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COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION: A CASE STUDY IN SULAYMANIYAH (KRG/IRQ) HISTORIC BUILDING

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ABSTRACT

It has become a proven fact that community participation is an obligatory aspect in the process of heritage conservation because in many cases, the fact that locals are not voice results in the lack of sustainability and cultural interest in the project. As discussed in this paper, the researcher explores how community involvement is linked to the development of conservation programmed in the old quarters of Sulaymaniyah, in the Kurdistan region, Iraq. Based on nine studies including both local and international settings the study determines eight major variables that describe participatory conservation including awareness, consultation, power-sharing, capacity building, financial participation, institutionalization, and cultural value recognition and feedback mechanisms. This paper will concentrate on the preservation of the city of Sulaymaniyah and it's Great Mosque with the primary emphasis on its values and success within the industry. The results indicate that meaningful participation positively influences conservation through increasing authenticity, mobilizing resources, and making cultural relevance, whereas tokenistic strategies undermine the results. The research touches on the issue that the conservation of Sulaymaniyah is top-down and expert-based, which supposes that the systematic approach to community integration is going to produce more sustainable outcomes. The significance of the given study is in the fact that global participatory theories are adjusted to the local situation providing policy recommendations and a framework that can be applied in Iraq and throughout the region. The conclusion reiterates the fact that heritage sustainability lies in participatory conservation. Some of the suggested measures are neighborhood heritage committees, micro-grant support, adaptive reuse models, awareness programs and toolkits on professional participation to create a balance between modernization and protecting both tangible and intangible heritage.

KEYWORDS: Participation by the community; Architectural conservation; Heritage management; Great Mosque of Sulaymaniyah; Cultural heritage; Public involvement; Conservation frameworks Kurdistan Region-Iraq.

1. INTRODUCTION

The preservation of heritage is not a one-dimensional undertaking that operates outside technical restoration. It includes cultural values, sense of community and social sustainability of places. The cultural and architectural characteristics of the Kurdish region can be traced with the help of the historic building areas of Sulaymaniyah constructed in the late Ottoman era and evolved during the course of the 20th century. They are traditional houses, mosques, khans, and commercial spaces that serve to add to the urban landscape and character of the city (Amin & Adu-Ampong, 2016). Nevertheless, such regions are experiencing pressure due to urbanization quick, real estate speculation, and lack of institutional means to preserve them (Qadir, 2022).

The practice of community participation has become an established conservation practice in the world, based on the further theory of development, which focuses on bottom-up strategies. The ladder of citizen participation by Arnstein (1969) is a timeless model of citizen participation that separates tokenism and citizen power. Community participation in the context of architectural conservation implies the involvement of the local residents, custodians, NGOs, and informal groups in the process of forming decisions regarding heritage buildings and urban heritage areas.

Two key questions are discussed in this article:

- What is the role of community participation in the architectural conservation outcomes in various

situations?

- What could be learnt about the historic areas of Sulaymaniyah based on the international and regional experiences?

2. METHODOLOGY

The research takes a qualitative research design that is founded on literature review and analysis of case studies. The number of reviewed studies was nine (two Sulaymaniyah and Iraqi and seven international) which analyzed the goals and findings and limitations of the study within the context of the participatory conservation theory, and especially the ladder of participation developed by Arnstein (1969). To achieve the intended objective, the Great Mosque of Sulaymaniyah was chosen as the primary case study due to its cultural value and conservation efforts. Sources used to obtain the data were academic literature, official reports, and secondary sources, which were devoted to conservation principles, achievements, and the degree of community participation. A comparison was then used to determine lessons that can be learned and evaluate eight factors of participation, including awareness, consultation, power-sharing, capacity building, financial participation, institutionalization, cultural value recognition and feedback mechanisms. Thematic interpretation enabled the cross-checking of results, but the study recognizes its weakness in its excessive use of the secondary data as opposed to the fieldwork. Figure 1.

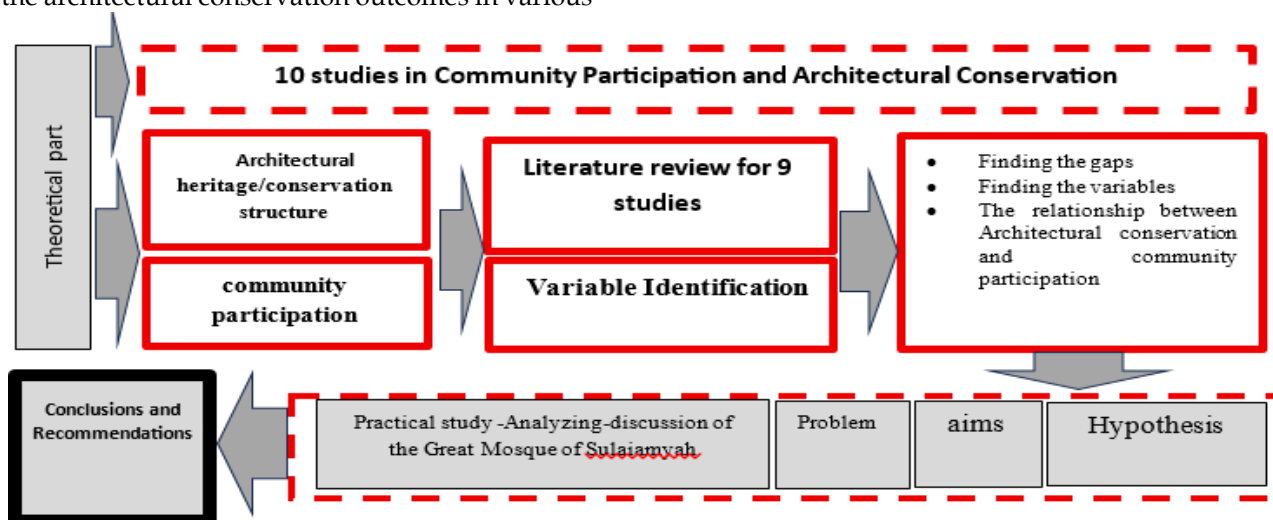


Figure 1: Research plan and Methodology.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

There are various ways though which community participation has been conceptualized. The ladder by Arnstein (1969) states eight rungs, starting at the

manipulation and therapy (non-participation) and citizen control (full participation). This was narrowed down to typologies of passive, consultative, functional, and interactive participation by Pretty (1995).

The involvement in heritage studies has been associated with: Legitimacy, which entails values and not necessarily expert or state views alone (Waterton and Smith, 2010). Knowledge integration entails the integration of oral histories, cultural practices and local building traditions (Logan, 2002). And Sustainability, its Generating ownership securing long-term care and decreasing the need of external interventions (Oladeji et al., 2022). The level of involvement of stakeholders can include a continuum of stakeholders: residents, custodians, shopkeepers, NGOs, architects, local government, and religious and political leaders.

The term architectural conservation is defined as the protection, preservation, and adaptation of built heritage including the preservation of authenticity and integrity (Jokilehto, 2017). It incorporates preservation, restoration, rehabilitation and adaptive reuse. Balanced authenticity and intangible cultural values are highlighted in international charters on historic urban landscapes and include the Venice Charter (1964), the Burra Charter (Australia ICOMOS, 2013), and the UNESCO Historic Urban Landscape (2011).

Historically, conservation was a domain of the expert, regarding material authenticity and technical quality. Nevertheless, the experts currently claim that sustainability should be based on participatory governance (Rodwell, 2007). Participation offers social relevancy, eliminates conflict, and facilitates adaptive reuse that should fit the needs of the community (Yung and Chan, 2012). On the other hand, tokenism as the lack of power-sharing and only consultation may lead to alienation of communities and loss of legitimacy (Waterton and Smith, 2010; Djabarouti, 2024).

4. CRITICAL REVIEW OF STUDIES

In this section, twelve articles on Sulaymaniyah, Iraq, and international situations are reviewed. The subsections have objectives, methodology, results, and critical evaluation in form of analytical paragraphs.

- Amin and Adu-Ampong (2016) Amin and Adu- Ampong (2016) explored the conservation issues in the historic center of Sulaymaniyah with the help of field surveys and interviews with the officials and residents. They found that they had poor governance structures, no cohesion of responsibilities between institutions and little implementation of conservation laws. There was also little and informal community involvement. Although the study is significant in its identification of the structural governance failures that prevent attainment of the effective conservation, it does not

sufficiently explore the manner in which the community groups can be mobilized to fill these gaps. In addition, the study does not focus much on the cultural values that support community engagement and a gap is left to bridge the issues that governance bring with them and the local identity and heritage meaning.

- Qadir (2022): considered the architectural preservation practices in the context of the whole of Iraq and how the rehabilitation processes tend to favor modernization and practical improvements instead of the authentic representation. The study utilised case studies and analysis of policies in order to show that communities are not usually consulted in such undertakings. The article gives a solid critique of the top-down technical methods common in the conservation sector in Iraq. Nevertheless, the discussion is based on policy frames and secondary evidence of cases, providing very little primary information on how local communities live and see things. This limits the insight on the social aspects of participation.

- Gravagnuolo (2024) Gravagnuolo and co-authors (2024) experimented with participatory approaches to evaluation in adaptive reuse development projects around Europe by using workshops and a variety of stakeholders. Their results show that high-level intervention of communities at an early stage was much better in terms of project acceptance, sustainability, and cultural alignment. This research is very relevant methodologically showing that participatory models can reinforce technical and social results. But due to the setting of the cases in Europe, where the systems of governance are comparatively more powerful, the direct extrapolation of the methods to Iraq, where the capacity of governance is less, has to be adjusted carefully.

- The article by Djabarouti (2024) explored the nature of conservation architects in the United Kingdom and their involvement with participation through interviews with practitioners. The study established that although architects appreciate the importance of community involvement, a lack of structures and instruments to make it effective is common in most of them. This brings out a professional dilemma; participation is considered significant, yet it is hard to make operational. The most important contribution of the study is the discovery of the necessity of systematic toolkits and professional guidelines. Nonetheless, it is confined to the UK case and fails to discuss how this framework may be applied to other areas, such as Sulaymaniyah, with other cultural and institutional environments.

- Oladeji et al. (2022) the survey and interviews conducted by Oladeji and colleagues (2022) on African community-based conservation projects. Their study revealed that micro-grants and technical assistance have worked well in empowering communities to be the initiators of conservation ensuring positive and sustainable results. The research is useful in proving the feasibility of the practical value of financial and capacity-building strategies in order to improve participation. However, the culture and politics of Africa are quite different than that of Sulaymaniyah, which implies that although the empowerment mechanisms are educative, there would be a need to adjust them considerably.

- Waterton and Smith (2010) Waterton and Smith (2010) criticized the official heritage discourses in the UK by analyzing policy and discourse. They found that community voices are generally relegated and that participation is commonly used as a rhetorical tool and not as a process of sharing power. The work is also notable because it warns against tokenistic types of participation that seem to bring about inclusivity yet ineffective influence. The criticism is especially applicable to Sulaymaniyah as the involvement can be rather formal than a practical one. Nevertheless, the work is rather abstract and its lessons could use more practical and operational examples of how to prevent tokenism.

- Yung and Chan (2012) Yung and Chan (2012) examined adaptive reuse projects in Hong Kong based on the case studies. Their results show that the communal practices of co-decision enhanced project acceptance, maintenance of cultural significance and long term sustainability of reused structures. The paper shows that participatory adaptive reuse is advantageous, which makes it a useful comparative

case study. Nevertheless, the market and urban density of Hong Kong vary significantly compared to Sulaymaniyah, and this implies that the lessons can be applied directly to a limited degree. Nevertheless, the very idea that co-decision results in ownership and sustainability is very relevant.

- Rodwell (2007) Rodwell (2007) has researched on the sustainability of historic cities by doing a comparative case study involving European cities. The outcomes of his work demonstrate that institutionalized participatory governance is beneficial in terms of conservation and offers balance both between heritage protection pressures and urban development pressures. This paper adds a significant point that it is beneficial to incorporate participation in formal systems of governance. However, the emphasis on European cities having robust institutions makes it to be a bit Eurocentric and its suggestions will need a lot of adjustment to settings like Sulaymaniyah where the systems of governance are more fragmented and weaker.

- Logan (2002) Logan (2002) made a theoretical study pointing out the significance of intangible heritage in conservation. In his argument, he noted that identification of intangible cultural values required active community participation since built heritage cannot be separated with culture of communities that is practiced. The work is theoretical but also fundamental in its attempt to reconsider architectural conservation as both a cultural and technical process. The most important contribution it makes is the fact that it demands that conservation cannot only be on material fabric but also on community identity and traditions. The weakness, though, is that the author does not give empirical evidence and practical applications of its framework to certain settings such as Sulaymaniyah. Table 1.

Table 1: Literature Review critics and Analysing.

| No. | Author(s), Year | Context | Methodology | Participation Role | Findings | Critique |
|-----|---------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 | Amin & Adu-Ampong (2016) | Sulaymaniyah | Field survey, interviews | Minimal | Governance gaps | Underexplored cultural values |
| 2 | Qadir (2022) | Iraq | Case/policy review | Limited | Modernization over authenticity | Weak community evidence |
| 3 | Gravagnuolo et al. (2024) | Europe | Workshops | Strong, early | Better outcomes | Context-specific |
| 4 | Djabarouti (2024) | UK | Interviews | Valued but unclear | Need for toolkits | Limited scope |
| 5 | Oladeji et al. (2022) | Africa | Case studies | Community-led | Grants & training succeed | Contextual limits |
| 6 | Waterton & Smith (2010) | UK | Policy analysis | Marginalized | Rhetorical participation | Cautionary |
| 7 | Yung & Chan (2012) | Hong Kong | Case study | Co-decision | Adaptive reuse effective | Urban-specific |
| 8 | Rodwell (2007) | Europe | Comparative | Institutionalized | Governance sustains heritage | Eurocentric |
| 9 | Logan (2002) | Global | Theoretical | Central | Intangible values need voices | Theoretical only |

5. VARIABLES OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION

Awareness and Education: Awareness and education are the level of understanding that communities have about the heritage values and the proper methods of conservation. In the case of low awareness, communities can accidentally damage historic buildings. Indicatively, in Sulaymaniyah, the guardians of ancient mosques tried to fix the domes with cement that undermined the original stonework and ruined the architectural integrity (Wahab, 2024). This is to show how well-intentioned efforts meant to be good could undermine heritage value in cases of ignorance. However, awareness creation and training programs can increase the level of heritage literacy and lead to the development of responsible stewardship. As an example, community training has been proven to be effective in African settings to enhance local maintenance, making custodians capable of managing appropriate materials and employing appropriate methods (Oladeji *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, awareness can be seen as a pillar on which other participatory mechanisms are anchored.

- **Consultation:** The consultation is a process of gathering the community opinion in a situation involving conservation-related decisions. Effective consultation helps to make sure that the projects will suit the needs of the community and they will be shared in terms of cultural values. Nevertheless, consultation will be limited to tokenism in case communities are only invited to approve the plans that have been made but not to shape them (Waterton and Smith, 2010). Consultation in Sulaymaniyah is more of an exception, with the population being rarely consulted in preservation initiatives and frequently facing conservation only after the work starts (Qadir, 2022). In contrast, participatory consultations in adaptive reuse projects in Europe were effective in incorporating local value in design and planning, which enhanced acceptance and sustainability of the project (Gravagnuolo *et al.*, 2024). This analogy explains how meaningful consultation practices should be institutionalized in Sulaymaniyah.

- **Power-Sharing and Co-decision:** Power-sharing and Co-decision are the most elevated of the community engagement, as the power to make decisions is distributed among professional, authorities, and local inhabitants. Such participation encourages true ownership whereby project is not only technical but also socially entrenched. In

Sulaymaniyah, power-sharing is practically non-existent with majority of decisions being arrived at as a result of expert-based, top-down approaches that do not give the community a chance to voice their views. But the benefits of co-decision are realized in international cases. The adaptive reuse projects in Hong Kong have been a great success under the circumstances when the community was engaged in the direct construction of the project, and conservation projects were created that depicted the lived cultural meanings (Yung and Chan, 2012). In the absence of such structures, Sulaymaniyah is vulnerable to further estrangement of the inhabitants of the surrounding heritage.

- **Capacity Building:** Capacity building is where the communities are prepared with technical skills and conservation knowledge to manage the heritage in a responsible manner. The variable discourages malpractices and enables custodians to assume proactive functions. The custodians in Sulaymaniyah are usually not trained and this has led to harmful activities like using modern materials that are not compatible to historic buildings. This does not only compromise authenticity but also reduces the life span of heritage buildings. In Africa, however, the application of the capacity building has demonstrated how a result regarding conservation can be changed, and trained custodians have embraced sustainable methods of repair and have decreased the reliance on external experts (Oladeji *et al.*, 2022). Agricultural conservation of the grassroots was also improved by an investment in training in Sulaymaniyah.

- In relation to conservation, the involvement of communities in the direct funding, co-funding, or sharing of resources is known as financial participation. This enhances ownership and long-term sustainability as the funding sources will not be restricted to the small state budgets. In Sulaymaniyah, no significant financial contribution is given and most of the conservation efforts are dependent on the government funds. It is also dependent which makes it vulnerable to budget reductions and political unrest. Comparatively, micro-grant schemes have been very useful to facilitate local initiatives in African community-based projects, in which even small amounts of money equipped the communities to preserve and transform heritage assets (Oladeji *et al.*, 2022). Such schemes in Sulaymaniyah will open up the possibilities of community-driven conservation.

- **Institutionalization:** Institutionalization makes sure that participation is institutionalized and

the ad hoc interventions are avoided and continuity is guaranteed. Conservation is still disjointed and lacks systems without institutional structures. The Sulaymaniyah does not have any heritage committees or participatory boards, and communities lack structured ways to participate in the long run (Rodwell, 2007). On the other hand, participation governance has been institutionalized in Europe by the policies and regulatory standards, which have provided uniform inclusion of the local communities in the heritage management (Rodwell, 2007). Institutional structures in Sulaymaniyah would stabilize conservation processes and take it out of short-term and project-oriented processes.

- **Cultural Value Recognition:** Cultural value recognition focuses on incorporating elements of intangible heritage in the conservation project, including traditions, narratives and daily practice. With the architectural preservation and cultural identity aligned, conservation gains significance to communities, and it becomes more of a part of everyday life. In Sulaymaniyah, the most common projects are very limited to the physical make-up of buildings disregarding intangible tradition and experience that are spatial. The intangible heritage recognition internationally has been promoted by

frameworks like the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approach by the UNESCO, which places cultural practices in their planning and conservation (Logan, 2002). The inclusion of such recognition in Sulaymaniyah would warrant the architectural conservation to embody both physical and non-physical heritage aspects.

- **Mechanisms of Feedback:** Feedback mechanisms are important in offering communities a medium of tracking, assessing and the reaction to conservation projects. This creates credibility, avoids error and provides adaptive management. There are completely no feedback structures in Sulaymaniyah and the planning is top-down with the communities having no channels of airing their grievances. Conservation professionals have also acknowledged the need to have feedback systems in the UK, whereby they have recommended systematic frameworks that would encompass the integration of community input in the various stages of the project (Djavarouti, 2024). In the case of Sulaymaniyah, feedback loops would provide better accountability, transparency, and provide dynamic learning processes that would reinforce conservation outcomes.

Table 2: Variables of Community Participation in Architectural Conservation.

| Variable | Definition | Effect on Conservation | Sulaymaniyah Example | International Example |
|-----------------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Awareness & Education | Knowledge of heritage values and techniques | Prevents harmful practices; builds stewardship | Mosque custodians repaired domes with cement | Training improved maintenance in Africa |
| Consultation | Gathering community views in decisions | Aligns projects with needs; risk of tokenism | Residents rarely consulted in preservation | Community values integrated in Europe |
| Power-Sharing & Co-decision | Shared authority in decision-making | Ensures ownership and sustainability | Absent; expert-driven processes dominate | Hong Kong adaptive reuse success |
| Capacity Building | Training in technical skills | Prevents harmful repairs; empowers custodians | Lack of training led to misuse of modern materials | African custodians adopted better methods |
| Financial Participation | Community funding and co-financing | Strengthens ownership; diversifies resources | No micro-grants; reliant on state budgets | African micro-grants funded initiatives |
| Institutionalization | Formal participation structures | Ensures continuity; avoids ad hoc approaches | No local heritage committees | European governance models institutionalized participation |
| Cultural Value Recognition | Inclusion of intangible heritage | Aligns conservation with cultural identity | Intangible traditions often ignored | UNESCO HUL stresses cultural practices |
| Feedback Mechanisms | Channels for community response | Builds trust; improves accountability | Absent in Sulaymaniyah | UK professionals demand frameworks |

6. THE GREAT MOSQUE OF SULAYMANIYAH- CONSERVATION PROJECT

The Great Mosque of Sulaymaniyah, also called the Grand Mosque or Sheikh Ahmad Mosque is a historic landmark of spiritual worship as well as cultural heritage in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The mosque was built in the year 1784 and the year later by Mir Ibrahim Pasha Baban, who founded the mosque and thus carries a history of religious, social,

and political history. It contains the tomb of Haji Kaka Ahmad, a well-known Kurdish cleric who was regarded as a generous person, and a shrine of Mahmud Barzanji, a Kurdish leader (King Mahmood). It is the first mosque in Sulaymaniyah and it also has the mausoleum of the powerful Baban family which had been historically associated with the Ottoman Empire. The religious symbolic and the political memory merge in this combination to give more emphasis to the significance of the mosque as a cultural and architectural landmark. (Wahab,2024).

The Grand Mosque, before it was restored recently, was in a great state of disrepair. Structurally, there were cracks on the walls and separation between the arcade columns and slabs which were a threat to the integrity of the building. The surrounding environment also played a role in the degradation; as a new hall was built next to madrasa, the moisture content in the environment was increased and corrosion along with rust development occurred. Moreover, the previous renovations that added modern concrete structures diminished the architectural authenticity of the mosque, thus the historical identity of the mosque slowly diminished over time. (Wahab, 2024).

The conservation project hence was to cover the physical and symbolic aspects of the mosque. Its major aim was to reestablish architectural identity by using original materials and traditional ornamentation to be able to continue with the original nature of the building. The structural stabilization was of the main concern and especially the strengthening of the loose ties between columns and slabs. The important features were particularly preserved, such as the domes with their customary seven-color tiles, and the unique tile pattern of the dome of the minaret. In addition to restoring the mosque physically, the project aimed to revive the cultural, religious and educational functions of the mosque. Towards this end, the artists and masters of Najaf and Karbala, Iran, Turkey and others were all involved in a joint venture that involved the integration of foreign artistry with local artistry.

This was a mixture of the use of modern technology and history. The Digital survey tools included the Total Station devices with a millimetric accuracy and this enabled the accurate documentation of the geometry and condition of the mosque. The study of historical photographs, interviews with the local historians and analyzing the archival data all added a certain amount of contextual insight. The compatibility of traditional bricks and mortars were tested on materials, where they were chosen as per their compressive strength and chemical mix. Conservation work aimed at strengthening the original minaret of the year 1905, stabilising the domes, and rebuilding the arcades and courtyard in a style reminiscent of the traditional methods.

The project had several challenges in spite of its successes. The scarcity of conventionally produced materials, such as bricks and special glass, which had to be obtained in Baghdad and other areas, was one of the most urgent ones. The multinational conservation groups also found coordination an

uphill task especially when stakeholders demanded frequent changes in designs. The procurement of materials and equipment was also slowed down by logistical challenges including congestion in cities and the bottlenecks in the transport systems. The issues raised make one realize that there is a fine line to walk between technical accuracy, heritage truth and administrative functionality.

The outcome of the conservation process was however substantial. The appearance of conventional brickwork and the insertion of hidden iron columns made structural reinforcement to guarantee the stability and the authentic appearance. The minaret of 1905 was also successfully restored; natural ventilation corridors were recreated in order to enhance environmental conditions in the mosque. Old domes and tile work also have been properly maintained whereas the roles of the mosque as a religious, cultural and educational center have been restored. The efficiency of the applied interventions was proved by the analysis of the data: the traditional bricks had an average compressive strength of 8.5 MPa, the limestone mortars had sufficient adhesion, and the humidity level in environment under the madrasa walls reduced by about 15 percent after the restoration.

The tension in heritage conservation can be revealed in the critical discussion of the project. One of the main conflicts was the necessity to reinstate the structures and the need to maintain the historical authenticity. Though innovations like fiber-reinforced polymers were taken into consideration, they were eventually discarded in favor of the old ones. The lesson taught by the experience was the need to engage the stakeholders early on, the need to be flexible with procurement and the need to invest in local craftsmanship as key lessons to be applied in future conservation projects.

The project also came up with a number of best practices. Symbolic umbrellas were placed to make the life of the visitor more comfortable and strengthen the spiritual atmosphere of the place. The authentic local materials and the focus of genuine local materials reinforced the mosque physical integrity as well as the cultural appeal. The conservation project preserved the identity of the mosque as a cultural and spiritual center by protecting its role as a community meeting and gathering place. (Figures 2,3,4,5,6,7,8).

The teamwork consisting of the cooperation of Anzue Construction Company, the Directorate of Antiquities in Sulaymaniyah, the administration of the mosque, NGOs cultural heritage skilled and competent workers throughout the region made the

project possible. It followed the ethical standards of respecting religious tradition and protecting local

heritage, and all the funding was local and propel involvement did not depend on the external funding.



Figure 2: The historical changes in Sulaymanyah Great Mosque from 1919-to 1970.



Figure 3: The steps of renovation of the dome.



Figure 4: Renovation work for different parts of the mosque (researchers).



Figure 5: local heritage ornamentation in the great mosque Sulaymaniyah (researchers).



Figure 6: Craft construction work in the mosque (researchers).



Figure 7: before and after the renovation of the Dome and Minaret (researchers).



Figure 8: The great mosque after renovation (researchers).

7. PRACTICAL STUDY AND ANALYSIS

The practical element of the research examines the severity and efficiency of the community involvement in the preservation of the Great Mosque

of Sulaymaniyah. The study is based on the theoretical framework of eight important variables, namely, awareness, consultation, power-sharing, building capacity, participating in finances, institutionalization, recognition of cultural value,

and feedback mechanisms, and assesses how this works on the local level and how the stakeholders are feeling about their involvement, which includes architects, community representatives, governmental structures, and non-governmental organizations. The participants were given a structured questionnaire in a five-point Likert scale that was distributed directly or indirectly to the participants who were involved in the project. This tool offers empirical information to determine the degree of participation, discrepancies in practice and theory and the overall contribution made by various

actors to the conservation of the mosque, on which analysis and suggestions are based. Table 3.

The survey was conducted with 26 respondents who participated in the preservation of Great Mosque of Sulaymaniyah: 10 architects/planners, 10 representatives of the community, 2 government officials, 2 NGO representatives, and 2 academics. This was a diverse group that offered technical, social, institutional and scholarly approach to community participation with regard to the project. Table 4- A, B, C.

Table 3: Questionnaire Table: Community Participation in Architectural Conservation.

| Section | Question | Response Scale |
|--------------------------------|---|----------------|
| 1. Awareness & Education | 1. The community had sufficient awareness about the heritage value of the Great Mosque. | 1-5 |
| | 2. Awareness programs or training were provided during the conservation project. | 1-5 |
| 2. Consultation | 3. Community members were consulted during planning and implementation stages. | 1-5 |
| | 4. Consultation influenced the final decisions of the project. | 1-5 |
| 3. Power-Sharing / Co-Decision | 5. Community representatives had a real decision-making role. | 1-5 |
| | 6. Experts, authorities, and community members shared responsibilities clearly. | 1-5 |
| 4. Capacity Building | 7. Local custodians or community groups received training in conservation techniques. | 1-5 |
| | 8. Capacity-building efforts improved the quality of conservation actions. | 1-5 |
| 5. Financial Participation | 9. The community contributed financial or material support to the project. | 1-5 |
| | 10. Financial contributions increased community ownership of the project. | 1-5 |
| 6. Institutionalization | 11. There were clear institutional frameworks supporting community participation. | 1-5 |
| | 12. Participation was organized through committees or official channels. | 1-5 |
| 7. Cultural Value Recognition | 13. The project respected and integrated cultural traditions related to the Great Mosque. | 1-5 |
| | 14. Intangible heritage (stories, practices, rituals) was considered during conservation. | 1-5 |
| 8. Feedback Mechanisms | 15. There were channels for the community to give feedback during the project. | 1-5 |
| | 16. Feedback from stakeholders resulted in changes or improvements. | 1-5 |
| 9. Overall Participation | 17. Public participation had a meaningful effect on the conservation outcomes. | 1-5 |
| | 18. NGO participation strengthened the project's success. | 1-5 |
| | 19. Governmental participation was effective despite legal/administrative challenges. | 1-5 |
| | 20. Overall, the conservation approach balanced professional, governmental, and community inputs. | 1-5 |

1-5 Likert (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree)

Table 4: Background Information of Respondents (n = 26) A-professional role, B- years of experience, C- Type of involvement.

| A- Professional Role | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Government Officials | 2 | 7.7% |
| Architects / Planners | 10 | 38.5% |
| Academics / Researchers | 2 | 7.7% |
| Conservation Specialists | 0 | 0% |
| Community Representatives | 10 | 38.5% |
| NGO Representatives | 2 | 7.7% |
| Total | 26 | 100% |

| B- Years of Experience | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Less than 3 years | 4 | 15.4% |
| 3-7 years | 8 | 30.8% |
| 8-15 years | 9 | 34.6% |
| More than 15 years | 5 | 19.2% |
| Total | 26 | 100% |

| C- Involvement Type | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Planning | 12 | 46.2% |
| Design | 10 | 38.5% |
| Implementation | 14 | 53.8% |
| Supervision | 9 | 34.6% |

| | | |
|------------|---|-------|
| Evaluation | 8 | 30.8% |
| Other | 3 | 11.5% |

The table below gives a summarized report on the perception held by the stakeholders as to their role in the architectural conservation of the Sulaymaniyah Great Mosque. The four major groups that included in the study included architects and planners, representatives of the people, the government and the NGOs and the intention was to establish differences in roles, performance and institutional dilemmas.

Table 5: Perceived Influence of Stakeholders on the Architectural Preservation of Sulaymaniyah Great Mosque.

| Stakeholder Group | Sample Size | Overall Influence | Main Strengths Identified | Main Limitations Identified |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------------|--|--|
| Architects & Planners | 10 | Moderate-High | Technical expertise, design review capacity | Limited authority in final decision-making |
| Public Representatives | 10 | Medium | Community awareness, cultural attachment, willingness to engage | Limited knowledge of preservation standards, fragmented participation |
| Governmental Institutions | 2 | Medium | Supportive role, ability to approve policies and provide permissions | Legal complications, administrative delays, and limited enforcement mechanisms |
| NGOs | 2 | Strong-High | Active involvement, professional advocacy, resource mobilization | Reliance on external funding, limited mandate in legal processes |

8. DISCUSSION

The stakeholder responses (ten architects and planners, ten representatives of the population, two governmental representatives, two representatives of the NGOs) are analyzed, showing a differentiated and yet closely interacting pattern of influence of the architectural preservation of Sulaymaniyah Great Mosque. All available information confirms that the involvement of the public is in an intermediate position of effectiveness, and serves mainly as an auxiliary but not entirely empowering element in the process of preservation. Though the people are evidently culturally attached and show high level of interest in protecting the architectural identity of the mosque, they are mostly consultative. The lack of such impact can be explained by the lack of technical awareness, lack of access to the decision-making process, and the absence of institutional procedures aimed at transforming the popular response into formal preservation action.

Conversely, NGOs are the most significant non-state actors that come up in the preservation process around the mosque. They are defined as having a structured interaction, professional advocacy, and mobilization of resources and the population. The statistics show that NGOs can be the middlemen between the governmental institutions, technocrats, and society. Their ability to bring about the conservation skills, lobby better regulatory systems, and maintain extended participation make them the

Summarizing the reported strengths and weaknesses of both groups, the table offers a very clear background of how various stakeholders play, and influence, the preservation process in the city. This summary can be used to form the basis of the analysis and discussion of their relative impact and the structural aspects on the results of heritage conservation. Table 5.

key players in promoting the conservation goals. This high impact is indicative of a more general tendency in the heritage protection cases when civil-society groups fill in institutional voids in the public administration and contribute to the sustainability of heritage projects.

The stakeholders in the government are viewed as being supportive but institutionally bound. The respondents did not fail to emphasize the fact that governmental agencies are always ready to help in preservation activities but this time around, their efforts are often crippled by old legal systems, cumbersome administrative systems, and weak enforcement structures. These organizational issues lower the responsiveness of the government and the capacity of the institutions to take appropriate preservation actions and in a timely fashion. Therefore, government agencies have a formal legal power in terms of planning and conservation approvals; however, their practical powers are curtailed through systemic legal and bureaucratic inefficiencies.

The role of architects and planners is somewhere in the middle with a moderate to high level of impact because of their technical skills in conservation practices, architectural evaluation and restoration planning. However, their success is subject to the collaboration of the governmental bodies and the degree of the community acceptance. Their contribution is relevant the most when combined with NGO-driven programs and backed up by a

robust legal framework.

On balance, these data indicate that a hybrid model of stakeholder partnership can be regarded as an effective key to maintaining the Sulaymaniyah Great Mosque. The moderate influence of the public participation is necessary to offer the necessary cultural legitimacy, the most dynamic and technically-based contributions are offered by the NGOs, and the governmental institutions, in spite of their constraints, are central to the official approval procedures and regulation. Strong legal frameworks, broadening of people education, and improvement in inter-organizational coordination are then important in maximizing stakeholder roles as well as increasing the process of long-term architectural conservation in the city.

9. CONCLUSIONS

9.1. Theoretical part

- Community involvement is critical: 1 exclusion results in a lack of sustainability whereas, true involvement enhances technical output as well as cultural authenticity.

- Beyond evil and tokenism: Symbolic consultation undermines legitimacy; in fact, co-decision generates trust.

- Individually, these are crucial in reducing the area's reliance on external resources through the enhancement of capacity. Individually, they are useful in channeling the enthusiasm of the community into realm of sustainable conservation by creating training and workshops and technical advice.

- Financial empowerment: Financial vehicles like micro-grants eliminate the reliance on scarce government funds and diversify funds.

- Institutionalization: Organizations such as heritage committees or councils will make the participation systemic and long-term.

- Proper recognition of cultural values: The preservation should be a combination of traditions, oral and social practices with the physical structures.

- Feedback and accountability: Monitoring and evaluation system enhances trust and other forms of permanency.

- The process of reconstruction of the Great Mosque of Sulaymaniyah was the indication of the relevance of the concept of awareness and education that allows people to appreciate and learn more about their cultural heritage.

- Majority of the local stakeholders were consulted so as to ensure that various opinions were put in the conservation process.

- Through the concept of power-sharing and

co- decisions, local communities, religious authorities and technical professionals came quite literally into the process of coming up with major decisions.

- Capacity building established the power of local artisans and workers thereby reinforcing the technical quality of the project and the ownership of the community.

- The support of individuals, the private sector, and local institutions with financial assistance played a vital role and was needed in case the external funding was not provided.

- Cumulative Leading the project was steered by cultural value offering preservation to the identity of the mosque, which is a religious, educational, and social landmark.

- NGOs were instrumental in bringing so much awareness to the masses of people on conserving heritage and linking the locals to the importance of heritage conservation.

- People/ Private sector involvement in the funding was also active and helped fund sustainability and tied conservation as a shared responsibility.

9.2. Practical part

- There is a medium yet significant impact of the public participation which is culturally attached yet restricted by the technical and organizational limitations. NGOs have the most important operation and advocacy influence on the conservation of the Sulaymaniyah Great Mosque by being the facilitator between the experts, government and the neighborhood. Institutions of the government lend the required support, but they are weakened by the vagueness of the law and delays on an administrative level.

- An increased tension of all stakeholders, in particular, of the role of the population and governmental rules, is the key to successful preservation so that expansion of the already demonstrated beneficial role of NGOs and technical specialists should be held to its maximum.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Regarding the findings, the following recommendations can be put forward with regards to Sulaymaniyah and such historic urban areas:

- Institute local heritage committees in the neighborhoods as participatory decision-making forums.

- establish the micro-grant programs accredited to residents, custodians and small business to split the costs of conservation tasks half.

- Standardize the best practices through creating training programs and toolkits to be used by the community custodians, architects, and officials.
- Include heritage education in the school programs, the activities of mosques and community workshops such that the knowledge of the generations is formed.
- Implement a participatory adaptive reuse models where communities are taken into the design experiments at an earlier stage, to be able to align themselves to the requirements of the community and the cultural values.
- this article suggests: institutionalize the planning and heritage legislation of a community consultation in an urban planning process to dissolve the symbolic participation in exchange of actual power-sharing. Document intangible heritage practices of buildings and spaces, in order to strengthen cultural aspect of conservation. Otherwise, by enabling communities to consider conservation projects and report any issues, accountability and responsiveness can be established.

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