Abstract

Purpose – Urban theorists argue that in the post-Second World War period cities faced the increasing development of homogeneous and soullessness urban spaces. This led to the formulation of urban design’s theories for addressing issues of space and place, as a means of correction to the built environment of modern cities. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the significance and authenticity of placemaking for Msheireb, which is the regenerated historic district of Doha in Qatar.

Design/methodology/approach – Oral and visual data are collected via: interviews with urban planners and consultants from Msheireb Properties and the Ministry of Municipality and Environment; walk-through studies; site visits and observations about the spatial form of buildings, streets and open spaces; on-site interviews; and a survey conducted during the walk-through studies.

Findings – The findings reveal that the urban regeneration of the historic district – envisioned through a socio-spatial process (public realm) based on conservation (built heritage) and modernization (contemporary architectural language) – contribute to defining the authenticity of placemaking (space and character) of the renewed historic district of Msheireb.

Practical implications – The insights provided through this research study contribute to the development of a framework for conceiving urban conservation projects in Qatar, which aim to preserve heritage value and revitalize deteriorating districts, to encourage the current trend for decentralization toward the creation of lively and vibrant urban district quarters by promoting a rediscovery of community life and cultural values.

Originality/value – The identified key factors have made the research original and unique.

Keywords Urban design, Built heritage, Livability, Msheireb project

1. Introduction

Over the last decade, the State of Qatar, located in the Arabian Gulf on an 11,000 km² peninsula, has experienced a period of exceptional growth and development, which has been funded primarily by the trading of hydrocarbon resources (Salama, 2008). From an early twentieth-century economy based on fishing, pearl diving and trading, Qatar has established institutions and structures to diversify its economy over the last 20 years, to ensure the long-term prosperity of its citizens and inhabitants (Salama and Wiedman, 2013; Furlan and Al-Mohannadi, 2018; Furlan et al., 2016; Furlan and ElGihani, 2018).

Doha, the capital city of the State of Qatar, has witnessed rapid urbanization, facilitated by the expansion of highways and public system networks in response to accelerated infrastructure development in preparation for hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup. As shown in Figure 1, several mega-projects are currently under construction within Metropolitan Doha. As a result, predominantly low-density uncontrolled suburban growth has led to a
decline in the traditional downtown area, the decentralization of traditional urban activities and environmental degradation within the historic districts of Doha, where the heritage of its vernacular urban fabric is threatened and/or neglected (Rizzo, 2014; Wiedmann et al., 2012; Jodidio and Halbe, 2015; Furlan and Almohannadi, 2016).

In response to the need to revive the historic districts of Qatar, conservation strategies for the preservation and regeneration of the urban fabric and/or built heritage were adopted as envisioned under the Qatar National Vision (QNV-2030) and the Qatar National Development Framework (QNDF-2032). The aim of this research study was to explore the extent to which the distinctive spatial form of Msheireb, Downtown Doha, contributes to the authenticity of placemaking and enhances livability or quality of life within the regenerated historic district.

The findings reveal that Msheireb Project was conceived through a socio-spatial process aimed at enhancing the liveability of the public realm; an urban and architectural language rooted concurrently in traditional values and contemporaneity; and a vision of reintroducing a thriving community and economy to the inner-city quarter. These three factors contribute to define the authenticity of placemaking, in space and character, of the historic district of Msheireb.

2. Literature review

2.1 Urban history and cultural heritage: human scale and social dynamics

Over recent decades, urban planners, architects and citizens have become more aware of the importance of urban history as the starting point for the urban planning process. The physical form of urban settlements needs to be understood through its socio-historical aspects, which can have a profound effect on shaping towns and cities. Researchers argue that the main actors at play in the urban design of old cities and neighborhoods are the square, the street and the buildings: the way in which they are arranged and designed constitutes the vital public face of the settlements (Relph, 1976; Rapoport, 2000; Gehl, 2011, 2010).

On the other hand, modern urban planning is characterized by unprecedented criteria: urban settlements have been influenced by the mass production of factory systems, as well as industrialization, standardization and mass transport systems, especially in the automobile industry. In turn, modern urban settlements are planned on a codified basis, using principles restricting urban design to the organization of land uses, density, diversification through separation, as well as the efficient functioning of transportation and infrastructure networks which often neglect the arrangement of the urban fabric so that it can “fit” within the codified arrangement.
These radical, revolutionary economic innovations to urban form have been pursued in the name of securing an economic livelihood to citizens in most progressive societies. As a result, contemporary urban settlements tend to miss out on the vital stage of their development: the creation of pleasant, vibrant and well-ordered public realm-environments on a human scale, whereby the public realm means the streets, boulevards, squares and public parks with the building facades that define them (Furlan and Sipe, 2017).

The priority of urban designers has shifted its focus from planning for pedestrians and city spaces as a meeting place for urban dwellers to free-standing individualistic buildings, which are more isolated, introverted and dismissive of their immediate and larger urban context. This trend has reduced opportunities for pedestrianization as a form of transport and contributed to the formation of lifeless cities, where the traditional social and cultural functions of city space are neglected (Gehl, 2011, 2010; Furlan and Almohannadi, 2016; Jacobs, 1961; Stevenson, 2013).

The architect and the urban designer are most concerned with human scale. Human scale is a measure of real size. The dimensions of buildings, squares and streets are compared with the proportions of the human figure (Moughtin, 2003).

In the past decade, valuable progress has been made in urban planning in making some kind of corrective intervention as a reaction against the lack of concern for urban life. The result has diminished the negative trend of increased automobile use, creating mixed-use urban areas instead of conglomerations of free-standing single buildings to provide better conditions for pedestrians (Bernick and Cervero, 1997; Furlan and Sipe, 2017; Furlan, Zaina and Zaina, 2016).

This vision is opposed to the ideology adopted by modernism, which continues to promote vast new sprawling urban areas, positioning introverted high-rise buildings in city centers, and a lack of credible schemes for pedestrians as part of an integrated city policy of developing lively, safe, sustainable and healthy cities. In short, the social function of city space has to be strengthened in order to provide better urban quality based on built environments designed and planned with humans in mind. This is the basis for the creation of a sustainable city, where a large part of the transport system promotes “green mobility” (Dittmar and Ohland, 2012; Altoon and Auld, 2011), or travel by foot, bicycle and public transport.

Venice has everything: dense city structure, short walking distances, beautiful courses of space, high degree of mixed use, active ground floors, distinguished architecture and carefully designed details – and all on a human scale. For centuries Venice has offered a sophisticated framework for city life and continues to do so, issuing a whole-hearted invitation to walk (Gehl, 2010).

Extensive urban renewal projects have been initiated to transform city centers into lively and attractive hubs, with the intention of attracting people to walk in city centers. Municipalities and urban planners have realized throughout human history that city space has functioned as an important meeting place for city dwellers. Nowadays, many city spaces continue to function as an important social meeting space, despite modernist planning ideals envisioning the invasion of car and separated skyscrapers within vast green parks. All over the world, architects, urban designers and town planners are working to implement transport-oriented development plans that concentrate on the interplay between pedestrian and bicycle structures and the collective transportation network (Calthorpe, 2011; Furlan et al., 2018; Furlan and Almohannadi, 2016).

Over the last decade, a large part of the original coherent historical fabric of historical urban centers in Doha have been damaged due to the establishment of new urban projects in such historical settings. As a result, new architectural developments have become dissociated from historical forms, leading to a fragmented hybrid urban fabric where modern and traditional, authentic and artificial elements are haphazardly combined to lack
a sense of coherence and integrity (Carmona et al., 2010). The State of Qatar has formulated strategies for the urban regeneration and renewal of Doha’s historic centers in order to achieve re-coherence and re-integration of the urban values represented by these original historic fabrics, based on identification, analysis and interpretation of their traditional urban forms. It is argued that Msheireb was planned and constructed through such a strategy, as a better synthesis between the historical substance of the city fabric and contemporary built forms more.

2.2 New urbanism: urban design envisioning placemaking

Urban design, or the art of building cities, is the method by which man creates a built environment that fulfills his aspirations and represents his values.

Urban design, like its sister art architecture, is people’s use of an accumulated technological knowledge to control and adapt the environment for social, economic, political and religious requirements (Moughtin, 2003).

Urbanism is the study of how the physical features of the built environment influence socio-economic activities and quality of life of its inhabitants (Kasprisin, 2011; Brown et al., 2014; Aasen, 2002; Farr, 2008; Flanagan, 2010). Also, the New Urbanism movement has taken the lead in the urban design of contemporary neighborhoods, which envision compact, pedestrian-friendly and mixed-use environments; where most daily activities can be performed within a walkable distance; the enhancement of pedestrian networks and public transport systems to encourage walkability; the use of public transport and diminishment of the use of private vehicles; a diversified range of unit types located within walkable distances to public transport; a mixture of private and public facilities comprising residential, business, education, civic, institutional and commercial amenities; and (7) the development of an interconnected public realm, and/or open spaces, parks and community gardens. According to Grant, New Urbanism’s principles can be applied from macro- to micro-level scale based on ten distinctive criteria: walkability, connectivity, mixed-use and diversity, mixed housing, quality architecture and urban design, traditional neighborhood structure, increased density, green transportation, sustainability and quality of life (Leccese and McCormick, 2013).

The common goal of the New Urbanism movement is to design and plan for vibrant urban areas and/or communities whose form and character contribute to enhancing liveability and the quality of life of citizens and inhabitants. This requires urban designers to further explore and comprehend the forces that shape the lives of the inhabitants and, in turn, the type of places that users want to inhabit according to their needs. Therefore, the insights will contribute to define the authenticity of placemaking (space and character) in urban settlements (Brown et al., 2014).

Finally, projects such as the new Msheireb Downtown Project are envisioned by the authorities in Qatar as a catalyst for Doha’s urban regeneration and traditional architectural identity, as it was set out with an extensive research for the past cultural and architectural heritage, while incorporating the modern. The proposed master plan of the project aims to revive the traditional cultural settlement, and enhance the liveability of the district, as envisioned through the principles advocated by the New Urbanism Movement.

2.3 Sustainable urbanism envisioning Msheireb Downtown Doha

Researchers and scholars argue that sustainable urbanism supports the ability and skills of a community to develop built environments, which not only meet the needs of its current users but also of its future generations. Therefore, the objective of the movement is to pursue the creation of liveable communities where the impact on the natural environment is minimized and social as well as environmental and economic aspects are addressed (Roorda, 2012; Robertson, 2014; Farr, 2008; Wiedmann et al., 2014).
In addition, scholars stress that urban settlements, which provide vibrant open spaces and encourage social interactions, are highly viable and socially sustainable. In turn, the social-spatial dimension is one of the key factors for developing liveable communities.

The form of the urban settlement affects its users’ liveability and/or quality of life, which in turn helps to determine economic prosperity, social stability and equity, educational opportunities, including cultural, entertainment and recreational possibilities (Appleyard et al., 2014). Above all, scholars highlight the need for urban planners to address eight fundamental planning principles for conceiving and developing liveable communities: sense of place; mixed-use development; density; effective planning for regional transportation; street-savvy/density; physical health and community design; public safety and personal security; and sustainable approaches to neighborhood and regional development (Godschalk, 2004; Wheeler, 2013). Namely, outdoor activities and spaces are two indicators which have a major effect on liveability (Gehl, 2011; Gehl and Svarre, 2013; Furlan, Muneerudeen and Khani, 2016; Furlan, 2016a, b). In addition, as highlighted in the novel Liveability 101 published by the American Institute of Architects, a liveable community is characterized by its distinctive identity as embodied within its physical features.

The need for sustainable urban developments has been encouraged in Qatar through national policies such as QNV-2030, an act envisioning the development of an advanced sustainable nation by 2030 that is capable of sustaining its own development and providing for a high standard of living for current and future generations (Qatar, 2008; Tan et al., 2014). The five major challenges addressed through QNV-2030 are: modernization and preservation of traditions; the needs of current and future generations; managing urban growth and minimizing uncontrolled expansion; managing the size of the expatriate labor force and strategies for economic growth; and managing social development and environmental management. In order to address these challenges, QNV-2030 rests on four pillars: human, social, economic and environmental development.

In addition, according to QNDF-2030, six guiding principles provide the foundations for the strategic planning objectives, plans and policy actions of the government. These guiding principles focus on quality of life, environmental values, connectivity of people and places, economic growth and diversification, identity and ownership in planning implementation. QNDF-2030 aims at creating a model for the formation of sustainable urban settlements in the twenty-first century by producing attractive and liveable urban environments; promoting economic and environmental sustainability; creating a distinctive identity for Doha as an international cultural center and dynamic knowledge hub; and providing a robust and innovative spatial and physical legislative planning framework (Salama, 2008). The framework (QNDF-2030) addresses strategies for creating liveable neighborhoods, sustaining the integration of housing, workplace, shopping, recreation and community facilities, linked by walking, cycling and public transport networks in a mix of activities by attracting people, creating safe environments and stimulating social interactions (Sillitoe, 2014).

2.4 Msheireb Downtown Project
Msheireb is the principal historical district of Doha. The district is located immediately south of the Amir-I Diwan, the main administration building for the State of Qatar and adjacent to the city’s main trading market and tourist attraction, the Souq Waqif, as well as being close to the original Doha coastline and the historic Koot Fort. Msheireb downtown Doha is bordered by Al Rayan Road (north), Jassim Bin Mohammed Street (east), Msheireb Street (south) and Al Diwan Street (west), which connect the area to the corniche (Law and Underwood, 2012; Msheireb Properties, 2011). The site covers approximately 31 hectares and extends over the entire Mohammed Bin Jassim District.
The district was named after the “wadi” (river) that runs between the Souq Waqif and the other districts (Figure 1). In Arabic, the term “Msheireb” means “a place to drink water” (Msheireb Properties, 2011). The Msheireb area was a mixed-use neighborhood inhabited by locals and characterized by single-story courtyard houses, which best represent the national architectural heritage (Figure 2). Four landmark historic houses are emblematic of the vernacular Qatari and Gulf architecture, which was a combined result of socio-cultural values, climate and available materials. The historic site developed during successive construction phases between the 1950s and 1970s and was later characterized by four- to five-story building types (Figure 3).

In the past decade, Old Doha witnessed an influx of expatriate workers, mainly due to the rapid economic and urban growth of the city following increased revenues from oil and gas exports. Qatari residents moved from small houses to larger and multi-story private houses.
in new urban (predominantly suburban) areas. The abandoned houses in Msheireb started to deteriorate due to negligence and lack of maintenance, while some were rented by expatriate workers. Due to the urban fabric and demographics’ changes, the district began to lose its central role as a major trade hub.

The Qatari Government recognized the need to renew and reintegrate the old district into modern Doha by preserving its architectural and cultural heritage. In 2006, “Msheireb Properties” initiated the Msheireb Downtown Project: it was a reconstruction project aimed at reviving the Msheireb Area by completely reconstructing it while preserving the essential architectural qualities of the heritage quarter. The entire area was demolished, except for the four original houses in the Msheireb Heritage Quarter, which were reopened as museums and exhibition halls to display the roots, history and daily life of the Qatari people.

The Msheireb Downtown Project utilizes the latest sustainable construction technologies and the buildings adhere to the highest green building standards. In contrast to the typical development pattern of Doha tending to promote isolated land use, relying on car transportation and energy-hungry buildings, this new project provides a mix of residential, commercial and entertainment land uses in a central hub, envisioned through a communal and pedestrian-friendly environment.

3. The research design
The research study aims to investigate and assess the extent to which the spatial form, based on tradition and modernization, contribute to the authenticity of placemaking and to enhance the liveability of Msheireb Downtown Doha. This is achieved through three stages:

1. review of the literature and identification of the key factors leading the urban regeneration project;
2. collection of oral data (from January to April 2018) through four focus groups and two hours semi-structured interviews with 20 urban designers, 4 directors, 6 project managers and 4 social scientists from Msheireb Properties; and
3. collection of visual data (from March to June 2018) through historic maps (the process of historic formation was deduced based on comparative analysis), cartographic sources (site maps), site visits and observation, architectural drawings and photographs.

Following this procedure, data analysis, assessment and discussion were developed in response to the aims of the research study (Newman, 2007; Knowles and Sweetman, 2004; Denzin, 1978; Creswell, 2003).

4. Findings
The findings reveal that the urban regeneration of Msheireb Downtown Doha is based on the enhancement of the public realm, built heritage and modernization (contemporary architectural language). It is this vision which contributes substantially to defining the authenticity of placemaking (space and character) of the new district. The public realm (Figure 5), which was integrated into the urban fabric of the historic district, has been categorized into the following spatial elements: Eid Prayer Ground; Main Square and Plazas; Secondary Squares; Street Landscaping; and Courtyards (Figure 4). Also, the Public Realm has been conceived and planned to enhance the landscape (Wadi Corridor, green areas and water features).

4.1 Eid Prayer Ground
The Eid Prayer Ground, an open space designed to accommodate large numbers of congregants for Eid Prayers, is located on a prominent site across from the city’s Al Koot Fort,
immediately south of the new National Archive Building and adjacent to the Jassim Bin Mohammed House Museum to the west (Plate 1).

The ground is roughly a rectilinear plot of approximately 4,000 m². The above-ground construction includes not only the prayer ground itself and the associated Qibla Wall, but also screening walls, sun screens, amenities such as public conveniences, drinking fountains and other enhancements such as public art.

The spiritual spaces of the Eid ground are a perfectly level platform set within an irregular rectangle on the site. The interstitial areas between the irregular site boundary and prayer ground contain stairs, ramps, vents, storage space and other facilities. Retractable shading devices provide protection for the northern and southern parts of the Eid ground (Plates 1 and 2).
4.2 Main Square and Plazas
The Main Plaza located at the heart of Msheireb is characterized by a formal geometric design, decorative stone paving and native citrus trees (Figure 5). It provides a setting for both ceremonial occasions and informal gatherings. The water features visually link Plaza 1 to a proposed Wadi feeder route and subsequently other areas of Msheireb. The use of water within the square is meant to provide a cultural connection to traditional forms of landscape design, which have traditionally used water. Shade will be provided by canopies and arcades. The surrounding buildings have been designed using local “cool pool” strategies.

From ground level and grand-scale moveable shades at roof level, the planting of trees will make the square into an attractive and comfortable place for users to meet and socialize. Also, lighting will be used to create a welcoming atmosphere. The other two plazas on the eastern end of Sikkat and north of Street 10 at the western end of Sikkat at the Metro transport hub will use similar landscape design features to achieve comparable effects.

4.3 Secondary squares
A few secondary squares are proposed within the district of Msheireb (Figure 6). Although the secondary squares will contain many similar design features as those used in the main plazas (water, fountains, shady palm courts, etc), their smaller scale is supposed to create a different atmosphere.

The location of the secondary squares has been chosen to provide visual and physical separation from traffic on the larger surrounding roads using a strong grid of trees; create gaps in the otherwise dense urban form to produce a sense of rhythm within the overall urban composition; emphasize points of transition into and through the sites; and strengthen the image and sense of place of Inner Doha as a well-designed, contemporary and spacious place utilized for recreational purposes.

4.4 Street architecture: landscaping and vitality
Street landscaping allows creating a “green framework” of linkages and routes to improve the appearance of the primary roads which contribute to improving the environmental
This green framework will focus upon the retained boulevards within the site. Each urban boulevard has been remodeled to provide a central median where native trees are planted, separating the traffic lane in either direction (Plate 3). Other forms of street landscaping on the secondary roads include raised street tables which will increase the visibility of pedestrians, creating a more continuous urban form and encouraging drivers to be more aware of pedestrian activity on/around the roads. Pedestrian priority areas will provide shared-use surfaces. This will raise the profile of pedestrians, increasing safety, improving the quality of the environment and encouraging social interactions in the urban fabric of the district.

4.5 Courtyards
The planned courtyards form the basis for a network of “Incidental Open Spaces” within the urban structure of the district (Figure 7). The courtyards are embedded in the center of superblocks and, although of varying scales, each one has a strong sense of enclosure and creates a series of thresholds, which help to articulate the hierarchy of public-to-private space. The incidental open spaces will provide quiet sanctuaries, orientation along pedestrian routes, and link together all the elements in the Msheireb Master plan.

**Figure 5.** Msheireb’s main public realm

Notes: (a) Msheireb main square and plazas; (b) illustrative design for main square and plazas; (c) 29 main gates to the main square; (d) main square connection to Souq Waqif

Sources: (a, b, c and d) Msheireb Properties (2011)
4.6 The landscape strategy (Wadi corridor, green areas and water features)
Water features are proposed parallel to Msheireb Street to evoke memories of the old Wadi, providing a landscape feature unique to Doha (Figure 8). The water features incorporate geometric pools leading from one key space to another, culminating at its western end in a major regenerated square, where Al Kahraba Street meets Street 10 at the Metro Hub.

5. Discussion: authenticity in placemaking of Msheireb, Downtown Doha
The open spaces of the district are distributed according to a hierarchy that goes from streets and squares, to small openings of paths or stopping points (sikka), up to the common courts that aggregate few residential units, all linked together by architectural filters, according to a logical progression that goes from public to semi-private, and to private, tested in the traditional urban fabrics of Dar al-Islam (Salama, 2015). The large square between the Souk Wakif and Msheireb is technically outside the limits of the district, but it is the urban vestibule and monumental access to these areas. Despite the presence of several monuments, such as the fort Al Khoot and the continuous front and porch of the Souq, it remains an immense paved surface, a hole in the continuity of the downtown fabric. However, the avenue that leads from the ceremonial entrance to the Barahat al-Naseem Square, crossing the sectors of museums and administrative offices of
the Diwan, has an enlarged section which welcomes both vehicular and pedestrian traffic without conflict (Hobbs, 2017).

Thanks to the landscaping with green islands on the margins, to some small squares opening on both sides and anticipating entrances to the mosque, to the musalla of ID, to museums and offices, it appears like a narrow and long square than a ribbon of asphalt. Barahat al-Naseem is a large rectangular square of well-proportioned 65,000 m², defined by two

Plate 3.
Msheireb’s public realm

Notes: (a) Street illustration in the morning for Msheireb project; (b) street illustration at night in the Msheireb project; (c) Aldiwan street landscaping with Msheireb project; (d) arcade within Aldiwan Street
Sources: (a and b) Msheireb company; (c and d) QU Researcher (2016)

Figure 7.
Courtyards location
Source: Msheireb company
Porticoed buildings and crowned by dramatic cantilever roofs, intended for residences and offices and closed on the short sides by a hotel and the House of Culture. The square is designed as an urban majlis: the decorated and formal domestic space of the traditional Arab house. On the ground floor there are restaurants and cafes equipped with innovative environmental techniques, which allow visitors to shop even during the summer season. The square not only links the uncovered paths leading to the main nodes of the district, but also the galleries that penetrate the fabric of the retail trade, as in the souks of the Islamic city.

Kahraba Street follows an ancient route through a sector to mixed-use residential accommodation and offices from Rayyan Street to Wadi Street, where private cars, trams and pedestrians have to negotiate their passage. This is a road bordered by architectures composed and built with a coating of the most noble material, stone canyon. At the end of its race Kahraba Street intersects Sikkat Street and there opens up a large planted square, next to the facade of the subway station. The square is a fundamental junction also for the nearby presence of the Business Gate. From this garden square Sikkat Wadi street follows the route of the river Msheireb, with a broken pattern and frequent cuts, drawing a jagged skyline and favoring unusual perspectives by way of a medieval route, until connecting to the central spine of the Souk Wakif.

6. Conclusions: a city within the city
Msheireb is an innovative neighborhood with high liveability, a notable exception among recent developments in the Persian Gulf, and with several merits:

- The common areas within the compact neighborhood are surrounded by vital, open streets and areas, which usually occurred only in the historic centers of older cities, not in vacant parking areas waiting for renewal, as commonly witnessed in the new
modern developments on the outskirts of cities. This compact district is characterized by a development grouped around public transport, walking and cycling. The public space or the streets/squares appear to be carved from an original block of material, where the urban fabric follows a single arrangement and building facades frame the space.

- Msheireb project privileges connectivity, recovers a widespread walkability and favors the mixed-use land used, making most services easily accessible from the residences. The wide pedestrian district lies on a multi-story system of service corridors, tunnels, service hubs, parking and loading bays.

- The project is conceived through a master plan going beyond the generic plano-volumetric scheme to include control of the architectural codes. It appears to recover the best tradition of the past in which architecture and urban planning were indissoluble. The master plan defines volumes as a coherent relationship via the urban regulation of density indices, land use and infrastructures, which incorporate coherent choices of building types and architectural language.

- The preliminary definition of the codes and careful selection of technologies/materials have given birth to a homogeneous urban image, while leaving ample freedom of expression for individual designers.

- The recovery of the basic urban elements of the pre-modern city shows a preponderance of elements such as the square, the street, open places, the compactness of urban fabrics in building blocks and urban scenes that leave no room for residual spaces. Internal connectivity is measured by a hierarchy of paths and squares in which each design scale adopts appropriate styles and elements. Msheireb’s urban planning can be defined as having both monumental and human scale at the same time.

- The architectural codes and master plan pay attention to precedents, both in the recovery of the ancient road layouts, as on Kahraba Street/Sikkat Street and the careful adaptive reuse of historical houses.

- The project aims to promote social encounters in Doha, currently and mostly limited to large shopping centers, extending them to open spaces defined by large squares, arcades and semi-private areas equipped with appropriate urban features.

- A capillary network of pedestrian paths and/or slow vehicular traffic encourages an almost complete walkability, which represents a revolution in this city.

- The project includes a wide diversification of residential types, with attention to tradition, but also to innovative aspects based on the new and different demands of social groups, apartments with courtyards, terraces and pools on the upper floors. The townhouse deserves attention for its ability to preserve the pressing request for privacy and at the same time fit into a high-density urban context.

- From the courtyard garden, a semi-private area of micro-community through filters can be accessed in the family reception areas (majlis), while on the two upper floors are the sleeping areas and the family service areas as a study area and family room. The roof of the house is crowned by a swimming pool, the gym and shaded and screened outdoor living spaces. Kitchens are located in the basement, from which access is granted directly to the underground parking.

Among the negatives:

- The process for the reconstruction of Msheireb has excluded not only the participation of traditional stakeholders, but the same Qatari citizens, to whom
it is addressed. Designed and built with public funding, it is still unclear whether, given the prohibitive cost of an “expense-free” management, it can be justified. The fact, however, that the adjacent historical areas of Najada and Ashmak are the subject of more cautious and decidedly less striking renewal projects from the technological and esthetic point of view suggests that the operation will be difficult to replicate.

- External connectivity to the neighborhood within the adjacent historical areas is an unresolved problem: surrounded on three sides by three urban highways, the district is isolated and its divisive character is accentuated by the weight of the larger volumes placed on the margins, like the walls of a fortress.

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The authenticity of place-making


About the authors
Raffaello Furlan is Assistant Professor of Architecture and Urban Design at the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning of Qatar University. He has held visiting and permanent positions in Australia (University of Queensland, Griffith University) and UAE (Canadian University of Dubai). His areas of interest include vernacular architecture, architecture and urban sociology and project management. Member of the Board of Architects in Italy, he has 20 years’ professional experience, split between design management, project management and supervision roles, with some highly respected companies, 6 years of which were in Italy, 10 years in Australia and 4 years in Middle East. Raffaello Furlan is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: raffur@gmail.com

Attilio Petruccioli is Professor of Architecture at the Doctoral School DrACO Architettura e Costruzione, DIAP, University of Rome, La Sapienza, Italy, and former Dean of the School of Architecture at the Polytechnic University of Bari, Italy. From 1994 to 1998 he was the Aga Khan Professor of Design for Islamic Societies at the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at the MIT.
From 2012 to 2013 he was the Msheireb Property Chair at Qatar University. He has written and edited more than 32 books on the topics of architectural design and the history of Islamic architecture.

Mohuiddin Jmaaleddin holds Bachelors and Masters Degrees in Urban Planning (Beirut Arab University, Lebanon). He is employed as a Senior Architect Engineer and Senior Regional and Urban Planner at the Ministry of Municipality and Environment (MME), State of Qatar. He has 20 years of work experience as an Architect Engineer, Regional Urban Planner – in Lebanon, in Qatar, where he has been involved in developing the Qatar National Master Plan, Qatar National Development Framework and Municipal Spatial Development Plans. He has 10 years of teaching experience at Beirut Arab University and Qatar University. Currently, he is PhD candidate at Qatar University.