2020), and the researcher ensured that all relevant backgrounds, including marginalized or underrepresented groups if any, had an equal opportunity to participate in the research, and avoiding exclusionary practices or barriers such as location, language, or socioeconomic status. The researcher was able to offer interviews in Arabic (which was preferred) or English. While a gender mix was ideal, for cultural reasons female residents preferred not to be interviewed. The researcher also sought an approach to recruitment that did not favour any particular group over others (Bendick & Nunes, 2012). In terms of Access to Participation, all households of the street were contacted to ensures the findings represent a wide range of experiences and perspectives. It was confirmed that all of those involved in the sample had lived in study street in old city core of Tripoli for a varying degree of time. There has been strong socio-cultural interaction amongst the people in the old Tripoli.

3.5.5.**2. Inclusion in Research Design and Participation**

Research methods and language that are respectful of and relevant to the cultural and social contexts of diverse participants were used. This was done by using the experience and skills of the researcher who is fluent and understands the same language and local culture which does not require translators (Choi et al. 2012). However, the research was designed by the researcher, using his familiarity with the culture, language and area: potential participants were not involved in the survey design.

3.5.5.**3. Ethical Considerations**

Informed Consent: The research was discussed the participants and ensured that they fully understood the purpose of the research, their rights, and the implications of participation. Also, complete confidentiality and anonymity of participants and protection of their privacy have been ensured (Kang and Hwang, 2023).

3.5.5 **4. Engagement and Feedback**

Community Involvement: A professional was employed by the agency [''The new agency'', i.e. The Old City of Tripoli Administration Board (OCTAB). This was formerly The Technical Agency for Organizing and Managing the Old City of Tripoli (TAOMOCT) (Ejroushi, 2024)], to facilitate the researcher's contact with the local population, to help build trust, and to ensure that the interviews were conducted smoothly, due to the security conditions in the city of Tripoli at that time. Through using this facilitator, the researcher sought to increase participation, and ensure that the research was designed and conducted in ways that respect the values and needs of the local resident community. By actively incorporating EDI considerations in the recruitment process, researchers can ensure that their studies are not only more ethical and representative but also more insightful and robust in their findings. This approach leads to research outcomes that can better inform policies or interventions aimed at achieving social justice and reducing inequalities.

Semi-structured, door-to-door surveys (n=21) were carried out with Tripoli residents (four households did not wish to participate). Many people were reluctant to allow the interviewer inside their homes due to the current security situation, so most of these interviews were conducted outdoors. One resident was willing to be interviewed inside his shop during working hours, and another interview was conducted inside a school administration office.

By conducting the interviews in the open air, the researcher was able to respect the privacy and personal space of the residents. This helped build trust between the researcher and participants and encouraged them to open up and share their experiences more freely. Moreover, the outdoor setting provided a neutral ground for both the researcher and the participants, which helped to minimise any problems of power dynamics that may have been present in a more formal, and more personal, indoor setting.

Additionally, the fresh air and natural environment may have helped to create a more relaxed and informal atmosphere, which in turn contributed to the success of the interviews.

Table 4 provides information on the residents surveyed, including duration of residence in the old city and tenure status. As with the professionals surveyed, these interviewees are identified using only a number (R#, for residents) to maintain confidentiality.

Table 4. Overview of the resident interview participants

Participant	**Duration of residence in the old city**	**Original owner / ''residents''**	**Owner / *Attaba** [threshold]**
R0	Since birth, in 1950.	Original Resident	Owner
R1	His father bought this house in 1950.	Original Resident	Owner
R2	Since 1981	Non-Original owner.	*Attaba*
R3	Since 1995.	Non-Original owner	*Attaba*
R4	City since 1985	Non-Original owner	*Attaba*
R5	Since birth.	Non-Original owner	Owner
R6	Since birth.	Non-Original owner	Owner
R7	since 2002	Non-Original owner	Renter via *Attaba*
R8	Since 2003	Non-Original Owner	*Attaba*
R9	Since 1992	Non-Original Owner.	*Attaba*
R10	Since 2007	Non-Original Owner.	*Attaba*
R11	Since 1963.	Original Resident	Owner.
R12	Since 1953	Original Resident	Owner.
R13	Since 1960	Original Resident	Owner.
R14	Since 2003	Non-Original Owner.	*Attaba*
R15	Since birth.	Original Resident	Owner.
R16	Since 1981	Non-Original Owner.	*Attaba*
R17	Since birth.	Non-Original Owner.	Owner.
R18	Since birth.	Original Resident	Owner.

R19	Since birth.	Original Resident	Owner.
R20	Since birth.	Original Resident	Owner.

* The *Attaba* is a property [building/land] sold without official papers. According to the Libyan proverbs it can mean “sugar in water”, “under the table”, “in the black market”. The "threshold" system in rents is linked to the implementation of Law No. 4 of 1978 in Libya, known as the "House for its Occupant Law". This law was part of the socialist policies adopted by the Libyan state under Muammar Gaddafi, and its aim was to abolish private ownership of residential real estate and transfer it to users ''residents'' (Gaddafi,1975).

3.5.6. Ensuring Rigor and Integrity:

In this research, addressing methodological considerations related to reliability, validity, generalisability, and positionality is essential to ensure the rigor and integrity of the study.

3.5.6 **1. Reliability**

Reliability refers to the consistency of the research findings and whether the same results could be achieved if the study were repeated under similar conditions. To ensure reliability, the following strategies were implemented:

Standardized Procedures: Consistent methods for data collection were used throughout the study. For example, interview guides and was followed strictly, ensuring all participants are asked the same core questions (Kabir, 2016). Data Recording and Documentation: All interviews were recorded and transcribed accurately to ensure that the researcher can refer back to the original responses (Al-Yateem, 2012). They were translated from Arabic into English for analysis, as accurately as possible (Akan et al., 2019). This allows for reliable analysis across the two phases of the research. The researcher carefully coded and analysed the qualitative data (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019).

3.5.6 **2. Validity**

Validity is the extent to which the research accurately measures or captures what it intends to study. To address validity in the research, both in the context of qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Thomson, 2011)., the following were considered. Construct Validity: Ensuring that the concepts being studied are clearly defined and operationalized (Strauss & Smith, 2009), for example, “Islamic city”, “Arab city” and Arab-Islamic city” could be interpreted slightly differently, so a consistent approach has been taken. The problems of construct validity across Arabic and English language is discussed elsewhere with specific reference to the concept of ‘urban decay’. Triangulation: Using multiple methods or data sources to cross-check findings (Carter et al., 2014). In this research, this involved using interviews, observations, and document analysis to corroborate data. After interviews and data collection, participants were asked to review their answers to verify that their perspectives have been accurately captured. This helped to enhance the credibility of the study and avoid skewed or inaccurate results.

3.5.6 **3. Generalisability**

Generalisability refers to the extent to which the findings of the study can be applied to other settings, populations, or contexts; and qualitative research also addresses it through transferability—the applicability of findings to similar contexts (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). In this study, purposive sampling is employed to ensure a diverse and relevant sample which could be generalisable to other Arabic-Islamic cities that have undergone immigration. Thick Description: In qualitative research, detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and the phenomena being studied allow others to judge whether the findings might apply to other contexts. In this study, this relates to the detail given in the discussion of results and analysis. Replicability: Providing clear, detailed information about the research process, data collection methods, and analysis techniques ensures that future researchers can replicate the study and verify whether similar results are achieved in different settings or with different populations. The detail given in this chapter should allow the approach to be replicated in other Arabic-Islamic cities.

3.5.7. Positionality and reflexivity:

Positionality acknowledges the researcher's background, beliefs, and social position, which may influence the research process and interpretation of findings (Holmes, 2020). The researcher has reflected on how their own status (e.g., as a male, Libyan academic, local resident, or outsider), and the power dynamics of the research process, influence the participants' willingness to share information or the interpretation of urban changes in the old Tripoli. This has informed the research design. Efforts were made to ensure that participants felt comfortable and empowered to share their experiences, as this is critical to minimizing the influence of the researcher's positionality.

In some research contexts, involving participants in the research design or analysis can help to balance the influence of the researcher's positionality and make the process more equitable. In this case it was felt that this was impracticable for the resident interviews given the restricted number of respondent households and the cultural/gender issues faced. The researcher's own background gave some familiarity with these issues and how they could be managed. Addressing these methodological considerations not only strengthens the credibility of the research, but also ensures that the findings are more robust, ethically sound, and applicable to a wider range of contexts. In qualitative research, providing detailed descriptions of the method and process of data analysis is crucial for transparency and credibility (Tuval-Mashiach, 2017). It helps clarify how themes emerged from the data and provides insights into the researcher's approach to interpreting participants' responses. The analysis process used here, resulting in the identification of 5 key themes, was as follows:

3.5.7.**1. Data Familiarization**

The first step was becoming deeply familiar with the data. This began during data collection (e.g., interviews, observations). The researcher immersed himself in the data to grasp the nuances of participants' responses. Transcription: the data collected via interviews were transcribed verbatim in Arabic then translated into English. Although this had some difficulties (Inhetveen,2012), transcription nevertheless persevered the richness of the data, including tone, pauses, and emphasis, which are essential for interpretation. Being done personally rather than by machine transcription/translation means that the researcher reads and re-reads the transcripts to gain a holistic understanding of the data and identify potential patterns or recurring ideas. This is the first step toward identifying emerging themes.

3.5.7.**2. Coding the Data**

Coding is the process of systematically labelling segments of the data with descriptive tags that capture the essence of the information (Rogers, 2018). These codes help to organize the data into meaningful categories. During the first round of coding, the researcher applied open codes to every meaningful segment of text (e.g., sentences, paragraphs, or phrases). These initial codes were very broad and descriptive, summarizing what is being said without pre-imposing any interpretations. For example, where the participants spoke about changes in neighbourhood dynamics, the early codes such as "migration effects," "modernization," and "community changes" may be applied to different parts of the transcript. Subsequently, in Line-by-Line Coding, every line of the transcript is examined for key ideas or concepts, which ensures that no important detail is missed, using a highlighted colour by hand (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). This method is particularly useful for identifying nuances in participant responses. It greatly facilitated the emergence and identify of the five themes in this research. The small number of responses meant that the researcher could do this personally, thus developing an extremely detailed familiarity with the data, rather than using an automated approach such as NVIVO.

3.5.7.**3. Grouping Codes into Categories**

After the initial open coding process, codes were grouped into categories based on commonalities. This is the stage where researcher begins to look for broader patterns or categories that connect the initial codes. In Axial Coding, the researcher looked for relationships between the codes, clustering them into broader categories or sub-themes. For example, codes related to "community changes," "modernization," and "social transformation" might be grouped into a larger category such as "urban change". As categories begin to take shape, the researcher refined the codes to ensure consistency and accuracy. Redundant or overlapping codes might be combined, while codes that seem too broad or vague may be broken down into more specific sub-codes.

3.5.7.**4. Identifying and emerging themes**

Themes are more abstract than categories. They represent recurring concepts, ideas, or patterns of meaning that emerge from the data and form the backbone of the research findings (Wicks, 2017). The researcher analysed the categories to identify overarching themes. These themes should be strongly supported by the data, reflecting the participants' perspectives and the research question. For example: if many participants discuss how migration is altering their sense of belonging, a theme such as "Changing identity and belonging in response to urban migration" might emerge. In an inductive approach, themes emerge directly from the data without the researcher applying any pre-existing framework. This is common in exploratory studies. Theme Saturation: the researcher kept identifying and refining themes until thematic saturation was reached, meaning that no new themes are emerging from the data. This indicates that enough data has been collected and analysed to capture the full range of experiences or views related to the research question.

3.5.7.**5. Reviewing and Refining Themes**

Once the initial themes are identified, the researcher reviewed them to ensure that they accurately represent the data and are distinct from one another. The researcher then validates the themes by revisiting the original data (transcripts, field notes) to ensure that the themes are well-supported and grounded in participants' responses. If a theme does not have sufficient data to back it up, it may be discarded or merged with another.

Themes should be distinct, yet interrelated in a coherent manner. The researcher examined whether the themes together tell a cohesive story that addresses the research questions. In some cases, themes are structured hierarchically, with broad themes containing sub-themes. For example, a broad theme like "Social Change" might contain sub-themes such as "Economic Impact," "Cultural Shifts," and "Community Networks."

3.5.7.**6. Finalizing and Naming Themes**

The final set of themes was reviewed and given descriptive names that encapsulate their essence. This is an important step, as the themes form the core findings of the study and need to communicate the data effectively (Vaismoradi et al. 2016 & Naeem et al., 2023). Each theme was given a concise, descriptive name that accurately reflects its content. To substantiate the themes, direct quotes from participants are included in the analysis. These quotes serve as evidence and demonstrate how the theme is rooted in the data. For example, for a theme on "Migration impacts," a participant might be quoted saying, "When people started moving in from the suburbs, the sense of community changed. It's like we're all strangers now."

3.5.7.**7. Writing Up the Findings**

The final step involves writing up the analysis, where themes are presented alongside supporting evidence from the data. The researcher explains how each theme emerged, how it relates to the research question, and what the implications of these findings are. The themes are woven into a narrative that answers the research questions, highlights participants' experiences, and addresses the broader implications of the findings.

3.6. The Case Study: Tripoli as a Historical City

A case study is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the ‘case’) in depth and within its real-world context” (Yin, 2014). Case study research is an all-encompassing method that includes a logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis. Tripoli is an ideal case, as it holds immense historical significance as the cultural, political, and economic capital of Libya (Remali and Abudib, 2022). It also has a longer history and more written documentation than any other historical city in Libya. This study focused on Francis Street, the most significant historical street in Tripoli's old city. It runs from the Marcus Aurelius Arch to the Freedom Gate, passing through four of the city's six zones (see Figure 6).

Historical Tripoli’s significance spans a number of historical periods, including the Phoenician era, Roman era, Ottoman era, the Al-Qarunli era, the second Ottoman era, the Italian era, the British mandate, the era of King Libya, the Gaddafi era, and the post-Gaddafi era. The city is Libya’s cultural, political, and economic capital, largest city, and the site of many notable events. It is considered a source of culture and has a dominant influence on the Libyan urban identity. The city hosts several of Libya’s largest universities, including the University of Tripoli (formerly Al-Fateh University), the largest and most important governmental university.

Tripoli’s geographical location on the Mediterranean makes it Libya’s most important port and sea outlet (and one of the most important outlets for all of North Africa). Tripoli has long been a significant trade centre, exporting commercial goods to and from Libya, Sudan, Chad, Malta, and the southern coast of Italy (Remali and Abudib, 2022). It has also served as Libya’s capital and largest residential community for centuries and remains a significant cultural and heritage site with exceptional urban form and architecture. Moreover, Tripoli exerts cultural influence over other ancient and modern Libyan cities, making it the cultural source of Libyan urban identity (Fuller, 2000). It is, therefore, essential to safeguard the city’s unique cultural identity for future generations and prevent the loss of originality in the face of modern cultural differences (Remali and Abudib, 2022). This requires a concerted effort to document and preserve cultural heritage, including the urban form, architecture, and traditional customs and practices (Elkekli, 2014).

Figure 6. Francis Street and the six administrative divisions of Tripoli's old city. (Source: Tripoli City Council)

3.7. Study Limitations

The security situation presented serious challenges when researching in Tripoli. The city was often subject to mobility bans and restrictions, making it difficult to move around and access different areas. Therefore, during the field research the researcher resided near the historic city to minimise the need for frequent movement that could have been affected by such restrictions. Another challenge involved translating Arabic interviews into English—to accurately convey the intended meaning of each word as well as each whole sentence.

Encouraging people to simply participate in the interviews presented another persistent challenge. The researcher worked closely with local community leaders and organisations to build trust and establish relationships. This helped increase participation rates and ensure that a diverse range of perspectives were represented in the research findings. Nevertheless, many people remained unwilling to participate. Gender dynamics also presented a challenge during the interviews, particularly when the male interviewer was interviewing women. The researcher chose to have a representative from the agency sit in on the personal interviews to facilitate communication and ensure respect for cultural norms.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are a crucial component of any qualitative study, as they ensure that the rights and dignity of the participants are protected throughout the research process. This study followed the principles of respect, beneficence, no maleficence, and justice. These themes were mutually beneficial for both the participant and the researcher. The researcher remained open to dialogue (spoken and written) with the participants to ensure that each participant's voice was heard and respected. This helped to maintain the participants' trust and confidence and ensure that the findings are trustworthy and valid (Aluwihare-Samaranayake, 2012).

Participant anonymity was a key ethical consideration to protect participant privacy, for both the professional and resident interviewees. No data collected or quotations used in this thesis can be attributed to a specific individual. All the data was stored in a secure location during the research, and research information and audio recordings will be securely destroyed after the project is complete. This protects participants from any potential negative consequences that could arise from their participation in the study.

Transparency is another critical aspect of the ethical process. The researcher made sure that participants were aware of the research objectives, methodology, and potential risks and benefits of participating in the study. Informed consent was obtained before the research began, and the participant could withdraw from the study at any time with no repercussions. Transparency in the research process also entails reporting both negative and positive results so that the findings are not biased towards a particular outcome.

3.9. Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the methodology employed in this study on how cultural values influence the built environment and urban form in ancient Arabic-Islamic cities. The study utilised an interpretivist, qualitative research design using Tripoli, Libya as a case study. The study featured a two-phase approach. The first phase involved archival research, field visits, and attending a workshop; the second phase included interviews, reviews of city planning documents (e.g., master plans, zoning codes, and design guidelines) and a site survey, which included taking measurements, photographs, and observational notes. Archival analysis and content analysis were employed to investigate the historical significance of the old city and the changes to its urban structure over time. Reliability, validity, research positionality, and ethics were carefully considered throughout the research process.

Chapter Four: The Case of Tripoli

4.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the location, history, growth, development, and significant physical features (e.g., topography and present condition) of Tripoli's traditional old city. Along the way, it provides detailed information about surviving historic structures and numerous maps illustrating the key buildings, land uses, and related features that help create and reshape the identity of the historic city. Most urban planning and architecture studies on Tripoli (both historical and modern) focus only on physical forms (Rghei and Nelson, 1994). They try to explain the end product—the urban form and physical character of the old city—but fail to examine the processes producing such results, consideration of which is becoming increasingly important in academic analysis (Larkham and Conzen, 2014). This chapter draws on a collection of references in both Arabic and English, including published books, articles, academic publications and information, pictures, graphics created post-observation, and official city documents.

Tripoli is the capital of Libya, a country in the central region of North Africa that shares borders with six neighbouring countries. Libya is subdivided into three regions that reflect the diversity of Libyan cultural identity and influence the identities of the major settlements in each region (Figure 7). The city of Tripoli is situated in the far north-western part of the country. It sits on the Mediterranean Sea, with its eastern (coastal) side being only three meters above current sea level. The city's elevation gradually increases to 23 meters above sea level in the north-west (Figure 8).

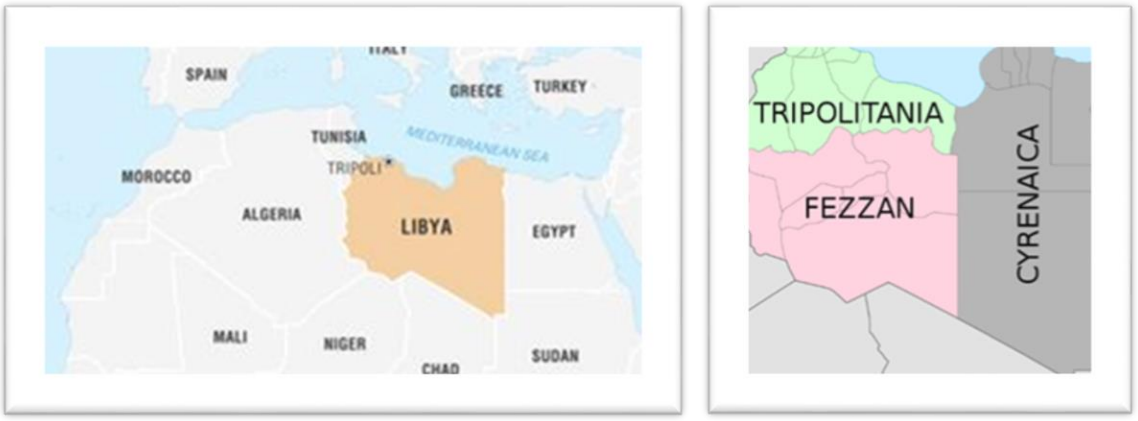

Figure 7. Tripoli within Libya (left); Libya's constituent regions of Tripolitania, Cyrenaica, and Fezzan (right) (Source: Grigoriadis and Kassem, 2021)

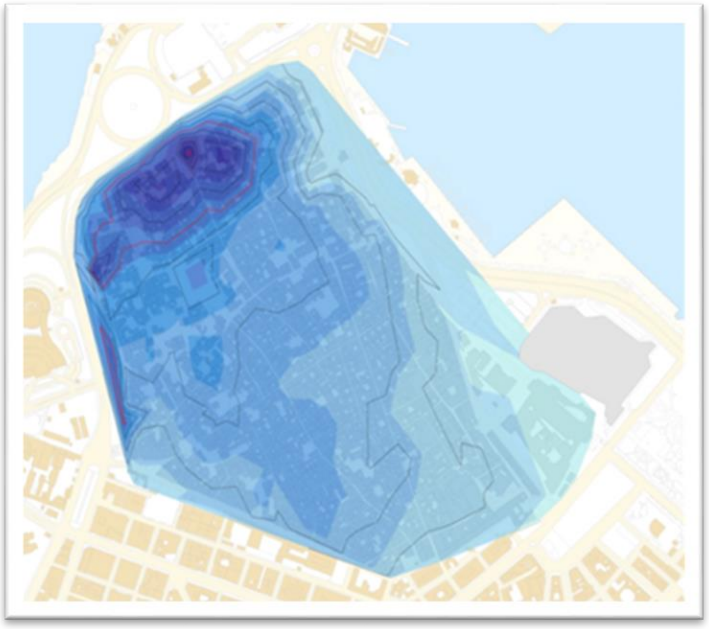

Figure 8. Topography of the ancient city, with darker colours representing higher elevations. (Source: Tripoli City Council)

4.2. A brief history of Tripoli's old city: The beginning to 2011

This section traces how Tripoli's old city has developed from the fifth century through the Roman period, the Ottoman period, the Italian colonial period, the British mandate period, the Libyan Kingdom period, and the Gaddafi period (which ended with the Libyan Revolution in February 2011).

4.2.**1. The Roman period**

Tripoli was founded by the Phoenicians between the fifth and seventh centuries BC as a safe port, regional administration centre, and subsidiary of Carthage. The city, then called Makar Oyat, developed into one of the most important Mediterranean ports due to its unique position (Al-Telisi, 1985). Oyat (alongside Leptis Magna and Sabratha) came under Roman rule after the Roman Civil War and Julius Caesar's victory over Pompeii in 46 BC. The cities were governed under a new province called Africa Nova within the Reggio Certica region. It was likely renamed Oia or Oya around this time (Al-Telisi, 1985).

The Roman Empire and various tribal groups in the region had a complex relationship in the first century AD (Mattingly, 1983). For example, in 96 AD, a conflict erupted between the cities of Oia and Leptis Magna over control of certain territories. The people of Oia sought assistance from the Carmanian tribes in Fezzan, who invaded and destroyed the surrounding areas of Greater Leptis. However, the Roman army, led by Valerius Festus, intervened to re-establish security in the city. They expelled the Carmanites and pursued them to Fezzan, ultimately restoring Roman control over the region.

The now infamous Marcus Aurelius Arch was built between 163 and 164 (i.e., the second century) as part of a larger monumental complex celebrating the emperor's military campaigns and achievements. In 193, Lucius Septimius Severus, a native of Leptis Magna, became Emperor of Rome, ruling from 193 to 211. His reign was marked by significant military campaigns in the Middle East and North Africa; he was also responsible for major building projects in Rome and throughout the empire. As the first African emperor of Rome, Severus' ascension signalled a shift in power towards the eastern provinces (Southern, 2015).

In the third century, the Romans created the new administrative region of Regio Tripolitana within the larger province of Numidia. This new region included the city of Oia, which was annexed to the centre of the Leptis Magna region. This administrative change signalled the region's continued importance to the Roman Empire and helped to consolidate Roman control over the area. In 303, Emperor Diocletian established the province of Tripolitana (Provincia), with Leptis as its capital. However, a devastating earthquake and sea flood in July 365 caused extensive damage to Leptis Magna and Sabrat (and other regions including Crete, Cyrenaica, Alexandria, eastern Greece, and Sicily (Al-Telisi, 1985)). In the fifth century, the Vandals invaded (455 AD) the coasts of North Africa. The collapse of the Western Roman Empire in 476 further disrupted the region and, by 533, the Byzantine Empire had conquered North Africa, including Tripolitana (Al-Telisi, 1985).

4.2.**2. The Arab period**

The Arabic Islamic army led by Amr ibn al-Aas conquered Oia in 643. In 647, Abdullah bin Saad led a campaign in southern Tunisia, and Carta Jannah was most likely conquered the next year. Kairouan was founded in 670 as a centre from which to rule the Maghreb countries under the Umayyad Caliphate, and the city of Oia was renamed Tripolitania (Al-Telisi, 1985). Byzantine fortifications were replaced and new walls were built to surround the entire city, including the seaward side by 796. The Abadis established a state over part of the area surrounding Tripoli between 757 and 761 until the Abbasid army destroyed it (Hoyland, 2001).

The Abbasid caliphate's rule over Tripoli ended in 909, and they were replaced with the Fatimid caliphate (Hoyland, 2001). The Great Fatimid Mosque was built during Fatimid rule. The Al-Naqa Mosque (She-camel Mosque) was also rebuilt between Fatimid caliph al-Muizz Li Din Allah's visits to Tripoli in 971 and 972. Between 972 and 1027, Tripoli was annexed by the Zirid Kingdom (a Berber dynasty). However, the Fatimids attempted to regain control of the lost territories. From 1146 to 1158, Norman knights occupied Tripoli and annexed it into the Kingdom of Sicily. However, the Almohads conquered Tripoli in 1160 (Hoyland, 2001).

The traveller Abu Muhammad Abdullah al-Tijani observed Tripoli during his journeys in 1307 and 1308 (Al-Telisi, 1997). Al-Tijani provided the first detailed descriptions of several prominent landmarks, including the fortifications (walls, castles, ditches) and the city centre (Brett, 2015). He claimed that the city streets intersected like a chessboard and were easy to cross; they were also wider and cleaner than in most other cities. This led him to dub Tripoli "the white city." This is an archetype of Roman colonian urban layouts.

Figure 9. A three-dimensional illustration of Tripoli, dating back to the sixteenth century.
(Source: Tripoli City Council)

The Spanish army, led by Count Pedro de Navarro, invaded and governed Tripoli from 1510 to 1551. de Navarro was deeply impressed by Tripoli (Vella, 1975), describing it as a city with unparalleled fortifications and cleanliness and comparing it to the centre of an empire (Al-Telisi, 1985). Batistino de Tones added that the city was situated on a flat quadrangular plot stretching over one mile, surrounded by a double wall and a deep narrow moat as shown in figure 9. The outer wall was small and low, while the second wall was tall, thick, and topped with strong towers (Al-Telisi, 1985). The impressive walled port city was said to have been inhabited by more than ten thousand Moroccans and some Jews (Abun-Nasr, 1987).

4.2.**3. The Ottoman period**

In 1551, the Ottoman ruler Sinan Pasha invaded the city with the help of the emir of the sea, Darghout. Tripoli experienced significant changes and developments during this first Ottoman era (1551 to 1711). Nevertheless, Tripoli continued to thrive economically from large trade and maritime revenues. The locals often seized European ships to add to their wealth (Abun-Nasr, 1987). Figure 10 depicts various landmarks and monuments that existed in 1567, at the end of the Maltese era. The map depicts the castle (Al-Saraya Al-Hamra), along with the customs gate Porta della Dogana, Bab Al-Bahr, Marcus Aurelius, St. Peter's

Tower at the northern end, and the "Castilleggio" castle along the rocky sea wall. It also features two Christian monuments: the tomb of Saint Lazaro, located north of Sidi Haddar Street, and the tomb of Saint Giorgio, located near Bab Zanata (The Old City Blog, 2010).

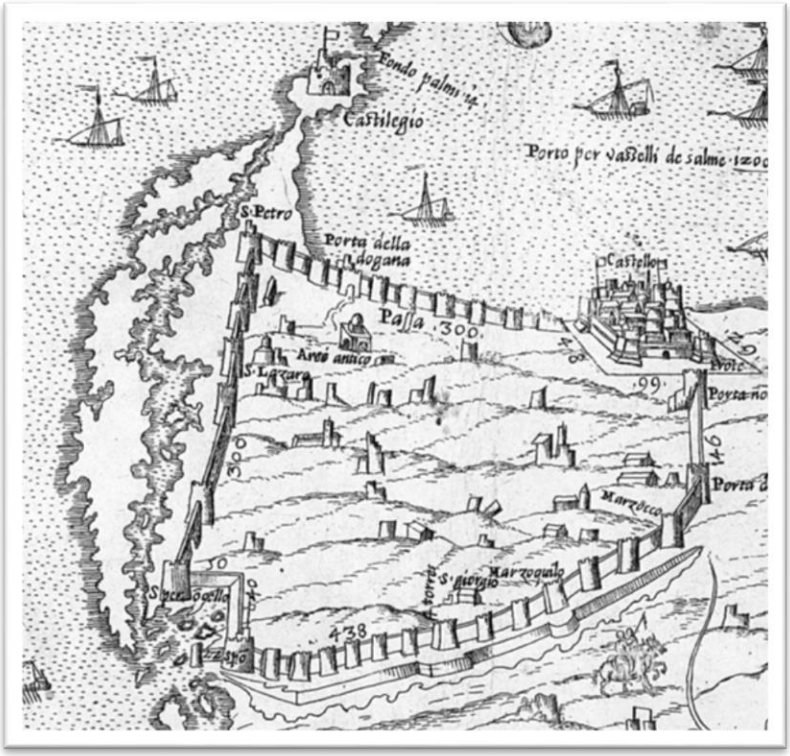

Figure 10. Tripoli in 1567, at the end of the Maltese era
(Source: Tripoli City Council)

The Ottomans played a significant role in the fortification, construction, and restoration of the city. New construction included Darghouth Tower, Turab Tower, and the south-eastern wall which was connected to the gunpowder house. The Darghouth Bath was built in 1604, and the Camel Mosque and Al-Kharouba Mosque were restored shortly thereafter. The 'greatest mosque' (probably partially located on the site of the present-day Ahmed Pasha Mosque), Darghut Bash Mosque, and Sidi Salem Mosque remained the most important mosques until the end of the seventeenth century. Othman Pasha built his grand school, the Great Hotel, and the Great Bath in 1654, and constructed the mosque that bears his name (and several smaller mosques) in 1699 (The Old City Blog, 2010).

Figure 1. A simulated military assault by European forces on the city of Tripoli (1551).
The figure shows the city's fortifications with the Ottoman castle, Marcus Aurelius Arch, the city's entrances, and the city's strong relationship with its important harbour.
(Source: Tripoli City Council)

Figure 2. The oldest mosques and the skyline of old Tripoli.
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya)

Figure 3. Old Tripoli in the Qara Manli era (1711- 1835).
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya)

In a 1675 sketch, Sargon Siler depicted the Ottoman restoration and reorganisation of the old city (The Old City Blog, 2010) (Figure 12). It shows three mosques, each with circular minarets (i.e., "The Greatest Mosque" located near the present-day Ahmed Pasha Mosque, Darghouth Mosque, and Sidi Salem Mosque). Figure 13 depicts ancient Tripoli during the Qara Manli era. It includes the Ottoman flag, as well as European flags at the British, French, and Spanish consulates. This reflects the significant contact between Tripoli and European powers at the time—the beginning of external influences on the local economy and culture. While Ahmed Pasha's rule (1711-1745 AD) fell within the broader timeline of European involvement with Tripoli, it was not the inception of these relations. European powers had diplomatic and militaristic contact with Tripoli from the Qara Manli era.

Between 1633 and 1672, several agreements were signed with European countries to open consulates in the city (Abun-Nasr, 1987). These developments are confirmed by a British map from 1675 and several drawings from the seventeenth century. This challenges the notion of isolationism (a so-called 'iron curtain') often associated with the Ottoman Empire (Faroqhi, 2004). The significant contact between Tripoli and European powers impacted the local culture, economy, and identity. Most of these interactions involved trade and maritime activities since European powers actively sought to establish commercial agreements to ensure safe passage for their ships through the Mediterranean. By 1885, European business ventures and investments had gained prominence, fostering the development of modern business institutions in Tripoli, including numerous (British and Maltese) bakeries, mills, shops, wholesale stores, and firms (Ahmida, 1953; Dyer, 1984).

In the early nineteenth century, Tripoli was a modest city surrounded by green areas with a population of about 12,000. However, it experienced continuous growth and had become an urban centre with approximately 30,000 inhabitants by the 1870s. Tripoli's strategic location between East and West (and Europe and Africa) contributed to its development as a trading hub and emerging urban society (Lafi, 2003). Tripoli came under direct Ottoman administration via Istanbul in 1835. It was the Ottoman Empire's westernmost bastion and most peripheral province from 1843 to 1911. The Ottomans undertook significant European-inspired modernisation efforts in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These reforms—known as the *Tanzimat*—encompassed various fields, including the reorganisation of the military and local administrations. Tripoli demonstrates how the Ottoman periphery inspired a renewal movement and the administrative modernisation required to maintain centralised influence (Lafi, 2003).

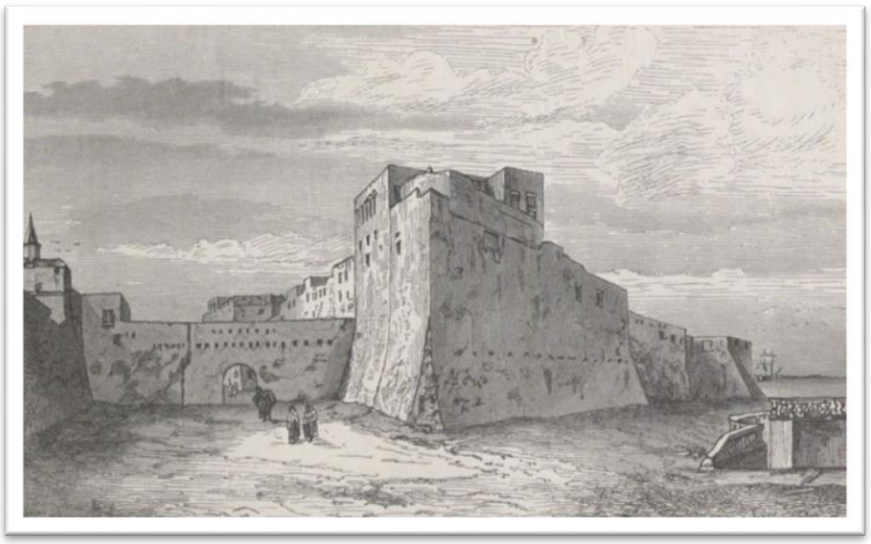

Figure 4. The Red Palace, 1874
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya)

Figure 5. The Red Palace, 1901
(Source: Mathuisieulx, 1901)

Figure 14 depicts the entrance to the old city, the Red Palace, in 1874. It also features the minarets of the Ahmed Pasha and Al-Qaramanli mosques and a portion of the harbour. Figure 15 captures the exterior of the Red Palace and the surrounding walls of the Arab city of Tripoli in 1901, at the conclusion of the second Ottoman era. The relatively spacious streets outside the city walls contrast with the narrow streets and alleys within the old city. These broad thoroughfares offered enough space for four animals to pass side by side. However, the narrow alleys could only accommodate a single animal in select areas. Figure 16 (left) features the minaret of Ahmed Pasha Al-Qaramanli Mosque and the Ottoman Clock Tower inside the city walls (left of the palm trees) and the Red Saraya (right) of the palm

trees. These structures, featuring semi-circular Arab arches, were located outside the walls of the Ottoman Arab city and flanked both sides of the road.

Figure 6. Tripoli's streets (outside city walls) in the late second Ottoman era (left); the view from inside the city walls (right).
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya).

The economic and political ties between Tripoli and the hinterland were strengthened during this period. The city provided essential political and economic services (e.g., public buildings and markets) and urban institutions gradually replaced traditional tribal structures after military defeats and the Ottoman expansion. This led to a decline in hinterland trade and prompted tribal migration to northern Libya, where new job opportunities with British and Italian businesses were available (Ahmida, 1953).

Capitalism and the decline of the Sahara trade transformed the traditional social structure in Tripolitania. Four distinct classes emerged: the merchant class, closely tied to the British and Italian capitals; a salaried class with landownership and connections to the Ottoman state administration; labourers, including tribesmen; and urban wage labourers (Le Gall, 1986). The Ottoman era also brought significant economic, social, and architectural changes and a significant change in the city's urban identity. Tripoli was encircled by walls containing numerous defensive towers and four gates. The fortifications formed a semi-triangle with the apex situated in the north. The northwest part, facing the sea, was guarded by a natural rock barrier, and a waterway across the port hosted docks and moorings. Two more defensive towers were positioned outside the city walls on natural rocks: the Abu Leila Tower (previously the Francis Tower) and the Mandrak Tower (Neck Tower).

In the 1860s and 1870s, Tripoli's primary trading partners included (first and foremost) England, France, the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, Tunisia, Austria, the United States, and Germany. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, Italy had emerged as Libya's second-largest trading partner. Italy's policy of cultural and economic penetration was

orchestrated through the Italian consulate and the Banco di Roma. Between 1876 and 1911, Italy established 12 schools in Libya and began investing in various sectors, including real estate, olive oil and esparto processing factories, flour mills, an ice cream factory, and a printing house (Ahmida, 1953). The bank offered low-interest loans that contributed to significant economic changes and the development of capitalism in the region.

4.2.**4. The Italian occupation and British mandate**

During the Italian occupation (1911-1943), the Western model was a direct imposition (rather than simply a matter of influence). A new European-Italian part of Tripoli was developed, separate from the traditional Arab medina, Arab quarter, and Jewish quarter. Ethel Brown, a traveller who visited 'New Tripoli' in 1914, described the social and environmental aspects of Libyan society in the first years after the Italian invasion (Brown, 2010). The Italians intended to preserve the ancient city while creating a separate European city to serve as a winter resort for Europeans. Italian rule was characterised by a military administration focused on developing the Port of Tripoli and constructing a new city on the eastern side (Rashid, 2021). Consumer capitalism, colonialism, and power inequality also shaped the transformation of Tripoli under Italian rule (Rashid, 2021).

Figure 17 depicts the transformation of a section of the old city near the Red Serail (Palace). The Italians undertook developments to connect the old Ottoman Arab city with the newly established Italian neighbourhood just outside the city walls (illustrated in yellow and black). The modern aerial image shows the other half of the developed area. The blue ring encircles the point where martyrs (revolutionaries against the Italian occupation) were executed in 1911 (Figure 17). This square became known as Martyrs' Square during the reign of King Idris, but its name was changed to Green Square during the Gaddafi era. Following the revolution on 17 February 2011, it reverted to the name Martyrs' Square.

Figure 7. The historical transformation connecting the old city with the Italian neighbourhood just outside the city walls. (Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya).

Figure 8. Martyrs' Square in the Italian era, 1939
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya)

Figure 18 illustrates Tripoli around World War I, just as the historic city began to extend beyond its walls. While the main streets of the expansion area are present, all walls of the city still remain. Figure 19 is a 1912 shown the old city, harbour, and the green area around the city. Figure 20 shows the Ottoman castle Qal'at Pasha (now called Saraya al-Hamra) from the sea, while Figure 21 the retained walls, 1919. Figure 22. The Martyrs' Square outside the castle walls(right). This image shows a portion of the square locate outside the castle walls before the Italian governor's modifications that demolished most of the buildings to expand the square. Figure 23. The Ottoman castle, Qal'at Pasha, while Figure 24 depicts Omar al-Mukhtar Street and several buildings under construction. It also captures a bustling square from the Italian era, teeming with a diverse crowd characterised by varying dress, cultures, and identities.

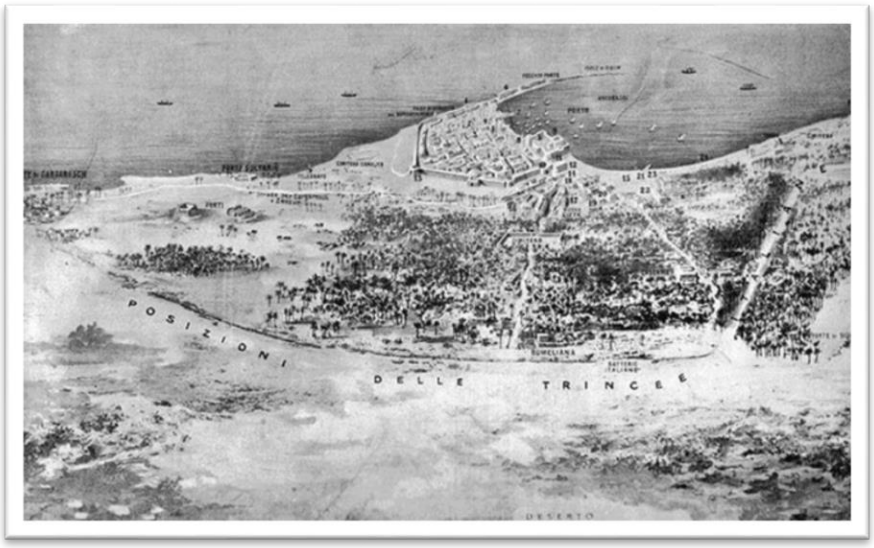

Figure 9. The old city, harbour, and the green area around the city, 1912.
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya)

Figure 20. Aerial photograph of Tripoli around WW1.
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya)

Figure 10. The retained walls, 1919
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya)

Figure 11. The Martyrs' Square outside the castle walls(right).
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya)

Figure 12. The Ottoman castle, Qal'at Pasha
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya)

Figure 13. A busy scene on Omar al-Mukhtar Street in the Italian occupation period (Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya)

In 1914, the port area and the area outside the Red Palace (the so-called Italian quarter) south-east of the old city's walls were redeveloped. Meanwhile, the old city was almost entirely surrounded by railway facilities (Figure 25). This kind of "fringe belt" (Conzen, 2009) is a relatively common phenomenon across historical contexts. The design creates an often ring-like area of lower-density development to meet particular socio-economic circumstances. "Inner fringe belts" developed around fortifications such as city walls, and these lower-density areas were often available for re-development when railways needed to expand. Railways extended to the outskirts of fortified areas, creating opportunities for urban expansion in previously restricted zones. This expansion was driven by factors such as increased accessibility, trade, and the need for housing as populations grew (Conzen, 2009).

Figure 14. A map of Tripoli, 1914
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya)

In 1916, Tripoli was divided into twenty-two quarters in accordance with an official decree issued by the Italian local government (Al-Ahwal, 2005). These quarters were later reduced to six residential neighbourhoods in 1931 (i.e., the big quarter, the small quarter, the Arabic quarter, the Jewish quarter, the Maltese quarter, and the 'Negro' quarter (Al-Ahwal, 2005)). The six quarters remain, but they have been renamed (i.e., the Bab al-Bahr quarter, the Kosha Al-Saffar quarter, the municipality quarter, the Houmat Gharyan quarter, the Al-Hara Al-Kabir quarter, and the Al-Hara Al-Saghir quarter). A map from 1916 illustrates the six distinct sections of the city, prominently featuring the primary axis that traverses five of the neighborhoods (Figure 5). The axis begins at the Marcus Aurelius Arch at the top of Francis Street and ends in the Bab al-Hurriya locality.

The Italian occupation of Tripoli ended on 1 May 1943, when the city was captured and came under the British administration. Figure 26 shows the old city of Tripoli as viewed from the British consulate. The Marcus Aurelius Arch is visible to the right of the *Gorgi* Mosque's

minaret and domes. The photo also shows the harbour and warehouses along the waterfront. The bottom part of the drawing depicts a time when the minarets of the mosques still dominated the skyline. Figure 27. shown the condition of the streets of the old city during World War II. Figure 28 offers an aerial view of Tripoli during the British mandate time in 1940s. The image captures the old Arab city, the Ottoman Palace (Qasr Al-Basha, now the Red Saraya), the Bank of Rome (right), and the Italian neighbourhood situated beyond the castle walls (left). This compelling picture visually represents the four distinct eras that shaped the historic town's culture, politics, and identity to this point. Each era is characterised by its unique architectural forms, appearances, and diverse identities, highlighting Tripoli's evolving nature and multifaceted history.

Figure 15. Tripoli's old city in the 1940s.
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya)

Figure 16. The Al-Mushir Market and Ahmed Pasha Mosque suffered damage from Allied bombings during World War II.
(Source: Libyan Jihad Centre for Historical Studies, Tripoli)

Figure 17. Tripoli during the British mandate, 1945
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya).

After the Italian occupation, many historical buildings with Italian names were given Arabic names—historical Ottoman names remained unchanged, such as in Figure 29.

This transition reflected the post-occupation cultural and political changes in the region, including the affirmation and celebration of Arab identity and heritage. Today, many preserved historical buildings still bear names that align with their Arabic historical roots to enhance the preservation of local heritage and identity (Khodeir et al., 2016). It is worth noting that preservation efforts and naming/ conventions can vary depending on the region and the specific historical site in question. Some historical buildings and landmarks may have undergone changes in names due to various reasons, such as political shifts, cultural influences, or local preferences (UNESCO, 2002). Such changes can be significant in reshaping identity for a range of reasons (e.g., Shoval, 2013). Conflicts of renaming places can also be an important identity issue when the state manifests its authority and exclusive right to interpret its own history (Różycki, 2018).

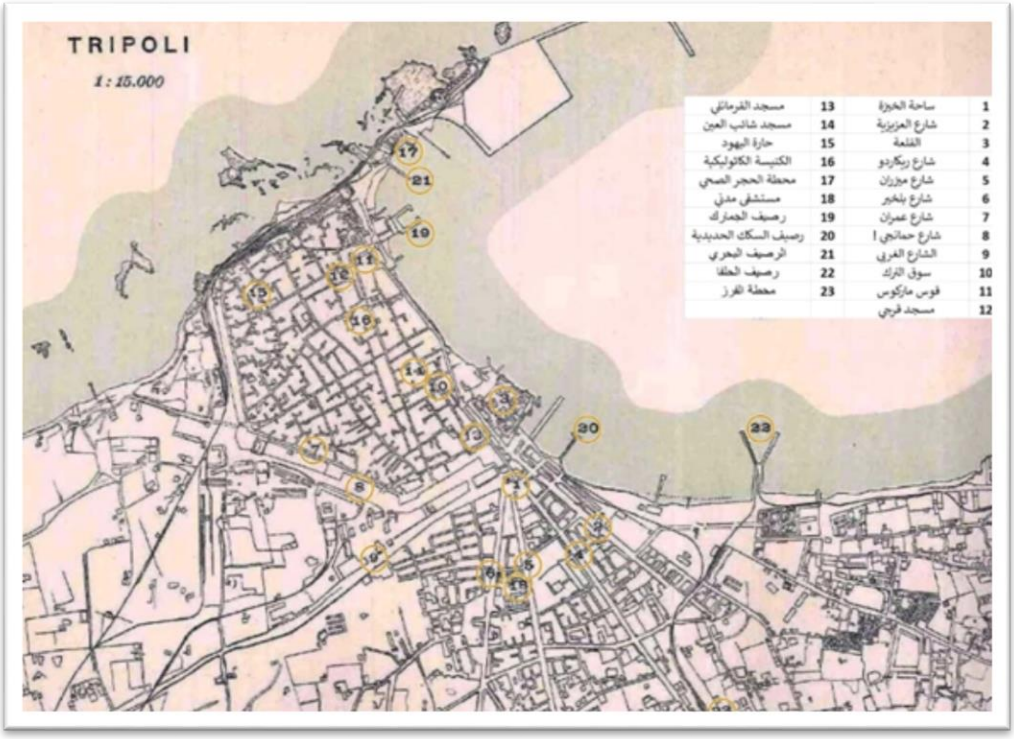

Figure 18. Map of Italian-named sites that would receive post-independence name changes. The bread square. 2- Azizia Street. 3- The castle. 4- Ricardo Street. 5- Mizran Street. 6- Belkhair Street. 7-Omran Street. 8- Hamangi Street. 9- West Street. 10- Turk market. 11- Marcus Aurelius. 12- Qarji Mosque. 13- Al-Qaramanli Mosque. 14- A mosque. 15- The Jewish Quarter. 16- The Catholic Church. 17- Quarantine station. 18- Civil Hospital. 19- Customs dock. 20- Railway platform. 21- The marine pier. 22- Allied Wharf. 23- Sorting station.
(Source: Historical Cities Administration)

4.2.**5. The Libyan Kingdom**

On 24 December 1951, Libya declared its independence. Shortly thereafter, in 1958, oil was discovered and rapid economic growth ensued. In 1966, the most common land use in the old city was residential. Figure 30 shows the dominance of housing within the old city (yellow), alongside commercial (dark red), and mixed commercial and residential (light red). There were also open spaces and parks (green), public facilities (dotted green), and parking (black). The official Tripoli city master plan was not updated nor maintained by the central or local governments after 1968. This is likely to have had significant consequences for the development and growth of the city.

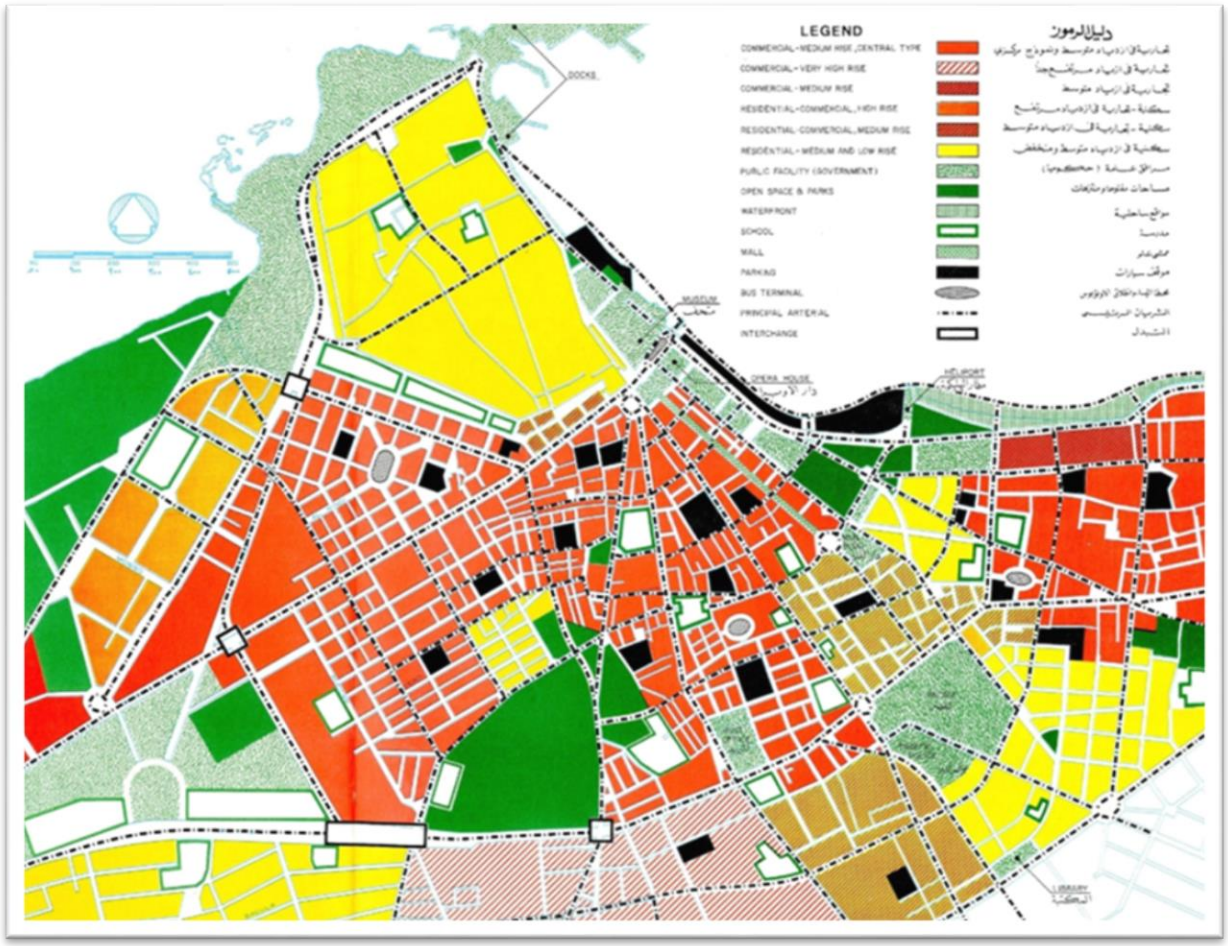

Figure 19. The 1966 plan for Greater Tripoli
(Source: Historical City Administration, Tripoli)

The 1960s also brought challenges such as growing traffic congestion and an increase in tall buildings along the old city's northern façade (Figure 31). Martyrs' Square now sat in the new Italian neighbourhood, just outside the old city walls, providing a different principle of the streets and character (Figure 32).

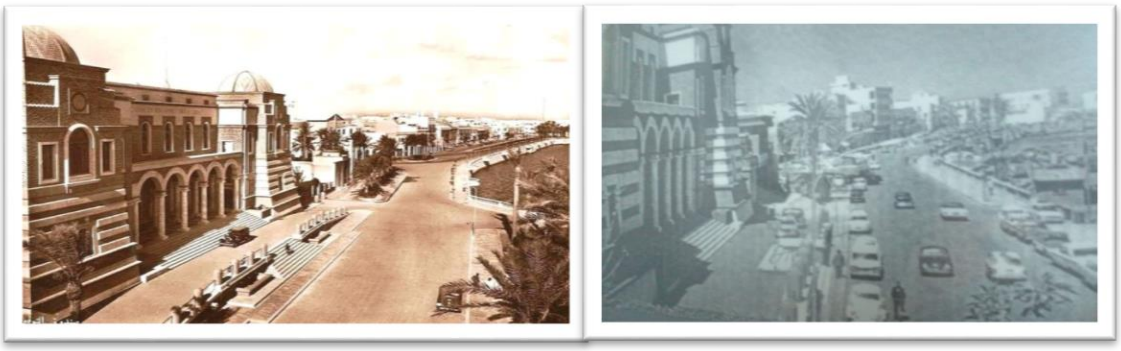

Figure 20. The evolution of the old city's northern façade from 1939 (left) to the 1960s (right).
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya)

Figure 21. Martyrs' Square in 1959.
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya)

4.2.**6. The Gaddafi era**

The Gaddafi regime began in September 1969. By April 1977, Tripoli had become the political, administrative, economic, and educational capital of Libya due to its increasing oil exports. In 1985, the General People's Committee established an old city management project (Resolution No. 40), which aimed to restore and maintain historical buildings, fences, and public spaces within the city walls. While the Tripoli City Council introduced plans for an 'urban expansion zone' from the late 1960s to the 1980s, these were never officially approved nor executed by the Gaddafi regime. According to Dumper and Stanley (2006), this was probably due to political and technical issues, not economic ones (Alows, 2016). The official city master plan has not been updated by the central or local government since 1966 (at the time of writing in 2024).

Figure 33 conveys the significant expansion that occurred in Tripoli during the 1970s. The old city is seen at the centre of the expanded urban landscape (including suburban regions that had emerged due to rapid growth) and has a noticeably denser layout. The old city remains confined to the port area along the coastal Shatt Road. The expansion of Tripoli beyond its historic walls resembles the expansion of Rome— 'finger' roads radiate outwards from a new central urban space (Figure 34).

Figure 22. Tripoli in 1977.
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya)

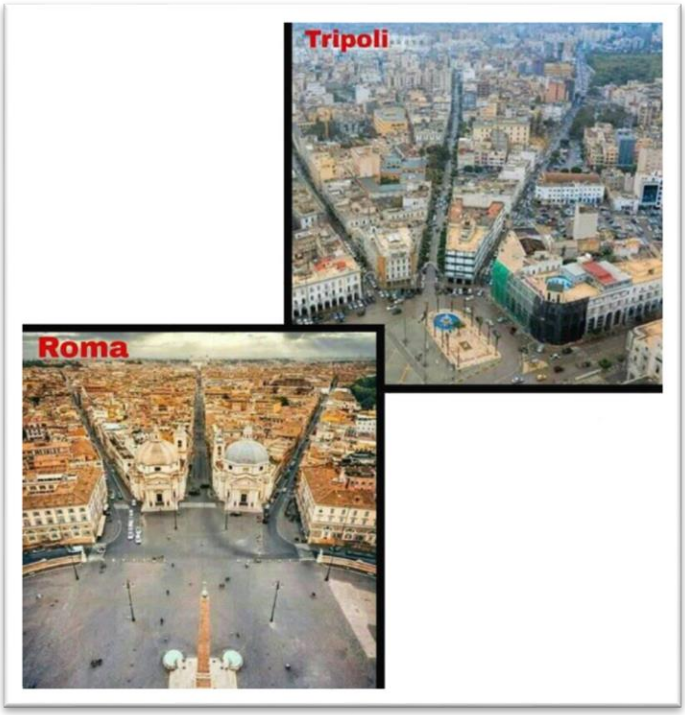

Figure 23. Aerial views of the expansions in Tripoli and Rome, circa 1980s
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya).

In 1977, the Gaddafi regime reviewed the 1968 Master Plan. A second-generation master plan was created to guide urban and economic changes until 2005. However, the authorities failed to fully implement any of the master plans. An accumulation of complications and delays led to obvious deficiencies in improving and implementing many proposed major urban infrastructure projects in Tripoli (Alows, 2016).

The local and central authorities also failed to effectively integrate immigrants into the city—a common issue in many modern metropolitan areas. Many people moved to Tripoli from within and beyond the country; others built residential buildings in the relatively undeveloped areas on the city periphery. Libya had become a transit country for people seeking a better situation (Parker, 2007). Most migration routes through the central Mediterranean transit through Libya (Altai Consulting, 2013). Furthermore, numerous immigrants were allowed into the country in the late-twentieth century without any control or regulation; this lack of supervision did not provide comfort for either the immigrants or residents (Parker, 2007). The failure to control these demographic shifts led the government to officially delineate an area "outside the approved planning scheme" as an immature urban zone with privately owned and developed buildings (Alows, 2016). These so-called "slum schemes" were privately owned operations established without the involvement of the central or local government (Yiftachel, 1998, p. 162).

From 1985 to 2010, a significant revitalisation effort took place in the old city. The initiative was overseen by the Administration and Organisation of the Old City and focused on the restoration of historical edifices. Mosques and grand structures from the Ottoman era underwent rehabilitation or were converted into museums, hotels, restaurants, or offices. This renewal also extended to the markets, which experienced a resurgence in activity, imbuing the area with a vibrant atmosphere. Aesthetic enhancements included adorning the facades between the clock tower and Bab al-Bahr with a fresh coat of paint.

This dynamic period before the 17 February 2011 revolution ushered in heightened commercial and cultural tourism activities and amplified the city's allure (Historical Cities Administration, 2010). Consequently, Tripoli's economy grew and more hotels were built, including in the old city, where some traditional courtyards were converted into hotels. This increase in commercial activity had positive effects for cafes and old city markets (e.g., jewellery, copper crafts, carpets, and souvenirs) throughout the late eighties (Historical Cities Administration Tripoli, 2010).

Expansion projects in the twentieth century mainly facilitated the port connection and traffic flow. Land was also allocated for tower blocks (i.e., office blocks and hotels) and to develop the road infrastructure surrounding the city centre. However, these projects ignored the important ancient historical link between the old city and the sea, as has been the case of “improvement” schemes in Barcelona ''Spain'' (Bakıcı et al., 2013). The newly constructed towers were situated near the old city (notably the Carinthia Hotel), occupying

land that once belonged to the old city before its walls receded in the sixteenth century. Such development has had negative implications, including infringing on the privacy of families residing in traditional Arab homes with exposed courtyards—the most important characteristic of a traditional Arab city.

4.3. The Contemporary Condition of Tripoli's Old City (2011-2024)

A dramatic expansion has taken place in Tripoli (Figure 35). Residential areas have surrounded the old city with new structures including tower blocks just outside the historic walls. The old city itself remains confined to the port area along the coastal road known as Tariq al-Shatt.

Figure 24. Bird's-eye view of Tripoli in 2016
(Source: Google Earth)

The researcher visited the ancient city in consultation with the local authorities, particularly the Department of Historic Cities, and several experts who attended a workshop on the preservation of historical buildings in Tripoli. The purpose of the visit was to assess the city's environmental and structural conditions and the changes in its urban form and character. The researcher had extensive discussions with the professionals before making several visits to the city at different times between 2016 and 2017. These discussions were useful in forming a mental picture of the city before proceeding with the visit.

It does not take long for a researcher (or anyone) visiting Tripoli to notice a real environmental crisis in the ancient city. Many buildings are on the brink of collapse and are structurally supported by wooden beams across the old city's alleys (Figure 36). The buildings are in poor condition and creating negative health conditions. Many Arab house courtyards are covered, blocking sunlight, which can lead to the spread of epidemics and skin diseases. This crisis is probably to be exacerbated by overcrowding and an increased population density in the old city.

The deterioration of the city's condition is also evident in the population's neglect of their surroundings. Many residents cannot maintain their homes due to their general economic situation. Other residents seek to covertly demolish old traditional houses (using inexperienced contractors) and construct new ones that differ in function, size, and details from the traditional urban fabric of the old city. For example, the researcher learned that one owner of a historical building on Francis Street was given a permit to do maintenance and restoration; however, the owner instead demolished the historical building and replaced it with a modern building. Structure heights often violate the building code, particularly in the Clock Tower area, where five-to-six-storey buildings now cramp the narrow alleys.

During a visit in December 2017, the researcher noted the concerning state of the streets and alleys. The paths were extremely muddy and difficult to navigate, particularly during the winter months (Figure 37). The researcher also observed the remnants of collapsed buildings that posed a danger to residents, passers-by, and visitors (Figure 38). Failure to address this issue could eventually lead to an environmental disaster. The neglect and deterioration of the streets and alleys in the old city must be addressed to ensure the safety and well-being of all those who frequent the area.

The historic city’s character has been significantly transformed by the unrestricted movement of cars and the construction of new buildings. Parking areas now dominate the urban fabric of the old city (despite some sidewalks being built to facilitate pedestrian movement).

Figure 25. Temporary wooden beams that that provide support the external walls and are scatted throughout the old city’s alleyways.
(Source: researcher’s own photograph '2016')

Figure 26. The deterioration of roads and alleys
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya and researcher's own photograph)

Figure 27. The deterioration of buildings inconveniences residents and pedestrians.
(Source: researcher's own photographs'2016')

Figure 28. New car parks dominate the urban fabric of the old city.
(Source: researcher's own photograph'2016')

Figure 29. Neglected and deteriorating historical buildings.
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya)

On the other hand, the researcher observed that some maintenance work had already been carried out by some residents (Figure 41), as well as on some historical buildings by the local government (Figure 42). This is a positive indication for preserving urban identity of the old city and its historical character.

Figure 30. Maintenance of the buildings and alleys is undertaken by the local residents and merchants.
(Source: researcher's own photographs'2016')

Figure 31. The task of maintaining historical buildings, such as the former English Consulate, Dar al-Fiqi, and Hosh al-Qaramanli (left to right).
(Source: researcher's own photographs'2016')

Comparing pictures of the same place over different eras is useful in illustrating changes in the people, culture, and urban identity. Figure 43 and 44 offer such a comparison of the state/character of the Clock Tower Square. Figure 43 was taken in 1939 (the Italian era) and evidences a mixed-use square, with space for cars and pedestrians. Figure 44 (left) depicts the square in 2010, before the revolution; it has new paving and paint, and pedestrians are enjoying the square. Figure 44 (right) was taken by the researcher in 2016 and shows cars clearly dominating the square.

Figure 32. The Clock Tower Square during the Italian era, 1939
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya)

Figure 33. The Clock Tower Square during the Gaddafi era (left) and post-2011 (right).
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya; researcher's own photographs'2016').

Figure 34. Towers near the old city impact residents' privacy and obscure views of the sea.
(Source: Historical City Administration)

Tripoli's urban fabric underwent many changes after the Libyan Revolution in February 2011 due to a lack of local government control over the old city. The best evidence of this comes from a 2014 statement (The letter addressed to all concerned local authorities) as shown in Figure 46 issued by the Historic Cities Administration on critical violations, infringements, and acts of sabotage (e.g., demolition and removal) that directly endanger buildings and historical monuments. The Authority highlighted the importance of immediate and essential

measures to safeguard priceless historic cities and architectural gems. It firmly committed to the urgent actions needed to protect, preserve, and safeguard the old city.

بيان جهاز إدارة المدن التاريخية

جهاز إدارة المدن التاريخية

Figure 46 Historical Cities Administration statement
(Source: Historical Cities Administration)

Translation of the statement:

''The Historic Cities Administration of Tripoli issued an official statement on March 13, 2014, addressing the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Local Government, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Interior and Defence, and all civil society institutions. The statement urged them to take immediate action to safeguard the historical cities and buildings in the face of various violations, encroachments, vandalism, demolitions, and removals of structures, monuments, and other historical artefacts ''

Ejroushi (2024) notes that this concern is continuing: “since the outbreak of the Libyan Civil War in 2014, the Old City has been threatened as residents and speculative developers have taken advantage of prevailing chaos in Tripoli to illegally dismantle historic buildings and replace them with new constructions''.

4.3.**1. The 2010 survey of heritage buildings in the old city**

A survey was conducted in 2010 to collect information about the old city's land use, architecture, construction, and format, including descriptions of public spaces, streets, squares, and open areas. The survey also made recommendations about filling vacant spaces left by buildings that had collapsed over the past twenty years, organised cultural meetings, celebrations, and festivals, revitalised cultural activities and traditional industries, and regulated the use of historical buildings. The study outlined public space design principles (e.g., street paving, streetlights, and urban furniture), commercial area rehabilitation, vegetation guidelines, infrastructure network repairs, economic zoning in the

old city, and building codes (e.g., dimensions, heights, and accreditation). Lastly, it included a list of historic buildings and sites that needed protection and restoration in the old city.

The survey found that the old city boasts a rich cultural heritage. The Tripoli City Council has categorised buildings according to their historical and architectural importance. Figure 47 denotes the heritage buildings with a deep blue colour, while structures (primarily residential buildings) with some heritage elements are depicted in a lighter blue. Buildings constructed after 1950 in spaces left by collapsed structures are marked in orange. Most of these replacements are concentrated at the edges of the historic city core; however, a substantial number exist within the city, where the loss of older structures could adversely affect urban character and identity.

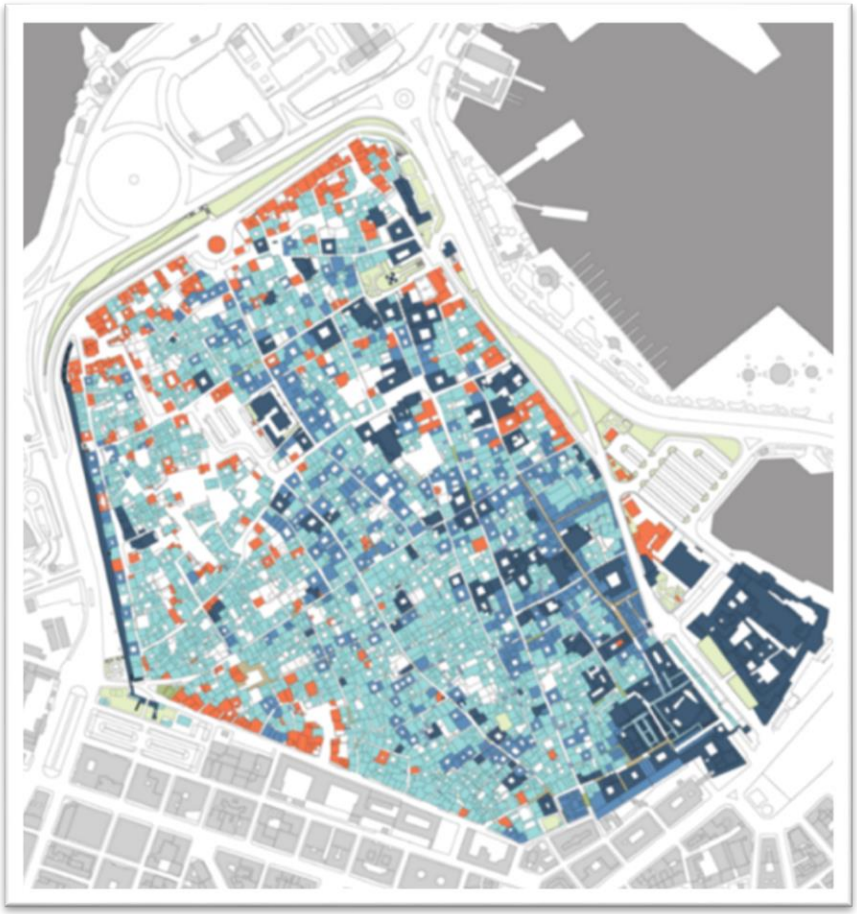

Figure 35. Map of the old city with heritage building classifications (Source: Tripoli City Council)

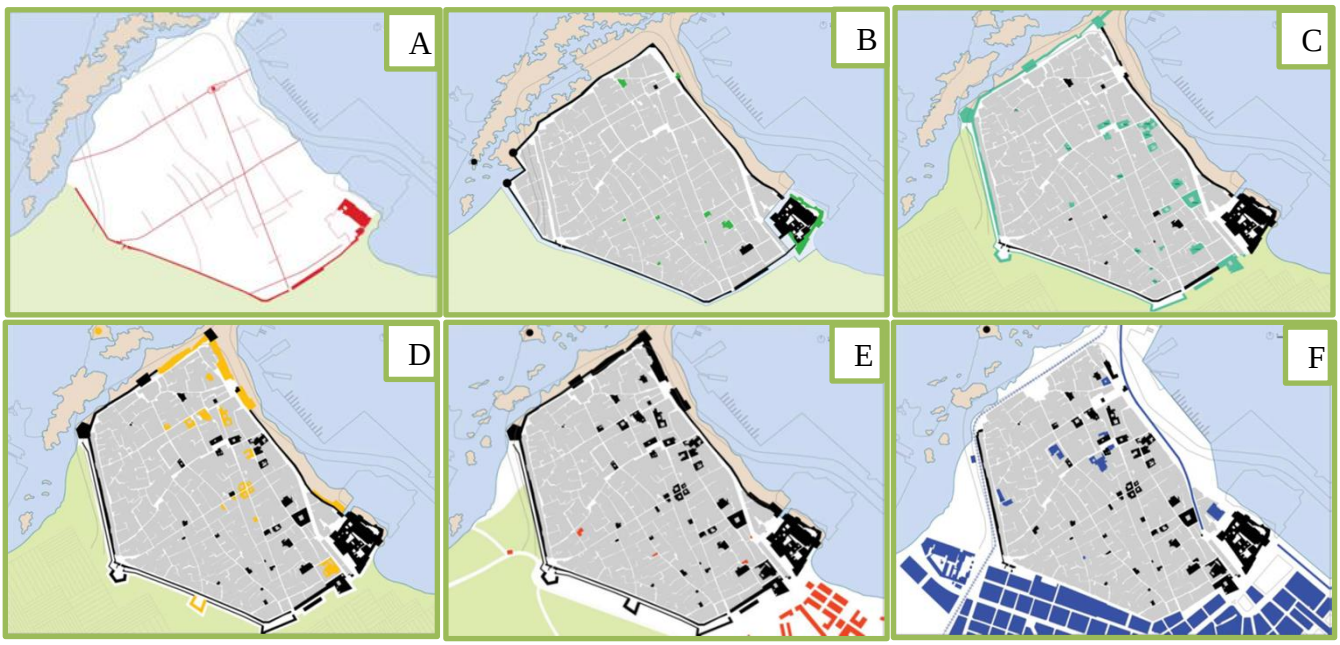

Figure 36. Surviving old city structures from Tripoli's historic eras.
A- Roman-era structures (red); B - Arabic-era structures (black and green); C - first Ottoman-era structures (light green); D - Al-Qurmanli-era structures (yellow); E - second Ottoman-era structures (red); F - Italian occupation structures (blue) (Source: Tripoli City Council)

Some historic Roman structures from the pre-Islamic period still survive in the old city, namely the Roman wall and the two primary streets that intersect at the Marcus Aurelius Arch (Figure 48A). Tenth-century Arabic structures include fortifications along the sea; the castle now known as the Red Saraya was fortified with a wall shown in black in Figure 48B. Other administration buildings were constructed within the city limits (Figure B – green & black). The fortifications were crucial for defending the city from potential threats, while the new buildings added to the city's character and reinforced its cultural significance.

Buildings were constructed within the city's original boundaries while fortifications, towers, and buildings were built along the edges during the first Ottoman era (1551-1771) (Figure 48C). These buildings and fortifications served practical purposes and contributed to the city's developing cultural and historical significance. In the Al-Qurmanli era (1771-1835), the city underwent significant architectural developments. Again, new fortifications, towers, and buildings served as defensive measures for the city and contributed to cultural and urban identity (Figure 48d).

The second Ottoman period (1835-1911) marked the beginning of construction beyond the city's historical walls (outside the main south-eastern gate) as the city grew and developed. New construction in the old city was minimal during this time (Figure 48e). The Italian occupation period (1911-1942) saw significant changes in the city's architecture, including the notable demolition of walls surrounding the old city. The removal of these walls paved

the way for construction to expand beyond the traditional city limits and spread into new areas (Figure 48f).

4.3**.2. Building collapse in Tripoli's old city**

The collapse of buildings in the old city has left a growing number of voids in the urban fabric. The large white spaces in Figure 49 illustrate the voids left by the collapsed buildings (smaller white spaces are traditional house courtyards). The number of collapsed buildings doubled during the Gaddafi era, specifically between 2001 and 2009. In 2010 it was felt that if preventive measures are not taken, collapses would be likely to increase.

Figure 37. Collapsed buildings (white space) increasing in the old city over time. 1930 (top left); 2001 (top right); 2009 (bottom) (Source: Historical Cities Administration)

*4.3.**3.** The preservation of Roman columns*

Stone columns—a defining feature of Roman architecture—are incorporated into various buildings and landmarks. They provide structural support and also serve as aesthetic elements, adding a touch of classical elegance to modern structures. The juxtaposition of ancient Roman columns with contemporary architecture creates a unique and visually striking urban landscape. The enduring presence of Roman architecture around the former empire underscores the timelessness of classical design and ancient civilisations' ability to shape the character of urban environments.

The presence of Roman columns in Tripoli is documented in official local government records, historical texts (e.g., Al-Tilisi, 1997), and the firsthand accounts of researchers. These remnants of Roman and Byzantine columns are discernible in the architectural features of the old city's mosques and alleyways. Their influence is particularly pronounced in landmarks such as the Al-Naqa Mosque, Salem Al-Mashat Mosque, and various alleyways in the old city (Figure 50), Which contributes to emphasizing the urban identity and its urban character.

Figure 38. Roman columns at Al-Naqa Mosque (top), alleyways in Tripoli's old city (bottom left), and Salem Al-Mashat Mosque (bottom right).
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya; researcher's own photograph, with individuals anonymised).

4.3.**4. The street network in the old city**

The city's street network is a crucial element of its heritage and serves as the foundation of transportation and connectivity. Street patterns are quite resistant to change, even over very long periods (Dyos, 1968). The origin of the modern road system in Tripoli is often attributed to the original Roman road network ordered by Marcus Aurelius, Roman Emperor in 161-180 AD (Benedictis et al., 2018). Though the Ottomans made some adjustments, the Roman influence can still be observed in the street layout and buildings. Figure 51 overlays the Roman street network in Tripoli's old city with yellow lines. The oldest, most historically significant street (highlighted in grey) runs north-west to south-east; it begins in the harbour area, passes through the Marcus Aurelius area, and terminates in Bab al-Hurriya, the city's historical market district.

Figure 51. Roman streets(yellow & Gray) within the old city's network(Main Street ''Gray'')
(Source: Tripoli City Council)

Although the Roman road network is no longer visible in Tripoli, evidence of its existence can be found underground since the entire surface of the Roman-era ground level at the Marcus Aurelius Arch is now buried over two metres deep. Nevertheless, Francis Street remains one of the most significant streets in the old city; it runs from the Arch at Al-Arba'a Arsat Street to the Darouj Mosque, and eventually to Bab Al-Horia [Freedom's Door]. It also still makes up part of Tripoli's administrative divisions. The old city's street network serves as a reminder of its heritage and is an essential part of its identity (Tripoli City Council, 2010).

4.4. The Case Study Area: Francis Street at the Marcus Aurelius Arch

The old city thrived as a vital trading hub along the Mediterranean coast during the civilizations such as the Romans, Spanish, Byzantines, and Arabs, each of which left their cultural legacy on its landscape. The city's network of streets demonstrates the Romans' early urban fabric. For example, Francis Street (Figure 52) is the main Roman street in the old city of Tripoli (Ejroushi, 2024). It has been a significant street since ancient times due to its connection with the historical Roman Arch of Marcus Aurelius. The street is the main artery connecting Bab Al-Bahr in the north-western part of the city and the Bab Al-Hurriya area in the south-east. Both these areas possess historical and commercial importance and house numerous bustling markets. The historical street acts as a bridge linking the quarters of the old city with the Italian quarter located beyond the city walls.

Marcus Aurelius area

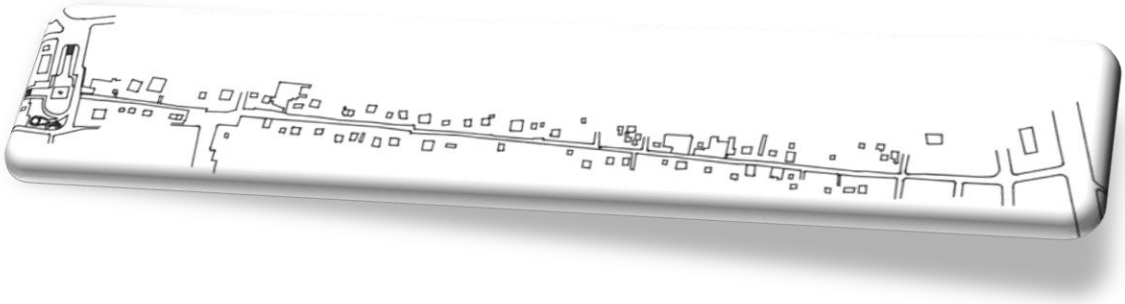

Figure 39. Author's sketch of Frances Road in Tripoli's old city

Figure 40. Marcus Aurelius Arch in 1979.
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya)

The area now serves as a hub for cultural and social gatherings and various festivals. Several notable historical buildings along the street are highlighted in, for example, a map advertising ''the cultural day of the old city in 2018'' (Figure 54). The Cultural Day of the Old City is an event sponsored and managed by the Historic Cities Administration. It consists of

tourist activities that begin at the Marcus Aurelius Arch and proceed down Francis Street to the Bab Al-Hurriya area. The tour visits the most important historical landmarks in the old city, including Francis Street.

Figure 41. A map advertising ‘‘the cultural day of the old city in 2018''
(Source: Historical Cities Administration)

Figure 42. The beginning of Francis Street
(Source: Historical Cities Administration)

The Marcus Aurelius Arch links the port to the ancient thoroughfare of Francis Street and is an important part of the old city's identity (Al-Ahwal, 2005; Al-Telisi, 1985). It is supported by another iconic arch, Islamic and horseshoe-shaped, that serves as the main gateway to the elongated historical street (Figure 55).

Figure 43. Historical building supporting the arch.
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya)

The arch was not prominently featured or cared for during the Ottoman era. As shown in Figure 57, during that period, the arch was incorporated into a cluster of buildings and repurposed as a café, which contributed to obscuring it from view. Nevertheless, the arch still contributed to the historical ensemble and significance of the surroundings. The most significant action early in the Italian occupation was to clear the area around the Roman-era Arch of Marcus Aurelius, and return it to original condition (Ejroushi, 2024). As Figure 58 shows, in 1912, excavation and demolition began to rehabilitate the historic arch (Brown, 2010) by removing nearby structures in a process known as “disencumbering”, a common aspect of urban conservation philosophy in the early-twentieth century (Ladd, 2014). Two rectangular buildings that once accommodated a bustling array of shops, busy with both shoppers and merchants, were demolished to restore the Arch to its initial state (Figure 59). By 1939, significant progress had been made to develop the area surrounding the arch and the arch itself was a free-standing structure that opened directly to the port area (Figure 60). In the 2010s, the local government committed to managing and maintaining the significant historical area surrounding the arch (including the historic Gurgi Mosque) (Figure 61).

The restored arch serves as a testament to the city's historical wealth and unique identity. This architectural ensemble, complete with its historical arch, symbolises a thriving city rich in history and cultural heritage. This architectural feature increases the significance of the direct link between the port and Francis Street, strengthening the bond between the urban fabric of the old city and its inhabitants in the historic port area. This major change to the appearance of the area reinforces the city’s historical identity and significance.

Figure 44. The Marcus Aurelius Arch was concealed from 1898 to 1911.
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya)

Figure 45. Restoration of the Marcus Aurelius Arch began in 1912.
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya)

Figure 46. The Arch in the Italian era.
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya)

Figure 60. Restoration progress on the Arch in 1914 (left) and 1939 (right).
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli old city, Libya)

Figure 47. The restored arch in 1960 (left) and 2010 (right)
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya)

Figure 62 shows the beginning of Francis Street, which directly faces the Marcus Aurelius Arch, and was undergoing maintenance during the researcher's 2016 visit. Francis Street showcases the unique architectural elements of the Arab city, including semi-circular arched supports that betray the length of history on this significant thoroughfare. The street's extensive and uninterrupted run serves as a continuous pathway through the historical cityscape.

Figure 48. The entrance to Francis Street from Marcus Aurelius
(Source: researcher's own photographs)

However, despite these notable features, it is clear that many historical streets, buildings, and houses are suffering from noticeable neglect. The narrow streets in the old city have become congested with parked cars, hindering residents' movement (Figure 63). Unfortunately, open spaces in Tripoli old city are still (Historical Public Open Spaces in Post-Conflict) mostly used as dumping grounds and parking lots (Abdulla and Abdelmonem, 2023). New buildings that replace collapsed ones fail to blend with the historic structures. Although the same colour/render may be used, they lack the architectural style and richness of the originals. The alley surfaces are uncomfortable for walking, and the neglect of alleys and corridors is evident. Wooden trusses are sometimes used to support the walls in narrow alleys to stop the potential collapse of old buildings. There is notably less commercial activity in these alleys for fear of collapse (Figure 64).

Figure 49. Crowded scenes on Francis Street
(Source: researcher's own photographs)

Figure 50. Wooden trusses support walls in many of the narrow alleys.
(Source: researcher's own photographs)

The removal of structures that once graced the alley significantly transforms the architectural fabric over time. Such modifications raise apprehensions about potential adverse structural ramifications, including potentially compromised walls. Such alterations also shift the outward appearance and identity of the historic street. For example, Figure 65 shows an upper room positioned above the alley in 1916; however, this feature was absent in 2016 (and signs of demolition are visible above the white truck). Evident neglect has also led to noticeable gaps between structures after old buildings collapsed (Figure 66).

Figure 51. Alleyway in 1916 (black and white photo); the same alleyway in 2016 (colour photos) with the upper room removed.
(Source: The digital photographic (left) & researcher's own photographs (middle& right)

Figure 52. Some gaps left by collapsed buildings on the left-hand side
(Source: researcher's own photograph)

Figure 67 shows that poor maintenance of the alley surfaces carries over to the historic market area known as the Bab al-Hurriya. These markets extend beyond the walls of the old city, connecting it to the newer Italian neighbourhood. There was a noticeable shift in the market's commercial activities, cultural aspects, and identity between the Libyan Kingdom and the post-Gaddafi era (Figure 68).

Figure 53. Poor maintenance of alley surfaces in the Bab al-Hurriya market area.
(Source: researcher's own photographs)

Figure 54. The decline in foot traffic and commercial activities at the Bab al-Hurriya historic market between the Libyan Kingdom (left) and the post-Gaddafi era (right).
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya)

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter explored Tripoli's traditional old city by tracing its historical development, changes in shape and character, and current condition. This detailed presentation of the city's evolution was informed by observational evidence and official city documents. The chapter first considered the location, topography, and notable physical features of Tripoli before delving into the city's rich history, growth, development, and varied uses over the years. The discussion of surviving historic structures was accompanied by maps illustrating key buildings, land uses, and related features. Observations on the state of the historic city provide evidence of its condition and an ongoing process of neglect and decay. The case study road, Francis Street, was then introduced. This chapter serves as a guide to the history and present state of the traditional old city of Tripoli. It highlights how the city's changing state, character, appearance, and urban identity have been shaped by the passage of time, as well as the influence of different people and their different cultures.

Chapter Five: Data Analysis and Findings

5.1. Introduction

This chapter identifies and explores five key themes emerging from the participants' responses. The participant insights are quoted in this chapter using coded labels (not their actual names) to protect their identities and ensure confidentiality. All participants identified with a P (e.g., P1) are professional respondents, while those with an R (e.g., R1) are residents of Francis Street in the historic city centre. The wording used in the quotations aims to capture the original Arabic phrasing and informality of the interviews (this has deliberately not been translated into strictly correct English grammar).

Five themes were derived from the content analysis of the participants' responses and serve as the foundational structure of this chapter: 1) built environment, 2) law, 3) decision-making, 4) social-culture, and 5) economy. The following pages review each theme in detail, shedding light on its significance and participants' perspectives. Examining these themes allows for a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between these factors within the context of this study.

5.2. Theme 1: The Built Environment

Tripoli's medina is considered one of the oldest cities in the Middle East and has been rooted in history since the days of the Phoenicians (Ahmida, 1994; Alsorey, 2005; Khoja, 1969; Villard, 1956). However, most studies (particularly in French, Italian, and Arabic) on Arabic Islamic cities position them simply as urban spaces, not cultural spatial structures (Elkekli, 2014).

Over the past century, Libya in general, and its urban centres in particular, were subject to very rapid urban growth (Belgasem, 2005). Most of this growth happened beyond the old city's walls, but it brought about fundamental changes to the physical environment and residents' views about living in traditional towns and traditional houses. The residents themselves changed too. For instance, undocumented immigrants found cheap (if not free) accommodation for large households in the old city (Belgasem, 2005). This wave of migration led to a change in the demographic characteristics of the old city and, hence, to its traditional urban structure.

The housing stock of the old city could have reduced Tripoli's housing shortage if government policy and housing programmes had included them in the official planning. However, no attempt was made to rehabilitate and integrate the old town into "modern" planning proposals or use its housing stock to alleviate the housing shortage. Rather, houses were left to be occupied by "illegal" immigrants who came to the city looking for work and a

better life. Some government agencies have, although only since the beginning of the present century, begun to restore a few old houses for public and cultural uses (Belgasem, 2005). This may begin to redress some of the old city's greatest challenges, including overcrowding, deteriorating buildings, and lack of adequate infrastructure (Belgasem, 2005). Yet it is not a direct response to housing shortages.

Interviewees confirmed that the ancient city of Tripoli was in good condition from the Ottoman era to the early Gaddafi era. However, the historical city now shows clear signs of neglect and deterioration, However, the historical city now shows clear signs of neglect and deterioration, and the interviewees used some keywords when describing the built environment *such as crisis, deterioration, overcrowded, ignored and decay*. So it is important to understand the reasons behind this change. As Lynch (1984) writes, cities are very complex, beyond our immediate control, and affect many people; conversely, people affect the city, both positively and negatively.

5.2.**1. Professional responses about the built environment**

The professional interviewees considered Tripoli's old city to be the most important historical city in Libya. As P1 described it, "Tripoli is a capital city of Libya, and the beating heart of Libya, the historic city is the heart and core of the city of Tripoli, [Francis] Street is the main artery of the old city and it's the core of it." Others described Tripoli's old city as the face of Libya. However, all the respondents agreed that the historical city is undergoing an environmental crisis. Respondent P1 estimated that about 630 houses were about to fall in the old city since the last city site survey in 2010 and needed urgent maintenance and restoration (i.e., they are only supported by 'temporary' wooden, sometimes steel, beams) (Figure 69). P1 also identified the problem of vehicular movement and parking in the alleys of the old city.

Figure 55. Walls supported by wooden beams and vehicles blocking the alleys (Source: researcher's own photographs).

According to P1, many of the houses in the old city are still being used despite their poor condition and lack of proper maintenance, evidencing a problem of overcrowding and poor living conditions. P3 stated that the older houses are now often occupied by more than 20 individuals, mostly single men. P7 felt that the old city was always crowded, a fact also confirmed by the researcher's observations when visiting some occupied houses. P1 concluded that ‘’the people didn’t care about the city, which started to become more deteriorated and [an] ignored part from capital city [area] of Tripoli.”

Figure 56. Agency staff members registering African families who live in the overcrowded houses. (Source: Historic Cities Administration)

P1 also expressed concern that “the residents do not care about the city, which has led to further deterioration and neglect. This lack of attention and care has contributed to the worsening state of the historical city, despite it being an integral part of the capital city of Tripoli.” There was a general consensus among the experts that the residents' lack of care and attention towards the city had contributed to its further deterioration and neglect. P3 explained that "many Egyptian contractors demolished a lot of underneath [subsurface] of the buildings old town of Tripoli [to] rebuild new buildings." This also has adverse effects on the neighbouring buildings (Figure 71).

Figure 57. The demolition of old heritage houses by contractors creates foundational damage that adversely affects the structure of the old city. (Source: researcher’s own photograph)

P3 believed that new residents had a negative impact on the city's structural fabric when they demolished traditional houses and constructed new ones that differed in function, scale, and detail. P6 added that Libya's major planning policies—specifically the second and third-generation plans—did not prioritise the preservation of the old city. P1 provided examples of residents changing the shape, architectural style, and height of buildings within the old city without any authorisation or with authorisation but without supervision. For instance In one case, after the 2011 revolution and conflict 2014, buildings in the narrow alleys near the Clock Tower area were raised by 5-6 floors in violation of historic city building codes. In another example, an owner who was granted a permit to maintain and restore a historic building on Francis Street—immediately beside the Marcus Aurelius Arch—instead chose to demolish it and construct a new one (Figure 72 and 72A). The researcher observed and documented these findings with images and sketches.

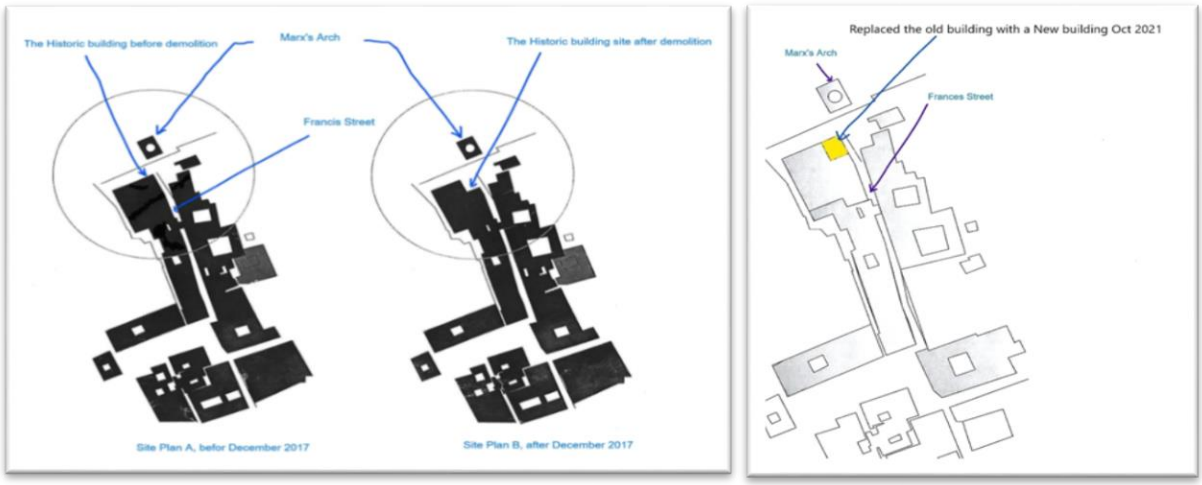

Figure 58. Author's sketch of Plans showing the historical building before, during, and after the demolition.

Figure 72A. The historical building (2016) and the replacement building in a new (and much larger) style (2021).(Source: (Left)researcher's own photograph & (Right) the digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya).

Figure 73 displays photographs showing the distinct features of the old city taken during the Italian era and Libyan Kingdom. At that time, the old city's skyline included minarets and a clock tower. However, the skyline has undergone significant changes and transformations that adversely affect the architectural landscape and overall appearance of the old city. Skylines are critical features in establishing urban character and identity (Attoe, 1981; Sklair, 2011).

Figure 59. Tripoli skyline during the Italian era (left) and Libyan Kingdom (right)
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya)

Higher structures deviate from the building policy established for the historic city and disrupt the architectural integrity of the historic city's character (Figure 74). For P1, these behaviours and demolitions have a significant negative effect on the physical structure of the whole historic city. After all, the old city's form is deeply interconnected—buildings structurally depend on each other.

Figure 60. Newer tall buildings in the old city.
(Source: researcher's own photographs)

According to P3, there is a general lack of respect for building regulations (e.g., building height, appropriate materials). The experts pointed to numerous new buildings in the historic city that do not align with the distinctive architectural style and traditional urban fabric (Figure 75). They deviate significantly from the established design elements and aesthetics prevalent in the old city, ushering in a departure from the authentic character and heritage of the locality. In general, the residents, both Libyan and immigrants, made changes to the urban planning of the old city through their motivation to survive and obtain a more suitable life for themselves and their families by constructing new buildings, living in deteriorating and condemned houses, or "squatting" in other owners' properties (Elfarnouk, 2015).

Figure 61. A new building that does not match the old city's distinctive architectural style. (Source: researcher's own photographs)

P6 noted that "Major changes have been going on during the last few decades. Implementation of new functions within the old fabric of the city, demolishing old buildings and building new ones instead which are different not only in function but also in scale." The respondent also complained about the cars that now impose their way into the old city's alleys and affect the urban fabric. However, this is also true of most cities in most parts of the world. P10 concluded that

> the new residents have negatively affected the fabric of the structure of the city by keeping demolishing the old traditional houses after they got a permission to restore the old houses, and building new ones which differ in function, scale and details. Also, change in function, human scale, colours, building materials, skyline, etc.

5.2.**2. Residents' responses about the built environment**

All the resident interviewees agreed that the old city was going through an environmental crisis of neglect. Most residents called for controls on vehicle use within the old city. As R1 explained,

> The main problems for us now here in this street is entering the cars into the alleys of the old city…it caused damages on the ground of the narrow streets and alleys

which were not prepared for cars. It caused damages on the frontages of the houses from the bottom, and noises, and sometimes dangers for the kids, the cars' entry to the old city should be reduced.

R20 lamented such changes: "in the past, the goods were coming to the city of Tripoli by camels and boats. Our life was primitive, in keeping with the desert environment around us" (Figure 76).

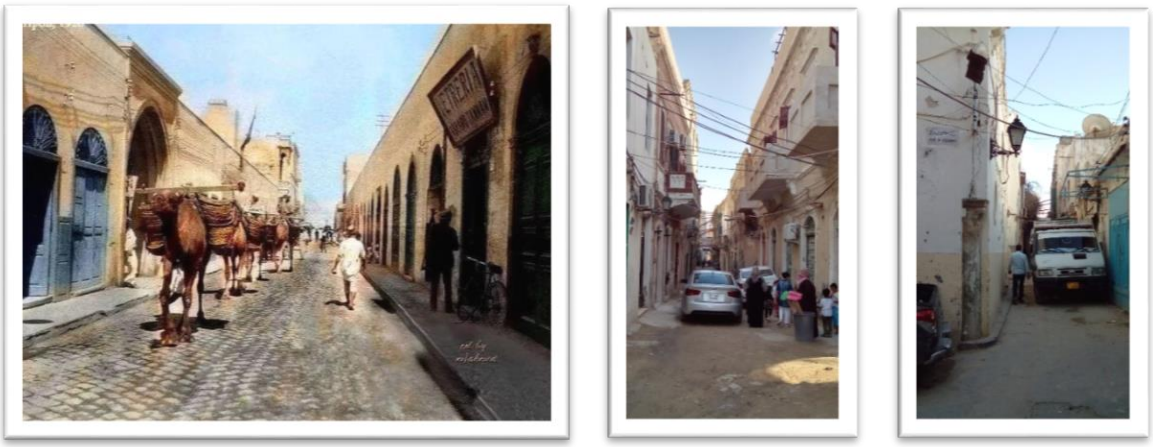

Figure 62. Transport in the old city: camels (1926) gave way to cars and trucks obstructing the pathways (2016).
(Source: researcher's own photographs)

R15, a builder and original resident of the old city, was passionate about removing and cleaning collapsed building sites since such structures pose a significant threat to the safety of residents, passers-by and visitors. He had approached the appropriate agency multiple times, urging them to take action and clear the sites of collapsed buildings. However, the agency currently lacks the financial resources to carry out such rescue operations. R15's concerns about the deteriorating and neglected condition of the streets and alleys were echoed by P2, who dreaded traversing the narrow streets, especially during the muddy winter.

Figure 63. The deteriorated condition of the streets and alleys significantly impedes pedestrian movement.
(Source: researcher's own photographs'2016')

R15 also mentioned that the original houses with open courtyards [uncovered houses] are difficult to live in during winter cold and rain, a problem Historical City Administration employees do not have to contend with:

> The employees of the agency…live outside the old city, in warm modern homes, that have the requirements for living and the means of rest, this is from Allah who give them, but us, this is what we have. We hope that the officials of the old city look at us as human beings, with a human outlook, because the official does not feel what the resident in the old city feels...we have now had to work and cover the houses illegally. We want to adhere to the external aspect only, but from the inside we need freedom of action.

According to R15, more violations have occurred in the old city since the 2011 revolution:

> for example, before the revolution [in] 2011, the agency was a committee, the citizen feared the law and stopped the illegal work in the old city. This is done by writing notes on the walls of a building or site to stop work or remove a building or floor that violates building codes. Because building codes are typically enforced by local government authorities. Because the height of the buildings was limited to not exceeding two floors. But, after the revolution, there are many problems in terms of the height of the buildings, which reached 4 and 5 floors, such as buildings that are on the main road or in the main facades. Building height should not exceed 3 floors, with the height of the floor 2.8 metres, in order to reduce the height of the building in the old city.

Figure 78 depicts a message sprayed on a wall by the local authorities stating, "Concrete columns on the upper floor must be removed". This directive pertains to a building located on the third floor, which exceeds the maximum permitted height of two stories in the old city. Moreover, the use of concrete is strictly prohibited in Libya's historical cities. This is an interesting informal way of communicating official views to residents and users.

Figure 64. A message from local authorities to adhere to the building codes.
(Source: researcher's own photographs)

Most of the residents interviewed, especially original residents (R5, R6, R15, R17, R18 and R20), confirmed that building heights in the old city have increased.

> Now, in the heart of the old city, some buildings reached six floors height, and the agency runs a complaint against the owner, sits the complaint in court and eventually [the owner] pays only a fine. This is always happening due to relationships and friendships, which have an influence on these issues. As for the building at the end of Frances Street, which was demolished a few days ago, it was a historical building on two floors with a coffee [on] the ground floor. It was sold for 90 thousand Libyan Dinar. This building had been sold many times to many owners, but the last owner had a permit for maintenance and restoration, but instead he demolished it.
>
> Now the agency stopped the work on it and the owner who demolished the building has a problem with the [the agency director]. There is negligence from the agency towards the city. Before the February 17 Revolution…there was more interest in the old city and there were influential projects and activities in the city such as restoration, maintenance, cleaning and oversight – better than the current time – especially the days of Fawzia Shalaby [the former minister of information under Gaddafi], because she is the daughter of the old city and she was more active than the present employees. However, the government has set a specific ceiling that does not exceed that limit in its projects. We are concerned about our old historical city and all of it. I wish not only our street, but all the alleys and streets that matter to me. This is my city and this is my country…I was in discussion with the residents of the neighbourhood, so that they want to clean alleys and streets of our area. Because we love this city, because it is our city. In the past, this historic city was the front face of Libya because it contained all European embassies in that time, such as the French embassy, Italian Embassy, British Embassy, Greek Embassy. Now, in other areas outside of this city walls, when people talk about us, they look at the old city and its society, [saying] that it is backward, dirty, with rats, etc. In the end, Allah will help us (R15).

Most of the original residents who are still living in the old city are attached to it, love it, and sympathise with it. For example, R20 said that

> the people who were born in the old historical city, and grew up in it, they love the old city and they are sympathetic to it, which is their love and life, and the old city is everything for them, to the point that, some of them looking at everything outside the city walls is backward. Because they saw the beautiful life in old city and learned how to live in it from the generations who was before them. Because they spent

> their childhood and youth, saw trade, and watched Turks, French, Italians, Jews, etc. They are still attached to it until now. Despite the deterioration of the city in general. This kind of human being how you talk to them and they are obsessed with it.

However, only a few original residents remain. Such residents are often heartbroken about the condition of the city and the destruction and damage that occurs within its walls.

Figure 65. The deteriorating state of the houses due to overcrowding and the absence of proper ventilation creates unhealthy living conditions.
(Source: Historic Cities Administration)

From the Gaddafi era to the present, old buildings have been replaced with new construction that does not align with the local architectural style. R20 personally witnessed UNESCO experts visit the historic city during the Gaddafi era to consider designating Tripoli's historical city as a World Heritage Reserve. However, the officials were concerned by 1) the use of building materials like cement in the construction and restoration of old buildings, 2) the modern architectural style inside the heart of the old city, and 3) the impact of vehicle use. These significant errors needed to be rectified before the historical city could be officially recognised as a World Heritage site.

R20 outlined the urgent need for a comprehensive solution to address this critical situation. A multifaceted approach would encompass Libyan customs, religious guidance, social initiatives, economic measures, cultural preservation, political interventions, and environmental considerations. R20 explained that

> three months ago, a health survey revealed that the number of Libyan families residing within the city walls reached approximately 4,000, with an average of four individuals per family, excluding foreigners. The city is grappling with severe overcrowding. Moreover, the residents of the old city have extremely limited income, to the extent that they are unable to afford necessary medical treatment and medication. To alleviate this issue, the clinic strives to offer nearly free or affordable treatment options, with a particular focus on providing support to the residents of the old city. Notably, the clinic frequently attends to cases from African and other foreign communities residing in the area.

Similarly, R6 highlighted the negative impact of new Libyan and other African residents on the historic city, mainly due to a lack of awareness about its historical value. During the Gaddafi era, R6 encountered an African man performing maintenance work on his house on Qas Al-Mufti Street. To R6's dismay, the man was demolishing the front wall of the building, which featured a 400-year-old granite Islamic cover adorned with intricate Islamic drawings. R6 confronted the man to express his strong disapproval and subsequently reported the incident to the local police station. However, the authorities dismissed the matter as “not my business”.

According to R6, there was an urgent need for government intervention, particularly regarding repairs (e.g., streets, alleys, and squares), infrastructure development, and limiting vehicles. Many original and non-original residents echoed these sentiments, emphasising the importance of removing collapsed buildings and maintaining clean streets. They also stressed that the Historic Cities and Management Authority should collaborate with the original residents. R6 proposed improved communication and cooperation between the agency and the old city's residents, suggesting that the agencies could support residents with building materials or other forms of assistance.

5.2.**3. Theme conclusion**

Experts and original residents believed that the increasing number of new residents had led directly to deterioration and overcrowding in the (now neglected) old city. These non-original residents lack an understanding of the historic city's value and contribute to its negative transformation. Residents also face health problems due to the lack of ventilation in the historical houses and the generally crowded environment. While the original residents provided detailed accounts of the differences between the past and present conditions, the non-original residents focused on the current state of affairs. The interviewees’ observations and experiences supported their claims about the changes in the city's condition and its built environment. There was a clear sense of concern among the experts and original residents about the state of their historic city. Current plans and developments seem to disregard the historical significance of Tripoli's old city—this lack of preservation and appreciation poses a serious challenge to maintaining the city's unique identity and cultural legacy. It is a rare example amongst larger and capital cities, even those experiencing rapid growth and change (Gordon, 2006).

5.3. Theme 2: The Law

The law emerged as one of the five primary themes conveyed by the interviewees. Its significance stems from the fact that laws have a profound impact on traditional Arabic Islamic cities, both historically and in the present context (see section 2.8). In the past, Arabic Islamic legislation, principles, and customary regulations played a prominent role in

shaping and organising ancient traditional Arabic Islamic cities. In contemporary times, laws enforced by the state or regime still condition traditional Arabic Islamic cities such as Tripoli.

Most interviewees from both groups commented on how laws changed the demographic composition of the old city during and after Gaddafi. These changes had a profound influence on the city's culture, environment, and economy. The most significant law—Law No. 4 of 1978—was issued by Gaddafi himself. When describing the law, the interviewees used keywords such as the law of Gaddafi /Law No. 4 of 1978 and *Attaba*.

5.3.**1. Initial Gaddafi-era property laws**

The laws that had a direct impact on real estate ownership during and after the Gaddafi era are listed chronologically in Table 5 (Ibrahim and Ott, 2017).

Table 5. The laws affecting property ownership in Libya, 1970-2015

Law Number	**Year**	**Description**
Law 123	1970	Pertained to the disposal of privately owned agricultural and reclaimed lands for the state.
Law 142	1970	Focused on tribal lands and wells.
Law 38	1977	Abolished possession or occupation as a means of acquiring ownership of real estate.
Law 4	**1978**	**Established provisions related to real estate ownership**
Law 21	1984	Dealt with the determination of public interest and the disposal of land.
Law 6	1986	Introduced amendments to certain provisions of Law No. 4 of 1978.
Law 11	1992	Established provisions regarding real estate ownership and its amendments.
Law 17	2012	Established rules for national reconciliation and transitional justice.
Law 29	2013	Focused on Transitional Justice.
Law 16	2015	Repealed certain laws.
Law 20	2015	Established provisions dealing with the consequences of repealing Law No. 4 of 1978.

Laws enacted by Gaddafi in the 1970s—specifically Law 123 of 1970 concerning the disposal of agricultural lands and Law No. 4 of 1978 regarding provisions related to real estate ownership—led to the seizure and redistribution of private real estate (real estate concerned individuals; agricultural lands concerned tribes). In political discourse, these laws were key social justice legislation. However, after the Gaddafi regime, disputes arising from these laws escalated as the original owners began to assert their claims for property recovery or fair compensation. Law 123 granted the state authority over the management, reclamation, and reconstruction of lands that it owned or would own in the future. These lands were then redistributed to citizens lacking sufficient resources for a decent living, particularly those engaged in agriculture or capable of agricultural activities. Priority was given to families with greater need and fewer financial means.

Law No. 142 of 1970 allocated a substantial portion of tribal lands to the state for subsequent distribution. Tribal lands constituted a significant portion of Libya's territory, and their classification was quite ambiguous. Initially, the Ottoman Land Law of 1858, applicable to Libya as an Ottoman state, considered tribal lands as princely lands with limited rights for occupants, who were granted usufruct, though the state retained ownership. The Italian occupiers cited this law when seizing tribal lands to benefit new Italian settlers in Libya.

A committee established in the early years of the monarchy ultimately adopted a similar approach (i.e., state ownership, with tribes having limited rights to usufruct). However, the monarchy did not fully endorse the recommendations of the committee. Instead, it recognised the tribes' ownership of their lands and allowed them to register lands under their own names in the real estate registry. This fostered tribal satisfaction and loyalty to the monarchy, particularly in the eastern region of Libya where tribes held significant influence. Gaddafi sought to undermine tribal authority by transferring most, if not all, of the tribal lands to the state under Law No. 142, which specifically appropriated lands and wells. Gaddafi utilised property ownership to garner support and weaken his opponents.

A few studies have considered the real estate property disputes stemming from previously enacted laws in post-Gaddafi Libya (Ibrahim and Ott, 2017). These studies focus on transitional justice and aim to find resolutions for disputes related to the laws that affected real estate ownership, particularly Law No. 4 of 1978, which applied to housing, buildings, and land. One noteworthy research project was a collaborative effort between the Van Vollenhoven Institute for Law, Governance and Society at Leiden University in the Netherlands and the Centre for Law and Society Studies at the University of Benghazi. This project spanned 18 months, from December 2015 to May 2017. Its objective was to develop policy proposals for both formal and informal mechanisms of dispute resolution.

Other studies have explored potential political or legislative initiatives to address these disputes(El-Katiri,2012). Employing a socio-legal approach, the project went beyond mere

desk studies of legal texts and delved into the actual implementation and impact of these laws. This involved conducting interviews with former and current property owners, occupants, chairpersons and members of the 2006 Committee and its subcommittees, relevant individuals in state institutions, and traditional leaders such as tribal chiefs. These interviews formed an essential part of the comprehensive research methodology employed (Ibrahim and Ott, 2017).

5.3.**2. Law No. 4 of 1978**

In the late 1970s, Gaddafi's *Green Book* ideology reached its pinnacle. Law No. 4 of 1978 reflected Gaddafi's ideas about property outlined in the book's third chapter. Gaddafi wrote that ownership is intrinsically linked to labour and freedom(Gaddafi,1975), with work serving as the foundation for human ownership and an essential element of production, alongside materials and machinery. Consequently, individuals who contribute their labour and appreciate its value have the right to own the fruits of their efforts, whether they are self-employed workers, partners in production facilities or public servants for whom the community pays a fee for their services. The *Green Book* argued that an individual's freedom remains incomplete without their personal and sacred possession of essential needs (i.e., clothing, food, shelter, and even transportation). Gaddafi stated that these items must be owned as sacred private property, never rented from others, as renting one's essential needs allows the landlord to curtail the tenant's freedom.

Law No. 4 had two stated objectives: 1) provide non-exploitative housing for individuals without private accommodations and 2) safeguard the interests of craftspeople and professionals who rent a building to practice their trades and businesses (Ibrahim & Ott, 2017). The law explicitly recognised citizens' fundamental rights to possess appropriate housing for their residence or a parcel of land to construct a dwelling. However, ownership of more than one residential unit was strictly prohibited, except under extraordinary circumstances and for temporary durations. Individuals with more than one property were required to select a single house or plot of land within the designated construction areas. Any surplus property beyond this allocation was to be transferred to the state, which could then assign it to deserving citizens or retain ownership for the benefit of the people. In effect, the law allowed tenants to acquire ownership of their rented accommodations (Auweraert and Williams, 2015).

The state also assumed control over non-residential structures, vacant lands suitable for construction, and properties allocated for public interest purposes. All non-residential property and structures not intended for housing that were owned or leased by a foreigner became the responsibility of the state (for the benefit of the people). Both Laws No. 123 and 4 initially vested property ownership in the state before transferring it to others; the state

either retained ownership and enabled individuals to benefit or maintained both ownership and benefit simultaneously (Ibrahim and Ott, 2017).

The Gaddafi era was characterised by a near-state monopoly, including the state ownership of most real estate. The Gaddafi regime controlled approximately three-quarters of Tripoli's properties, a significant figure in a city housing one-third of Libya's population (Ibrahim, 2015). Moreover, the implementation process was marred by corrupt practices, which the regime later acknowledged as "deviations in the application of revolutionary articles". These practices included the appropriation of individuals' sole residences and the allocation of homes to individuals who did not meet the criteria stipulated by the law (Ibrahim, 2015). Law No. 4 was never solely motivated by ideological considerations; it also aimed to weaken opponents and garner support from loyalists (Ibrahim, 2015).

Law No. 4 had significant impacts on the private ownership of real estate. It dispossessed thousands of people from their lands, their homes, and their commercial, industrial and craft stores. It is still not clear how many properties were affected. The State Department suggested 75,000 properties, while other informed sources confirmed that 50,000 properties were stolen from their owners in Tripoli and its suburbs alone (Ibrahim and Ott, 2017). After Gaddafi's rule ended, the original owners of such properties began demanding restitution or, at the very least, fair compensation for their loss. This created a complex challenge in post-Gaddafi Libya, as the government faced the task of addressing the grievances stemming from property seizures and finding just resolutions for the affected individuals.

Table 6. The articles of Law No. (4) of 1978

Article (1):	Every citizen who has reached the age of majority has the right to own a home, under the condition of residing in it or possessing a suitable plot of land for building a home. Orphans who have lost both parents are exempt from the requirement of reaching the age of majority. The ownership of a dwelling is considered sacred and cannot be violated, except in cases of public interest.
Article (2): & Article (3):	Subject to the provisions of Articles (1, 2, 4, 5), the ownership of buildings intended for housing shall be transferred to the state, even if they are used for purposes other than housing. The same applies to buildings not intended for housing, with the exception of those used by national owners for their professions, crafts, or industry. Ownership of empty lands suitable for construction is also transferred to the state, with the intention of re-assigning them to eligible citizens. These provisions apply to all property owners, except for those owned by public legal entities, national bodies of public interest, and embassies.

Article (4):	A citizen, even if married to multiple spouses, is prohibited from owning more than one house or possessing more than one plot of land suitable for building a house.
Article (5&6):	A person who owns a residence in accordance with the provisions of this law cannot dispose of it through sale, mortgage, or any other action that transfers ownership or entails real rights over the property, except after full payment of the price. However, there are exceptions to this provision. The owner may replace their current home or build a new one under the following circumstances: If it falls within public benefit projects. If it is unfit for habitation. If it becomes disproportionate to the number of family members. If the owner changes their usual place of residence. The executive regulations of this law specify the rules and conditions for the application of these provisions.
Article (7):	Regarding the real estate that has been transferred to the state as stipulated in Article (3), the following actions shall be taken: Homes, buildings not intended for housing, and vacant lands suitable for construction shall be assigned to eligible citizens. They may also be allocated for public benefit purposes based on the needs of the people. Housing and buildings not intended for habitation, owned or leased by non-citizens, shall be managed in the interest of the people. Any dispositions made regarding the real estate mentioned in the above paragraphs that were not carried out through the departments and offices of real estate registration in the Jamahiriya shall not be considered valid. The executive regulation specifies the rules and conditions of ownership and management as stated in the previous paragraph, including the authority responsible for implementation and determining ownership priorities among eligible individuals.
Article (8):	Compensation for the real estate mentioned in Article (3), including the method of payment and cases of exemption, shall be determined

	according to the conditions and rules specified in the Executive Regulations.
Article (9):	It is prohibited for any person to rent out any of the real estate they own. However, public legal entities and legal entities of public interest may rent out their owned real estate in accordance with the provisions stated in the Executive Regulations.
Article (10 &11)	The executive regulations of this law are issued by a decision of the General People's Committee.
Article (12)	1 – Without prejudice to any more severe penalty stipulated in any other law, a penalty of imprisonment for a period of no less than one year and a fine of no less than one thousand dinars and not more than five thousand dinars shall be imposed on whoever commits anything that obstructs the implementation of the provisions of this law in any of the following acts: a) Demolish, damage, damage, conceal or change any of the real estate subject to the provisions of this law. b) He provided false or incorrect information about these properties or was late in submitting them. The court may order depriving the convict of civil rights for a period not exceeding five years. The imposition of the penalty in the cases stipulated in item (A) shall not prejudice the obligation of the convict to pay the value of the damages resulting from his act. 2 – The penalty stipulated in Paragraph (1) shall be applied to anyone who violates the provisions of Article (9) of this Law.
Article (13)	The penalty stipulated in Paragraph 1 of the previous Article shall be imposed on any property owner who refuses – without any right – to pay all or some of the installments for the price of the property he owns. The imposition of the aforementioned penalty shall not prejudice the obligation of the king to pay the due instalments.
Article (14)	Every verdict that does not comply with this law will be cancelled.

5.3.**3. Interviewee responses**

The participants were asked questions about property ownership in general, rather than on any specific aspects of land and property law. However, the answers – particularly from professionals who had to deal with the details of laws – were focused and unified on Law No. 4, which is known to many of the participants as the Gaddafi Law, which produced what is known as the *Attaba* ownership, which will have a major impact on the course of ownership and change of ownership and thus the change of residents of the old city. This was indicated by most of the participants, the first of whom was P1. Other aspects of law took a distant second place, and it was easy to identify in the content analysis the significance of Law No. 4 (which is specific to Libya), but the generic issue of the place of the legal system in urban change is generic.

P1 explained that

> one of the biggest reasons for the destruction of this city is the demographic arrangements, which is forced by the previous regime on this historical city by Law No. 4 to dismantling the original family of the old city, dismantling indigenous customs, traditions, and civilisations upon which it is built up … on purpose destroying the old historical city of Tripoli … The previous regime started to allow the entry of strangers and outsiders who do not know the value, culture and historical history of this city in terms of moral, intellectual and material sabotage. This is not the fault of the new residents, but this is the responsibility of the Gaddafi regime.

In this respondent's opinion, the law robbed the original people of their traditional homes, shops, and markets. Those who replaced the original owners brought other cultures from other cities and regions (whether Libyans from outside Tripoli or non-Libyans).

These circumstances led to so-called *Attaba* sales, which R15 explained differed from an original owner's sale of Holy property.

> The *Attaba* is a house that is not yours, but is reserved for you by the state … But people sell the *Attaba* … without official papers. For example, some people [offer] some houses to other people to use it for a period of time; they give it to them with an agreement under the table to protect the property from Law No. 4. But some people sold the house or the property to a third party, which is not legal … They should return it to the original owner or to local government. It means, you live in it for a small amount of rent—a nominal amount. I mean by trust [the property is legally in the name of the tenant to avoid state seizure], but the property is for the original owner … and as if he relinquished this property to you in front of the law.

R15 continued,

> There are individuals who rent a property from its original owner and then proceed to sell it, taking advantage of Muammar Gaddafi's Law. However, there are others who, out of fear of Allah [God], choose to return the property to its rightful owner or to the state. Many individuals have engaged in this practice multiple times, moving from one house to another, selling and buying properties repeatedly. This is strictly prohibited according to Islamic law ... Each property ends up with multiple owners. During that time, I lived with my mother in a single room for 11 years. During that period, some people approached me offering houses at prices ranging from 3000 to 4000 dinars under the guise of the term *Attaba.* In reality, the true prices of those homes during that time were 100 thousand dinars, and now their value has increased to 250 thousand Libyan dinars. They offered me an apartment facing the sea for 14 thousand dinars back then, but its actual value is 250 thousand Libyan dinars. They suggested that I live in it under the pretext of possession and disposal recognised by the General People's Committee. However, I declined the offer because it is forbidden by Islamic law to reside in properties that belong to others. Currently, I have purchased a house adjacent to my mother's residence, covering an area of 90 square metres. I chose to demolish it and construct a new house in its place, serving as a replacement. Now, I am content and feel as though I am living in a 2000 square meter house.

Most of the interviewees (both original residents and non-original residents of the old city) talked about *Attaba*. However, the non-original residents hesitated to go into detailed discussions, perhaps because they obtained their homes either directly from the government under Law No. 4 or through intermediaries (rental agreements) facilitated by Law No. 4.

When asked when they moved to the old city and whether they rented or owned their property, R6, an original inhabitant, stated,

> I have lived in the old city since I was born. I did not move into the old city; it was my father [name redacted] who did. My father has been the Imam (leader) of the Darghuth Pasha Mosque since 1957. However, due to his old age, he is no longer able to lead prayers in the mosque. As for me, I am over 50 years old, which means I was born before the arrival of the Gaddafi regime and its laws … my father was present alongside me outside the mosque. He is more than 80 years old, and our home is considered a Holy property.

Similarly, R18 stated that,

> I was born in the old city of Tripoli, and I spent my entire childhood there. Similarly, my father also grew up in the old city. Our entire family has roots in the old city of Tripoli, with more than 180 years of history. My father and grandfather were both

> born and raised in the old city. I am currently 36 years old. In the past, my grandfather served as a sheikh in the Al-Naqa Mosque … The house we reside in is owned by my father and is considered a Holy property.

However, participants R3 and R9 provided limited responses when asked the same questions. R3 only said that they "have resided in old town since 1995. I [did] not mov[e] within old town." Participant R9 was equally brief: "I am not own[ing] this property … No, I am not the owner of this property … I am currently renting."

These respondents are not from the indigenous population and exhibit caution since they only own their real estate under Gaddafi's law. Old historical papers and documents serve as proof of the indigenous people's historical roots and ownership of ancestral homes and real estate. These ancestral homes have been passed down through generations; they are a physical embodiment of cultural identity and historical continuity in the old city. P1 added, "the city had a legacy, customs, traditions … the city's condition was very good in terms of economic, social and security, and there was a strong social and family … the whole city was such as one house until Law No. 4 came in 1978 by the previous regime."

P7 approached these changes from another angle:

> another thing which increased the chaos of the old city of Tripoli is the different laws that were issued by Gaddafi's regime … there was Law No. 4 of 1978, which cancelled the private ownership of properties and encouraged [the] renter to own the property. By which the original landlord has lost his property, which has led to neglect of the historical city … The new people didn't care about the city, which started to become more and more deteriorated in … structure and becomes [an] ignored area within Tripoli.

The law created chaos in real estate ownership, which was abused by the non-original residents of the old city and renters. P1 mentioned that new people came into the ancient city (i.e., 'intruders'). When the law cancelled private ownership, the original owner lost his property and indigenous people were replaced by outsiders who did not know the culture and peculiarity of the old city. While P1 focused on the socio-cultural aspects and P7 considered the environmental perspective, both individuals lamented how the law abolished private ownership.

P2 noted that the "ancient town, the historical city, has become desirable for residents with low income" due to the discovery of oil, its central location, the influx of immigrants (generally single labourers), and low prices of homes and rentals. Most residents of the old city are now Arabs and Africans. Most people in the old city are living in *Attaba* houses that are unhealthy and unventilated. Living conditions are not good when renting from either the original owner or the new owner under Law No. 4 (P11).

Some individuals have proof of purchasing their houses with official papers before Law No. 4. R1 explained that his father bought their house in 1950. The transaction was fully legitimate since it took place before Law No. 4. However, the new law made the process of establishing ownership, rental agreements, and legal contracts exceedingly complex. This was echoed by R5, who has been unable to complete the necessary paperwork for their small shop due to the complications arising from Law No. 4.

P1 left Tripoli in 1978 to pursue studies abroad for six years. Upon his return to Libya in 1984, he observed a significant transformation in the condition of the old city. Markets, shops, and doors were closed due to the halt in trade, and cooperative societies were established for distribution purposes. The houses were mostly abandoned, and the original inhabitants of the historic city had moved out, leaving it a deserted and ghost-like place. P1 attributed these changes to Law No. 4.

According to P1, the economic and cultural impact of these laws became apparent in the early 1980s when the administration for historical cities was established. The agency started granting closed shops to individuals from outside the historical city. People from the far south of Libya with different customs and traditions were also resettled in the historic city. This gradual change in the social structure led to transformations in renowned customs, traditions, and activities. The regime targeted the original social structure of the old city by altering its cultural and economic identity. Consequently, the city's distinctive features began to change gradually, and signs of neglect became apparent both internal and external appearance in the city.

5.3.**4. Theme Conclusion**

While the interview asked about the law in general, the interviewees referred to Law No. 4 specifically. Little was said about other aspects of law: the Libya-specific issue of Law No. 4 have dominated this part of the analysis. Two of this law's fifteen articles targeted housing and shops in the old city. The first stated that no citizen may own more than one house/plot, while the second prohibited the rental of real estate.

Some respondents commented on Law No. 4's socio-cultural and environmental impacts; others spoke more vaguely, without outlining the problems with the law. The original residents owned their homes as Holy property (pre-Law No. 4), while non-original residents acquired their homes through *Attaba*, either directly from the government under Law No. 4 or through a middle person (the lessor). The experts and original residents confirmed that Law No. 4 changed the demographic arrangement of the old city. The non-original residents acknowledged the condition of the old city, but did not cite the effects of the law.

5.4. Theme 3: Decision-Making

The interviewees from both groups discussed the problem of decision-making in the old city. One of the key problems stems from conflicting decisions arising from decision-makers struggling over power. As a Libyan proverb states, “If the winds oppose each other, they adversely affect the traveller”. Here, the historical city is the traveller adversely affected by decision-makers’ conflicting decisions. Failures in the decision-making process have had a significant impact on the old Tripoli city. When describing decision-making, the interviewees used keywords such as *conflicts, confusion, overlapping roles, personal interests, regional interests, financial corruption, lack of experience and training, lack of expert qualifications* and *frozen decisions*. The respondents passionately highlighted the challenges and issues associated with decision-making in the context of Tripoli's historic city.

5.4.**1. Interviewees’ responses about decision-making**

The interviews described decision-making conflicts, specifically within the local authorities responsible for the old city. For example, P1 was confused about the old city’s administrative affiliation. After submitting a request to the municipality of Greater Tripoli, the informant received a letter from them stating that the historical old Tripoli city does not fall under the Greater Tripoli jurisdiction. This occurred after P1 submitted a request to change the name of the old city to ‘Atraplus’. P1 intended to distinguish the historic city of Tripoli from connotations of backwardness and marginalisation associated with its current name. P1 explained, "This correspondence took place when the municipality of Greater Tripoli was asked to add the letter Aleph to the name of the historic city, in order to distinguish it from the name of Tripoli." P1 was surprised by this information: “We were surprised by their response, which claimed that the old city of Tripoli does not belong to Tripoli central. However, in reality, it is the exact opposite, as everybody knows that the historic city is the origin and centre of Greater Tripoli”. Most interviewees affirmed this viewpoint, including the original residents who had a deep understanding of the city’s history.

P1 discussed the overall neglect of the historic city, particularly the environmental neglect and potentially deliberate administrative negligence. They pointed to an overlap in legislative and executive powers, which has led to significant confusion over decision-making power and implementation. The conflicts between departments have resulted in the freezing of decisions and projects pertaining to the historic city. Several institutions are involved in the management of the small historical city, including the Historic Cities Administration Authority, the Cities Development Authority, the Tripoli Municipality Centre, and various ministries such as the Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Endowments, Ministry of Utilities, Ministry of Housing, and the Savings Bank. increasing the likelihood of conflicts and opposing decisions when there is a lack of consensus. Different entities vie for control over the old city, creating confusion

about which authority is actually responsible. Most residents in the sample did not know which of the numerous bodies involved in the old city's affairs holds the primary responsibility for any one issue.

P3 called on those entrusted with the old city to exercise genuine dedication:

> The individuals in charge of the old city should truly believe in its value and not simply occupy positions for the sake of a monthly salary...Those responsible for the old city must have a genuine connection with the historical city. They should be aware of the happenings in its alleys, among its lanes, and within its neighbourhoods. They must fully comprehend the magnitude of the problem and not be motivated solely by monetary gain or personal benefits.

During the Gaddafi regime, Fawzia Shalabia, the Minister of Information, was widely considered to be the manager of the old city. She would walk through the narrow streets and engage in conversations with the residents. She displayed a deep personal interest in the well-being of the historic town. However, the current residents [the participants] can no longer name the current person responsible for the old city.

P1 and the majority of residents expressed dissatisfaction with the agency, as its staff are not residents of the old city and lack awareness of its day-to-day realities. The Historic Cities Administration office is located at the top of Frances Street on the extreme northwestern side of the old city, far from the main residential area. The employees acknowledged in interviews that they do not visit the narrow streets of the old city on a daily basis. Consequently, P1 and others feel that "they don't feel the suffering of people who live in the old city."

Most interviewed residents strongly agreed that those working in the historic city should themselves be resident there. Individuals employed from outside the old city are only present during working hours (i.e., 09:00-14:00) and are unable to fully comprehend residents' experiences and emotions. Agency staff and experts typically live in modern accommodations (e.g., tower blocks) outside the old city, while residents live in "the swamps of the city" (as P1 described it). This stark contrast in living situations further accentuates the disconnection between the workers/experts and the residents. P1 adds, "I am constantly reminded of the hidden intentions of this agency, as they have used the old town as a mere symbol for their own private benefit and the benefit of their members." While interviewing P3, I received a phone call from an agency worker, prompting P3 to comment, "I don't like the thieves. They are a group of thieves."

In one example of personal enrichment, P1, a resident and active participant in the old city, uncovered an attempt to seize a portion of the historic city to convert it into a car park for the Ministry of Finance without official documentation. This incident occurred early on a

Friday morning, when work requires approval from local authorities. P1 became aware of the situation and took the appropriate decision to halt the work.

Figure 66. Exchanged letters about transforming part of the old city into a private car park for the Ministry of Finance. (left letter: from the Financial Services Control & wright letter: Signed: from Mukhtar (the Mayor) of the Old City – Tripoli. (Source: The Mayor of the Old City). [name redacted]

Translation of exchanged letter
Left letter: from the Financial Services Control-Tripoli
Dated 17/12/2017
Director of the Historic Cities Administration Authority – Tripoli.

With greetings,

While we thank you for your cooperation with us in serving the public interest.

''We refer to the letter of XX / Mayor of Tripoli Municipality [holding a senior city administrative post on in the] Centre No. (B T 1546) regarding the approval to recover the space located behind the Financial Services Control building Tripoli, to use it as it was previously a parking lot for the employees of the Financial Services Control.

Whereas we will start building a room for the parking guard as well as completing the remaining part of the fence, which is estimated at about 4 metres, noting that the construction will not affect the outer wall of the old city, but will be an extension of the fence previously erected. So, that we can place a tight gate on the parking lot.
We hope that you will approve and authorize the implementation of this work''.
Thank you for your cooperation with us.

Signed
Director of the Financial Services Control

Wright letter: from Mukhtar (the Mayor) of the Old City – Tripoli.

This letter from 20/12/2017 Mayor of the Old City of Tripoli to the Director of the Historic Cities Administration Authority – Tripoli.

After greetings,

"While we appreciate your specialized efforts in raising the level of services for citizens, I address you in my capacity as Mukhtar (Mayor) of the Old City regarding the parking lot behind the financial services building, as the parking is used by residents and people of the area to park their cars, due to the privacy of the old city and the inability of residents to park their cars near their homes. Therefore, and in the public interest of the citizens, we hope that you will not allocate this parking lot to any party so that it will be a public parking lot for the residents".

''Please accept our utmost respect and appreciation
Signed: Historic Cities Authority /the Old City – Tripoli''.

It is worth mentioning that UNESCO states that the protection of historical areas in cities should preserving all individual historic buildings and all elements within a comprehensive and multidimensional urban structure (UNESCO, 2021). It is also for each State to adopt, comprehensive and energetic policies for the protection and revitalization of historic areas and their surroundings as part of national, regional and local planning (UNESCO, 2021).

R5 expressed frustration over agency employees' negligence when dealing with ownership papers and rental matters. They feel like some employees are aggressive and potentially seeking bribes from citizens. This exacerbates the conflict between the citizens and the management of historical cities. R5 described the relationship between citizens and the agency as that of a cat and mouse. All the residents complained about the lack of communication and cooperation between the agency and the residents. They reminisced about the days when the Minister, Fawzia Shalabiya, used to come to the old city to engage with residents and check on their well-being.

P1 add that, it is especially disheartening to observe the exploitation of the old city during electoral periods. Many candidates seek votes by associating themselves with the old city, making promises that they ultimately fail to keep once elected. Their engagement with the old city often appears superficial, limited to brief visits to Marcus Aurelius Square during lunchtime. They arrive with delegations, take photos as evidence of their visit, and promptly leave.

Numerous projects in Libya remain incomplete due to financial corruption and insufficient oversight—a bitter truth that is widely acknowledged among the Libyan population. P1 was willing to accept that individuals responsible for serving the old town would pocket 20% of

the funds and utilize the remaining 80% for the city's benefit.[2] However, most contractors exhaust the entire allocated budget, resulting in a debt that exceeds the initial contract value. Projects are often initiated with enthusiasm but ultimately fail to sustain momentum and stagnate.

It is important for experts to possess knowledge of proper procedural work, management techniques, negotiation skills, communication, and local customs to protect the historical city (P1). These individuals should possess a deep understanding of the historical background and an expertise in modern digital systems for preserving and organising documents. However, current officials are inexperienced in areas like negotiation, communication, management, and knowledge of local customs. The interviewees recommended assigning specific roles to various experts such as architects, engineers, teacher syndicates, artists, and medical doctors to help reactivate and revitalise the old town.

The various administrative bodies responsible for the old city have failed to effectively guide and preserve its historical context due to political issues, a lack of professionalism and inexperience. P4 confirmed that a key challenge in preserving urban heritage lies in the scarcity of skilled individuals qualified to undertake its maintenance and modernisation. This is primarily due to the lack of adequate material and moral incentives for craftsmen, engineers, and specialised researchers to engage in restoration, maintenance and modernisation efforts. A craftsman technician often earns more than an engineer, potentially encouraging financial corruption among engineers overseeing such projects.

P7 joined the Historic Cities Administration, specifically the Conservative and Administrative Bureau (Agency), as an architectural consultant from 1989 to 1990. In the early stages of his consultancy, P7 discovered that the agency lacked a comprehensive technical policy for the preservation of historical structures within the city's historical fabric. The team had no experience supervising old cities and had limited knowledge of key concepts such as restoration, preservation and modelling.

P4 had worked in the Information and Documentation Department since 1985. Over time, he became the Head of the Documentation and Information Department, which eventually evolved into the independent Information Documentation and Humanities Department. P4's role primarily involves compiling an extensive database of historic buildings and cities. This encompasses the collection and preservation of historical and technical documents, as well as documenting studies, research, plans, programmes, and activities related to the agency's administrative work. P4 is also responsible for documenting the condition of historical

[2] P1's percentages may be exaggerated.

buildings and cities, as well as the restoration and maintenance work carried out on them. This includes preparing comprehensive files for each site. P4 also develops a plan for printing and publishing relevant materials. Furthermore, P4 ensures that cultural spaces, such as libraries, are equipped with books and references. They are also involved in organising cultural programmes and activities in these spaces, including an exhibition in Historic Itrablis (Tripoli) showcasing folk collections and historical costumes, the Dar Abdullah Kristah centre for child culture, the Nwjie House cultural centre, the Hassan Al-Faqih (Hassan House of Arts), and Ahmed Al-Naep House, a repository of documents and historical information.

P4 confirmed that the agency's capabilities in the mid-1980s were quite rudimentary. For instance, regular photographic techniques were used for documentation, with photographs taken to a basic photocopying facility that produced primitive prints. Most of the pictures were unclear, and some were too dark. Therefore, gathering vocabulary and architectural elements from these images was challenging (cf. AutoCAD, Photoshop, advanced cameras that were available in the 2000s). P4 also noted that none of the employees and engineers who joined the agency had prior experience or expertise in the field.

Despite the agency's documentation efforts, students and researchers often face a dearth of reliable sources, particularly on rehabilitation projects. P4 worked in the agency's documentation section for 30 years. He took tens of thousands of photos, but without documenting information such as location, date, or the general plan showing the location of the pictures, their history, and the names of the buildings. P4 presented some of these photos without sufficient accompanying information, highlighting the deficiency in technical skills and experience.

Furthermore, the Historic Cities Administration office has been plagued by problems related to administrative organisation, economic resources, residents' and users' behaviour, as well as interventions from other state agencies, security services, and various mandates. Some colleagues who experienced the agency's challenging phases have chosen to persist, while others have departed prematurely after addressing specific, limited issues. During the researcher's field visits in 2016-2017, there was no supervising engineer appointed to oversee the maintenance and rehabilitation of certain historical buildings, such as *Al-Mashat* Mosque. Surprisingly, work was being carried out on this significant mosque without any supervision from the agency's authority. The researcher documented this issue and discussed the potentially adverse consequences with experts. R15, a builder working on historical buildings in the old city under the agency's authority, confirmed the lack of project supervision.

Most experts in the interview group characterised current planning mechanisms as weak and ineffective. This was mainly due to the lack of technical research conducted in this field and the limited utilisation of research findings. There was no strong connection between the

residents and the local authority—a critical problem that required urgent attention from city managers. Most residents were unaware of new developments or projects taking place in their city. No one in the resident group—including a doctor, a builder, and a corner shop owner—had ever been invited to events about changing the city, been involved in development projects, or even knew about plans for the city.

Urban design is completely absent from the old city's management, leading to a focus on urban planning processes that do not effectively address the existing situation. The concept of urban design is virtually non-existent in Tripoli old city, except for a recently established course at the University of Tripoli (with limited practical application).[3] Many interviewees saw the *''Al-Modawana*'' [the code] as the most recent significant regeneration plan and a viable solution for the old city. The plan known as "Al-*Modawana* " (the code) had not yet been approved, rendering it ineffective on the ground. The director of the Engineering Consulting Office sent a recommendation to the Prime Minister's office for approval in September 2017. *Al-Modawna* is just one decision affected by the lack of progress and conflicts between different departments.

However, P7, a professor of urban design, saw it as a general survey that lacked crucial details. No new plans have been developed since, and *Al-Modawana* has had limited influence on the ongoing developments. Many individuals also viewed the Urban and Architectural Booklet [of 2010] for the Centre City of Tripoli positively; however, it also failed to adequately consider the local culture in its designs and proposals. P6 added that Libya's major planning policies—particularly the second and third generation plans—did not allocate any attention to the old city. Rather, they focused on urban planning and land use across the entirety of Tripoli, with a lack of urban design for the old city. The Gaddafi era planning policies generally neglected Libya's old cities in favour of areas outside the historical cities.

P5 was the only professional who discussed the importance of security measures for heritage protection. They mentioned UNESCO's willingness to support the Antiquities Authority in Libya, particularly in safeguarding the historic city of Tripoli. This was crucial since these places require ongoing protection and surveillance due to the constant risk of theft and damage. Nearly all the professional interviewees agreed that local officials have limited control over the old city, largely due to the prevailing political situation in Libya.

[3] P7 was the only professor at the University of Tripoli with urban design experience in the old city. P7 had been personally invited by Fawzia Shalabyah, who acknowledged that her team lacked experience in managing old cities and could benefit from his expertise gained in the USA. Importantly, Libyan universities mainly exist to teach graduate students.

There is a local authority responsible for overseeing building and planning permits, which residents are required to obtain prior to construction. This process is meant to include a comprehensive examination of architectural designs, encompassing factors such as architectural style, façade shapes, building heights, functionality, and building materials. It is also crucial for adequate supervision during the implementation phase. The local authorities could mitigate any excesses and errors in construction by adhering to these procedures. However, some professionals incorporate unfamiliar Western ideas sourced from the Internet—a practice that has detrimental impacts on new buildings integrated into the historical fabric of the old city.

P7 used both Western and local insights in their professional practice. However, their primary focus embraced the local character (e.g., building construction, architectural details, texture, and function). On the other hand, P8 only relied on local ideas. However, several interviewees noted differences in the design of new buildings within the old city. The continuous demolition of traditional housing allowed the development of new structures that employed different techniques, interior spaces, and heights. Some locals deliberately demolished traditional homes to replace them with new ones incorporating modern technology and functions.

The final significant factor contributing to project stagnation is overlapping authority. There were several still unexecuted major projects from the Ministry of Housing meant to improve the infrastructure of the entire historic city. Several projects that were approved during the Gaddafi era have yet to be implemented, particularly infrastructure projects in the old city. While the Historic Cities Authority is responsible for overseeing the old city, a significant portion of the old city (particularly the shops) is actually owned by the Ministry of *Waqif*. The rents and donations are directed towards maintaining Waqif properties, meaning these buildings are in better condition than most. This leads to conflicts between the Ministry of *Waqif* and the Historic Cities Authority—numerous meetings have tried to reconcile all involved entities. According to P1, the Historic Cities Authority wants to exert control over all the buildings within the old city. However, residents simply want consensus between the authorities to avoid conflicts and negative repercussions.

R5 narrated his father's ownership struggles for his shop in the Turk market. Initially, the property was under *Waqif* ownership, and R5's father paid rent. However, at some point, the Historic Cities Authority office seized the shop, leading to a change in the rent payment recipient to the agent. The *Waqif* office then intervened and took the matter to court to resolve the dispute with the agency office. The court ruled in favour of *Waqif*, resulting in the shop being returned to them from the agent. As the current tenant, R5 has first-hand experience navigating the overlapping authorities (including obtaining official documents from the authorities (e.g., tax papers), paying rents to the rightful owner, and handling water and electricity bills).

This claim was also supported by a shop tenant, who mentioned the conflict over ownership of certain buildings in the old city. P4, representing the agency, further elaborated on this matter. He mentioned that a recent committee consisting of the administration of the Old City Tripoli, the Municipal Guard of the Old City, and the security services undertook the action of sealing a disputed building, specifically the Ahmed Pasha Al-Qarah Manly Mosque, with red wax. This action was based on the information provided in the technical management report. According to preliminary details, the individuals involved had reached out to the *Waqif* to commence commercial activities in the shops without obtaining permission from the relevant authorities.

5.4.**2. Theme conclusion**

The governmental experts interviewed outlined several concerns with decision-making in the old city. Firstly, there were numerous conflicts and clashes between local government entities, exemplified by the dispute over a car park. There was also confusion due to the unclear ownership status of the historical city and overlapping roles due to the convergence of legislative and executive powers. This led to numerous frozen decisions and projects, and the exploitation of the old city for personal gain (e.g., during elections).

No significant efforts have been made to develop new regeneration plans for the old city despite the absence of a clear policy on urban design, administration, and project management. Local government and experts have been unsuccessful in addressing the situation, primarily because the local officials lack control over the old city due to the prevailing political situation in Libya. Furthermore, project management was often financially corrupt, involving irregularities in project funding, delays, incomplete projects, and resulting in additional financial costs. Lastly, supervising professionals often had insufficient qualifications and expertise and needed more education and training.

5.5. Theme 4: Social-Cultural

The old city's rich history of cultural diversity has been evident since the Ottoman era. The current cultural transformation in the historical city can be attributed to the laws established during the Gaddafi era, particularly Law No. 4. After an initial visit to the historical city to gather preliminary information, it became clear that culture would need to be a primary part of the qualitative questionnaire. The experts and some residents emphasised the significance of cultural change and its impacts on the historical city's current cultural features, and the interviewees used keywords when describing the social-cultural theme such as demographic change, culture and identity change and influence of migrants.

5.5.**1. Professional responses about the socio-cultural environment**

The professionals confirmed that Tripoli's old city has long been home to diverse cultures. P3 explained that prior to 1911 and the Italian invasion, various cultures coexisted—the north-west precinct was occupied by Jews of Turkish, Spanish, and Libyan origins, while the south-west section was predominantly inhabited by Muslims. The north-east section of the city was occupied by Europeans from countries such as Malta, Greece, Italy, Denmark, and France. There were also consulates representing different European nations, including Italy, France, and Denmark. In the post-independence period, Europeans left and new cultures 'invaded' the old city, including Africans (e.g., Nigerians, Nigeriens, Zambians, Chadians), Arabs (Sudanese, Mauritanians, Tunisians, Palestinians, Moroccans, and Egyptians), and recently Bangladeshis. For this reason, P3, a historian, refers to the "old city" as the "historical city" to foreground the city's cultural history. On the other hand, P1 did not comment on the historical aspect but focused on the current cultural makeup, describing it as a mix of Libyan backgrounds (from different regions of East, South, and West, comprising approximately 45%-50%), Africans (from Chad, Niger, Nigeria, Mali), Arabs (from Sudan, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco), and Asians.

According to P1, Law No. 4 had motivated the shifting demographics since the late 1970s. The law made the old city an attractive destination for African expatriate workers, drawn by affordable rents. This influx of people led to overcrowding, and African cultures came to dominate the old city after 1978. Most immigrants in the old city were working class artisans like blacksmiths, carpenters, and fishers. A few came with their families, though many more were unmarried singles. They lived in challenging conditions, and P1 emphasised the government's responsibility to improve their living standards. Cultural differences have affected the transformation of the city's structure and influenced the diverse utilisation of housing units, including temporary or long-term leases for residential, commercial, and artisan purposes. The old city's diminishing capacity to accommodate a large number of immigrants is exacerbated by the immigrant communities' limited resources. There has also been a lack of support from the state, resulting in the neglect of the historical value of the city. Consequently, this has led to the misuse of the city by its residents and users.

The old city's residents believed that the people whose lives outside the city walls perceived the historic city as "backwards". Many old city inhabitants also perceived themselves as being of lower status than those outside the city walls. However, some residents contest this notion, emphasising that the old city served as the foundation for the current capital city of Tripoli, which holds great importance and vibrancy. As R18 expressed, "Tripoli is the beating heart and capital of Libya, with the historic old city serving as its core. This street, being the main artery of the old city, represents its essence". Many residents believe that the old city serves as the foundation for Greater Tripoli, the capital of Libya. P1 had a strong connection to the city and was an original citizen who had spent his entire childhood and life there. He imbued every corner and stone with a special perspective that recognised their historical and civilisational significance. Similarly, P2 emphasised the significance of their role as a library manager in the heart of the historic city. The library aims to encourage individuals (e.g., students, researchers, professors, and writers) to visit the old city. P2 also acknowledged the general public's negative perceptions about the old city, viewing it as environmentally backward.

P1 reminisced about their early life as a child in the old city. They recalled a vivid sense of safety—doors were open to everyone, and the city was considered completely secure. They also recalled how shopkeepers would leave their shops during prayer times, leaving only sticks or other items to signify that they had gone. The shops remained open, with money inside, but there were no attacks or thefts (Figure 81).

Figure 67. A wooden stick placed outside the shop indicates that the owner has temporarily left to attend prayer. The owner trusts that no one will steal from the shop during their absence.
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya).

Figure 68. Historical markets in the old city sold items like food, fruits, and cloth.
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya).

Figure 69. Some of the most famous popular markets (souks) in the old city (left to right): Souk al-Turk, Souk of Al-Laffa, and Souk of al-Mushir.
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya).

Before Law No. 4, the old city enjoyed favourable economic and social conditions. The community thrived from strong neighbourhood and familial ties. Close-knit relationships fostered a sense of unity and interconnectedness within the old city (P1). However, the early 1980s marked a turning point for the old city, as significant changes began to unfold in its social and cultural fabric. As P2 explained,

> After the discovery of oil in Libya [circa 1970], and after the migration of original citizens from this historical city to outside it, and after the emergence of Law No. 4 with the influx of immigrants, and due to the low prices of homes and rental prices, this city has become a magnet for workers and foreigners to provide rooms for cheap rent … The historical city of Tripoli is located in the heart of the greater city of Tripoli, and by providing all the needs of the residents of this ancient town, the historical city has become desirable for residents with low income, most of them are workers [who] work in blacksmithing, and some work in carpentry and traditional

> industries, and many of them work in fishing, because of the proximity … to the Tripoli seaport and the main port of the city of Tripoli, especially after the fishing craft rebound. It is these communities who settled, especially those who have families and children, but the rest returned to his country of origin or immigrated to another place, either inside or outside Libya. Some of them use their city temporarily and others permanently.

Since the 1970s, new cultures started infiltrating the area and the old city became a transit point for individuals migrating to other countries (P4). The original citizens—the majority of property owners—relocated outside the old city. Presently, the original citizens make up the smallest proportion of the population in the old city. To illustrate the failure to pass customs down to future generations, P2 cited the decline of the *Senfaz* profession as shown in figure 87. This was a well-known culinary practice in the old city, specifically renowned for preparing a popular morning breakfast dish. The old city was known for its skilful artisans who specialised in crafting and serving *Senfaz*, a cherished traditional food that contributed to the culinary heritage of the old city. However, the children of *Senfaz* cooks often pursued higher education and shifted their focus beyond the old city, resulting in a change in function and lifestyle within the community.

Figure 70. A man preparing the traditional Senfaz breakfast.
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya).

P6 noted that Tripoli is currently home to diverse Libyan, African, Arab, and Asian cultures that differ in terms of social structure, professions, skin colour, language, behaviour, and customs. Moreover, each culture has distinct customs for social rituals, marriage ceremonies, weddings, and mourning practices.

> New people … brought new cultures to the old city. And the migration of original people, these factors affected the change on the city's function and change the historical city in general … [There is another] social problem, which is the failure of

> the new residents and new arrivals, to follow the customary convention known unto the inhabitants of this historic city. Such as social acquaintance among the population, likewise performing condolences and congratulations on weddings and incidents, meaning integration in society, and you find the new citizens introverted and closed to themselves.

P7 added,

> The mixed cultures of the present time which is Libyans, Africans, Arabs, and Asians … they differ on many levels: social, profession, colour, language, behaviour, custom, etc. and the differences lie on their cultural background, such as altering the structure of the city, different use of the housing units; residency temporary or long term lease, commercial, artisan, etc.

Some experts who lived outside the walls (e.g., P7) lacked direct experience with the current culture of the city, due to their distance from the local community inside the historic walls. In contrast, P1 and P3 live within the walls, walk the narrow streets and alleys, mix with the public, and gain local cultural experience in the always-changing mixed culture. However, P7 knew more about the urban, architectural and legal state of the city.

Figure 71. A funeral ceremony in the alleys of the old city of Tripoli.
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya).

Figure 72. A celebration ceremony in the alleys of the old city, 1926.
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya).

P8 talked about the history and mixing of cultures from Libya (Muslim and Jews), Turkey, Europe (Maltese, Greece, Italian, Denmark, French, etc.). P8 affirmed that the influence of European culture decreased in the period after independence. From the 1970s, other new cultures have 'invaded' the old city of Tripoli, including Africans (Nigeria, Zambia, Chad, Niger), Arabs (Sudanese, Mauritanians, Tunisians, Palestinians, Moroccans and Egyptians) and, most recently, Bangladeshis. They differ in language, customs, clothes, professions, attitude to privacy, interior furniture, colours, food, smells, and lifestyles. According to P8,

> the old city was previously used for residential, commercial, trade, and crafts purposes. The residents were Libyans (Muslim and Jews), European, and Turkish. The houses it was for ownership original. But now the most of residents are living under law No.4 (*Attaba*). Also, labours class like the Africans, and Arabs, most of them are single, and they live temporarily, as the old city is used as a transit station on the way to migrate to other countries. Now original Libyan residents are lowest percentage of the population of the old city, because the majority left the old city and moved to live outside it. There are Arab communities permanently residing in the old city, such as the Palestinians, Moroccans and Tunisians, and recently Asian such as Bangladeshi.

5.5**.2. Residents' responses about the socio-cultural environment**

Residents' responses to this theme do need to be considered in the light of the historical and socio-economic development of Tripoli, and their effect on the old city specifically. Tripoli's old city shares many characteristics with other Arabic Islamic cities; however, it also maintains cultural values, norms, and behaviours that are unique to Tripoli itself (Elbendak, 2008). Like many other cities around the world, Tripoli has been significantly influenced by globalization across various domains. Although Arabic is the official language of Libya, the city of Tripoli has increasingly absorbed global cultural influences, with national culture rapidly urbanizing in response to foreign cultural forces (Elbendak, 2008).

In this research, most participants spoke about their family life before and after the Gaddafi era. For example; R6 reminisced about life and social activities in the old city before the Gaddafi era:

> We were playing with children in the square in front of the church. There was also a nursery school in which Maltese and Italian sisters, where we playing games inside the nursery school. Our childhood was beautiful in those days before Muammar Gaddafi. The church is still functioning and with its original activity. At the current time, we like our children [to] play near our home under our supervision.
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> Now adults, all the time, they are between the following places: the mosques during prayer time, Al-Zawia [the corner] in the time of events, in the Bab al-Bahr club if they play football or watching football or in the streets or alleys or in the seaside

road or at home. [In the past], these streets and alleys were … more suitable for walking … people gathered to talk and exchange news and spend some time sitting in front of houses, etc. But now the cars affect these spaces, so people park their cars on it, children play on it, adult walking via it up a down going to Bab al-Bahr club, and walking outside the old city walls via these streets … When we were youth [young], we usually met on the streets [to] talk and before this sea club opened, we used to play in an old stadium … in the summertime, we were sitting on the beach, but after the opening the club, almost all the youths of this area are gathering in this club (Bab Al-bahr club). Social events are held either at home with a tent outside the house in the street, alley, or in the corner, or in the mosque, depending on the type of event … Building a temporary tent in the street in front of the house for women in solace. In the wedding, [those] who have financial ability will rent a wedding hall outside the old city. P6 Some families also enjoy spending time at the beach, having picnics with their children and loved ones.

Figure 87. An old man sitting with his grandchildren at the beach in the old city.
(Source: The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya).

R5 compared his childhood to the current experience of childhood in the old city: when stated that, ''Today, children play in the streets and alleys, as there are no designated spaces for them to play. Recently, a park has been established at the bottom of the old city, and some children go to play there or in the park outside the old city. However, most children are prevented by their parents from going outside the old city, as their parents prefer them to play in front of their homes in the alleys, which they consider safer. R5 continued:

> ''Adults in the old city move around the streets with friends, chatting outside doors, and heading to work or school. They often meet on the streets, while the youth typically play at the Bab El Bahr club, near the [Marcus Aurelius] arch, where they engage in activities like football, judo, or watching a football match. These streets were originally designed for pedestrians, but people now gather to converse,

> exchange news, and spend time sitting outside their homes … For social events, a tent is typically set up outside the houses in the courtyards, which are situated between the alleys, so the alleys are sometimes closed off. Men often gather at the mosque since the houses are too small to accommodate large gatherings, although smaller social events are usually held inside the homes. Those with the financial means may rent a wedding hall outside the old city for larger events.

Many of the participants expressed discomfort with the presence of foreign bachelors living near their families, as they do not accept them mixing with their families. Libyan families are generally conservative and prefer bachelors not to interact with their families and children Due to religious and cultural considerations, families do not want single strangers and even young natives to come close to and interact with their women and children. The main issue here is what is known as the "foreigner's problem"—a concern familiar to all Libyans (R5). One resident reflected on the changes over time, saying, "In the past, the historic city was much better than it is now. I mean, I was born here and grew up here. It was a beautiful childhood. All the residents of the historical city were Libyan citizens. The culture was 100% Libyan. The foreign people and expatriates did not understand the historical and cultural value of this city. There is something in ourselves that we have lost—our identity. The identity of the city was once a Libyan identity, but now it has changed. We have lost our Libyan culture here." He continued, "In the past, the culture was 100% Libyan. There must be compulsory guidelines for living in the historic city. Libyan or non-Libyan, Arab or African, or any other nationality—if they wish to live in this historic city, they must understand the value of this place and live according to the terms and conditions of the contract."

Figure 88. People gather to talk, exchange news, and spend some time sitting in front of houses, 1961. (The digital photographic collection of Tripoli Old City, Libya)

R15 spoke about daily life when they were young:

> They usually meet on the streets, the Youth people play at the Bab El Bahr club, close to Marcus Aurelius Arch, play football, judo, watch a football match. The days when we were youth, we usually meet on the streets for talk and before this sea club

> opened, we used to play in an old stadium, which is the ground of it is not grassy, and in the summer time, we were sitting on the beach, but after the opening the club, almost, all the youths of this area are gathering in this club (Bab Al-Bahr club). These roads were originally designed for pedestrians, but people gather to talk and exchange news and spend some time sitting in front of houses, etc … The road that I use[d] is from the upper water tank in the region overlooking towards the sea from the west. In fact, I like to walk from those alleys to here, and to the club because all my friends are from those alleys and we meet in the club almost daily. The days when we were youth, we usually meet on the streets for talk and, before this sea club opened, we used to play in an old stadium … the ground of it is not grassy … in the summertime, we were sitting on the beach, but after the opening the club, almost, all the youths of this area are gathering in this [Bab Al-bahr] club.

These lifestyles were confirmed by almost all the original residents. R1 explained that

> Adults move around the old city with friends and talk outside doors, go to work and school via these streets. We meet with friends and neighbours in the club. In our area, we do it in the church's external area. Some social events are held either at home with a tent outside the house in the street and alley, or in Al-Zawia [religious building] or in the mosque, depending on the type of event, for example, in buildings called the corner for men in event [of] mourning.

Also, R2 confirmed that

> In wintertime, the adult normally meet in the mosque, the corner (Al-Zawia), in the homes, or in the Bab al-Bahr club. Sometimes in homes, but the youth are usually in cafes and the club, Bab Al Bahr, also, we meet in the streets and alleys. In summertime, adult sitting on outside the home door. These roads were originally for pedestrians, but people gather to talk and exchange news and spend some time sitting in front of houses … Social events are held either at home with a tent outside the house in the street, alley, or in the corner (Al-Zawia) or in the mosque, depending on the type of event …. [Those who] have financial ability, rent a wedding hall outside the old city [or build] a temporary tent in the street in front of the house for women in solace or joy. As for men, in a building that is called the (*Sufi*) corner, in case of joy or solace. Also, foreign singles live in the middle of families and children area, in the old city, and this is unacceptable for families.

R3 added that

> Women meet at homes, men most of the time in the mosque, at the corner, Al-Zawia or at homes, or in the Bab al-Bahr club. These roads were for pedestrians, but people gather talk, walking to work, school, shopping, spend some time sitting in

> front of houses, etc. These streets and alleys are important for our daytime and night-time life …. for women, they build up a temporary tent in the street in front of the house for women in solace or joy. As for men in a building that is called (Al-Zawia) corner, in case of joy or solace. And who have financial ability, will rent a wedding hall outside the old city
>
> Singles live in the middle of families and children, areas in unhealthy houses, and this is not suitable for families … living around them, which they need help from the local government. There is a problem of entering the cars into the alleys of the old city, because these narrow streets and alleys does not planned to enter cars, plus it's dangers for the kids. The old city needs smart environmental solutions; it needs cleanliness, it needs infrastructure, it needs its people to serve it.

R4 confirmed that,

> the adults move around the old city with friends and talk outside doors, go to work and school via these streets. Now we have the club where we meet with friends and neighbours. Most of the time in the mosque, Al-Zawia (corner), in the homes, or in the Bab al-Bahr club and cafes. Also, they usually meet on the streets, the Youth people play at the Bab El Bahr club, close to the Marcus Aurelius Arch, play football, judo, watch a football matches … We use these spaces for pedestrians, for people gather and talk. Exchange news and spend some time sitting in front of houses, etc. Kids play around their houses. Also, for events and cars parking.

The residents' responses to the socio-cultural environment of the old city of Tripoli reveal deep tensions and reflections on the intersection of tradition, modernity, and globalization. Through their responses, several key concerns can be identified: the preservation of local cultural identity, changing social rules, and the impact of globalization and migrants influence.

5.5.2.**1. Preservation of cultural identity**

A recurring theme in the residents' reflections is the perceived loss of a specifically Libyan cultural identity in the old city. It is, of course, unsurprising that incomers cause culture clash (Donaldson, 2013). In this case, the nostalgia expressed for the past is not merely about physical changes to the environment but about a perceived erosion of cultural values. This relates to wider work on nostalgia and residents' responses to newcomers (Zou and Petkanopoulou, 2023). Residents describe a time when the old city was inhabited exclusively by Libyan citizens, and they emphasize that the culture was 100% Libyan. This sense of loss is connected to both the physical transformation of the city and the cultural change they associate with the presence of foreign nationals, particularly expatriates and bachelors.

The original residents' deep attachment to their cultural heritage is illustrated by the expressed discomfort with foreign bachelors mixing with their families. This aversion reflects a broader concern over the erosion of social cohesion within the local context. For example, the participants from both groups such as p1, R15, P7 and others mention that "the foreigners mostly do not understand the historical and cultural value of this city" suggests a belief that outsiders, especially those who are not invested in the local culture, fail to respect or contribute to the preservation of the city's unique social fabric. It fails to recognise the potential benefits that newcomers might bring, and historically this has been a common response (Fagan, 1988).

The residents' sense of identity is also tied to the spatial environment of the old city. The traditional urban fabric, architecture and urban design, characterized by narrow alleys and tightly knit courtyards, are seen as reflective of a more intimate, community-centred way of life (Bianca, 2000; Jayyusi et al., 2008). This environment is ideal for maintaining close-knit social relationships, especially among families, which are fundamental to Libyan society. The creation of spaces for social gatherings, such as the setting up of tents in courtyards or gatherings at the mosque, reinforces the importance of community-based social interaction and a sense of collective identity.

5.5.2.**2. Changing social rules and family structures**

Another significant aspect of the residents' responses is the evolving nature of family dynamics and social roles within the old city (Aref et al., 2024). The fact that children now play in the streets and alleys, which also have more vehicular traffic, due to a lack of designated play spaces highlights a tension between traditional practices and modern expectations (Atmakur-Javdekar, 2016). While some children go to newly established parks, most are restricted by their parents, who prefer them to stay within the confines of their homes and alleys for safety reasons. This reflects a broader shift in attitudes toward childrearing and parental control in the face of perceived risks in the larger urban environment (Marx and Steeves, 2010).

The shift in the social environment is also evident in the nature of social gatherings. In the past, communal spaces like the mosque and courtyards were central to family and social life. These spaces were used not only for religious purposes but also as venues for community events and social cohesion. Today, the growth of individualism, spurred in part by urbanization and globalization, has altered the structure of these gatherings (Radwan, 2020). Although small social events still take place in homes, larger events such as weddings may be held outside the old city, signalling a shift towards more private and less communal forms of socializing.

Moreover, the discomfort with the presence of foreign bachelors in the community underscores a broader concern about the erosion of traditional family structures. In Libyan

society, which remains deeply conservative, the notion of family and its role in socialization is closely linked to cultural and religious norms. The fear of cultural dilution and the violation of traditional family values emerges in the disapproval of families interacting with bachelors. This sentiment reflects the anxiety that the introduction of foreign, and especially Western, ways of life could disrupt the moral and social order that is seen as vital to maintaining a cohesive community.

5.5.2.**3. Impact of globalization and immigrants**

Globalization is another critical factor shaping the socio-cultural environment of Tripoli's old city (Abubrig, 2016). The arrival of expatriates, foreign workers, and the growing number of foreign bachelors has introduced a new set of cultural norms and practices that are perceived to be in conflict with local traditions (Mao and Shen, 2015). Tripoli city has attracted large number of migrants from the rest of Libya, adjacent countries, and sub-Saharan Africans looking for employment opportunities [or using the city as a staging post for migration to Europe] (Abubrig,2016). The residents' discomfort with these foreigners is indicative of the challenges faced by many societies in the Global South as they navigate the complexities of global migration and cultural exchange.

While the influence of globalization is acknowledged through the presence of foreign nationals, there is also a resistance to it, as evidenced by the call for compulsory guidelines for living in the historic city (Arnett, 2002). This suggests a desire for some form of cultural regulation to protect the city's identity from external forces. The argument for non-Libyans to adhere to the "terms and conditions of contract" can be seen as an attempt to ensure that newcomers respect and integrate into the cultural fabric of the old city without undermining its established social and cultural values.

In particular, the critique of the "foreigner's problem" emphasizes the perceived incompatibility between globalized lifestyles and traditional Libyan customs. The old city's local [National] identity is framed as something static and pure, and the influx of foreign influences is seen as a threat to its integrity (Edensor, 2002). This highlights a tension between the forces of modernity, which often embrace pluralism and cultural exchange, and the desire to preserve tradition in the face of outside influence.

5.5.2.**4. The urban environment and social cohesion**

The unique urban design of the old city, with its narrow streets and courtyards, plays a significant role in shaping the social life of its residents. The fact that these streets were originally designed for pedestrians rather than vehicles underscores the centrality of human interaction in the city's layout. People gather in these spaces to talk, exchange news, and spend time in front of their homes, reinforcing the importance of public space in building community ties.

This shared urban environment fosters social cohesion by enabling residents to interact regularly with one another, creating a strong sense of belonging and mutual support. However, the discomfort with foreign bachelors and the changes in family dynamics suggest that these traditional forms of interaction may be under threat. The presence of outsiders, particularly those who are not integrated into the community, could lead to fragmentation and a weakening of the social bonds that have historically sustained the old city.

5.5.2**.5. Theme conclusion**

These responses highlight the historical and present-day cultural diversity within the old city and shed light on the various cultures that have influenced the area over time. After Law No. 4 instigated demographic changes, the historic city of Tripoli became a haven for African immigrants but was neglected by the state. Law No. 4 had a significant influence on the old city, leading to shifts in its cultural values, social relationships, and overall structure. Nevertheless, the streets of old Tripoli city are very culturally, socially and economically important to the lives of its residents.

African cultures are now over dominate in Tripoli's old city. All immigrant groups have failed to adapt to the culture of the old historical city. For instance, families in the old city prefer not to have unmarried men living near them, but this has become nearly inevitable. Furthermore, traditional cultural activities have not been passed on to next-generation Libyans since more young people are now going to university to improve their situation.

There are prevalent negative perceptions of the old city as "backwards," despite its integral role in Libyan life. Residents of the old city also feel like they are of a lower socio-cultural class than those living beyond the walls. Some residents contest this notion, emphasising that the old city serves as the foundation for the current capital. Long-time residents fondly recall a time when the city was characterised by a strong sense of safety and unity, with open doors and a harmonious atmosphere during prayer times.

Overall, the residents' responses to the socio-cultural environment in the old city reflect a complex interplay of nostalgia for a past that is seen as more culturally coherent and a recognition of the challenges posed by globalization and urban change. There is a strong desire to preserve local traditions and values, yet there is also an underlying tension between maintaining cultural integrity and adapting to the realities of a more interconnected and globalized world. These responses reveal that the ongoing struggle to balance preservation and modernization, and the deep concern over the potential loss of a distinctive cultural identity in the face of external influences.

5.6. Theme 5: Economy

Like many other traditional Arabic Islamic cities, Tripoli's old city experienced significant changes after the industrial revolutions of the last century. Furthermore, the discovery of oil and the development of oil industries in Libya had a profound impact on the country as a whole. Historically, the old city enjoyed stability and a thriving economy, particularly during the Ottoman era and the early years of the Gaddafi era. Its commercial and tourism activities were consistently strong.

However, the current state of the historical city reveals signs of significant economic change. Traditional activities in the historical city have declined despite local attempts at revival. The traditional economy was affected by the introduction of new cultures, resulting in changes in the daily lives of the residents. When describing the economy, the interviewees used keywords such as traditional market closed, business closed and change function.

5.6.**1. Interviewee responses about the economy**

Tripoli was formerly a vibrant and bustling international trading city that hosted numerous European embassies. Starting from the Ottoman era, its urbanism, cultures, and heritage were passed down to future generations. The city held great significance as a central hub representing the East within the Arab Maghreb region and Mediterranean basin. P3 highlights the historical diversity within the old city of Tripoli, noting that it was inhabited by a mixture of residents including Libyans and Europeans. The Jewish community, originating from Turkey, Spain, and Libya, resided in the north-west area, while Muslims occupied the south-west section. The north-east section was home to European communities such as the Maltese, Greeks, Italians, Danes, and French. Various consulates representing different European countries, including Napoli, France, and Denmark, were also present. The city embodied a whole nation of a bygone era behind its walls and gates. During the Italian occupation, changes occurred outside the walls of the old city. Engineers constructed a church and a square (Algiers Square), along with post offices, administrative structures, hospitals, and schools. These developments catalysed urbanisation beyond the traditional city boundaries; however, the historical city remained stable and continued with its traditional economic activities (R20).

P1 listed the traditional markets of the historical old city: Al-Turk market (Soke), Al-Rabbaa market, Al-Mushir market, Al-Lafa market, Al-Hareer (Soke) souk, Al-Nagara (Carpentry) souk, Al-Atara (Perfumery) market, and a handicraft bazaar. These trading activities continued contributing to a thriving economy after independence (and this was mentioned by P1, P2, P4, P5, and P6). The city's economy, society, and security remained stable, with a strong sense of social and family cohesion characterising the old city (P1).

However, the impact of Law No. 4 in the early 1980s became evident with the founding of the Historic Cities Management (HCM), a local government agency responsible for the old city. The HCM began granting closed shops in traditional markets to individuals from outside the historical city. As a result, new activities gradually overshadowed the traditional ones. For instance, in early 1990s the traditional preparation of *Senfaz* lost its prominence and eventually ceased to exist in the old city. Nevertheless, the traditional craft of fishing is still alive, even with changes in conditions. Many people work in fishing due to the old city's proximity to the main seaport, especially after the rebound [after a stagnation in this craft] of fishing craft (P2). R4 stated that he had been in the profession since 1985, noting, "there are many residents of the old city working in this field."

There were noticeable positive developments in the city's tourism sector before the 2011 revolution (P2). However, the security situation has since deteriorated, rendering Libya unsuitable for foreign tourists. An overall decline in the city's condition further disrupted the continuous growth of tourism activities in the old city (P1). Therefore, the traditional markets have undergone a transformation, primarily adopting new commercial functions, particularly becoming places for currency exchange (P3).

Uncontrolled economic pressures pushed function changes in some of the old city's buildings and markets (P2). For instance, the Al Musheer market near the Clock Tower has transformed from a traditional crafts market to a currency market. The entry of a currency market into the old city has significantly driven up the prices of real estate and rents due to the soaring costs of foreign currencies. R20 suggested that the price of an *attaba* (shop) fifteen years ago ranged from 3,000 to 4,000 Libyan dinars. It now costs between 60,000 and 70,000 Libyan dinars. Similarly, properties like houses, khans, and buildings, including clinics, now days in 2017 carry a price tag of around one million Libyan dinars.[4] The declines in the Libyan dinar against foreign exchange have been so severe that it has become challenging to physically transfer cash to and from the market—local currency, in the form of cash, must be transported using trolleys within the Al-Moshir currency market and to the car park (R18).

At present, the residents of the old city predominantly fall into three categories: 1) the small number of original residents who own properties, 2) those who entered during the Gaddafi era, and 3) those who invested their own money to acquire shops in the *attaba* market, which are then rented out to African workers as a business venture. Moreover, many houses in the old city are being utilised despite their poor conditions and lack of proper sanitation (P1). This has resulted in a density problem, with some houses rented to African workers now being occupied by over 20 individuals, most of whom are single men (P3).

[4] One building near the clinic in the currency market area was sold for 1.8 million Libyan dinars.

The interviewees unanimously agreed that people's lack of concern for the city has led to further deterioration of its infrastructure. This is exemplified by the demolition of old traditional houses by new residents, who construct new buildings that differ in function. The situation parallels the current state of the currency market, which was previously the traditional crafts market. The new buildings constructed in the old city often exceed six stories, deviating from the scale and architectural details of the traditional structures. For example, [P1, R15, and R20 and others all cited this example] a building located at the end of Frances Street held historical significance, consisting of two floors with a coffee shop underneath. Surprisingly, this year (2017) it was sold for 90 thousand Libyan dinars. Over the years, the building had changed hands multiple times, but the last owner had obtained a permit for its maintenance and restoration. However, against expectations, the owner decided to demolish the building. The intention was to construct a new building with a different purpose than its original function. This event reflects the ongoing trend of demolishing historic structures due to the rising prices of land and real estate, both in the city of Tripoli as a whole and, specifically, in the historical city.

5.6.**2. Theme conclusion**

The ancient historical city of Tripoli had various traditional businesses and activities, including traditional craft markets. These activities were vibrant and contributed to the city's strong economy. The old city remained stable and maintained its traditional economic activities through the introduction of urbanisation during the Italian colonial period. However, Law No. 4 led to the closure of traditional markets and shops, a halt in trade, and the departure of many original residents. The management agency responsible for the old city began assigning closed shops in the traditional markets to newly resettled individuals. Cooperative societies were established for goods and food distribution.

Fishing remained an important source of income; after the historical city witnessed a decline in foreign tourism after February 2011 due to the security situation. In general, due to conflict in Libya the high prices of foreign currencies and the decline of traditional craft markets resulted in rising rents and real estate prices. Traditional markets had to adapt to new commercial functions (e.g., currency exchange). Several buildings have changed ownership multiple times over period 2013-2017 contributing to the overall increase in land and real estate prices (Aminur and Di Maio 2020).

5.7. Conclusion

This chapter analysed five key themes that emerged from a content analysis of participants' responses: 1) built environment, 2) the law, 3) decision-making, 4) social-cultural aspects, and 5) economic aspects. Participants lamented the physical conditions of the old city (e.g., architecture, infrastructure, and urban planning) and issues such as overcrowding, deterioration, and neglect. Both experts and original residents worried about the old city’s

built environment. They agreed that preserving its historical significance is crucial for safeguarding the city's identity and heritage. Many participants put much of the blame on Law No. 4 of 1978, which restricted property ownership and introduced rental regulations in the old city. The government experts and original residents acknowledged the negative impact of demographic changes, while non-original residents – themselves recent migrants – avoided discussing the issue in depth.

After Law No. 4, traditional markets closed, trade declined, and original residents left. Fishing remained, but foreign tourism decreased due to security concerns. These changes affected rent, real estate prices, and the city's urban identity. The participants' economic discussions focused on traditional businesses, crafts markets, fishing, and the impact of changes in ownership and real estate prices on the local economy. The interviewees also pointed to the complexities of decision-making in the old city. They cited conflicts between local government entities, overlapping authorities, and the challenges with implementation, financial corruption, and a lack of professional expertise. Improving decision-making, accountability, and skill development is vital for the city's development and its urban identity. While some view the city as a haven for African immigrants, the area has long suffered from the state's neglect. The old city is socially and economically significant but faces negative stigmatizations that label residents as "backward."

These five themes provided valuable insights into Tripoli's old city; they highlighted the challenges and changes in its built environment, economy, law, decision-making processes, and social-cultural fabric. Preserving the city's historical significance and addressing the identified issues are crucial for sustainable development and cultural heritage, and all are important components of urban identity.

Chapter Six: Discussion

6.1. Introduction

Urban change is a reflection of social changes in the built environment, and both are related to urban image and identity. Social change occurs (amongst other reasons) when a particular group migrates to a place and invariably changes it over time. While social change always plays a role in urban change, its impacts may be unintended – for example causing gentrification or, as studied here, urban decay. Therefore, shedding light on urban decay can help us understand the factors/elements/aspects impacting it and offer a more holistic understanding of how it affects identity.

None of the interviewees in this study, including the experts, explicitly mentioned the term "urban decay". Instead, they used related Arabic words and phrases that indirectly refer to the concept. This is probably because the term "urban decay" is not commonly used in Arabic literature (unlike in the Western literature, where it is explicitly discussed in relation to identity). In light of this linguistic gap in the relevant literature, the researcher employed translation strategies to effectively convey the intended meaning. This study adopted a semantic approach (Nord, 1994) to identify equivalent target text or words that capture the same essence and message as the source text. The phenomenon of urban decay is visibly present in many, probably most, cities – both Arabic and Western. However, its boundaries are conceptualised differently— in the relevant Arabic literature, terms such as *crisis in the built environment* or *disaster* are more common. For example, the researcher noted that, the most common and used terms in the relevant Arabic Libyan literature (Libyan universities' reports, papers, and journals) in this field are crisis and disaster.

This chapter establishes links between the interviewees' responses and the existing literature. The primary knowledge contribution lies in exploring the complex nature of urban decay in Arabic Islamic cities. Although the specific term "urban decay" may not be commonly used or recognised, the phenomenon itself exists within the interpretations and understandings of the people living in or managing these cities. By exploring their perspectives, we can gain a deeper understanding of how urban decay manifests and is conceptualised within this specific cultural and linguistic context beyond Western perspectives.

This project required careful analysis of data and insights from the residents and workers in Tripoli's old city. The researcher created a "fan tool" to more effectively organise and communicate these critical findings. The five key themes emerging from the interviews formed the basis of the fan (Figure 89). The theoretical contribution expands and enriches

the concept of urban identity by exploring urban transformation through the lens of urban decay in the specific context of Tripoli's old city. Thus, the fan was the enabling mechanism to understand urban decay within the context of urban transformation in Tripoli's old city.

The thesis also explores the key concepts of identity formation, transformation, and the correlation between identity and urban change – in this case, urban decay. It also investigates the interplay between identity and society, and any resulting socio-cultural changes. The fan diagram displays how driving forces and contributing factors intersect the concept of urban change. Ultimately, the researcher used the fan diagram to derive insights from the identified themes and expand the concept of urban identity by exploring urban transformation through the lens of urban decay in Tripoli.

Figure 73. The fan diagram.
(Source: generated by Researcher).

The old city at the heart of Tripoli holds immense cultural significance. Its traditional narrow alleys and streets play a crucial role in shaping the cultural, social, and economic life of its residents and their urban identity. According to Madanipour (2003), narrow streets can facilitate a range of social interactions between individuals, as well as between individuals and their environment. He argues that narrow streets provide a sense of intimacy and create a more communal environment, as people are forced to interact with each other. This can lead to a greater sense of community and social cohesion, as people are more likely to get to know their neighbours and establish social connections (Madanipour, 2010).

The local authority's efforts to revitalise the cultural aspects of the historical city include the provision of cultural spaces such as libraries, cultural programmes and activities aimed at preserving and promoting the city's cultural heritage. According to UNESCO, heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations. Our cultural and natural heritage are both irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration (Lee, 2017). The rise of the concept of World Heritage has led to the preservation of important human landmarks and natural environments worldwide. It has revitalised neglected heritages, saved endangered cultures and languages, and even contributed to the revival of heritage cities (Khirfan, 2016; Pendlebury and Porfyriou, 2017). It has also grown cultural and eco-tourism (Turtinen, 2000). However, the concept of World Heritage has always been linked to national and international politics.

Figure 93 show the five main factors influencing heritage and urban identity in Tripoli's old city. Understanding these factors will improve the richness of existing studies on managing change in Tripoli and help develop professional discourse. All the elements of the fan contribute to identity. However, these five factors operate in locally particular ways— in some circumstances, they lead to urban decay; in others they lead to urban improvement. The same processes of urban change will yield different outcomes in different places since each city possesses unique characteristics. While the model in Figure 90 is based on Tripoli, it may nevertheless serve as a generic model applicable to other Arabic Islamic cities, there will always be subtle differences within each 'blade' of the fan.

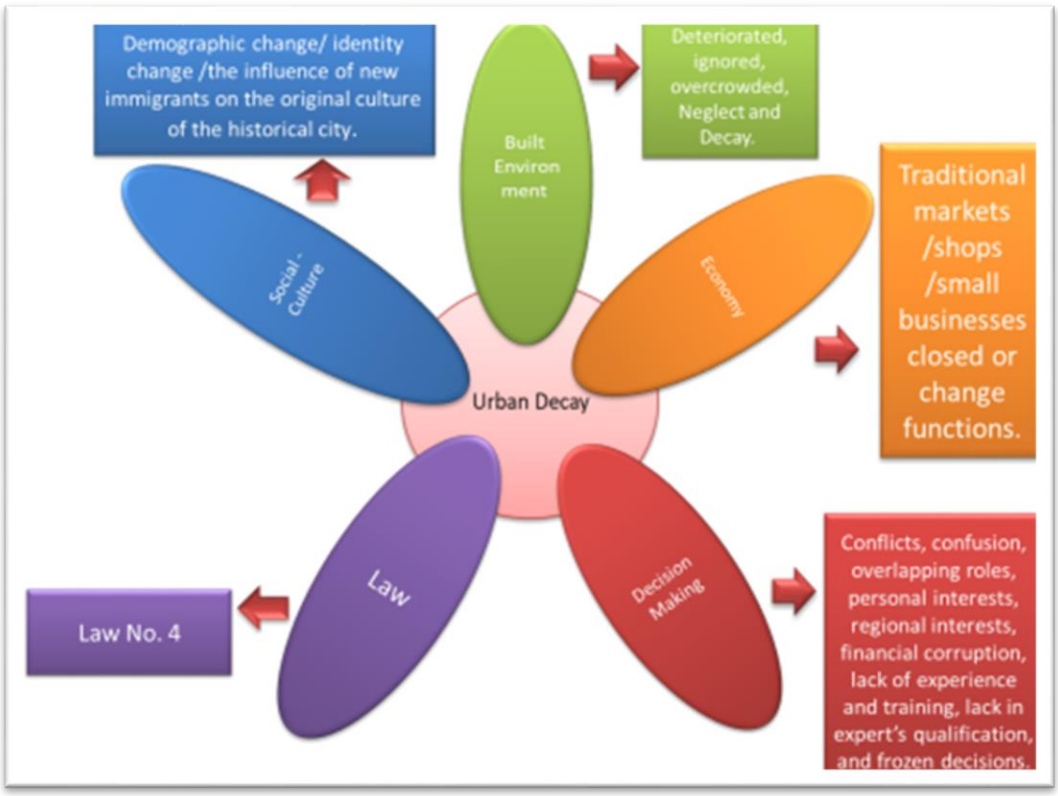

Figure 74. Modified fan diagram showing the five main factors influencing Tripoli's old city and their effects. (Source: generated by Researcher).

Urban decay is primarily observed in the built environment, but it is influenced by a combination of factors, including social-culture, decision-making, law, and economy. These factors are not isolated from one another; they are interconnected and affect each other sequentially. Decision-making affects the law, which then affects the economy, and ultimately influences the built environment. The fan diagram consists of four interconnected parts and one external part, each already having an impact. The three interactive sequential points—decision-making, law, and economy—affect the endpoint, the built environment. On the other side of the model, the social-cultural aspect also influences the built environment. The social-culture aspect is particularly important in the context of Arab Islamic cities. Culture extends beyond geographical location and climate; it encompasses the way in which society thinks and the values it holds. This cultural backdrop is significant in understanding the rationales and implementation of specific laws (e.g., in this particular country, Libyan Law No. 4).

6.2. The socio-cultural factor in Arabic-Islamic cities

Numerous social-cultural changes have occurred in Arabic Islamic cities over time. In Tripoli, the interaction between original and new residents has been a significant factor affecting urban decay. It is important to recognise these dynamics to derive a more tangible approach to understanding the underlying drivers of urban decay.

Social-cultural and identity factors can be observed in the daily traditional lives of Arab Muslim communities in Arabic Islamic cities (despite many challenges and the risk of decline (Skeres, 2004). The underlying reason for socio-cultural changes and alterations in stems from the demographic shifts after the influx of new arrivals. This has forced changes in Arabic Islamic cities at large, unintentionally affecting the social structure and contributing to cultural transformation in these cities. Tripoli's historical city serves as a compelling case of these changes.

In recent times, concepts such as urban identity and urban change have gained popularity in the Western literature. Globalisation has influenced socio-cultural and economic circumstances, necessitating the reshaping of cities (Sirel, 2005). Globalisation is a potential threat to civilisation and local cultural values; it disrupts social relations and national belonging, creating sectarian conflicts and eroding social and religious beliefs (Hajjar, 2010). These changes have affected almost the entire world, including Arabic Islamic cities. Cities such as Abu Dhabi, Doha Dubai, and Manama have experienced continuous urban transformation, development, and growth during the last 20—30 years (Al-Mohannadi and Furlan, 2018; Hashim, 2018; Fletcher and Carter, 2017; Hamouche, 2008). These cities are ethnic areas created by a demand for labour and the interaction of diverse cultures, with many expatriate professionals residing and working in these cities. They are "media-scapes" shaped by the increasing role of media and information technology. It is widely recognised that economic factors have environmental consequences and vice versa (Belgasem, 2005).

Certain cities have also gained geopolitical prominence as new challenges emerge in the context of international urban competition, especially on the Arabian Peninsula (Salama, 2011). On the contrary, the arrival of new immigrants posed challenges for cultural adaptation within the old historical Tripoli city. Migration influenced job opportunities and the nature of work. The general public also holds negative perceptions about the ancient city, associating it with ecological backwardness (Belgasem, 2005).

These challenges affect nearly all Arabic Islamic cities. Oil discovery led to the growth, development, and transformation of Libyan cities. It also provided new rationales for internal and external migration to Libyan cities, with Tripoli – as the capital city – being a primary destination. While the circumstances and influencing factors may be similar across Arabic Islamic cities, the resulting outcomes can vary.

For example, many Saudi cities have been experiencing rapid urban growth (Al-Hathloul and Mughal, 2004), and changing affecting their identity, which was acquired over a long history. These changes produce socio-economic challenges including regional planning, place-making, sustainable urban development, and urban governance.

To assess this scenario of Buraydah city (Osman et al., 2021), substantial fieldwork including several site visits, municipal archives, and field surveys was conducted as a part of the practical aspect. The findings indicate that the process of urbanization didn't start with adequate planning for expanding Saudi cities. These cities have gone through radical urban expansion policies, without considering the historic urban pattern, causing the loss of identity (Al-Ansi et al, 2023), as likeness with this example or a parallel with it where this research argues that identity loss in Tripoli is a result of population change though within the historic core [Which was occurred by Law No. 4] rather than urban expansion, also much of the original population has moved out to the expanded areas (just outside the old Tripoli city walls). However, the results were similar in terms of loss or change in urban identity (Al-Ansi et al, 2023).

6.3. Decision-making, the law, and the economy

The urban planning literature often perceives decision-making processes, the law and the economy as separate elements, with the economy being the most significant factor influencing urban decay in Western cities (Agueda, 2009). However, in Arabic Islamic cities, the economy is not conceptualised independently. It is one influencing factor among others (namely, particularly decision-making and the law) that contributes to urban decay.

The narrative power of economic elements is evident in the story of Detroit in the United States. The city went through an extended period of urban crisis beginning in the 1970s. However, the severity of the city’s problems only became evident in later decades. In the 2000s, Detroit’s population and employment losses were much worse than in other

comparable cities. The subsequent collapse of real estate markets, high poverty rates, and sharp declines in average family income exacerbated social problems, increased crime rates, and decreased tax revenue. The city was trapped in a vicious cycle of decay and eventually declared bankruptcy in 2013 (McDonald, 2013).

Unlike Detroit, Tripoli was affected by the displacement of its original population and the arrival of new residents with different cultures. Economic factors, combined with the law and decision-making, contributed to the decline of the city's traditional activities. The economic factor in Arabic Islamic cities operates in conjunction with decision-making and law. While other studies view the economy as a standalone factor, this study highlights how the economy operates as a result of decision-making and law.

The interviewees emphasised the role of decision-making and law in urban decay. P1 cited demographic arrangements imposed by the previous regime as one of the primary reasons for Tripoli's destruction. Law No. 4 dismantled the city's original families, indigenous customs, traditions, and civilisations, intentionally leading to the destruction of the old city's traditional identity. The entry of strangers and outsiders who lacked knowledge and respect for the city's cultural and historical value led to intellectual and material decline. Significantly, the primary responsibility for this lies with the Gaddafi regime, not the new residents themselves.

Some professional interviewees suggest that, the problematic nature of decision-making in Tripoli's old city primarily stems from individual 'experts' within the previous and current government. The shortage of competent people or departments led to producing unbalanced decisions and uninformed interventions. These hasty decisions in preservation efforts in the absence of specialists endangers the integrity and authenticity of Tripoli's old city's heritage, as (Ejroushi (2024) confirms. For example, P1 described how conflicts and clashes within the local government resulted in decision-making confusion and overlapping roles. The overlap between legislative and executive powers also contributed to confusion in decision-making and implementation. When such conflicts arise, decisions and projects in the historic city are frozen by a multiplicity of local authority departments. Personal interests also come into play, as some individuals try to exploit the old city for private gain (especially during elections). The mismanagement of project finances, including corruption in funding allocation, leads to further disputes, project failures, significant delays, and financial costs. Finally, a lack of formal qualifications and experience deficiency among experts exacerbates the situation in Tripoli. Despite the legal frameworks in place, there is a gap in applying historic preservation principles in dealing with Tripoli's old city due to a lack of expertise. Also, the neglect of enforcing Libya's 1995 preservation law has also contributed to the issue (Ejroushi, 2024).

These issues are easily recognised across various departments in most local governments. For example, in 2022 the researcher attended an infrastructure-related meeting in the city of Derna, Libya that brought together the local water company funded by the Libyan state, the Ministry of Housing and Utilities, and several consulting offices. During the meeting, an official raised concerns about incomplete projects, including numerous wells that were dug about a year and a half earlier. Despite this, a water crisis persisted and residents still had to manually transport water. It turned out that the electricity company had not electrified the wells (for some unknown reason). Some attendees suggested that administrative issues and a lack of coordination between the two ministries might be the cause. There is a pressing need to address decision-making problems within government departments and prevent confusion and overlapping roles among local authorities. Resolving decision-making challenges and ensuring effective coordination within the same local authorities remains an urgent matter. However, the Libyan Arabic literature, both professional and academic, rarely discusses these problems, or the development of administrative practices, individual experiences, and professional skills within the field. Almost no consideration is given to the local cultural principles in these government departments.

6.4. Urban decay in the context of Arabic-Islamic cities

The term "urban decay" is not commonly used in Arabic-Islamic literature, particularly in relation to Libyan Arabic Islamic cities. A study of staff publication and student thesis lists suggests that no Libyan university studies have addressed the urban decay of Tripoli's old city. The use of "urban decay" appears very limited among academics in Libya, even those who have studied in the West or are influenced by Western literature. For instance, a recent study in 2017, about 'urban planning in Libya - evolution, levels, problems to preserve of the environment and urban environment from degradation and the spread of degraded areas in Libyan cities'' (Hadoud, 2017) made no mention whatsoever of urban decay. Furthermore, P7's review booklet described the act of urban decay in relation to the 2010 code for Tripoli without mentioning "urban decay" (The Old City Blog, 2010).

The phenomenon is often described using alternative concepts that convey a similar meaning, such as "urban crisis". During the researcher's informal discussions about the themes arising from this study, a professional civil engineer with expertise in the field did not recognise the exact meaning of the term "urban decay" when translated into Arabic. This person had participated in Arabic research discussions and engaged with various local authority panels in in Libya. Yet the Arabic term was unfamiliar to him in the context of Arabic Libyan academic discussions and research.

Therefore, *urban decay* is a relatively new concept in Arabic Islamic literature and offers a distinct approach for discussing these issues. The limited usage of the term in the Arabic literature implies a limited investigation into urban decay. While people recognise urban crises and discuss topics such as population movement, cultural changes and economic

shifts, they do not explicitly conceptualise it within "urban decay". Native citizens of Tripoli – such as the residents interviewed in this study – primarily attribute these changes to cultural shifts and population movements within the old city without specifically mentioning “urban decay”. Non-native individuals discuss the physical deterioration of the city without close examination of its underlying causes or a historical perspective. Clearly, some of the population fails to connect changes in social life with the transformation of the city, highlighting the need for comprehensive understandings of the relationship between these elements.

6.5. Identity

The Libyan urban studies literature does examine how socio-cultural and economic issues affect identity. For instance, a draft of an architectural study, *Code critical report*, in 2010 (The Old City Blog, 2010) (hereafter, “the report”), highlights the significance of social, cultural, and economic factors (Figure 91). It mentions the influence of Western countries such as France and Italy, but leaves gaps when describing identity within Libya. The document was created to address these gaps, justify these points, and include specific elements related to identity within Libya. Many interviewees mentioned the significance of this document (Appendix C).

Figure 75. Draft of an unpublished architectural study.

The report criticises the absence of people (i.e., cultural and behavioural aspects) in *Code 2010,* which focuses only on the physical structure of buildings, streets, and squares. Studying communities to arrive at a holistic understanding of socio-economic perspectives is crucial for understanding identity, rather than focusing solely on the built environment, and this is specifically seen in much of the literature on ‘placemaking’. Unfortunately, this

document remains unpublished and is not widely circulated. The document—identified only through the interviews, not from bibliographic research—significantly reinforces the credibility of this work. This study advances its arguments with new documentation and an extended contribution.

The report also highlights the intrinsic connection between identity, the built environment and culture. There is no identity without a built environment, and there is no built environment without culture. Therefore, to truly comprehend identity, it is insufficient to solely consider the physical aspects of the built environment. Rather, researchers can gain deeper insights into the factors that shape identity by examining the socio-economic dynamics within communities. This broader perspective acknowledges the interplay between societal, cultural, and economic factors and highlights their importance in shaping and defining identity. Most Libyan students of architecture and urban design learn about identity from a Western perspective, particularly using French and Italian theory. However, understanding how ideas from different languages and cultures are accepted or rejected is essential if a deeper understanding of identity is to be reached.

The interviewees did not explicitly mention the role of the law. This could be because, for so many years, it was not always permissible to openly discuss Law No. 4. Discussions around this law only began to emerge after the end of the Gaddafi regime. Therefore, exploring the impact and significance of Law No. 4 on identity within Libya adds value to theoretical and local discussions. This investigation provides a unique perspective and contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding identity in the cultural context of Libya.

6.6. Conclusion – the importance of urban fabric

The historic value and significance of Tripoli’s old city stem from its status as a long-standing ancient site, with its unique historic urban fabric reflecting the city’s deep-rooted past (Ejroushi, 2024). The urban fabric of Tripoli's old city plays a central role in shaping its identity and cultural significance. In the context of urban change, which often arises from social transformations such as migration, the traditional urban fabric of Tripoli provides a deep connection to the city's history and heritage. Although the phenomenon of urban decay is present in both Western and Arabic Islamic cities, it is understood and articulated differently across these contexts. In Tripoli, terms like "crisis in the built environment" or "disaster" are more commonly used to describe the effects of urban decay, rather than the term "urban decay" itself, which is prevalent in Western literature. This difference in linguistic framing highlights the need to understand urban decay through the cultural and linguistic lens of the people experiencing it. The study of Tripoli’s old city reveals that its urban fabric—comprising historic buildings, streets, and neighbourhoods—is vital for understanding the city’s cultural identity and how, when and why it undergoes transformation. The fan tool developed in this study helps organize insights from local residents and professionals, illustrating the complex relationship between urban decay, identity, and social changes. The traditional urban fabric serves as the foundation of the

city's identity, embodying both continuity with the past and the challenges of modernization. By exploring urban decay through the lived experiences of Tripoli's residents, the research expands our understanding of how urban change affects identity formation and social cohesion in the specific context of Tripoli's old city.

The traditional urban fabric of Tripoli's old city is an irreplaceable and multifaceted asset. Its cultural, historical, economic and social significance underscores its importance in shaping the city's urban identity and character. Preserving this urban fabric is not merely an act of nostalgia; it is a strategic approach to building a sustainable, resilient, and socially cohesive city. By maintaining its historical architecture, streets, and cultural landmarks, Tripoli can continue to preserve its sense of place, strengthen its local economy, and foster a shared identity among its residents. Furthermore, in a rapidly globalizing world, the preservation of Tripoli's old city helps safeguard its cultural uniqueness, contributing to the broader effort of cultural resilience and diversity.

The traditional urban fabric of Tripoli's old city is crucial for understanding the city's identity, heritage, and role in contemporary urban development, not only representing the city's deep-rooted past but also forming the bedrock upon which its cultural identity and social continuity are built. The importance of this traditional urban fabric can be examined through several key dimensions:

6.6.**1. Cultural Identity and Sense of Place**

The traditional urban fabric of Tripoli's old city is a tangible representation of its long history, reflecting the unique cultural and architectural heritage of the city. This physical connection to the past is essential for maintaining a sense of place—a feeling of belonging and continuity for the residents. Preserving the historic buildings, streets, and neighbourhoods allows current and future generations to connect with their heritage, fostering a shared identity that binds the community together. For residents, particularly those with deep historical ties to the area, this sense of place is integral to their personal and collective identity. As Smith (2006) suggests, cultural landmarks play a vital role in sustaining the historical memory of a place, reinforcing a connection between the past, present, and future.

6.6.**2. Tourism and Economic Benefits**

Tripoli's old city, with its rich cultural and architectural heritage, is a valuable asset for tourism. The historic cities often attract visitors interested in exploring local culture, architecture, and history (Dredge,2010). In Tripoli's case, the preservation of its traditional urban fabric not only safeguards the city's unique character but also enhances its potential as a tourism destination. The influx of tourists creates significant economic benefits, boosting the local economy through tourism revenue, job creation in sectors like hospitality and retail, and increased demand for services. In a country like Libya, where tourism can be a vital part of the economy, maintaining the traditional fabric of the old city is an important strategy for economic development.

6.6.**3. Education and Research**

The preservation of Tripoli's historic fabric also holds immense value for education and research. Lowenthal (1996) argues that historic buildings and sites provide valuable resources for archaeologists, historians, and academics seeking to understand the cultural and historical trajectory of a place. By preserving the urban fabric, Tripoli can serve as an important site for scholarly inquiry into the city's past, offering insights into the broader history of the region. Moreover, universities and research institutions can engage with these preserved sites as living classrooms, contributing to the development of new knowledge about heritage, urbanization, and the evolution of the city's social and architectural structures.

6.6.**4. Environmental Sustainability**

In the context of sustainability, maintaining and retrofitting the traditional urban fabric of Tripoli's old city offers a more environmentally responsible alternative to the demolition of historic structures and the construction of new buildings. Older buildings often possess inherent energy efficiency—their thick walls, natural ventilation, and materials contribute to reducing the environmental impact of construction (Feilden, 2003). When retrofitted with modern technologies, these buildings can meet sustainability goals without compromising their historical value. By choosing to repurpose and retrofit these buildings rather than demolishing them, Tripoli can also reduce the consumption of new materials, minimize waste, and promote environmental resilience.

6.6.**5. Social Cohesion**

The social role of traditional urban fabric in Tripoli is another important aspect. In traditional cities like Tripoli, the urban fabric helps to define and sustain social cohesion by creating public spaces and neighbourhoods that encourage community interaction. These spaces often serve as venues for local events, markets, and social gatherings, fostering a sense of belonging among residents. The shared experience of living in these historic areas creates a strong collective identity, enhancing social capital and improving the quality of life. Urban heritage can serve as a unifying force, encouraging collaboration and social cohesion among diverse groups within the city (Florida, 2002). If a community changes as radically as has that in old Tripoli, that replacement community might have social cohesion but little connection with the traditional urban fabric.

6.6.**6. Aesthetics and Beauty**

The aesthetic value of the traditional fabric in Tripoli's old city cannot be understated. The architectural beauty of the buildings, the intricate designs, and the layout of the streets contribute significantly to the visual appeal of the city (Palermo, 2014). These aesthetic qualities not only enhance the daily lives of residents but also attract visitors, artists, and investors. The beauty of a place plays an essential role in shaping urban life, contributing to a city's overall sense of well-being and appeal (Jacobs, 1961). In Tripoli, the preservation of the old city's aesthetic and architectural character ensures that its visual identity remains intact, helping to maintain the charm and historical allure that make it unique.

6.6.**7. Cultural Resilience and Globalization**

As Tripoli faces the challenges of globalization, the preservation of its traditional urban fabric becomes crucial for maintaining the city's cultural resilience. In a rapidly globalizing world, cities often undergo homogenization, where modern developments erase the distinctive features of historic places. By prioritizing the conservation of its traditional urban fabric, Tripoli can safeguard its cultural diversity and uniqueness, counterbalancing the pressures of global uniformity. Heritage conservation plays a key role in protecting local cultures from cultural erosion and maintaining the diversity that enriches the global cultural landscape (Harvey, 1989; Nocca, 2017). In Tripoli, the old city's traditional fabric serves as a vital link to the past, fostering a sense of pride and resilience in the face of global change.

6.7. Conclusion

The traditional urban fabric of Tripoli's old city is an irreplaceable and multifaceted asset. Its cultural, historical, economic, and social significance underscores its importance in shaping the city's urban identity and character. Preserving this urban fabric is not merely an act of nostalgia; it is a strategic approach to building a sustainable, resilient, and socially cohesive city. By maintaining its historical architecture, streets, and cultural landmarks, Tripoli can continue to preserve its sense of place, strengthen its local economy, and foster a shared identity among its residents. Furthermore, in a rapidly globalizing world, the preservation of Tripoli's old city helps safeguard its cultural uniqueness, contributing to the broader effort of cultural resilience and diversity. Future research should continue to explore the delicate balance between modernity and tradition in urban development, ensuring that cities like Tripoli remain vibrant, living monuments to the past while adapting to contemporary challenges.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter offers conclusions on why urban identity in Arabic-Islamic cities, and Tripoli in particular, should be examined not only from a built environment perspective, but also from social and economic perspectives. It emphasises the intricate nature of identity, which is influenced by a diverse array of factors. In the case of Tripoli, social changes, legal frameworks, economic conditions and decision-making processes have contributed to identity change. In essence, urban decay is a social change that manifests in the built environment. Social change occurs when a group migrates to a city over time, and its effects are particularly noticeable if they move into the city's historic core or other designated historic districts. Therefore, urban change can be attributed to social change, but its effects can be unintended, as evidenced by the emergence of urban decay in this example. It is essential to investigate the factors/elements/aspects that influence urban decay to gain a holistic understanding of its impact on identity and potential management strategies. Simply restoring or replacing buildings will only be a short-term response if the root causes of urban decay are not identified and addressed.

7.2. Urban identity and character

The concepts of urban identity and distinctiveness are interconnected—it is challenging to determine which comes first. Urban identity refers to the unique characteristics, traits and qualities that define a specific place. It encompasses concepts such as "place identity", "character of a place", "image of a place" and "sense of place", all of which contribute to the understanding of a place's distinctiveness (Cheshmehzangi, 2015).

Historic city centres are increasingly recognised as significant for defining urban identity (Boussaa, 2017). This is particularly true when policy prioritises the preservation and enhancement of historic areas (e.g., to reinforce place identity, boost tourism, and encourage inward investment). In such contexts, planners, urban designers, architects, urban administrators, and politicians more readily engage in discourse clearly related to urban identity.

'Character' is another important element in urban identity. It refers to the unique attributes and qualities that contribute to the distinctiveness of a place. It encompasses tangible/visual elements such as architectural style, and intangible elements spatial layout, historical significance, cultural heritage, and the overall ambience of a location. The character of a place plays a crucial role in shaping its identity and contributes to the sense of place experienced by residents and visitors (Ashworth and Tunbridge, 2000).

The concepts of urban identity and distinctiveness are closely intertwined, and both terms emphasise the dynamic nature of the phenomenon. The preservation and enhancement of historic cores should be prioritised in discussions about urban identity, while the concept of character plays a significant role in defining the unique qualities of a place.

The specific links between this study's findings and the concept of urban identity are interconnected through their shared focus on urban identity and the factors that influence it, particularly in the context of urban change and heritage preservation.

This study explores the concept of urban identity through the lens of urban decay and transformation, particularly in Tripoli's old city. It highlights how urban decay is a product of social change and shifts in the built environment, which ultimately impact the identity of a place. Urban identity is also discussed as the distinct characteristics and traits that define a place, contributing to its sense of place and distinctiveness. Both sections of this study emphasize that urban identity is dynamic and influenced by change, whether through decay or preservation.

Many studies of urban identity identify historic city centres as key areas in shaping urban identity, with a particular focus on preservation and the enhancement of these areas to reinforce identity. This links directly to this study's findings and discussion of Tripoli's old city, where urban transformation and decay are examined in relation to the preservation and management of heritage. The way heritage is managed in cities like Tripoli can influence both urban decay and the preservation of the distinctive character of a place. The procedural shortcomings identified in Tripoli could be applicable to other Libyan historic cities.

The character is defined as a key aspect of urban identity, encompassing architectural style, spatial layout, cultural heritage, and overall ambience. This resonates with this study's exploration of how changes in the urban environment—whether through decay or improvement—alter the character of a place, which in turn shapes its identity. The fan diagram mentioned in this study can be seen as a tool to explore how different factors, such as architectural features and cultural heritage, intersect with urban transformation and affect the overall identity of Tripoli's old city.

Both study findings and the discussion of urban identity emphasize the dynamic nature of urban identity. Urban decay is presented here as a factor that can either adversely affect or positively reshape identity. Urban identity is depicted as an evolving concept tied to the distinctiveness of a place. This evolving nature of urban identity ties the two discussions together, suggesting that urban identity is shaped by both positive and negative transformations, such as decay or revitalization.

The study's insights into urban decay and its effects on identity could be valuable for better managing urban change in Tripoli. Its consideration of urban identity further develops this by highlighting the role of urban planners, designers, and policymakers in shaping urban identity through the preservation and enhancement of historic areas. In both contexts, the management of urban change—whether through addressing decay or promoting preservation—plays a crucial role in maintaining or altering the urban identity.

In summary, this work explores how urban identity is shaped by change (decay and transformation), with an emphasis on the significance of historic areas and the distinctive character of a place. The insights from the study findings, particularly through the lens of urban decay and change, directly feed into the broader discussion in urban identity about how identity and character are interconnected and how they influence urban planning and preservation efforts.

7.3. Knowledge contributions

This study's theoretical contribution advances conceptual understandings of urban identity change—specifically urban decay–in the context of Arabic Islamic cities. While Western literature suggests that economic factors are the main drivers of urban decay, this study reveals that urban decay stems from economic factors within a range of other crucial factors. These include decision-making, the law and social aspects, with the latter including social change and migration. These elements significantly influence the built environment and contribute to urban decay.

The fan diagram graphically represents this significant transformation by placing the city's fabric at the centre, with the five factors influencing the physical form as the fan blades. These five factors can contribute to urban decay in various ways and to different extents, depending on the particular circumstances. The effective control and management of these five factors can even promote positive urban growth and change. In both scenarios (positive and negative), transformation changes the shape, character, appearance, and identity of traditional Islamic city cores. It affects both built structures and the uses of spaces, reflecting an evolution in urban identity.

Urban decay can be defined as the social process that causes a previously well-functioning city, or part of a city, to undergo disrepair and deterioration. Social issues predate the more evident physical aspects of decay. In Tripoli's traditional heart, this phenomenon has unfolded over the past forty-five years, starting in 1978. Urban decay in the city emerged from the dynamic interplay between interconnected socio-economic factors, including urban planning decisions and poverty. There is no single cause responsible for this complex phenomenon.

Interestingly, there are links between the Western concept of urban decay and the researcher's observations in Tripoli. The professional and resident interviewees acknowledged the impact of urban decay on the old city. However, their expressions and vocabulary differed from Western uses. Respondents did not use the term "urban decay," despite similarities between urban decay seen in Western cities (e.g., Detroit) and the situation in the Arab world (e.g., the old city of Tripoli). In both contexts, urban decay led to a city becoming a 'ghost town' (as P1 mentioned). While the phrase "urban decay" is not found used in the relevant Arab literature, the phenomenon is still recognised.

It is important to consider the concept of urban identity as a whole to address and mitigate urban decay. This study highlights how factors like economic conditions, social-cultural aspects, laws, and decision-making processes shape the built environment and, ultimately, play a crucial role in defining urban identity. Stakeholders who acknowledge the role of identity in urban environments can make informed and thoughtful decisions about urban development that preserve and enhance a city's unique identity or create new identities.

This study will aid various stakeholders in urban design studies, including academics, university students, planners, architects, and urban designers, 'because, in general Libya lacks "professional preservation entities able to safeguard its historical evidence'' (Ejroushi, 2024), even in the ''professional team of Tripoli old city agency, there is a lack of specialized knowledge in preservation and restoration and a shortage of skilled preservation specialists and efforts'' (Ejroushi, 2024). This is also what have been stated by P6 and P7 from the professional interview group. Thus, ''a notable lack of historic preservation knowledge and awareness can lead to the eradication of a Libyan cultural heritage'' (Ejroushi, 2024). Despite the legal frameworks, there is a gap in applying historic preservation principles in dealing with Tripoli's old city due to a lack of expertise.

Also, it must be remembered that ''there is an absence of historical preservation education in Libyan institutions and a lack of any preservation curriculum in Libyan universities (Ejroushi, 2024). ''This serious situation highlights the need to dig in and discover the main reason for this problem in Libya and find solutions to mitigate its effects'' (Ejroushi, 2024), and because the ''Conservation and management of the built heritage is being undertaken by architects, archaeologists, surveyors, urban designer, town planners, engineers, historians, managers, and other disciplines''(Orbaşli and Whitbourn, 2002).

It is essential for those involved in urban development projects, urban regeneration, urban design, and other related fields to understand and study the local urban identity and its influencing factors (Moudon, 1992). This encourages a more holistic approach to urban development and emphasises the intricate relationship between urban identity and urban decay. It fosters better practices in urban planning, design, and regeneration, leading to more sustainable and resilient urban environments that embrace their distinct identities.

7.4. Future research

There are several potential directions for further research, some of which focus on cities generally and others on the particular socio-legal contexts of Arabic Islamic cities. Future research should attend to residents facing barriers in accessing urban resources, including migrant men and women who encounter linguistic and cultural challenges.

This study's implications facilitate deeper understandings of urban decay and its impact on cities. Therefore, it might be incorporated into the teaching curriculum on urban identities at universities and schools. This would encourage students, professionals, and experts to adopt an identity-centric perspective when examining cities and considering urban change. The integrative fan (it can be software applications in future) concept framework has the potential to support decision-making processes that facilitate identity change in Arabic Islamic cities—this is the main practical contribution. Future work should test the framework's application in similar urban environments (e.g., Arabic-Islamic cities with different socio-legal systems) or in contexts experiencing even greater changes or more significant impacts (e.g., reconstruction after a natural disaster or wartime destruction). This will advance our understanding of urban identity, urban decay, and effective decision-making processes and contribute to more culturally sensitive and sustainable urban development practices. This study presents possible solutions for managing change in the built environment of the future.

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