Minimalism Theory and its Manifestations of Exclusion and Overflow in The Design of Interior Spaces: Insights from Turkey

Alaa Talib Kareem[1] & Hiba Salih Meften[2]
Lecturer[1], Assistant Lecturer[2]
Department of architecture, College of Engineering
Mustansiriyah University, Iraq
Email: alaa.t.k@uomustansiriyah.edu.iq[1]
Email: archhiba11@uomustansiriyah.edu.iq[2]

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Abstract

Many interior designers use the theory of minimalism to design interior spaces. This is because it is a theory that promotes the concept of exclusion of the unwanted and the extraordinary. Indeed, that involves some kind of 'overflow,' of the excessive. However, research into minimalism employing the concept of overflow has not been conducted adequately. In this context, this research examines the minimalism theory employed in-between exclusion and overflow in the design of interior spaces,

It employs two types of information: first, about the theory of minimalism and its foundational roots; and second, about the duality of exclusion and overflow. The research extracts the indicators for assessing them and build an analysis form for the study model-Sangaklar Mosque-in Istanbul, Turkey. It then devises a design rule using the theory of minimalism which can be applied in the design of interior spaces.

The research concludes that in minimalist theory, exclusion, and overflow are directly proportional at the level of action. Thus the greater the exclusion, the greater the overflow, and the less exclusion, the less overflow. These are inversely proportional at the level of production, so the greater the exclusion, the less the overflow in the use of the design elements.

Keywords: minimalism, exclusion, overflow, design, interior spaces words.

Introduction

Interior designers are responsible for creating simple, easy-to-use spaces by keeping the number of intellectual and material elements to a minimum, striking a balance between exclusion and overflow in a way that maximizes user safety physically and psychologically. Users of interior spaces also prefer simple spaces that are easy to recognize, understand, and use rather than being preoccupied with speculating about what the interior space was and would be like. However, because of the complexity of space and its design elements, it has become necessary to investigate the establishment of the minimalist theory in interior space design.

This research therefore poses the research question as follows. Can the duality of exclusion and overflow establish the minimalist theory as a method in the design of interior spaces"?

In this context, this research aims to reveal the ways in which minimalism is applied in the design of interior design spaces allowing the manifestation of the duality of exclusion and overflow. Its objectives are as follows.

1. To identify indicators to build an analysis form for a given design, and devise a design rule using the theory of minimalism in the design of interior spaces.
2. To propose stratgies and principles to employ minimalism in interior design

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework includes two parts**:** one of this is an articulation of the theory of minimalism, its roots and applications in the design of interior spaces. The theory of minimum or minimalism derives a theory from the abstraction movement in the plastic art of the twentieth century, specifically after the Second World War (1939-1945), adopting simplification as a method to reformulate the surrounding environment with a new vision. The artists at that time wanted to exclude the expressive and decorative characteristics and elements to create what they believed was the purest form of beauty.

The minimalist theory continued to develop and spread along with the movement of modernity, to enter into practice in the sixties of the twentieth century and include all artistic, the visual and consumer fields. Indeed, when Obendorf (2009) explained the minimalist theory, it became a method with an exclusionary entity called every action (intellectual or material) that abstracts things to their basics. Since architecture is one of the most consumer-oriented visual arts affected by the neighboring intellectual and material elements, it was affected by this theory, as the designers and architects subscribed to the notion. Among them are French architect Le Corbusier (1887-1965) who was the father of modernish which banished decorations, the German architect Mies Van Der Rohe (1886-1969) who is well-known for creating the dictum ‘less is more’, and the Japanese architect Tadao Ando (1941) who articulated it through the Japanese Zen philosophy.

Interestingly, they all sought to apply the minimalist theory in their designs of both the exterior and interior spaces, with the aim of bringing architecture from its transcendent design entity overflown with intellectual and material elements. As Erben (2019) describes, the goal was affected by design movements of a stilted nature in its classic image to society. To make the design process more clear and transparent, they realized in practice that the minimalist theory is the essence of complexity underlying the design of interior spaces.

The designers of interior spaces and the supporters of the minimalist theory articulated by Mies Van Der Rohe in his ‘less is more’ adopted it as a design method that excludes intellectual and material elements of an expressive nature in interior designs. In fact, they began to present a purely visual experience in terms of meanings. Saliba (1982) explains knowing the thing on its face, and complex in terms of concept, content, and implication, emphasizing on three basic elements: shape, function, and matter. However, the simplification of the form is an intellectual reflection overflown with meanings of the essence of the function. As Kuang & Zhang (2014) show, the materials in its design entity act as the visual counterpart to it after it has been simplified and many elements are excluded to reach a more refined and clear design spaces. Interestingly, Al-Sayid (2021) summarizes the minimalist theory in designing interior spaces by the following:

- Excluding curved lines and using basic engineering lines.
- Overflowing in the integration of the visual landscape.
- Presence overflown pure and frank of the material.
- Focusing on the relationships between spaces without narrative, historical, or symbolic decoration.
- Overflowing in posing material elements and their repetition.
- Excluding different colors and adopting white and neutral colors.

The Duality of Exclusion and Overflow in The Design of Interior Spaces

The various concepts are perceived through the reflection of their meanings, content, and relationships in the human mind, as one concept can be perceived in different shapes, in which conceptual relations play a major role. Saliba (1982) explains that since the concepts are relatively complementary, it is whose perception depends on others and they are not absolute. This is because the human mind perceives their reality through sensation and experience.

Thus, the research can identify the conceptual exclusion and overflow of the meaning or content reflected in the human mind and perceive them in a bilateral relationship that interprets one another as advanced cognitive process that are not absolute or finite, especially when they are used in the context of one design work. Asaad (2005) describes that each concept of this duality has synonyms that work within the framework of its meaning and relationships in providing the design system of the interior space directly and indirectly with a set of proven or innovative solutions, procedures and design methods. They work to create various relationships between the formed spaces and give the interior spaces certain characteristics that reflect the nature of these relationships. This is especially so when the interior designer adopts process contradictory binaries, as is the case in exclusion and overflow and the multiple interpretations they bear, which enhances their role in abstraction, simplification and reduction on the one hand, and diversity, multiplicity and complexity on the other hand.

The design itself is a complex process between the apparent and latent elements. In this regard, Al-Husseini(2008) views it as it is the resultant and total processes accomplished by the designer (so he is affected) and through which he influences his environment. This is in order to formulate and adapt it. However, in order for that formulation to come out with shapes that meet his basic needs in life or those that its adaption results that Man can through it resist Nature, damage, and harmony with it. As Raafat (2007) explains, this means achieving the performative meaning of space-utility-the material need of society, intellectual well-being, and achieving the meaning of safety-durability-in the use of technological innovations such as concrete elements and iron elements, psychological safety, and the meaning of beauty from the integrity of the design entity with functional requirements.

Therefore, the importance of formulating and adapting design elements such as shapes, colours, and materials should be perceived in a way that achieves utility, durability, beauty, and dealing with them, not on the basis of a single meaning in interior design, but rather a multiple meaning perceived in opposites. In fact, here comes the role of the duality of exclusion and overflow, as the exclusion of formative elements with multiple shapes such as curved, broken, and different angles is matched by an overflow in the creation of elements and configurations with abstract geometric shapes such as points, lines and right angles. The extravagance in the use of white and neutral colors is a reflection of the exclusion of the multiplicity of colours of the solar spectrum and their reduction in neutral colours, and the exclusion of shapes with various symbolic meanings is the overflow in simplifying and abstracting shapes. In addition, the activation of the process of exclusion in the design of interior spaces is nothing but a process of concealing the complexity of the interior space and the development of design alternatives.

From the above, the research arrives at a set of indicators that can be adopted in preparing the research sample analysis form. They are as follows.

1. The transformations that occur in design elements such as shape, color, and material can be used to identify exclusion and overflow in interior design.
2. The minimalist theory's concept of exclusion includes design synonyms that work within its framework, such as abstraction, simplification, and reduction.
3. In the minimum theory, the concept of overflow includes a group of design synonyms that work within its framework, such as diversity, multiplicity, and complexity.
4. The interior designer requires the exclusion and separation process to result in benefit, durability, and beauty.
5. Minimalist theory is concerned with form, function, concept and meaning.
6. The minimalist theory's visual data includes simple and abstract lines, white and neutral colours, the pure presence of matter, and repetition in design elements.

They can be presented as shown in the Fig 1. and the Table 1. Below.

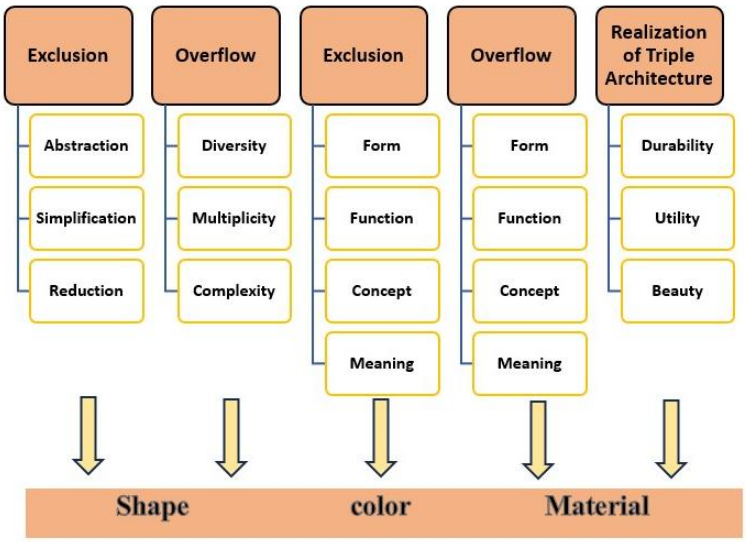

Fig. 1: The Items of The Theoretical Framework
Source: Authors

Table. 1: The Items of The Theoretical Framework
Source: Authors

Main indicators	Secondary indicators	Element
Exclusion	Abstraction	Shape
		Color
		Material
	Simplification	Shape
		Color
		Material
	Reduction	Shape
		Color
		Material
Overflow	Diversity	Shape
		Color
		Material
	Multiplicity	Shape
		Color
		Material
	Complexity	Shape
		Color
		Material
Exclusion	Form	Shape
		Color
		Material
	Function	Shape
		Color
		Material
	Concept	Shape
		Color
		Material

	Meaning	Shape
		Color
		Material
Overflow	Form	Shape
		Color
		Material
	Function	Shape
		Color
		Material
	Concept	Shape
		Color
		Material
	Meaning	Shape
		Color
		Material
Realization of Triple Architecture	Durability	Shape
		Color
		Material
	Utility	Shape
		Color
		Material
	Beauty	Shape
		Color
		Material

Research Methodology

This research adopted a case study approach to achieve the research aimed at extracting indicators building an analysis form for the case study, and devising a design rule using the theory of minimalism in the design of interior spaces. The case study is the Snjaqlar Mosque, in Istanbul, Turkey designed by the Turkish Architect Emre Arolat. It has been constructed from 2014-2024.

The Case Study

- Snjaqlar Mosque Designed by Emre Arolat Office
- Project Details:
- Architects: Emre Arolat Architecture Office
- Location: Istanbul / Turkey
- Built area: 1300 m^2.
- Project Execution: 2012-2014

The mosque is built on a level beneath a natural meadow, with the courtyard surrounded by horizontal walls and a vertical rectangular block of stone, which is the minaret, as shown in the Fig.2. The mosque spaces are accessible via natural stone steps (see Fig.3). The mosque was built at a depth of 9 m out of light grey Kerak stone and reinforced concrete, giving it a colour range of light grey to black (neutral colours), as depicted in the Fig.3. No symbols or decorations are used to decorate the structural determinants, and no chemical dyes are used, as clarified in the Fig.4.

The mosque is a collection of spaces, including an internal prayer room with a multi-levelled floor. It comes to an end with an angled wall topped with glass windows. This wall features a light-permeable niche in the form of a groove. The pulpit is rectangular and has semi-circular levels. The ceiling of the space is made of concrete and is comprised of overlapping

oval-shaped levels, as illustrated in the Fig.5. Natural and artificial lighting are used in the interior design, while there are also bathrooms in the Imam's house. A library and rest area are located next to the mosque.

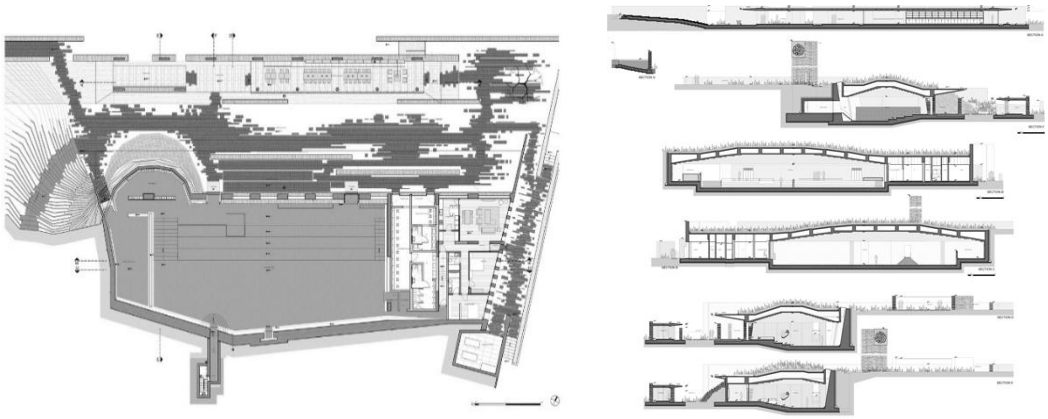

Fig. 2: Plan and Section Snjaqlar Mosque
Source: emrearolat.com

Fig. 3: Snjaqlar Mosque from the outside
Source: emrearolat.com

Fig. 4: The Entrance to The Mosque Snjaqlar
Source: emrearolat.com

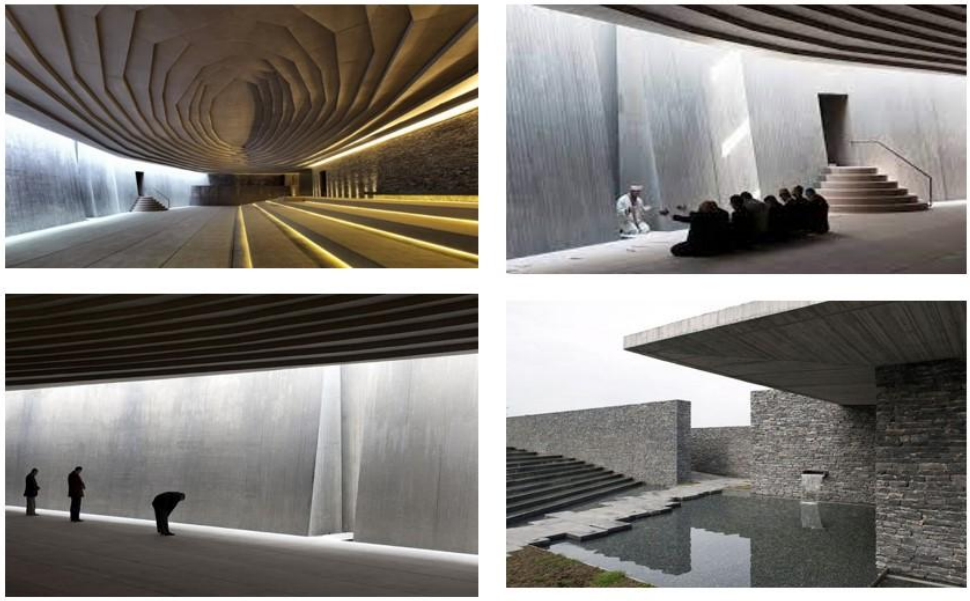

Fig. 5: Interior Shots of The Prayer Space in The Mosque Snjaqlar
Source: emrearolat.com

Table. 2: measure the variables through the realized value, and the percentages
Source: Authors

Main indicators	Secondary indicators	Element	verified	perc of verified
Exclusion	Abstraction	Shape	*	%100
		Color	*	%100
		Material	*	%100
	Simplification	Shape	*	%100
		Color	*	%100
		Material	*	%100
	Reduction	Shape	*	%100
		Color	*	%100
		Material	*	%100
Overflow	Diversity	Shape	*	%100
		Color	*	%100
		Material	*	%100
	Multiplicity	Shape	*	%100
		Color	*	%100
		Material	*	%100
	Complexity	Shape	*	%100
		Color	*	%100
		Material	*	%100
Exclusion	Form	Shape	*	%100
		Color	*	%100
		Material	*	%100
	Function	Shape	*	%100
		Color	*	%100
		Material	*	%100
	Concept	Shape	*	%100

		Color	*	%100
		Material	*	%100
	Meaning	Shape	*	%100
		Color	*	%100
		Material	*	%100
Overflow	Form	Shape	*	%50
		Color	*	%50
		Material	*	%100
	Function	Shape		%0
		Color		%0
		Material		%0
	Concept	Shape		%0
		Color		%0
		Material		%0
	Meaning	Shape		%0
		Color		%0
		Material		%0
Realization of Triple Architecture	Durability	Shape	*	%100
		Color	*	%100
		Material	*	%100
	Utility	Shape	*	%100
		Color	*	%100
		Material	*	%100
	Beauty	Shape	*	%100
		Color	*	%100
		Material	*	%100

Discussion

The designer focused in designing the Snjaqlar Mosque on achieving the abstraction of the design elements and the overflow in the moral and soul values of the design and reflecting this through the simplification of the general design and the prayer niche, and the diversity in the use of the elements of Nature such as light and stone that remind us of Hira Cave. This is the first place in which the Islamic message was revealed. In this design, the exclusion of the traditional elements of the mosque, including the dome of the main space, the dome of the minaret, and the overflow was achieved by using horizontal surfaces and abstract geometric shapes at various levels of the mental clarity of the space user. It also achieved the exclusion of decorative motifs and structural details which are common elements in mosque architecture. The design emphasized the complexity of using the single color base of the natural material-stone-used, abstracting to its derivatives, and employing it with natural and artificial lighting to submerge the spiritual sense of the interior space.

Conclusions

Based on these findings, this reserach makes the following conclusions.

1. In the minimalist theory, exclusion, and overflow are directly proportional at the level of action, so the greater the exclusion, the greater the overflow, and the less exclusion, the less overflow. and inversely proportional at the level of production, so the greater the exclusion, the less the overflow in the use of design elements.
2. In the design of interior spaces, the minimalist theory can be applied to all types of design elements such as colours, texture, and material.

3. The duality of exclusion and overflow extends beyond achieving durability, utility, and beauty in the design of interior spaces in a way that ensures the recipient's physical and psychological safety.
4. 4-Minimalism theory incorporates abstraction, simplification, reduction, diversity, multiplicity, and complexity into the design of interior spaces.
5. 5-The minimalist theory discusses design elements through form, function, and material, as its application helps direct the recipient's awareness of the intended meaning of the design.
6. 6-Simple and abstract lines, neutral colors, the pure presence of materials, and the repetition of design elements are integrated into the visual scene.

It is to be noted that these conclusions must be interpreted within the strengths and weaknesses of this research. On the one hand, this research examines minimalism and its manifestations from the points of view of exclusions and overflows which have not happened so far. Thus, it brings a new dimension of understanding to the application of minimalist theory as it is applied in interior design. On the other hand, this is just a single case study and according to the basic research guidelines, case study conclusions are case-study-specific and cannot be generalized. Although, here we have offered potential generalizable conclusions, they need to be tested further before being accepted as universally valid.

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Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that the implementation of this study does not involve any conflict of interest.

Ethical Practice: The authors declare that this research has been conducted employing accepted ethical research practices and does not violate the rights of any social group, a person or animals. The data was generated with a full understanding and agreement of the respondents, and owners of the case studies.

Availability of Data: The authors declare that the data used in this study are available for verification upon request.

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