

EXPLORING CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL BUILDINGS IN HERITAGE AREAS IN BAHRAIN: ENHANCING VISITOR EXPERIENCE THROUGH PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACHES

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Abstract. “We often find that we can only fully remember and articulate a place when we are distant from it, unable to convey its essence while we are present”. Cultural buildings situated in heritage areas should possess architectural uniqueness, appeal to a diverse range of users across various age groups and authentically reflect traditional villages and cities' sensory and cultural experiences. Furthermore, such cultural buildings should function as interactive cultural environments and living museums that engage the senses of sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste. This research addresses the problem of declining interest in visiting cultural buildings in Bahrain and explores the common reluctance to visit these sites. The hypothesis is that visitors navigate cultural spaces and sense the interior spaces via their bodily experiences; if visitors have the opportunity to wander, feel the texture of traditional walls, inhale the scents of wooden and stone constructions and listen to the sounds of everyday life, it would prevent their disengagement. This approach aims to address the challenges of visitor abandonment and encourage increased attendance at these cultural structures. The research will conclude with recommendations for creating vibrant and informative experiences by integrating modern interpretive techniques with contemporary and classic architectural elements. A mixed methods approach will be used as the principal methodology to accomplish the research aim through a theoretical literature review and an analytical study.

Keywords: Culture buildings, bodily experiences, phenomenology, Bahrain.

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1. Introduction

Bahrain means ‘two seas’ in Arabic, guiding to its salty waters and submarine freshwater springs - one probable reason behind the fact that the quality of Bahraini pearls is unrivaled and their request everywhere. Before the period of air travel, jeweler Jacques Cartier visited Bahrain to start jewels himself. Since the second century, the exploitation of pearls has maintained the livelihood of all strands of civilization: divers, staff members and supervisors, boat owners and builders, suppliers, sailmakers, creditors, vendors and dealers. At the pinnacle of pearl hunting, from the 1850s to the 1930s, Bahrain’s prosperous capital, Muharraq, was the pearling capital of the Arabian Gulf. Muharraq was constructed mainly out of coral stone fetched from the shallow seas. This tiny Middle Eastern country built itself and its reputation around pursuing pearls, powering its economy and shaping its culture, social structures and national identity. By the 1930s, the world economy faced irreversible changes; cheap competition was introduced by cultured pearls in Japan and oil was discovered in Bahrain. Muharraq lost its intimate

connection with the water as vast swathes of land were reclaimed. Nevertheless, although the old city suffered from negligence and many of its properties were destroyed over the years (only around 20 percent still stand today), its warren of narrow alleys typical of Islamic cities escaped development pressures and almost miraculously, remains nearly untouched - attention and activities shifted instead to the other side of the harbor to the district of Manama, the current capital.

The Gulf's sole surviving pearling center is now being looked after: its layered history inherited and appropriated, its residual traces rediscovered, exposed and recomposed into a meandering 3.5 km pearling pathway snaking its way through the lanes of the old city. Sixteen structures are opening their doors to both locals and visitors and 400 houses along the route are having their facades restored. As the past is uncovered - literally, by peeling away the skim coat of lime and clay plasters to expose the coral stone - new structures are being commissioned to hold remnants of crumbling walls and ancestors' stories. Without threatening the existing, the future is being constructed atop the legacy of the old. Softer interventions include consolidating precarious structures to decrease acoustic and visual pollution. More daring are the bold commissions for new buildings by local and foreign architects (Mollard, 2020).

Cultural heritage includes artifacts, monuments, a group of buildings and sites and museums with diverse values, including symbolic, historical, artistic, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological, scientific and social significance. It includes tangible heritage (movable, immobile and underwater) and intangible cultural heritage (ICH) embedded into cultural and natural heritage artifacts, sites or monuments. The definition excludes ICH related to other cultural domains such as festivals, celebrations, etc. It covers industrial heritage and cave paintings (UNESCO, 2009). Cultural heritage legacy is an invaluable treasure that provides insight into the shared past and connects us to our roots, shaping our identities. Especially there are three UNESCO World Heritage sites in Bahrain, which are Dilmun Burial Mounds (2019), Pearling, Testimony of an Island Economy (2012) and Qal'at al-Bahrain - Ancient Harbour and Capital of Dilmun (2005) (Convention, 2024).

Culture encompasses all tangible and intangible identity facets, including historic buildings, monuments, customs, languages, artwork, music, folklore, publications and literature. A deep understanding of a nation's culture is essential for preserving its identity, as it underscores the significance of the country's architectural heritage. However, Bahrain faces a pressing challenge with rapid urban development, threatening this architectural heritage through demolition and neglect. Consequently, there is a critical need for a space that documents and vivifies the country's architectural legacy through utilizing cultural building facilities. In the same context, Contemporary cultural buildings are crucial in promoting a culture of heritage and learning. Bahrain has always been famous for its heritage and the novelty of modern buildings that service it. However, there are many other historical landmarks in Bahrain worth knowing about, such as the Isa Cultural Centre (ICC), Bahrain National Museum, Bahrain Fort Museum, Beit Al Quran and Beit Al Jasr Heritage House, which employs the vernacular language of the Island at different cultural and heritage levels (Charlesworth, 2025).

So, attractive and inclusive cultural buildings in the heritage areas that have inner spaces that respect users' senses and cater to the diverse interests and learning heritage cultural preferences of the entire community place a special emphasis on engaging and inspiring the younger generations is a step towards envisioning a brighter future for Bahrain, where knowledge, culture and learning flourish. It occurs when a cultural

building's design respects the users' feelings while visiting and meets its functionality by catering to a wide range of user needs to suit the age's demands. Therefore, maximizing the maintaining tradition by blending Bahrain's cultural legacy with modern influences occurs via connecting visitors' senses with the place, incorporating users' senses while practicing the inner spaces and as an inspiration (Al-Haddad, 2019).

The research discusses the recent cultural heritage hub constructed in Muharaq's heritage area, which hosts cultural and historical events. It sheds light on the challenges such cultural heritage hubs face in Bahrain, particularly the decline in visitor numbers and their inability to attract visitors because people feel detached and alienated from the building or the environment. In the primary research stage, a general survey was conducted about designing for some buildings in such areas. It was found that most cultural heritage buildings emphasized the function (form follows function theory) rather than following the phenomenology theory (focusing on attracting the users' senses). Most research survey respondents show that most designs miss intimate spaces or interactive designs that leave a memory in their minds or attract the users' senses.

A grasp of phenomenological theory can significantly enhance visitor experiences. A design that respects it provides an attractive space that aligns with users' senses and contemporary requirements, which can effectively address these challenges and revitalize the country's cultural heritage landscape. This theory emphasizes concepts such as lived experience, the ordinariness of daily life, the importance of meaningful relationships, our presence in the world, encountering entities, the nature of time and structural care in architectural design (Eldardiry & Konbr, 2022). The architecture of such cultural heritage hubs' environment should be fundamentally ageless, connected to the nature of the heritage areas and genuinely humanistic to attract users and bond the visitors' experiences with their memory of such places. On the other hand, modernization worldwide, particularly in Bahrain, has gradually disappeared from the traditional national life and cultural legacy due to the country's rapid development and urbanization. The younger generation needs to become more connected to the rich cultural traditions and history that shaped the way of life of their ancestors (Rakan, 2017).

Locally, When considering direct users, the educational statistics in Bahrain paint a compelling picture of the student population of 213,325 individuals, demanding accessible knowledge hubs to support their academic endeavors and research initiatives is palpable and caters to changing reading habits while integrating digital resources to enhance the overall user experience (IGA, 2018/2019). Moreover, the causeway between Saudi Arabia and Bahrain is partially responsible for the twelve million visitors (2023), mainly for entertainment (a count of 12.4 million visitors to Bahrain in 2023) who stay an average of 3.4 nights; Bahrain offers an excellent opportunity for cultural exchange and intellectual enrichment. Cultural heritage hubs in the old areas of Bahrain could attract these visitors, serving as a hub for exploring Bahrain's cultural centers and educational heritage (IGA, 2023).

By utilizing these statistics and insights, the culture centers in Bahrain can become a hub of learning, cultural exchange and community engagement. It would cater to the thirst for knowledge among residents and visitors alike, fostering a dynamic intellectual environment that promotes lifelong learning, research and cultural exploration.

For future generations to experience and appreciate the national culture, the essence of national life must be preserved and revitalized. The Memory Cultural hubs will address this need, following the phenomenological theory by creating an intimate cultural heritage environment that brings users different senses for unique practicing experiences

that attract them to visit such cultural heritage hubs often. Moreover, it plays a crucial role in fostering cultural aspects at different levels, such as tangible and Intangible cultural heritage elements in Bahraini society.

Guiding by the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities (BACA), creating cultural buildings in such historic areas and attaching them to architectural heritage buildings in Bahrain is integral to preserving the country's cultural and social identity. The need for cultural buildings in such areas is to include a place that illustrates a rich history that spans centuries, narrating the stories of the communities that have lived within them (BACA, 2015).

When considering direct users, for example, the educational statistics in Bahrain paint a compelling picture of the necessity for cultural buildings within heritage areas. With a student population of 213,325 individuals, the demand for accessible knowledge centers to support academic endeavors and research initiatives is palpable. Furthermore, a deliberate study involving 390 Bahraini readers reveals a strong affinity for printed books (83.6%), emphasizing the importance of modern Cultural buildings that cater to changing reading habits while integrating digital resources to enhance the overall user experience (IGA, 2018/2019; Mal Allah, 2019). The indirect Users, with a high visitor count of 12.4 million visitors to Bahrain in 2023 who stay an average of 3.4 nights, find Bahrain offers an excellent opportunity for cultural exchange and intellectual enrichment. Cultural buildings could attract these visitors as a hub for exploring Bahrain's literary and educational heritage (IGA, 2023). By reinvesting in these statistics and insights, cultural buildings in Bahrain's historical area can become a hub of learning, cultural exchange and community engagement. They would cater to the thirst for knowledge among residents and visitors alike, fostering a dynamic intellectual environment that promotes lifelong learning, research and cultural exploration. Such Cultural buildings will play a positive role in preserving them, which is vital beyond mere aesthetic value; it includes maintaining Bahrain's collective memory and cultural identity. Revitalizing these buildings using new technologies and sustainable practices is essential to ensure this heritage is for future generations. These sites can be transformed into cultural, artistic, or educational centers that raise heritage awareness and contribute to sustainable development.

Therefore, the research problem considers users' desertion and unwillingness to visit cultural buildings and the accompanying decreasing heritage awareness, which decreases heritage awareness's contribution to sustainable development.

Consequently, this research investigates solutions for attracting more visitors to Bahraini culture, showing its rich history to meet today's society's needs. It considers the users' body experiences via applying phenomenology theories.

So, the research discusses how the design of interior spaces in buildings should be full of human sensing to enrich visitors' experiences and attract them to visit such buildings frequently. This will positively impact the implementation of the sustainability concept while operating such projects in Bahrain. It will discuss the concept that a place may be distinguished by its unique contour, which influences our bodies and connects us to the environment practically, based on examples of cultural buildings as case studies in Bahrain.

The hypothesis is that every architectural connection experience is multi-sensory. It includes space features, proportion, scale, sight, sound, smell, skin, taste, bones of the skeleton and individual experiences empowered by architecture. Sensory experiences that interact and integrate attract visitors and leave strong memories for them.

It will examine two case studies as samples of small-scale culture buildings designed following the phenomenology theories and considering the user's senses. The two samples were studied by user experiences practicing various building activities. This ensures that responders and visitors can interact with most functions, following the vision explanation that it “is experienced by the experienter”.

This research used a mixed methods approach as its main methodology through a theoretical literature review and an analytical study. Depending on volunteering, young designers practiced their bodily experiences and recorded their senses in the interior spaces in such buildings, the research methodology is designed as follows:

- a. General integrative reviews related to the problem situation or research problem are cited, such as those found in psychological and sociological research reviews.
- b. Analysis of comprehensive bodily experiences for volunteering young designers for successful case studies relevant to Bahraini culture.
- c. Conclude the results of the visitors' bodily experiences that are significant in evaluating the design.

2. Literature review

Bahrain has been recognized for decades for its rich history in cultural activities on different levels. Its profound and rooted history is anchored in Bahrain. Recently, the authorities have paid attention to such cultural buildings; therefore, many various cultural buildings were constructed, renovated or conserved in different places hosting different artistic and cultural activities, such as and not limited Babar Temple; Bahrain Pearlin Path; Bahrain Fort, Arad Fort; Al-Khamis Mosque, Dilmun Burial mounds, Diraz temple Bab al-Bahrain, Riffa Fort: Saar Archeological site Sheikh Isa bin Ali House; Siyadi house and Ghazi Al-Ghosaybi house. These different cultural buildings in heritage areas provide a quiet environment for visits, studies and research in addition to hosting different heritage activities. Consequently, they also organize various events and initiatives to meet their visitors' diverse needs and passions, including youth activities and cultural events. Transforming from an essential repository, the public Cultural buildings' mission has evolved into a community center where learning experiences, cultural resources, creativity and community interaction occur. Such cultural buildings offer more than just buildings with books and other places; they are a gateway to information for visitors to heritage areas, tools and learning horizons for those who seek to learn about culture and heritage, which can enrich individuals of all ages. It demonstrates a thorough area of knowledge and provides arguments supporting the study's focus.

Although some may claim that despite Bahrian's rich culture and heritage, as well as its many famous writers and heritage dimensions, its society has few contributors to the culture of reading recently, they did not consider that Bahraini youth need initiatives to release their energies. It is crucial to understand that cultural buildings are not just places for storing books or nonbeneficial places. However, it is a hub for sharing knowledge, fostering connections within the community and enriching cultural interactions (Rakan, 2017). Such a cultural building would create dynamic, inclusive, active and attractive areas that cater to the entire community's diverse interests and learning preferences and emphasize engaging and inspiring the younger generations. This is a step towards envisioning a brighter future for Bahrain, where knowledge, culture and learning flourish. Therefore, implementing the phenomenology theories by studying the

users' senses is vital when discussing the success of cultural buildings, mainly through the surrounding historical and heritage ambiance.

The literature review aims to delineate various theoretical positions and develop a conceptual framework for generating hypotheses and formulating the research question. The literature review needs to:

- a. Critically evaluate the literature rather than merely describe previous literature (i.e., what is good/bad about the body of literature?).
- b. Show a synthesis and be integrated rather than being more like an annotated bibliography.
- c. Identify critical authors and the key works in the area, thus acquainting the reader with existing studies relative to what has been found, who had done work, when and where the latest research studies were completed and what approaches to research methodology were followed.
- d. Constitute an argument.
- e. Identify the gap in the literature being addressed by the research question.

2.1. Significance of cultural buildings in city heritage areas.

The importance of language extends beyond mere communication; it forms the foundation of the world's religions, sciences and cultures. It is a fundamental aspect of human existence, shaping our identity. It distinguishes us as individuals and unites us within societies. Every country has its own unique language, which plays a crucial role in fostering nationalism and social cohesion. As philosopher Azfar Hussain observes, language is a tool we use to express ourselves and a force that shapes our lives. Languages use us and we use language to express ourselves (Islam, 2024).

One of the benefits of creating cultural buildings in heritage areas is embracing the culture and its local language. The local culture is a powerful force that shapes and reflects residents' thoughts, evokes emotions and influences actions. It plays a crucial role in defining our identities, influencing social dynamics and connecting us to our cultural heritage. Recognizing the importance of culture is essential to strengthening our communities and preserving cultural richness. Moreover, local languages and cultural buildings are linked and interconnected. For example, understanding the local Language and culture buildings are intertwined, as they are all pivotal to exploring knowledge within a society. Cultural buildings are repositories of knowledge and cultural heritage, while language is the primary means of transmitting and understanding a society's heritage and culture. They contribute to creating a vibrant environment for learning and cultural exchange.

Moreover, culture buildings with their cultural buildings also serve as guardians of local languages and dialects and as custodians of literary heritage by preserving rare texts. They host special collections, including priceless manuscripts and first editions, while digitizing works to increase accessibility. This ensures that languages and heritage are preserved over time. Preservation is crucial to fostering community engagement through literary events, supporting classic and contemporary authors and ensuring a vibrant literary culture (Gundakanal & Kaddipujar, 2024). Therefore, language has a profound impact beyond mere communication; language shapes our reality, influences our emotions and strengthens community bonds. By recognizing its importance and the role of culture building in preserving linguistic diversity, it could be worked toward a more inclusive society that values every voice and culture. Embracing the richness of language enriches the residents' identities and strengthens the fabric of their shared humanity.

2.2. Cultural heritage

To understand the importance of each site explored on this page and its stewardship, it is first necessary to understand what exactly is meant by the phrase “cultural heritage”. A relatively unbounded and contingent idea, our modern understanding of what comprises cultural heritage is broad and challenging to define. However, by examining the UNESCO definition of world heritage and the category of world heritage sites, it becomes feasible to understand the various components comprising “cultural heritage” (Architecture, n.d.).

Cultural heritage: Article 1 of UNESCO defines cultural heritage as: Monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations, which are of Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of history, art or science;

Groups of buildings: groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of history, art or science;

Sites: works of man or the combined works of nature and man, as well as areas including archaeological sites of Outstanding Universal Value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view.

Some properties might satisfy more than one of these definitions (e.g., a monument or a group of buildings). This definition was developed in 1972 and concepts of cultural heritage have expanded since then. Nonetheless, the definition has been interpreted very broadly to embrace the diversity of cultural heritage. The Operational Guidelines offer additional definitions regarding cultural landscapes, historic towns and town centers, heritage canals and heritage routes (ICCROM, 2011).

World heritage sites were first designated under the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, which UNESCO adopted in 1972. They formally came into effect in 1975 after being ratified by 22 countries. This Convention laid out our current framework for the preservation and stewardship of significant cultural heritage sites across the globe. It also provides an infrastructure for considering what “cultural heritage” is in the first place. Under the three types of designated sites under the UNESCO convention, monuments, town sites, archaeological sites and works of art are classified under “cultural heritage sites”. Nevertheless, what makes these sites the locale for transmitting “cultural heritage” and what exactly is this heritage? Heritage can take many forms. Definingly, it is a generational inheritance that may be tangible or intangible. Intangible forms of heritage include oral traditions, community bonds and language. On this page, we will explore tangible forms of heritage - material traces left behind that transmit important cultural and historical knowledge from one generation to the next. In this way, tangible cultural heritage can be understood as monuments, town sites, archeological sites and works of art that carry and transmit the cultural features of a society - the spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of that society or group (Architecture, n.d.).

2.3. Phenomenology is using culture buildings' interior spaces

Phenomenology is the study of the human experience. It studies structures of consciousness in terms of first-person experiences. The main aspect of the experience is Phenomenology theories and the bodily experiences of the users of the interior spaces, which are directed toward research objectives. Phenomenology is a way of seeing things

rather than a set of scientific and metaphysical theories (Eldardiry, 2022). Phenomenology rose to prominence during the early 20th century in the works of Husserl and later by those he influenced, such as Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty (Smith, 2013). Phenomenology in Architecture: manipulation of space, material, shadow and light to create memorable experiences by impacting the human senses

a. **Space:** Does the architecture relate to the site (orientation, views, context)? How is the circulation considered? Does the project implement environmental design?

b. **Materials:** Is there a variety of textures, surfaces and colors? Does the design integrate the tactile, auditory and olfactory senses?

c. **Shadow and Lightning:** How is lighting implemented (natural and artificial)? How is the use of shadows? How is the visual sense integrated?

Table 1. Phenomenology in Architecture

SPACE			Materials			Shadow and Lightning		
site	Layout + circulation	Environmental design	Materials	Textures	Color scheme	Natural lighting	Artificial lighting	Quality of the views

Consequently, the sensory experience between an architectural object and those who encounter it should be critical and complementary. These followers are determined to revive emotion-evoking design through space, material, light and shadow by expressing these features in both the larger context and intimate human perception. (Eldardiry & Konbr, 2022). In phenomenology, space is determined by the development of fluid, flexible programs and the utilization of interstitial space. As theorist Vernon Bourke defines it, rationalism is a theory “in which the criterion of the truth is not sensory but intellectual and deductive” (Bourke, 2008). Christian Norberg Schulz stresses that “the environment influences human beings and this implies that the purpose of architecture transcends the definition given by early functionalism” (Schulz & Hanusa, 1980).

2.4. Sight predominant in architectural culture and design

In recent decades, attempts have been made in urban theory and discourse at large to revisit and reconsider several concepts that have been marginalized or suspended because of the rise of scientific ideology in academic research.

For example, in the mid-1990s, Juhani Pallasmaa, a Finnish Architect, was the leader in this branch. In his book *The Eyes of the Skin*, he asked the far-reaching question: “Why, when there are five senses, does one single sense - sight - become so predominant in architectural culture and design?” With the increasing digital and all-pervasive use of images electronically, the subject has become all the more critical and topical since the foremost publication. Pallasmaa articulates the endless rainfall of images in the contemporary world, in the era before the internet, which became the medium of the contemporary interconnected culture that has recently emerged. If this was valid in 1996, then it is more invariant today. So, this egocentric eye views architecture exclusively as a mechanism of self-expression and a philosophical contest of consistencies and feelings (Pallasmaa, 2005).

Peter Sloterdijk, as quoted by Juhani Pallasmaa, argued about sight sense when approaching spaces: ‘The eyes are the organic prototype of philosophy. Their enigma is that they not only can see but are also able to see themselves seeing. This gives them

prominence among the body's cognitive organs. Good art of philosophical thinking is only eye reflex, eye diabetic, seeing-oneself-see' (Mohith *et al.*, 2016).

On the other hand, Juhani Pallasmaa argues that suppressing the other four sensory domains encloses the overall impoverishment of our built environment, often declining the emphasis on the spatial understanding of a building and architecture's capability to inspire, engage and be enriching. He argued the documented development of the ocular-centric paradigm model since the Greeks and its influence on understanding the nature of architecture and its characteristics. In the same context, he discussed the function of the other senses in precise architectural experiences and points the route toward a multi-sensory architecture that enables a sense of integration, intimacy and belonging (Pallasmaa, 2005).

For example, touch is the sense that became differentiated from all the other senses. Understanding our external environment is much more dependent on all the senses. However, sight is the feeling that is increasingly overpowering in architecture. Pallasmaa develops the case for tactile feelings in ventures, understanding the world and designing architecture on different levels. The pre-conscious perceptual domain of peripheral sight includes the quality of architectural validity much more than an observant image. This opinion crafted an argument for architecture founded less on the sense of sight and more on the other senses, stressing how touch is the core sense from which the others flow. It discussed that we have gone too far in keeping sight above those other senses, specifically in Architecture and that there is a more satisfactory, profound way to understand and shape design spaces. This vision provided a persuasive understanding of architectural culture that persists in enlightening more than a quarter-century after its initial idea. Pallasmaa's most delinquent views are on the priority of place, unfocused perception and existential knowledge. He updated and described how our sense of self remains significant with the most influential architectural influence. His updated preface touched on the present experience of the seminal significance of existential insight Pallasmaa (2005).

In the same context, the concept of the spirit of place, known since the Roman era as intellectual loci, is one of the key categories lost and regained in the history of urban planning and its theoretical reflections. Architectural historian and theorist Christian Norberg-Schulz has contributed most to reviving this old Latin idea of the spirit of place in urban and environmental studies. Norberg-Schulz was curious about evolving the spirit of place as a philosophical initiative of his phenomenology of architecture and place. Samalavicius (2012) explained that Norberg-Schulz notes that the concept of genius loci or "spirit of place" remains a valuable analytical means in promoting the discourse on modern urbanism so that material and non-material aspects that make the true essence of the urban place in modern urbanity can be sufficiently estimated in urban research. Norberg-Schulz later reconsidered his perspective about modernist principles (as professed by Le Corbusier, Sigfried Giedion *et al.*) of the endless capacity to convert spaces. He evolved as a spokesman for the symbiotic affinity between human beings and natural/urban space humans. He revisited the ancient idea of intellectual loci as urgent for stylish city-building (Samalavicius, 2012).

2.5. Understanding Bodily Experience

Creating buildings that respect the heritage context should follow an exceptional design concept (Maier, 2003) said: "You feel our spaces, live them, sensing the conceptual thought by which they are carried. Our passion is held by interior spaces that

communicate something and stir positive emotions (Maier & Utzmeier, 2021). Rooms that feel good also come across right”. It's a tool where you can enhance the user experience of a space (Corbusier, 2020). Frank Lloyd Wright explained, “All fine architectural values are human values; otherwise, they are not valuable” (Rahbarianyazd, 2017). This concept allows visitors to have a successful Bodily experience in the cultural buildings.

Table 2. Evaluation matrix for the visitors' Bodily experience in the Cultural buildings

Bodily Experience	Sound	Noisy or impressive
	Visual	Attractive or inappropriate
	Touch	Stimulating or elusive
	smell	Support the building context or not
Urban approach	Aesthetics	Variety or limited
	Sociality	Social connectedness or not
	comfort	Capability of offering the comfort aspect
	Human value	Marginalizing or supporting the values

Source: Researcher as a conclusion from reading

2.6. Users expectations while visiting Cultural buildings:

While visiting Cultural buildings in the historical areas, it is expecting to find the following dimensions:

- i. Social dimension:
 - a. Emerges as a primary hub for knowledge, research and cultural engagements.
 - b. Draw in and captivate future generations by providing creative and interactive educational experiences.
 - c. Promote a passion for reading and continuous learning within every part of the community.
 - d. Foster teamwork, innovation and analytical skills by utilizing interactive technologies in collaborative environments.
 - e. Maintain and enhance Bahraini heritage and culture by creating specific exhibition areas and implementing cultural events.
- ii. Architectural dimension:
 - a. Spatial Efficiency: Maximizing functionality and usability, providing diverse interior spaces for different activities.
 - b. Flexibility and Adaptability: Create a flexible and adaptable architectural framework that can accommodate future growth, changing user needs and evolving technological advances, ensuring the longevity and relevance of the National Cultural buildings as a dynamic cultural institution.
 - c. Accessibility: Design the National Cultural buildings to be accessible and inclusive to all users, including individuals with disabilities.
 - d. Technology Integration: Creating a futuristic environment by integrating advanced technology into architectural design to enhance accessibility, connectivity and interactive experiences for users.
- iii. Cultural dimension

Cultural Sensitivity: Integrating elements of Bahraini culture and heritage into the architectural design creates a sense of identity and place and celebrates the nation's rich history and traditions (Ahmed *et al.*, 2024).

3. The research methodology

How often do you go to the cultural building? When you visit the historical area in Bahrain, would you like to visit a cultural building and its library and cultural activities that can provide background about the area? “what is deep knowledge of the Bahraini heritage?” were asked.

“I do not think I know much”, the answer came, quite surprisingly.

It was eye-opening that many had answered this question in the same way. They need to learn deeply about the Bahraini heritage in Tangible and Intangible elements, even if they are readers. This raised the question of why and how Bahrainis have a shortage of information and knowledge, especially when Bahrain has a rich literature scene that dates back to pre-Islamic times and continues to this day.

Therefore, the research methodology depends on data gathered from two cultural buildings in the heritage area of Muharraq. The different cultural buildings in the historical areas provide various cultural services in Bahrain. The users' bodily experiences from volunteering are young designers approved to practice bodily experiences for the selected buildings and cultural activities and support the visitors of the historical and cultural areas. The results of their bodily experiences were gathered for each case and analyzed to understand the performance of the selected cultural building, following the main elements in Table 2.

3.1. Cultural architecture learning hubs “Green Corner”

A selected case is the cultural architecture learning hubs in the historical zone in Muharraq, Bahrain (Figure 1). They called it the “Green Corner”. The project area is 1190 m² and was constructed in 2020. The Green Corner is located in Muharraq, specifically on Sheikh Abdullah Street and is affiliated with the Sheikh Ibrahim Cultural Center (Figure 2). The Green Corner constitutes a qualitative addition to the cultural infrastructure in the city of Muharraq. It includes a distinctive model of modernity in an old town that carries modern architecture consistent with the city's urban landscape. (Figure 3). The Green Corner Building, one of the buildings that provides cultural services and hosts cultural activities in the historic city of Muharraq, adds to the charm of this project, making it a center for art and culture. The focal concept of designing the Green Corner Building is based on embodying the founder's vision, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. It depends on the elements of the environment, nature and heritage. The idea of renovating and redesigning the heritage house was to show the pounding cultural relations of GCC countries.

The researchers divided the analysis into six main zones by applying the users' bodily experiences. Starting from the urban context, there is no dedicated parking for visitors and obtaining a parking space is complex (Figure 3). The research practiced the bodily experiences of volunteering users and found the following results:

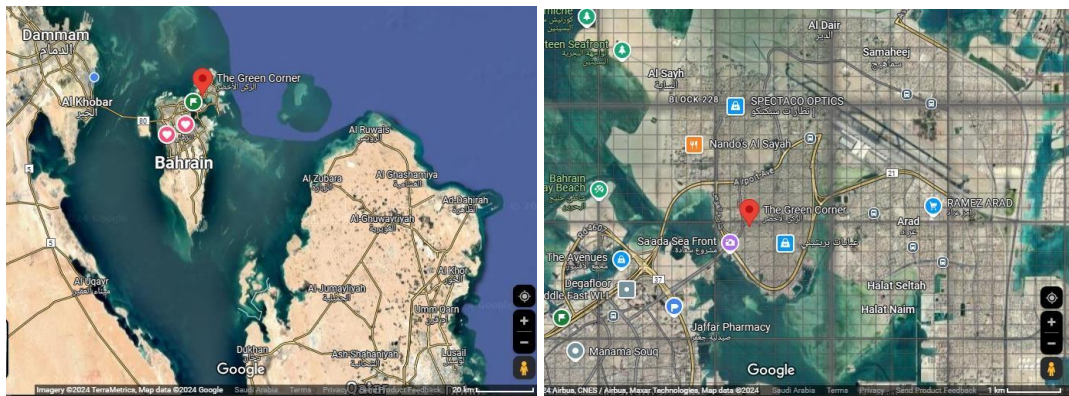


Figure 1. Macro approach to the “Green Corner” concerning Bahrain and Muharraq island map



Figure 2. External image for the Green Corner building

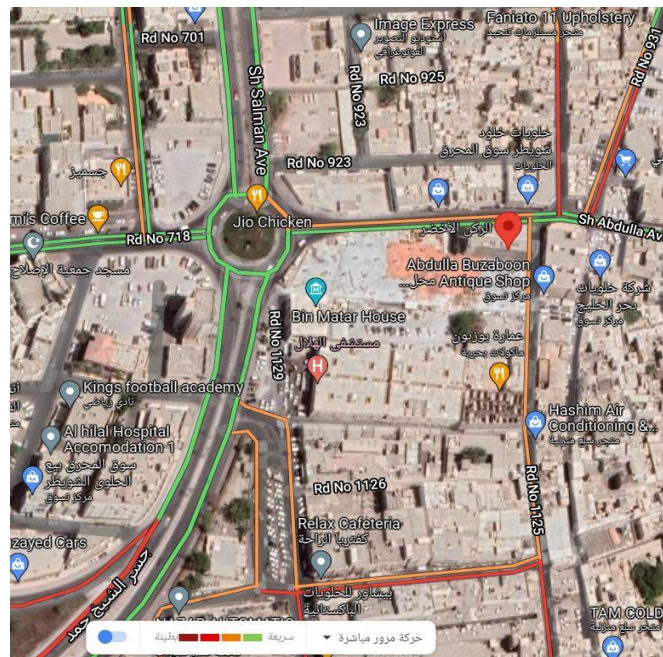


Figure 3. The location of the Green Corner, Muharraq, Bahrain (Google Earth 2022) edited by the researcher



Figure 4. Main zones in the project (edited by the researcher)

Zones 1: Parking, Summery by evaluating the parking zone. The positions are not prepared in terms of planning or form. The visitor feels uncomfortable during the process of searching for car parking. There is no visual relationship between the parking lot and the green corner. When discussing parking and its relationship to the Green Corner location, human values were not considered.

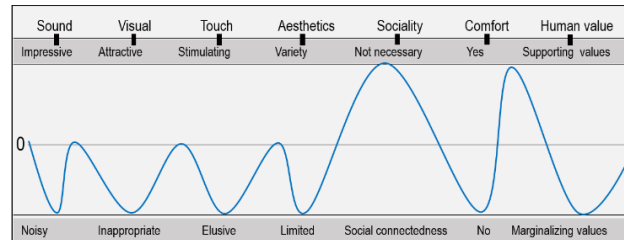


Figure 5. Bodily experiences for visitors while approaching the car parking

Zone 2 - Ticket: The site chosen for tickets prepares the visitor for the experience by letting him pass through external corridors that will remind him of the beautiful past. It created a beautiful and well-implemented bodily experience on the ticket purchase site. The architectural elements created a robust social relationship between the individual and the buildings. The materials used have a role in the visitor's sense of belonging and comfort.



Figure 6. Using art elements through external corridors (Material and Textures – Mashrabiya – Calligraphy)

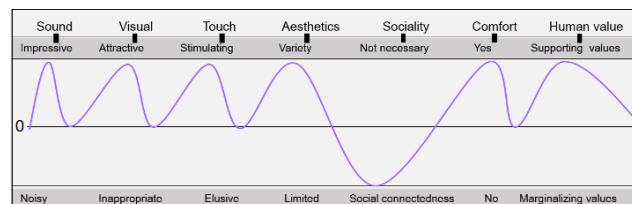


Figure 7. The bodily experiences of visitors by letting them pass through external corridors

Zone 3, the Approach Area / Entrance: The experience begins from this area, especially when standing in front of the building and examining the materials it was built from and the plants that used them. In addition, the search for the entrance is part of the bodily experience, as the door has been camouflaged with the rest of the building. The summary evaluates the zone upon examining the user's experience. There is little noise around the building. The unique shape of the building arouses the curiosity of the visitor and thus motivates him to explore. The idea of the entrance (disguising the door with the

facade) was uncomfortable. The building from the outside applied human values because there is respect for the mind in terms of linking the name with the idea through the use of plants and other materials.



Figure 8. Zones 3 - Approach Area / Entrance

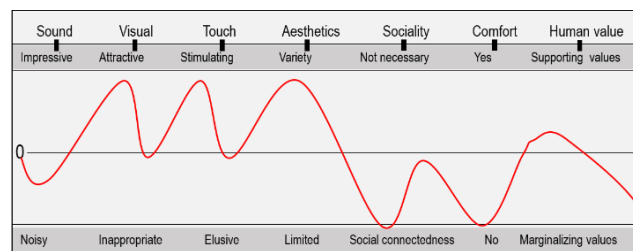


Figure 9. Bodily experiences for visitors while approaching the Area / Entrance

Zone 4 - First room: The first room represents Bahrain in a contemporary way by using ancient elements and modern methods and materials. The zone summary is presented via the elements used in this space to stimulate the senses to interact with the exhibits, thus achieving bodily experiences. The decoration pieces are closely linked to human values. Moreover, the items used and connected to the past can bring back memories to the visitor. In addition, the sound in this room could be improved to support the physical experience.

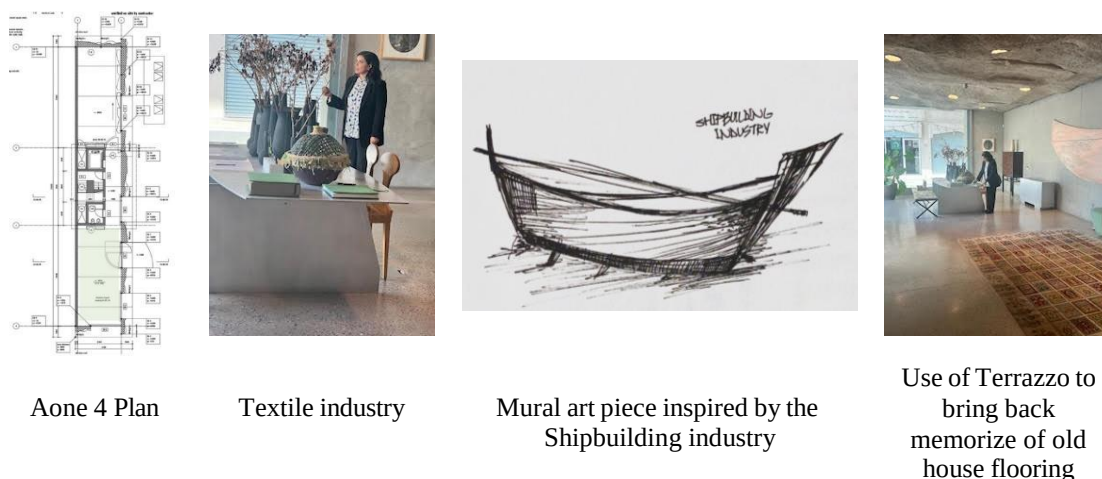


Figure 10. Zones 4 - In the first room, the design elements emphasize bodily experiences

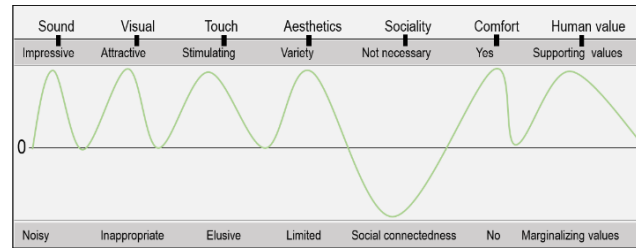


Figure 11. Bodily experiences for visitors while approaching Zones 4; first room

Zones 5 - Corridor: The corridor is the element that transports the visitor from the first room experience to the second. It was designed effectively, as the use of glass linked the idea of inside and outside because visitors can see the greenery outside from the corner, which can be interpreted as how they achieved the concept of the green corner.

The interior designer hung this Textile piece rather than installing it on the floor to give a sense of appreciation for the textile industry. This piece has a valued cultural meaning as it contains a mosque reflecting Bahrain's regional aspect. The use of metallic buffs inspired by the Al-Qarqor industry conveys the message that the interior designer wants to simulate the vision and touch experience by bringing old elements in a contemporary way (Figure 14).



Aone 5 Plan



Paints at the Corridor



The inspiration issues



Figure 12. Zones 5-Corridor

The evaluation summary shows that most of the criteria used to evaluate the design were applied, as the design in this corridor reflects some of the social values in Bahraini society. In addition, it is designed to respect the different groups of users, as the corridor measures about two meters, so people with special needs can pass through it. Unfortunately, the design did not take into account the Deaf, dumb and visually impaired.

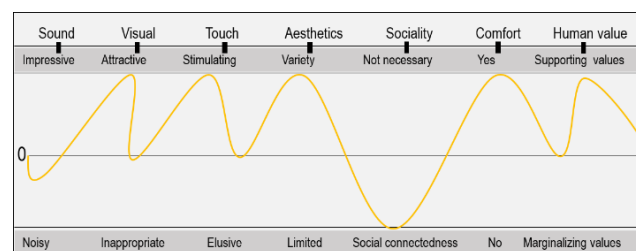


Figure 13. Bodily experiences for visitors while approaching the Zones 5 - Corridor

Zones 6 - Second Room, from the point of view, the second room talks about the antiquity of the multi-religious Bahraini society and some of the historical components on which Bahrain was built during different periods, whether personalities, professions, or otherwise. From this point of view, the second room talks about the antiquity of the multi-religious Bahraini society and some of the historical components on which Bahrain was built during different periods, whether personalities, professions or otherwise.



Zone 6



Cultural Painting- reflects the multicultural society



Cultural Painting- contains old professionals to bring back memories by the use of art

Figure 14. Zones 6 - Second Room



Figure 15. Connecting indoors and outdoors using large window



Figure 16. The idea of Old mats implemented in the bench to simulate the touch sense

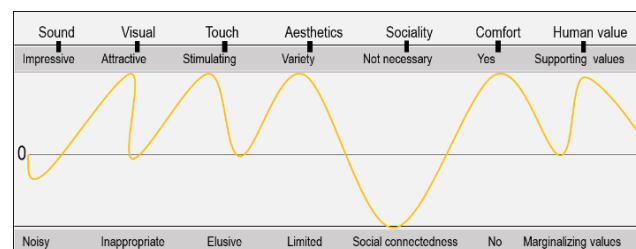


Figure 17. Summary of the bodily experiences for Zones 6 - Second Room

The second room achieved all the criteria in terms of aesthetic, social and human value, in addition to the successful bodily experience that was presented through the use of unique pieces of furniture and accessories, in addition to materials that stimulate the senses to interact with them.

3.2. House of Architecture Heritage “Exhibition Center”

The project is located in a residential neighborhood in Al Muharraq, Bahrain. It is an infill between two existing buildings. The building stands out in the urban fabric because of its contrasting façade and materials. The House of Architecture Heritage, called the “Exhibition Center”, has a small area. Table 3 was used to identify the user's movements and their bodily experiences. The bodily experiences for the volunteering users were to answer the following questions:

- Space: Does the architecture relate to the site (orientation, views, context)? How is the circulation considered? Does the project implement environmental design?
- Materials: Is there a variety of textures, surfaces and colors? Does the design integrate the tactile, auditory and olfactory senses?
- Shadow and Lightning: How is lighting (natural and artificial) implemented? How is the use of shadows? How is the visual sense integrated?

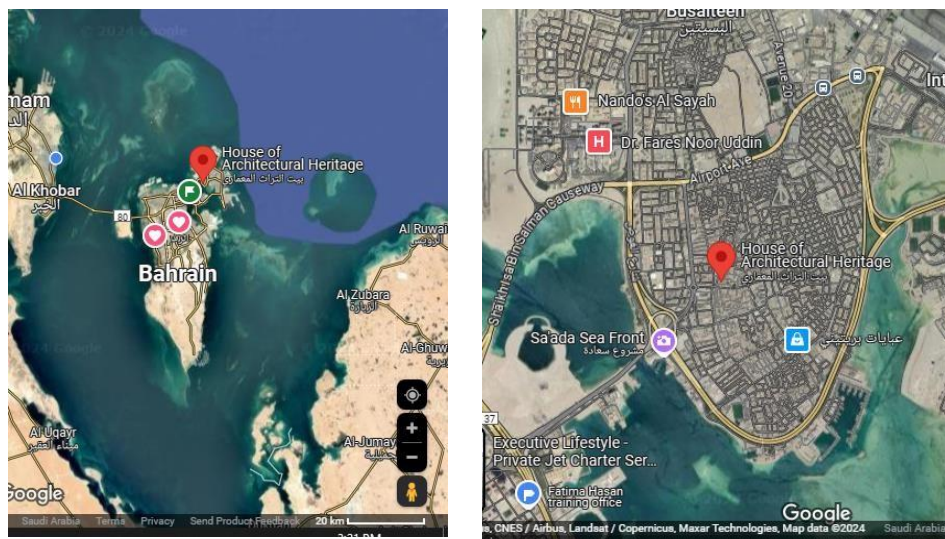


Figure 18. Macro approach to the “Green Corner” concerning Bahrain and Muharraq island map

Table 3. Identify the user's movements and bodily experiences in the Exhibition Center

SPACE			Materials			Shadow and Lightning		
site	Layout + circulation	Environmental design	Materials	Textures	Color scheme	Natural lighting	Artificial lighting	Quality of the views

The Exhibition Center is inserted within the tight urban fabric, visually contrasting adjacent buildings, as presented in Figure 19. Although the building's exterior uses raw concrete surfaces, which makes it stand out, it is similar in height and proportions to the surrounding buildings. In designing the building exterior, the visual feature of the raw concrete in the exterior - tactile sense - contrasts with the surrounding urban context. It is the first step in attracting visitors' eyes to the area, as shown in Figure 20. The entrances open to the street allow passersby to catch a glimpse without entering inside, allowing users to interact with the exhibits and the building itself visually.



Figure 19. The micro-location of the Exhibition Center



Figure 20. The concrete spans the entire plot width

Moving to the interior design, the building is rectangular with an L shape, as shown in Figure 21. It has two opposite entrances since the museum acts as a public passageway. This allows movement from one street to the other; from the other point of view, it encourages the public to go across the buildings and see the interior spaces via its large glass windows.

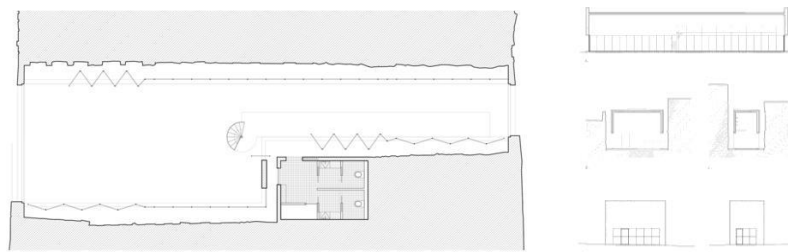


Figure 21. The Exhibition Center's plan shows the passage, while the section elevation shows the glassed facades, visually connecting the outdoor and indoor users

Source: González (2017)

The building has exhibits about the history of architecture in Muharraq and the building itself acts as an exhibit by showing the different construction methods and materials throughout history (coral stone to concrete block work. So, the designer made the inside consist of fixed and pivot glass panels to allow people to see the materials used for the existing buildings' adjacent facades. This part affects the visual aspect of the user's pivoted glass panels for visual continuity and adds unique bodily experiences. The merge between natural elements with heritage dimensions, such as coral stones and artificial contemporary materials, such as concrete blocks with the same color feature, add value by contrasting the materials in visual comfort. The glass panels allow natural light as well as create a view of the urban built form of the buildings on the site.

Moreover, The interior has contrasting textures of glass and concrete and contrast of coral stones and blockwork, evoking the tactile and visual sense. The different textures of the materials used in Bahrain's architecture show the progression of materials. In addition, merging artificial and natural lighting produces shapes and shadows that emphasize the tactile textures and give more depth to the place's historical dimension.



a. pivoted glass panels and the merge between coral stones and concrete blocks with the same color feature



b. Merging artificial and natural lighting while the mezzanine visually connects with the ground floor

Figure 22. Visual continuity and merging between natural and artificial materials

The shielding from the sun and the gap between the external walls and the neighboring building reduce the glare of the natural lighting, which is communal at the time and reduce the need to cool the inner spaces. Moving to the mezzanine floor included a small library following open stacks design to be open and has visual continuity with the main space. The railing and staircase use minimal materials and assembly to allow visual connections. The project considers the site and urban context. It encourages public participation by creating a new museum typology that is open and acts as a passageway rather than an enclosed building. The project is protected from the sun and uses thermally

insulated concrete to control the sense of high temperature, which gives a sense of comfortability while using the space. Overall, the most used senses are visual and tactile. The use of Muharraq's architecture in various textures and materials to evoke these senses.

4. Finding and Discussion

A country that values its culture and heritage, even if its population leans towards modern forms of entertainment like shopping malls or cinemas, should take pride in showcasing its traditions. Bahrain's rich history and culture deserve recognition and celebration. Additionally, emerging writers should be encouraged to write and publish their work in a suitable library. When culture-building is established in heritage areas to showcase various aspects of culture, such as writers' works that reflect the heritage of the historical area using sensory experiences, the number of writers and enthusiasts will likely increase. Eventually, when someone asks how often you visit cultural buildings in the historical areas of Bahrain and if you're interested in exploring a place that provides insights into the area, you can confidently respond, "What is deep knowledge of Bahraini heritage?". The answer would be, "I know a lot! There is an entire building dedicated to it!".

Wholeheartedly agree with Pallasmaa's call for Architects to refocus on the human condition as their Architectural cornerstone; designing cultural centers respecting the human senses is an experience that is a unique responsibility of space designers. The theory of phenomenology acknowledges this responsibility by implementing sensory design to establish experiential architectural space. Phenomenology demonstrated in architecture is the manipulation of space, material, light and shadow to create a memorable encounter by impacting the human senses. This theory promotes the integration of sensory perception as a function of a built form. This creates an experience that is beyond tangible, but rather abstract, observed and perceived.

The research conducted the results of applying sensual experience to create interior-exterior spaces via the evaluation chart. All zones have the same values in terms of the following criteria: sound, touch and hearing, but there is a slight difference in social connectedness, human values and comfort, except for the Parks zone, which is entirely opposite to other regions, as it is not prepared in all respects (blue line).

a. Green Corner

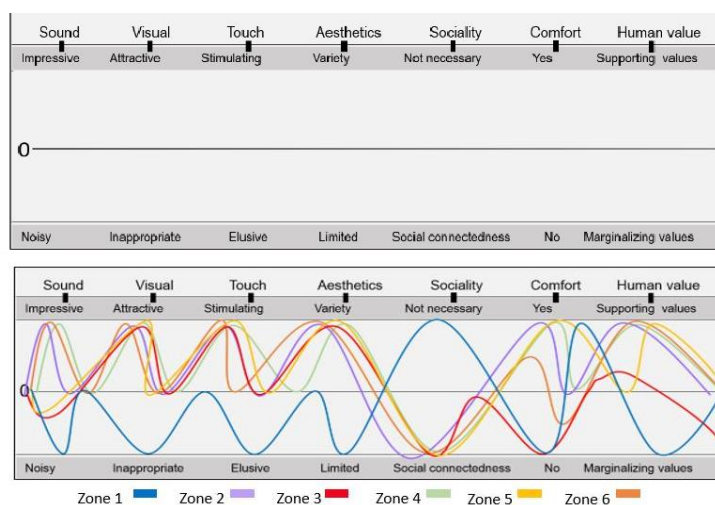


Figure 23. Application of bodily experience to create interior-exterior spaces in the green corner.

Table 4. Apply the bodily experience of the designer in the green corner

Criteria	To what extent does the designer apply bodily experience
Sound	The designer did not give sound much importance, as he relied heavily on the natural sounds outside. It would have been better if he had added the sound of music or traditional sounds related to the building's concept rather than hearing the air conditioning, for example.
Visual	The element of consideration has been applied very effectively, as the simplest things can attract attention and give meaning to the visitor. The place is generally comfortable for the eye and there is a visual link between the inside and the outside.
Touch	All elements stimulate the tactile aspect, as an additional rough finishing material was used.
Smell	The smell is generally balanced, comfortable and unobtrusive, but it was possible to add scents that have meanings, such as the smell of the Mashmom plant.
Aesthetics	The building is beautiful in all aesthetic aspects due to the implementation of the idea that aims to display Bahrain's beautiful past in a contemporary way that attracts visitors.
Sociality	The interior design communicated social messages by highlighting simple elements, such as decorative books bearing pictures of essential personalities in the Bahraini community.
Comfort	The design is comfortable for the eye because it does not contain distracting elements and all design aspects, such as circulation and furniture arrangement, are homogeneous.
Human value	This project adds a human dimension to visitors by evoking old memories we no longer see clearly.

b. Exhibition Center:

The project regards the site context. It created an interaction between the designed passageway rather than an enclosed building inter spaces, which encouraged public participation by creating a new museum typology that is open and acts. The building uses various textures and materials to exhibit and show the materials used in Muharraq's architecture. This composition of glass coral stones and concrete blocks with the same color feature evokes the visual and tactile senses of the building's visitors, which are fundamental to their bodily experiences. To add more experiences for the Exhibition Center visitors, the merge between artificial and natural lighting produces shapes and shadows, emphasizes the visual and tactile textures and gives more depth to the place's historical dimension. It also uses glass panels for natural light and to create a view of the urban built form of the buildings on the site. Overall, the visual and tactile senses are the most used.

According to the bodily experience of the volunteering user of the center, Table 4 indicates her opinion.

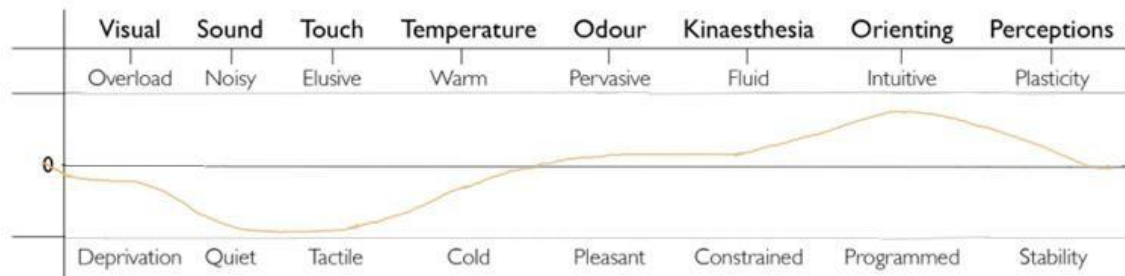
The building is an exhibition space that is not very busy. Visually, the building is balanced between being overloaded and deprived. On the exterior, it is visually contrasting with the surroundings; on the interior, it has contrasting textures and visual continuity. It uses a cool color scheme. The building uses many contrasting tactile textures, such as rough coral stones, smooth glass and raw concrete. The inner temperature is comfortable - neither too warm nor too cool. The building uses thermally insulated concrete and has air conditioning.

Table 5. The volunteering user of the center's opinion

SPACE			Materials			Shadow and Lightning		
site	Layout + circulation	Environmental design	Materials	Textures	Color scheme	Natural lighting	Artificial lighting	Quality of the views
a	a	b	b	a	b	a	b	c

a - excellent application, **b** - satisfactory application, **c** - poor application

The design did not consider the odor; it is neutral but depends on the odor of the wooden and natural stone. Regarding movement inside the building, it balances openness and control. The open plan provides flexibility, while the building's linear design directs circulation from one point to the other. The following diagram presents the venturing user's bodily experiences based on her observation and visiting the Exhibition Center.

**Figure 24.** The user's bodily experiences for Exhibition Center

5. Conclusions

The challenges existing cultural buildings face, like declining visitor numbers, highlight the need for a revitalized hub that caters to the community's diverse needs. By addressing these needs, a new national library can become a hub for learning, cultural exchange and community engagement, meeting the hunger for knowledge among residents and Tourists. Cultural buildings in Bahrain are crucial for the nation's progress and cultural preservation. With a significant student population of 213,325 individuals, the demand for accessible knowledge hubs to support academic pursuits is evident. Moreover, a study of 390 Bahraini readers reveals a strong preference for printed books (83.6%), emphasizing the necessity for a modern library inside the culture buildings that accommodates evolving reading habits while integrating digital resources as one of the tools to preserve the culture from losing.

After analyzing the Green Corner and Exhibition Center buildings, many believe they are inimitable in terms of aesthetics, considering the user's senses and pand uniquely recognizes the phenomenology theories in design, especially in Bahrain. Bokhour's smell, surrounding sounds and the sound of birds added another dimension to the experience. The selected pieces of furniture are attractive. The interior design reminds the individual of Bahrain's history in a contemporary way. Some believe complementary elements to the building, such as parking, must be developed, which is a challenge and an obstacle for visitors outside the Mouharaque.

Considering the phenomenology theories via considering the users' senses in the design will:

- a. Provide the resources and suitable conditions to safeguard Bahrain's Tangible

and Intangible Cultural Heritage.

- b. Work on developing the cultural infrastructure by preserving existing heritage and drawing plans for a comprehensive infrastructure.
- c. Encourage and support cultural actors, be they individuals or cultural entities.
- d. Cultivate human values of citizenship, tolerance, peace, openness and freedom of expression within the activities of the Authority.
- e. Create annual cultural seasons to enrich the local cultural scene.
- f. Promote cultural dialogue by attracting talents and expertise and hosting essential events in the Authority's annual activities.
- g. Foster a favorable cultural environment that stimulates and encourages creativity per the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

Therefore, such attractive cultural buildings, even if they exist in small brings, will serve as a hub for culture and education, preserving and promoting Bahrani communities' traditional way of life. Consequently, Visitors will be able to experience and appreciate the historical and cultural significance of traditional Bahrani living through an immersive, multi-sensory experience. In addition, such cultural buildings should organize workshops, exhibitions and cultural events, which will be added to the BACA culture schedule and engage and educate the community.

According to the sustainability pillars, cultural buildings in heritage areas should:

- a. Socially, offering a comprehensive educational program enhances knowledge and admiration of Bahrani culture. The community feels proud and identified by including them in immersive and engaging events.
- b. Economically, establishing a distinctive cultural destination that attracts tourists from abroad and draws in locals increases cultural tourism. Moreover, promoting the continued study and preservation of Bahrani heritage through specialized research facilities and partnerships. In addition, tourism development can be achieved by establishing a distinctive cultural destination that attracts tourists from abroad and draws in locals, thereby increasing cultural tourism.
- c. Culturally, introducing and preserving heritage improves the sense of honor in Bahraini Communities' Customs and way of life. In addition, educational outreach is done by offering a comprehensive educational program that enhances knowledge and admiration of Bahraini culture. Moreover, cultural engagement creates a feeling of pride and identity in the community by including them in immersive and engaging events.
- d. Environmentally, creating a high-quality indoor environment attracts visitors by concocting intimate interior spaces that attractively challenge the users' senses. This includes research and documentation activities through providing specialized research facilities and partnerships to promote the continued study and preservation of Bahraini heritage.

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