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The Effects of Islamic Values on Design Process of Architecture

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Abstract

Needless to say that architecture is a profession where values play a vital role. Since architecture satisfies the basic needs of humanity, it must be essentially conservative. Based on Rokeach's Concept of Value, "values are the most important components of belief system". Although Muslims around the world have different observations and understanding of Islam, based on their culture, norms and the politics of their societies, all of them believe that there is a clear link between human values and Islamic values. In addition, the conception of human values is quite clear even without specific definitions. Islamic values effect on the way Muslim architects conduct the design practices. Different literatures have been reviewed and main Islamic values have been identified. These factors as Islamic values include "equality, fairness, social justice, hospitality, forbearance, peace, respect for the other and so on, capable to make specific lifestyle and activity system. From this activity system, more observations and discussions about the reality of Islam, the architects would be able to create a new design process if a systematic approach to the values can be constructed.

Key words: Architecture, Design process, Human values, Islamic values

1. Introduction

Milton Rokeach is one of the researchers have carried out a series of important studies on how people's attitudes in relation to other nations/peoples as well as many other important societal factors are related to how people prioritize their values. Based on Rokeach's concept (1997) of value, "values" are a structural theory about the organization of belief systems and are the most important components of belief system. The value concept is also able to unify the apparently diverse interests of all the sciences concerned with human behavior. Rokeach's work demonstrates the importance of priorities in the values process and the importance of the free personal options.

2. Human Values

Rokeach has revealed that values as modes of conduct and end-states, namely, instrumental and terminal values. He has classified terminal values as personal and social. Personal values include self-centered end-states (e.g., self-respect, inner harmony), and social values involve socially-centered ones (e.g., equality, a world at peace). Rokeach (1973) has found seven factors in values:

1. *Immediate gratification* (a comfortable life, pleasure, cleanliness, exciting life) vs. delayed gratification (wisdom, inner harmony, logic, self-control)
2. *Competence* (logic, imagination, intellectuality, independence) vs. religious morality (forgiveness, salvation, being helpful, cleanliness)
3. *Self-constriction* (obedience, politeness, self-control, honesty) vs. self-expansion (broadmindedness, capability)
4. *Social orientation* (a world at peace, national security, equality, freedom) vs. personal orientation (true friendship, self-respect)
5. *Societal security* (a world of beauty, equality, being helpful, imagination) vs. family security (family security, ambition, responsibility, capability)
6. *Respect* (social recognition, self-respect) vs. love (mature love, being loving)
7. *Inner-directed* (courage, independence) vs. other-directed (politeness)

He has also shown that there is a need for a well-defined set of objective values and that these values are universal in their nature.

Shalom H. Schwartz is another researcher who worked on human values. According to Schwartz's work (2005a), "values that purport to be universal must meet three fundamental criteria. First, they must have scientific value, i.e. their exploration must yield leverage on important questions of our time. Second, they should correspond at least roughly with a recognized definition of values. Finally, they should include or overlap with values commonly identified by lay persons as of central importance in their life". Schwartz has presented his ten values as universal to humankind based on his work (Fig1). Although, he ultimately has added two others values to them, this paper argues that because of these criteria the potentially large number of values cannot be perfectly accounted in twelve items. They are Power, Achievement, Hedonism, Stimulation, Self-direction, Universalism, Benevolence, Tradition, Conformity, Security, Financial Success and Respect.

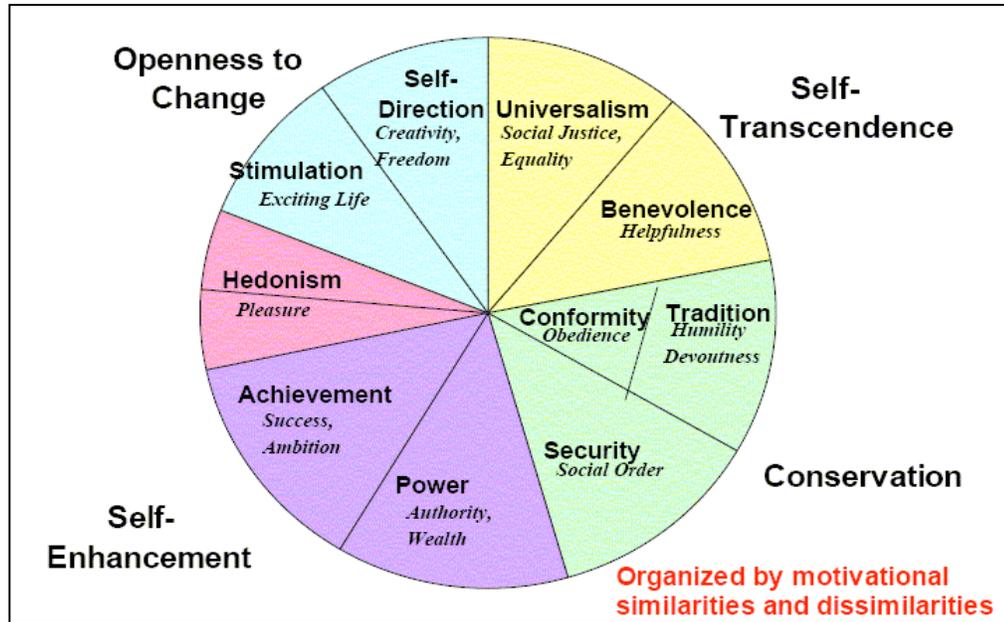


Fig1: Schwartz has presented his ten values based on his work as universal to humankind

3. Values In Religion

All major religions promote tolerance, non-violence and patience tenets, promoting an ethos of care and a sense of "community". For example; in order to respect and care for people we can read from the Bible that:

“If you love your neighbor, and your neighbor loves his neighbor, would you not also love your neighbor’s neighbor? And if this continues, would you not love all people? ”

This is very clear that different religions have the same moral standards. The core of any religion simply amount to adhering to a high moral standard.

4. Islamic Values

According to researches of Seyyed Hosein Nasr (2002), the common ground of the Abrahamic faiths, (the core spiritual and social values of Islam) are Peace, Compassion, Social justice and Respect for the other.

Although Muslims around the world based on their culture, norms and the politics of their societies have different observations and understanding of Islam, all of them believe that there is a clear link between human values and Islamic values. Within this paper, different literatures have been reviewed, and so far tangible and practical Islamic values have been identified. These factors as Islamic values include “neighborliness, inclusively, hospitality, forbearance, broad-mindedness, and so on. On the other hand, this research found that Muslims who are not living in Muslims countries believe that these values are similar with Islamic values, including Equality, Fairness, Reciprocity, Socioeconomic justice and Honesty.

5. The Influences of Islamic Values

Based on Amos Rapoport’s idea (1977), values mean ideals, images, schemata and meanings (Fig2). As you see in the figure 2, because of values, we have norms, standards, expectations, and rules. Ultimately, values make a lifestyle and activity system.

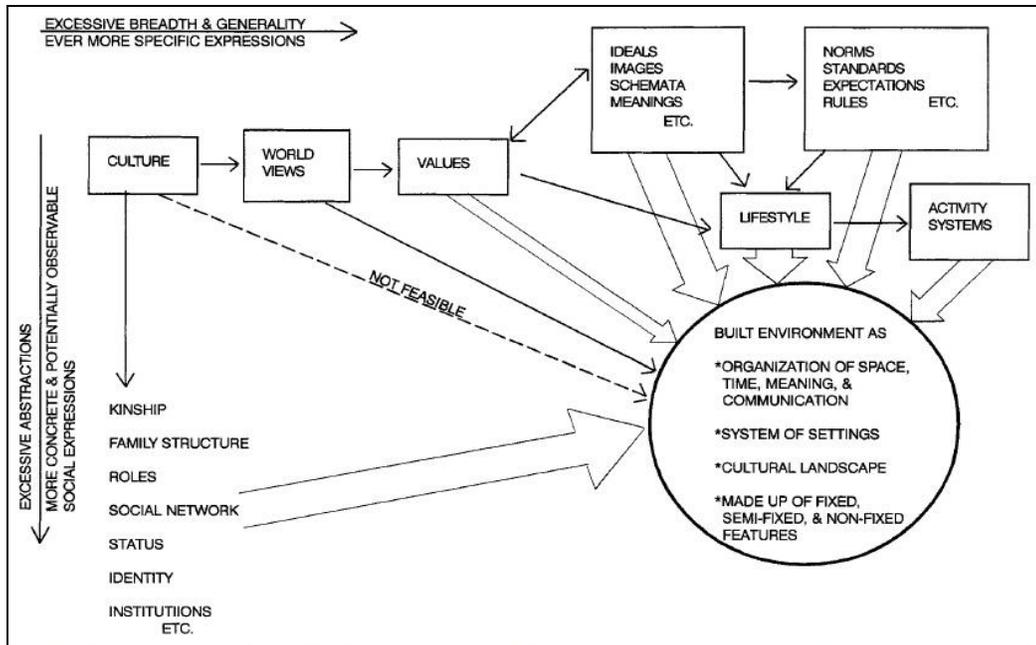


Fig2. Rapoport’s diagram shows that how values are related to lifestyle and activity system. As a result, “values can be considered as strategic references indicating that acting in one way is more appropriate to achieve certain goals”. On the other hand, there are clear influences of cultures and norms on values in the communities. The Muslims as one of the biggest communities around the world also have accepted these influences on their Islamic values based on standards, rules and politics of their countries. Although because of these acceptations they have found out some different attitudes of Islam, they believe in equality, fairness, reciprocity, socioeconomic justice and honesty, security, respect and so on as the main values of Islam based on Quran and their prophet commands (i.e. Hadith). This paper reveals that Islamic values as a belief-system for Muslims are capable to make specific lifestyle and activity system. While the main Islamic values and human values are the same, but different views of these values and prioritization of them influence the way Muslim architects conduct the design practices from this activity system. The Muslim architects would be able to create a new design process, if a systematic approach to the Islamic values can be constructed. We hope this new design process would be used with architects as a new method for designing buildings in Islamic countries or other Muslims buildings around the world.

5. Conclusions

As mentioned before, values are the most important components of belief system. It indicates that beliefs make values. Islamic values are Muslims’ belief system that have made new lifestyle and new activity system.

Although the main Islamic values and human values are the same, but because of different views of these values and prioritization of them, Muslim architects have to create a new design process.

As a conclusion of what has been said about Islamic values and their influences on lifestyle and knowing that choosing the kind of architecture also depends on lifestyle, architects need a

new method for designing buildings in Islamic countries or other Muslims buildings around the world.

We believe that with more observations and discussions about the reality of Islam, this new design process can be created and used.

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