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## City Architectural Heritage Revival: The Need of a New Applied Approach

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### Abstract

Egypt is a nation of 4000 years of civilization, which was known for its ancient architecture that occupied the highest rank of importance, but how long will our neglected heritage sites survive in our recent era? This is a rising debate.

This paper is based on a hypothesis whether the conservation of the neglected or isolated heritage sites, particularly in the inhabited areas, can bind the citizens to their past. For this reason, the research provides scenes of many applied conservation practices in other countries. The study calls for developing a new applied approach of conservation that takes the interaction between citizens and the city heritage zones into consideration.

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*Keywords:* Renovation; Socialization; Memorization; Comprehensive; Commercialization.

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### 1. Introduction

Ancient architecture is enriched with the most important events and beliefs. It was a record of the daily life. It has been always the heritage of the community and the mirror that reflects people's culture and its evolution. It is an authentic translation of the nature of society, its customs and traditions, at all levels of economic, political, psychological, social and historical dimensions. Unfortunately, our architectural heritage sites are suffering lately. How long will this weird situation last, especially in that transition period which witnessed the demolition of several

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valuable heritage buildings in many historical cities? Alexandria, for example, includes many monuments of the ancient Egyptian civilization; Ptolemaic, Greek and Romanian. By reflecting on these civilizations and making a quick urban tour in those countries, we will find out that the preservation of heritage depends not only on the principle of restoration, but also on the consolidation and merging in the daily life of citizens, which allow interaction to create a kind of sensual experience, starting from the visual sense to the re-use of the monument in some cases, through bodies, movement, and the five senses. But it is seen lately that Alexandria is losing its unique historical image as a cosmopolitan city, and so are many other countries, like Cairo and Port Saeed. As our cities are not just a single linear history and include a multiple layers of histories, the violation committed against the city's memory might result in erasing some historical layers which narrate and embody the real history of the city.

Egypt has lost much of its significant architectural heritage, and it is necessary that the concerned professionals stop this bleeding. According to the Law no. 117 of 1983 on the protection of monuments which states, "«Monument» is any real wealth or portable of historic, scientific, artistic or literary value." Notwithstanding the laws, the crime series committed against Egypt's history still in progress, represented in the demolition of buildings and archaeological buildings. It is stated that 90% of the archaeological houses and buildings became victims for the irresponsible government officials who are used to taking the easier decision to demolish or neglect these buildings rather than to bear an official responsibility.

Furthermore, the preservation approach used in many cases in Egypt, where the government builds concrete walls surrounding the monuments for protection, isolates the present from the past and breaks the bond between citizens and their history.

Moreover, many monuments have not been discovered yet. For instance, it has been stated that Alexandria includes a lot of sunken monuments which have been badly exploited by some citizens, or even sold to foreign entities. One of the funniest situations when a monument was discovered by accident at a construction site, the contractor preferred not to announce the incident and keep it secret, maybe to keep it for himself and sell it later, or not to interrupt the course of construction by the government.

For all the above mentioned reasons, the research provides scenes of many applied conservation practices in other countries, to explore various means from different cultures, like Greece, Italy, and Germany, and to examine whether these experiences would be useful for Egypt circumstances. The study calls for developing a new applied approach of conservation instead of the old ones, taking into consideration the interaction between citizens and the city heritage zones, in order to positively influence the city diverse aspects of life, political, economic, environmental, social cultural,...etc, and to enhance the citizens daily life, through creating connection between their past and present contexts, and to plan for a better quality of life in the future.

### Terminologies

- |   |                                                                                                        |
|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A | Restoration: the act or process of returning something to its earlier good condition or position.      |
| B | Renovation: to repair and improve something, esp. a building.                                          |
| C | Reuse: to use something again.                                                                         |
| D | Rehabilitation: to return someone or something to a good or healthy condition, state or way of living. |
| E | Commercialization: to commercialize the monument preservation (to make use of it for profit)           |

## 2. Objective

Developing a new applied approach of conservation in Egypt, instead of the old ones, taking into consideration of the interaction between citizens and the city heritage zones.

### 3. Hypothesis

This paper is based on a hypothesis whether the conservation of the neglected or isolated heritage sites, particularly in the inhabited areas, can bind the citizens to their past, and help them perceive their nationality, which in turn strength the sense of belonging.

### 4. Methodology

The research approach is a phenomenological philosophy which has an effect on the methodology adopted for the study. It is considered as an exploratory research; since it mainly depends on the observation of many applied conservation practices in other countries, an overview analysis, not only from an experimental approach, but also based on urban sociology approach. Thanks to this approach which aims to better understanding how to deal with heritage and encourage the public participation, in addition to exploring various means from different cultures and countries, such as Greece, Italy and Germany, and to examine whether these experiences would be useful for Egypt circumstances.

### 5. Scenes from many applied conservation practices

#### 5.1. Protection; but not Isolation, Athens: shades on Archeological site

During an urban walk in the heart of Athens, near of *Syntagma* square , one can find a lot of archaeological sites which have not been neglected or isolated from citizens, rather, they have been protected by an elegant shades made of steel and glass. With a handrail of glass, as so simple solution that passers-by and tourists are able to cherish the monuments and stop for a short rest to enjoy the shadow of the past. In some other case, floors are made of glass, steel and wire to see the underground monument. See Figure 1



Fig.1. Shades above archeological sites in Athens, Greece. June 2015. Source: Researcher

Compare that maintenance with the case of the Ptolemaic tomb 5, which date back to the third century B.C., in *Moustafa Kamel* residential Area, *Sidi Gaber*, Alexandria city, in Egypt. After many years of negligence, finally in July 2015, the administration of cultural development and archeological awareness organized a volunteer campaign to save the tomb and clean the garbage in the site. But as usual, the armed forces in Alexandria built a concrete wall two days before the campaign started working, in order to protect the archaeological region. This happened after the newspapers publishing the negligence which had been seen in the archaeological area. See Figure 2



Fig.2. Ptolemaic Tomb 5 in *Moustafa Kamel* residential Area, *Sidi Gaber*, Alexandria, Egypt. May 2015. Source: Researcher

### 5.2. Socialization; interaction not negligence

Social plazas, which were inspired from the idea of Agora, played an important role in the Greek life and daily interaction with their past. Sometimes they include some glass pyramids that raise the curiosity of passers and tourists to look inside. Take the commercial social plaza as an example, which is located in *Panepistimiou* Street, opposite to Athens University, and represents the connection point between the university site and *Klavthmonos* square. Those plazas emphasize the importance of a new "socialization and commercialization" concepts, to encourage the region inhabitants to maintain the monument; not only because of its historical significance, but also it is a touristic attraction point and a source of their daily income. See Figure 3

In the same *Panepistimiou* Street and next to the university building, the National Library building plays a cultural role and reflects the long history of Greek civilization. It is noteworthy that when you enter the building, the most noticeable thing, besides its unique architectural style, is the full flat glass ceiling which gives a natural lighting for readers. This reminds us of our many neglected and abandoned heritage buildings in Egypt with falling roofs or other demolished parts. And here is a question that imposes itself: "Is it possible to reuse or re-employ this damaged part (may be to turn to glass ceiling) to serve as particular cultural activity, such as a library or cultural center, or even a museum, to help revive those buildings again. See Figure 4



Fig.3. (a) Athens university;(b) the opposite commercial Plaza;(c) *Klavthmonos* square. June 2015. Source: Researcher





Fig.4. The National Library, Athens, Greece: (a)(b)Exterior façade;(c) Interior view of the reading hall. June 2015. Source: Researcher

### 5.3. Renovation; and reuse not only restore

One of the most unique examples of its kind in Italy is the renovation of *Castelvecchio* Museum in Verona, by architect *Carlo Scarpa*. It was originally a castle, and the building was re-designed as a museum displaying a collection of sculptures, statues and paintings. The new and historic layers can clearly be read through the architect's careful material choices and elegant detailing which underpin the use of form in relation to the host building's structural requirements, in addition to many architectural elements and materials that did not disturb the preservation of building, rather it revived it. One of the most impressive scenes is *Cangrande* statue, who in fact never saw *Castelvecchio* which was built by his heirs after his death. The statue was placed by *Carlo Scarpa* in an attraction center. He decided not to enclose it into a room, but to leave it outside, seen and enjoyed by Verona citizens as it has always been for centuries on the top of his tomb in the city center. (Marc, 2010)

In *Carlo Scarpa's* renovation, *Cangrande* becomes a joint between *Castelvecchio* various parts, since it is visible from the main courtyard, the residential area, the painting gallery and the battlements. Placing the *Cangrande* sculpture required an attentive and thorough analysis on *Scarpa's* part, in order to find a location that allows the visitor to face the statue along the walk through the museum, which was shown from the exterior, with the surrounding stairs and small walkways, so it can be seen from several visual points. This underlines its emblematic importance. It can be seen even from far away in the residential neighborhood and not only within the museum tour. See Figure 5

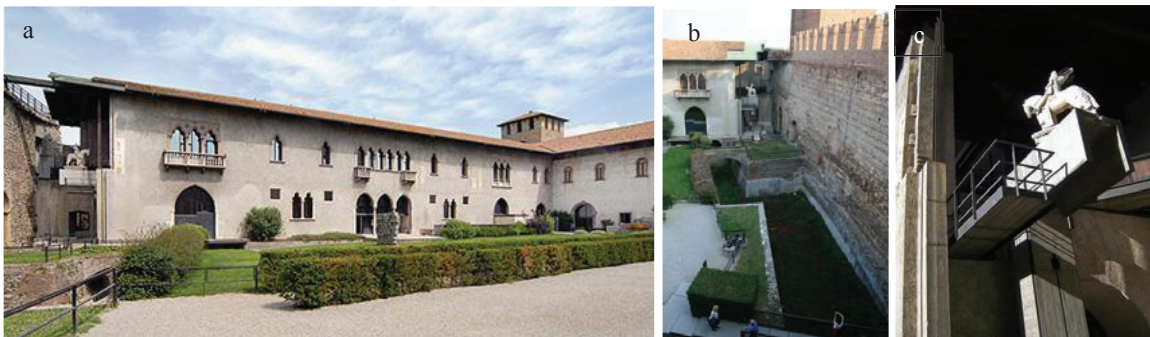


Fig.5. (a) *Castelvecchio* Museum, Verona, Italy; (b)(c) *Cangrande* statue Sources: [www.archiviocarloscarpa.it](http://www.archiviocarloscarpa.it), [www.italypicgallery.com](http://www.italypicgallery.com), [www.e-architect.co.uk](http://www.e-architect.co.uk)

#### 5.4. Memorialization; narrate as an open continuous dialogue, not hushed

Obviously the *Hadrian Gate* has been located as a focal visual point in the main traffic *Amalias* street, south of *Syntagma* square. It became the focus of attention under public protection, which makes it difficult to tamper with it all day long. The public become the strongest guard. Since the arch is located southeast of the *Acropolis*, people notice *Hadrian's Arch* with the *Acropolis* seen in the background. The Arch of *Hadrian*, most commonly known in Greek as *Hadrian's Gate*, is a monumental gateway resembling a Roman triumphal arch. It spanned an ancient road from the center of Athens, Greece, to the complex of structures on the eastern side of the city that includes the Temple of *Olympian Zeus*. It was said that the arch was built to celebrate the arrival of the Roman Emperor *Hadrian* and to honor him for his support to the city on the occasion of the dedication of the nearby temple complex in 131 or 132 AD. Although it is not certain who construct the arch, probably Athens citizens were responsible for its construction and design. Maybe it is the secret of its survival until today, as it belongs to the people themselves. There are two inscriptions on the arch, facing in opposite directions, naming both *Theseus* and *Hadrian* as founders of Athens. While it is clear that the inscriptions honor *Hadrian*, it is uncertain whether they refer to the city as a whole or to the city in two parts: old and new. The earlier idea, however, that the arch marked the line of the ancient city wall, and thus the division between the old and the new regions of the city, has been shown to be false by further excavation. ( Frazer, 2011)(Adams,1989)See Figure 6 (a, b)

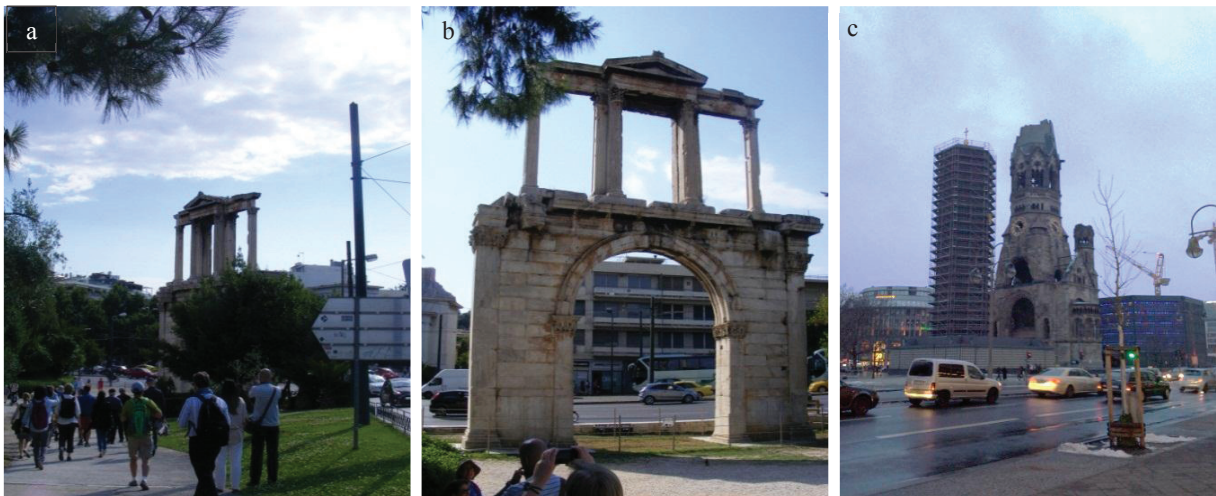


Fig.6. (a)(b)*Hadrian gate*, Athens, Greece.June 2015; (c)*Kaiser Wilhelm GedachtnisKirche* in Berlin, Germany. January 2015.Source: Researcher

Similarly, there are many examples in Germany, with its current urban planning which tells the city's history through the people's daily life. The citizens then do not have to pay money or set time to see the monument or visit the museum, they can simply read history through their daily journey to work. For instance, *Kaiser Wilhelm GedachtnisKirche*; "Protestant Memorial church", is located in Berlin on the *Kurfürstendamm* in the centre of the *Breitscheidplatz*. The original church on the site was built in the 1890s. It was badly damaged in a bombing raid in 1943. The present building, which consists of a church with an attached foyer and a separate belfry with an attached chapel, was built between 1959 and 1963. The damaged spire of the old church has been retained and its ground floor has been made into a memorial hall. The Memorial Church today is a famous landmark of western Berlin, and is nicknamed by Berliners "*der Hohle Zahn*"; which means "The Hollow Tooth".(Gerlach, 2007) In contrast with that open dialog concept between citizens and history, many of the Egyptian cities suffer from the lack of that dialog channel through the urban space as a memory device, to truly narrate the city history, as it has been stated that places are harder to be faked. See Figure 6(c)



### 5.5. Unification; Create a comprehensive image, Unifies Past and Present, not separation

The passer can record the present and the past together in a single camera shot when standing in front of the *Eonikh Tpaneza* building, which was built over an archaeological site. The contemporary design of the building takes into account and highlights the monuments through a visual communication, which in turn increases the architectural value of the building. See Figure 7



Fig.7.(a) *Eonikh Tpaneza* building Façade with main entrance, Athens, Greece; (b)(c)The archeological part under the building. June 2015.Source: Researcher

Furthermore, in some occasions where comprehensive image was found in heritage building beside contemporary ones. For example, the famous Cologne Cathedral; a Roman Catholic cathedral in Cologne, Germany. It is a renowned monument of German Catholicism and Gothic architecture and is a world heritage site. It is Germany's most visited landmark, attracting an average of 20,000 people a day. It is located beside the main station of Cologne city. The cathedral is the largest Gothic church in Northern Europe and has the second-tallest spires. Its two huge spires give it the largest façade of any church in the world. (UNESCO, 2015) It is the first scene when Cologne visitors and inhabitants exit the station door. It is very impressive comprehensive image which narrates the city history, and reflects the current present moment at the same time. (Oliver& Claudius, 2015) See Figure 8



Fig.8.Cologne Cathedral, in Cologne city, Germany. August 2015. Source: Researcher

### 5.6. Commercialization; motivate not prevent

At the mention of Greece, the *Parthenon* above the *Acropolis* in Athens cannot be ignored. When visiting the surrounded residential area, the most notable thing is the population commerce, with many cafeterias, shops and bazaars, even as a part of their houses in the narrow routes between the houses those serve visitors of the *Parthenon* and *Acropolis*. See Figures 9, 10

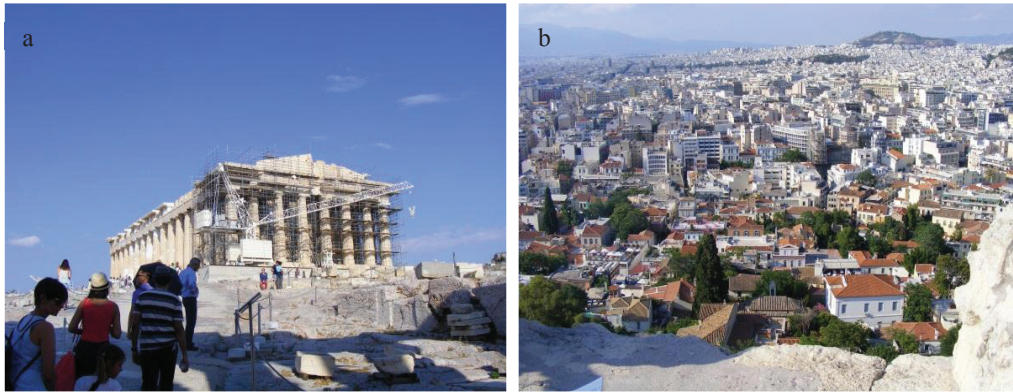


Fig.9.(a) The Parthenon, (b) The surround residential area. June 2015 source: Researcher.

After that touristic round and quick observation of many heritage places, nothing can embody this truth but the famous saying, "Places such as monumental and modest have one powerful property in common: they are all inhabitable and they are all inhabited, either literally or in dreams and memories, ....it gives a donation of human vivid and mysterious human identity." (Kent & Charles, 1977)



Fig.10. The Parthenon surrounded residential Area. June 2015. Source: Researcher.

Back to Egypt after that quick tour, it became crystal clear that there are many alternatives to preserve the monuments which were exposed to human and environmental risks, which are better than the traditional narrow-minded solutions, such as isolating the monuments by concrete walls which can be called "the culture of walls".

The monuments in the aforementioned examples are not neglected or isolated away from the society, rather they are activated to serve the community objectives and re-employ them, if possible. Through investigation, it was important to review those examples to stimulate this new orientation through visitor's eyes to reach some principles outlines which can help in shaping new direction.



## 6. Future Research

In process, working on three main applications in order to develop and revive the architectural heritage of the Egyptian city:

- A toolbox "*Designing Urban National Memory*", provides a set of criteria, aims to build a bridge between research and design practice.
- Producing a national *memoryscape* map, consists of multiple layers of histories with consideration of the various collective memories, to be used in urban analysis and site surveys of any existing public space in a historical context. That *memoryscape* map is to be considered as an additional layer among other maps/layers of urban space analysis.
- An urban design context; proposal of rehabilitation of the Ptolemaic tomb 5 in *Moustafa Kamel* residential Area, *Sidi Gaber*, in Alexandria city. The redesign proposal is based on the initiated principles, aims to identify not only the interaction between history, national memory and the public space, but also to unveil the connection between the city urban fabric and the individual associations in memorable places.

## Conclusions

There is an Arabic wisdom says "Causes may vary but death is the same". There are numerous negative applications in our lovely country Egypt and the result is the slow death of civilization. Although Egypt is the oldest civilization, but a lot of countries achieve more progress in applying modern methods to maintain the heritage. In European countries, such as Greece, Italy and Germany, in spite of all the crises and wars they experienced, they are very keen to narrate their history through city urban spaces as a way to overcome the painful past, starting from their status to map heritage sites that constitute the city history, including the consequence of the different historical stages and events linked to a network of public transportation.

It is such a shame to demolish historical buildings in Egypt. It is a major crime against the historic monuments. The study disapproves dishonouring the history; it is an uncivilized act. Concerned professionals should work on preserving the cultural heritage from damage and bear the responsibility of the everyday negligence by paying no attention to the history of the ancient era. Besides, it is important to prepare new archaeological zones in distinct places in order to be a new source of attraction for tourism and increase the income of Egypt. Also, there must be coordination between the administrative and documentation centers, as to keep the monuments in the museum stores for the sake of their preservation until needed to be renovated or restored. Despite the fact that there is a governmental carelessness and pressure practised by officials, concerned professionals should work on long term strategies for conservation. Since revival does not happen overnight, it is important to set clear agendas, and design a new roadmap that fosters a sense of community; making an important contribution to the local economy.

To raise the concern about the protection of monuments, securing and maintenance of the expected hazards; it is known that there are two types of threats: natural hazards and human hazards. As for the natural hazards, it includes wind, sand storms, difference in temperature, humidity, sanitation, groundwater, salt, rain and earthquakes. Also, it is essential to provide a good environment which does not harm the monument, and this requires not establishing labor-intensive huge factories which produce gases, which negatively affect the uncovered archaeological sites, such as historical buildings, temples and pyramids. On the other hand, human hazards, which are the misuse of the facility, fire, attached informal markets, and some crafts and traffic congestion, theft, faulty restorations and wrong excavations, exhibitions and citizen's lack of awareness.

Finally, it is about time to think out of the box, and face those mentioned threats with a new level of thinking and suggest contemporary alternative solutions. The study depends on those outcomes, which are believed that they will have a real effect on the researcher, the developer and the governmental sector, as the agenda is set for Architectural Heritage revival across Egypt, in terms of supporting cultural identity.

With an agenda of new principles and concepts to develop a new applied approach in preserving city Heritage, we can begin with addressing the following suggested concepts:

- Protection concept, but not isolation, aiming to bond citizens to their past.
- Socialization concept; interaction not negligence, in order to strength the sense of belonging.
- Renovation and reuse concepts, not only restore; to adapt with people and the city changeable needs.
- Memorialization concept; narrate as an open continuous dialogue between citizens and city.
- Unification concept: Create a comprehensive image that unifies past with present and links generations, not separating them.
- Commercialization concept, motivate rather than prevent, and not only to profit but to encourage inhabitants to maintain the monument, and also to raise the external international concerns.

That agenda should always be developed, updated and benefited from the applied practices in other countries, in consideration with our identity, in order to preserve the city heritage to be an ideal source of reference, remembrance, and discovery.

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