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Preservation Laws: Saving Modern Egyptian Architectural Integrity

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Abstract

Egyptian cities have witnessed a variety of impeccable architecture throughout centuries of civilization, which enriched the Egyptian society. Constantly rising to the discussion is a question of what constitutes value to architecture of different times. It is important to regard heritage conservation as a synthetic, complex topic that is open for interpretations and judgment. While some antiquities are protected by law, it is apparent how modern heritage is a matter of ambiguity when it comes to preservation and conservation efforts. Until the mid-19th century, architectural heritage was primarily concerned with the preservation of monumental architecture. Theorists like John Ruskin and Viollet Le-Duc were largely exploring the authentic expression of materials in architecture, establishing the foundation, that Cesare Brandi would later build on, that conservation authenticity is not limited to age, rather includes material, style and structure.

It is appropriate to regard heritage buildings as capital assets, with a potential to raise fluxes of services over time. However, not only Cairo, but Egypt has been losing much of its valuable modern heritage; thus its identity in the process.

This paper focuses on Egypt's modernist architecture, discussing the rise of modernism and its introduction to the Egyptian cultural scene while reflecting on the current cultural detachment from such heritage and the current tendency towards historicism. It, also, explores the rise of Egyptian modernism as a national style that reflects social and economic prosperity, in contrast to its rise in the west primarily advocating minimalism, functionalism and social equality.

In comparing Egyptian laws to international charters on heritage preservation; in particular modern heritage, case studies are used to explore the consequences. The research concludes by suggesting measures and acts that can, directly and indirectly, affect the decision-making process, as well as support efforts of preservation of Egypt's modern heritage.

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Keywords

Modern; Architecture; Heritage; Preservation; Integrity; Authenticity; Legislation; Amendments

1. Introduction

Cairo has witnessed a lot of transitions towards modernization. Some movements sought to modernize Egypt by ridding it of the past and focusing on a more liberated future while others looked at the past taking direct reference from it in order to build anew. Such revivalist movements tended to revisit Pharaonic, Coptic and Islamic heritage for reference. Egyptian modernism is certainly a complex one where multiple realities overlapped. It is a reflection on local history in its context; a context of a real national struggle that dates back to the 1919 revolution trying to find and emphasize on a national identity.

Towards the end of the 19th century, there was a tendency to look back at Cairo's old parts in order to project a new kind of modernity, one that values history. Efforts to restore the city's historical quarters were part of this attempt to highlight its modernity by preserving its past.

The processes of 'the aestheticization of decay' and a celebration of the modern past; in the late 20th century, created a mode of an imperialist nostalgia. Such idealization of the past reflected a general dissatisfaction with the present and the search for a more complete reality. Such state of reminiscing affected the architectural product of the time as well as the perception of heritage. The more popular result of this nostalgic process is the production of postmodern facades that seem attached to the aesthetics of, not only the Pharaonic, Islamic and Coptic that was evident in previous modernization attempts, but also the Belle Époque. The newly re-discovered aesthetics of the ornamented neoclassical architecture started to crystallize in the Egyptian post-modern architecture. This post-modern production is generated by the search for iconic value, thus classical architectural details are reproduced and assembled on facades as displays of value and class. These varying degrees of remembering are the effects of the recent redefining of Cairo's heritage to include its early 20th century city as one possessing historical value (Elshahed, 2007).

This paper discusses the rise of modernity in Egypt, and the effect of political transitions on the architectural image. This will be addressed through linking the modernist movement of Egypt to the socio-political discourse of the time, exploring what was viewed as architecture of 'value' at each period. It, also, attempts to formulate the conditions that shaped the current cultural detachment from the modernist heritage; addressing the nostalgia to the neoclassical and the Belle Époque and tendency towards eclecticism. This paper argues that the current cultural detachment from the Egyptian modernist heritage, steams from the lack of public awareness of its ideological and contextual value as a sign of the social, political and economic transitions that the country has lived through in search of its liberated identity.

Abbreviations	
NOUH	National Organization for Urban Harmony
CDHC	Cairo Heritage Development Committee
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
SCA	Supreme Council of Antiquities
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

2. A historical narrative of Modern Egyptian Architecture

2.1. The rise of a Modernist Egypt

Egypt has witnessed many attempts towards modernity; each of which involved detaching from the past and moving forward. The historical narrative of the rise of modern Egypt dates back to the early 1900s; when Egypt was under British occupation. At that time architecture of 'Value' was deemed as that which follows contemporary European architectural language; i.e. classical architecture. The great social gap at the time between the upper bourgeois class of foreigners and Egyptians who assimilate with western ideologies and the poor class of Egyptians reflected in the architecture of the time; i.e. it was by foreign architects for the wealthy.

2.2. The rise and fall of Nationalist Struggles

By 1920, there was a rise of a national struggle; after the 1919 revolution accompanied by the representation of Egyptians in the political scene and a call for a sovereign modern Egyptian state with an emphasis on the Egyptian identity. This was a reaction to the secular liberalism of the 1890s which was seen as an attack on Egyptian traditions.

2.3. Colonial Liberal Age

The colonial liberal age (1930-1951) saw a rise of Egyptian nationalism in art and architecture. The growing sense of nationalism was at a time of population growth in Cairo due to rural-to-city migration; which resulted in a growing middle class. This period witnessed a duality in the architectural character. The first was a 'National Movement' which emphasized on the Egypto-Islamic identity accompanied by movements of Egyptianizing western facades; ex. National Bank of Egypt in Downtown. A third floor was added to the building and the excessively-ornamented classical façade was renovated to an ornament-free simplified façade (Elshahed, 2007).

The second was a 'Liberative Approach' which called for a universal architectural language; refusing the direct referential approach and the ornament-oriented neo-classical facades. This period was very experimental in terms of its modernist product. It varied from buildings with strong vertical and horizontal lines to expressionist architecture with curved balconies and streamlines. It was a modernist movement by Egyptian architects themselves. The architectural product of the time ranged from public buildings like Misr Insurance Building on Talaat Harb St. in 1952 by Mahmoud Riad to religious buildings like St. Catherine's Church in Heliopolis in 1950 by Naoum Shebib. This period was not only experimental in terms of architectural forms, but also represented a time of true structural innovation. The aspiration of the architects was to use modern technologies to express building materials in their purist form. Naoum Shebib is one of the architects that embodied the structural innovation of Egyptian modernism. His fascination with construction engineering inspired him to innovate the reinforced concrete thin vault which was patented as 'Shebib Vault'. The modernist architecture of this period was also catering for the growing middle class; villas and multistory apartment buildings; with some formal social housing projects like 'The social housing project for the Railway Company in the 1930s.

2.4. The rise of Socialism

A socialist-Egypt was formed after the 1952 revolution were Gamal Abd EL Nasser became the leader of the country. The nation was officially entering a new period calling for social equality and independence of identity. There was a shift in aesthetics where colonial architecture was deemed as a distraction from nationalist feelings. Architecture of 'value' became that which negated ornaments and adopted the International Style; as a way to distance the nation from any historical references; whether colonial or Islamic. Consequently, placing the progressive Egypt in a pan-Arab and international context (Nassar, 2011).

Architecture and urban space were used as a tool through which an inspiring vision was embodied. Today, the 'Nile Cornish' stands as witness to this period of modernist Egypt that used architecture as a statement of change. A series of modernist buildings, primarily public, were established along the water front, emphasizing the nationalist identity by retracing the Nile Front's skyline. The radio and Television building was built in 1956. Hilton Ramsis was realized with the Arab League Building neighboring it. Belmont building, the first skyscraper in Egypt and Africa was built in 1954 by Naoum Shebib. The modernist skyline as consolidated with another Naoum Shebib project, which is Cairo Tower in 1961 as an abstraction of a Pharaonic lotus flower (El-Ashmouni, 2013).

2.5. The Open-Door policy and Post-Modernism

With the Open-Door-Policy 'Infitah', Egypt entered a phase of hyper modernism in the 70s and 80s; to accommodate the rising population of the capital. This period witnessed a new socio-political discourse launched by a burst in the Egyptian economy and the rise of the Arab Gulf. Socially; there was a burst in inter-social-classes movement with the rise of a new bourgeoisie class and the desire to move away from the socialist past into a brand-new lifestyle.

A new aesthetic began to emerge in the 1970s, 80s and well into the 90s; an echo to a large extent of a renewed worldwide interest in traditional/vernacular architecture. This led to a revival of traditional forms - known as post-modernism. The short-lived modernist project in which the Egyptian nation sought to move beyond its historical constraints, and in turn become modern, abruptly ended when Egypt entered a post-modern phase accompanied by a surfacing of a sense of nostalgia and a shift in the architectural 'value' and aesthetics.

There were two layers of 'nostalgia' at the time; each with its effect on the architectural product and definition of heritage value. The first was towards the Arab-Islamic identity which affected the architectural product of the time. It was fueled by the rise of the Gulf as a power; and the increase in migration of Egyptians and others to that region and their eventual return, bringing with them an outlook deeply affected by particularly rigid interpretations of Islamist traditions. It can also be argued that there was a need for 'a sense of belonging' under the now fragmented city whose identity was threatened while facing the global economy and the kind of culture that comes with it.

The second, more recent nostalgia is the one towards the Belle Époque; where the once politicized imperialist architecture was aging. This affected the public view of heritage where the process of the aestheticization of decay allowed the classical architecture to be deemed as heritage. This was facilitated by its age value, as well as its newly, selectively rediscovered, historic value. The age value contributed to the 'authenticity' of objects where a sense of nostalgia was fueled by people's collective memory through films and literature (Elshahed, 2007).

It can also be argued that the haphazard rehabilitation of the Belle Époque architecture and lack of its maintenance played a role in triggering such nostalgia. Under Nasser's regime, many of the nationalized art-deco and classical buildings were reused as state buildings and; more interestingly, public schools. This resulted in a generation of students surrounded by the aging ornaments of the Belle Époque; reminding them of a former age of aesthetic beauty that relied on ornamentation. Also, due to the politicization of the Belle Époque architecture; as a sign of occupation and corruption, much of the architecture was left ill-maintained and even destroyed. The nostalgia to the Belle Époque stemmed from appropriating the remaining architecture of the period becoming accidental monuments of collective memory.

3. Modern Heritage in Egypt: Challenges and Authenticity

3.1. Challenges facing Modern Heritage

Attempting to recognize the reasons behind the deterioration of the significance of value of the modernist heritage in Egypt is quite a challenging process. Yet, it becomes clear after a brief history of the evolution of the modernist Architecture in Egypt why the current and past generations have problems relating to its value and significance. The past generation, in the era of Nasser, grew up surrounded by decaying Belle Époque heritage, and with the economic and political turmoil of the era, the past was looked upon as time of comfort whilst the modern was ugly, and undesirable. Therefore, regarding modernist heritage as a valuable documentation of the socio-political and economic narrative of the city, is hard to be understood by the public.

"I cannot see it; I do not understand it and it does not look old to me."

R. Longstreth

The above mentioned quote displays another challenge that modernist heritage faces; which is how the majority of the general public perceive heritage and its automatic adherence to aging. What comes to public's mind is

generally an aging building that triggers reminiscing sentiment towards a forgotten past. However, unlike classic monuments, which gain character with age, the sight of a decaying modern movement building is not accepted. Modernist architecture was a transitory design movement and it was experimental in nature. The bare ornament free concrete walls rot, steel bars erode and the glass facades get tainted in time. This did not work in favor of such heritage as it failed to resonate with the public as something valuable and should be taken care of. In other words, our standards for modernist buildings are different from those for 'classic' monuments (Zwart, 2008).

3.2. Local and International Documentation Efforts

By 1989, it was clear to the Egyptian architectural scene that the moment of creation of modernist Egypt has passed and there was a pressing need to document it. One of the documentation efforts was a book called 'Egypt in the 20th century' by Tawfeq Abd El Gawad; recording Egyptian modernist architecture as well as acting as a reference for future generations about modernism.

Meanwhile, on the international heritage scene, it was evident that modern architecture was under threat, as their 'value' was never properly addressed. A poor understanding of the significance of these buildings and sites resulted in their subjection to serious alteration and destruction; as the rapid socio-economic changes resulted in continuously changing functional demands. It became obvious that in addition to the traditional heritage categories; like archeological sites and monuments, modern properties and sites needed to be represented in a clear heritage category; as a reflection on cultural identities at crucial times in modern history' worthy of preservation.

The definition of modern heritage has been one with many obstacles. One of which is how to distinguish 'unique architecture of value' that has resulted from the modernist movement when we are surrounded by contemporary architecture that is based on the same principles of modernity wither directly or indirectly. Preservation and conservation of modern heritage remain a global challenge despite multiple efforts to establish a conceptual framework under which such heritage would be defined and maintained. At the core of this predicament is the maintenance of the 'authenticity' and individuality of a modern building. For that, one must look at the progression of the concept of authenticity in conservation.

3.3. Authenticity in Conservation

Theorists like John Ruskin and Viollet Le-Duc were largely exploring the authentic expression of materials in architecture, establishing the foundation of conservation authenticity. The concept progressed from being limited to age, to a more 'stylistic unity' which includes material, style and structure. Later Cesar Brandi proposed his theory highlighting the importance of 'conservation with intention'. A modernist building doesn't necessarily look old, nor does its restoration need to emphasize on its age. The modern movement was one of thoughts and innovation, its value steams from the innovation in materiality, structure and concept. The integrity of restoration of a modern building should steam from its respect to the architect's vision in response to its socio-economic context. The 2017 ICOMOS charters mention specific details about the restoration techniques, where consciously choosing the material, the colors and the restoration methodology are necessary to maintain the architectural integrity of a monumental building. Such details are mentioned for example in its third article:

"Twentieth-century building materials and construction techniques may often differ from traditional materials and methods of the past. There is a need to research and develop specific repair methods appropriate to unique types of construction. Some characteristics of twentieth-century heritage, especially places or sites created after the middle of the century, may present specific conservation challenges..."

*Research the Technical and Planning Aspects of Twentieth Century Cultural Heritage.
ICOMOS (2017)*

3.3.1. Case Studies

The earlier mentioned difficulty in understanding the ‘value’ of modernist heritage does not only result in the negligence of such buildings, but also results in radical changes occurring to such buildings in renovation or adaptive-reuse attempts.

The Abasiyya Cathedral in Cairo, to which Nasser laid the foundational stone in 1965 and inaugurated in 1968 was Africa’s largest Church. The architectural design competition held for it was won by Awad Kamel Fahmy, then dean of the school of fine arts, and its structure was designed engineer Michael Bakhoum, Egypt’s most famous structural engineer back in the days (ElShahed, 2012).

Following the 2016 bombing, restoration and reconstruction efforts took place. Sadly, the reconstruction process chose to ignore the original architect’s vision. The bare concrete walls were plastered by Christian icons and art and the impact of the pure form of the church was substituted by the traditional tendency to plaster the facades in icons.

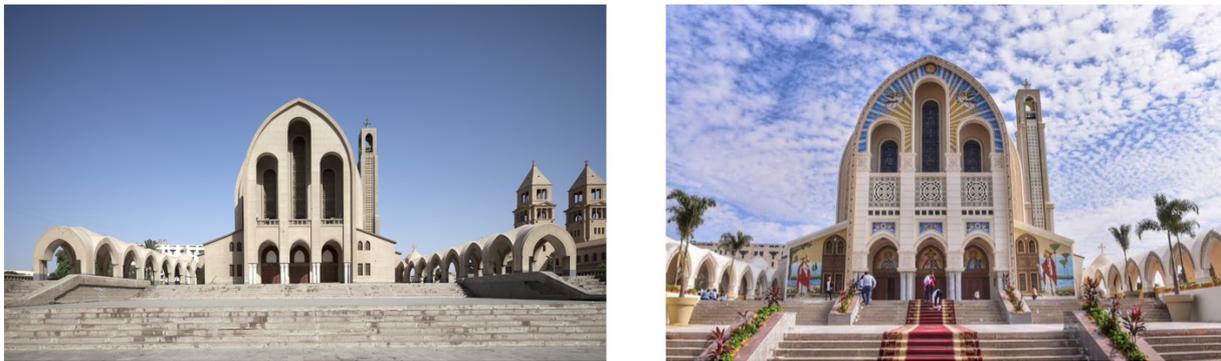


Figure 1. Abbaseya church before renovation (left) and after (right) *Roland Unger, 2010 (Left)

*https://www.reddit.com/r/OrthodoxChristianity/comments/blufzb/st_mark_church_abbaseya_cairo_egypt/ (Right)

On the contrary to the current state in Egypt, the works of Le Corbusier are now being considered for heritage listing by France in cooperation with other countries where his works are located. Other buildings like the Sydney Opera House, the Panama Canal and the Shanghai Bund are subject of discussion by national and international experts as well as government officials. However, there must be movement to raise public awareness on the conservation of modern heritage to support such discussion (UNESCO, 2007).

On the urban scale, the local government has done efforts with the support of the law no.144 of 2006 “Regulating the Demolition of Structurally safe Buildings of Value, and Conserving Architectural Heritage” that states in its second article:

”...buildings and structures of: distinctive architectural order, related to national history, related to a historic figure, representing an historic era, or considered as touristic destination. Those are forbidden to be licensed for demolition or any addition without the consent of the NOUH representatives”

Law no.144 of 2006 “Regulating the Demolition of Structurally safe Buildings of Value, and Conserving Architectural Heritage”

Such efforts include the Downtown Cairo Regeneration project; a cooperation between Cairo Governorate, NOUH and CHDC where downtown Cairo witnessed a renovation of the facades of most of its Khedeival buildings. The project’s first phase was inaugurated in April 2018 with the rejuvenation of AlSharifain Street, which is a part of the 60,000 square meter Borsa Square (Shahine, 2018).

”The CHDC, formed by presidential decree in late 2016 with a mandate to examine strategies “for a better future for Downtown and Historic Cairo” and draw up a comprehensive master

plan to balance the area's historic preservation with its economic growth potential, "has been breathing tremendous life into Cairo's Downtown area", according to CHDC Spokesman Tarek Atia."

Al-Ahram weekly Journal Gihane Shahine

However, sadly enough buildings of the 40s such as the Immobilia building, home to Egypt's foremost cinema, and the de facto headquarters of the entertainment industry remain untouched and left to eventually decay (CLUSTER, 2016).

Internationally, the UNESCO was able to save the white city of Tel Aviv, which is seen internationally as an example of the large scale city planning of the time. Its architecture is a true representation of the significant styles and techniques popular to the Modern Movement, their implementation, and how they developed in Europe. The white city is also eminent in how it took into consideration the local climate conditions as well as the cultural context.

4. Egyptian Laws and International charters and Conventions

4.1. Egyptian Laws

In realizing the current state of the modernist heritage in Egypt, it is important to reflect on The Egyptian Antiquities Protection Law no.117 of 1983, Chapter 1, Article 7 where it states:

"Two permanent committees are set up in SCA one of which is concerned with ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman Antiquities and the other is concerned with Islamic, Coptic and Jewish monuments. The executive regulation shall specify the formation and competences of each committee"

The Egyptian Antiquities Protection Law no.117 of 1983

The same law also states in its first article that in order for a building to be considered historic it has to be over one hundred years old.

"To be the product of Egyptian civilization or the successive civilizations or the creation of art, sciences, literature or religions that took place on the Egyptian lands since the pre-historic ages and during the successive historic ages till before 100 years"

The Egyptian Antiquities Protection Law no.117 of 1983

It is clear through reading those two articles how the law poorly considers the significant heritage of the modern period. In spite of the regional meeting that took place in Egypt in 2005, the law was revised and republished in February of 2010 still without any efforts to include modernist heritage. This is increasingly subjecting such valuable buildings to deterioration and undesirable alterations, not to mention a lack of proper documentation of the buildings' history, and/or any additions or alterations that took place.

The following example is of a modernist building in downtown Cairo, in the intersection of Emad Eddin Street and Al-Alfy Street. The building clearly relates to the modernist Egyptian period. It was built after the 1952 fire had ruined the previously existing Shepherd Hotel. Currently, the building houses the Egyptian Mining Authorities. It is unfortunately poorly maintained; despite its role in displaying an important time in Egypt's modernist architecture with the use of sun barkers to cope with Egypt's hot climate.



Figure 2. Building Façade view from Windsor Hotel (Left) and the Deteriorating Façade System (Right) *Photos taken by Co-author



Figure 3. The Shepherd hotel that existed prior to the Mining Authorities building *Photo Extracted from Le Caire, Centre en Mouvement, P.119

4.2. International Charters

By the year 2000, only thirteen buildings were inscribed in the World Heritage List, all in either Western Europe, or Latin America. International efforts started to be emphasized in 2001 when the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and DOCOMOMO started a joint program with financial support from the Netherlands in an effort to raise awareness about heritage of the nineteenth and the twentieth century. Between 2002 and 2005 five regional meetings were held in different regions of the world in an attempt to discuss the identification and the management of significant modern heritage as well as raise awareness and encourage the state laws to include buildings, urban and vernacular areas of significance (UNESCO, 2003). However, it remains quite challenging, combining efforts in keeping the integrity and authenticity of modern heritage, taking into consideration the importance of local awareness, socio-economic conditions and the required ongoing maintenance.

In order to gain a wider perspective into how the international efforts targeted modernist heritage globally, it was necessary to review as many charters and policies as possible, ones that laid down the ground for heritage conservation in general, and ones that targeted modernist heritage in particular.

UNESCO Charter, Venice, 1964

The UNESCO 1964 charter is considered the mother of all charters, as it provided the foundation of globally accepted conservation and restoration theories of monuments and sites. However, the reconstruction theories are now opposed slightly by modernists in arguments about the authenticity and integrity of monuments. Works of reconstruction are still practiced, yet much more cautiously and with the UNESCO's acceptance under exceptional

circumstances.

World Heritage Convention, Paris, 1972

The World Heritage Convention's primary mission was to set guidelines to form the world heritage list that includes natural and cultural monuments and sites of outstanding universal value. The implementation is facilitated through sets of guidelines and procedures under the World Heritage Fund.

Nara Document on Authenticity, Japan, 1994

The Nara document addresses a much broader need for understanding the multiple aspects of monuments and heritage. It objectively addressed the authenticity of the cultural context and drafted the definition of authenticity in architecture. For the 1st time, not only tangible but intangible heritage was recognized as universal value.

ICOMOS Australia Burra Charter, 2013

The Burra charter revised the methodologies and ideologies that started in the Venice charter. It rewrote specific processes and definitions in the form of a very comprehensive guideline that starts with understanding and assessment of a heritage site, and ending with site sustainable management; providing an implementation plan.

ICOMOS New-Delhi — Madrid Document, 2017

In 2017, the ICOMOS published a new document specifically concerned with conserving modern heritage; titled: "Approaches to the Conservation of Twentieth Century Cultural Heritage, Madrid - New Delhi". It takes on, in its first article, a detailed assessment of the cultural significance and heritage identification:

"The identification and assessment of the significance of twentieth-century cultural heritage should use accepted heritage criteria. The cultural heritage of this particular century (including all of its elements) is a physical record of its time, location and use. Its cultural significance may rest in its tangible attributes, including physical location, views, design ..."Significance may also lie in use, historic, social, scientific or spiritual associations, or evidence of creative genius and/or in its intangible values"

Approaches to the Conservation of Twentieth Century Cultural Heritage. ICOMOS (2017)

It also goes to mention in its second article the following:

"Understanding how cultural significance is manifest in the heritage of the twentieth century requires an assessment of how different attributes, elements and values contribute to that significance. This is an essential prerequisite to making appropriate decisions about its care, interpretation and the conservation of its authenticity and integrity. Places and sites evolve over time and later alterations may have cultural significance. Different conservation approaches and methods may be necessary across a heritage place or individual site."

Approaches to the Conservation of Twentieth Century Cultural Heritage. ICOMOS (2017)

From both articles, it is clear how essential it is to assess all possible elements and values that contribute to a building's significant value. Tangible as well as intangible attributes play a vital role in the importance and value of a monument. The document also specifically addresses the intervention processes, if any. According to it, it is incredibly necessary to develop clear policies and guidelines upon which the process is planned and executed, thus limiting and controlling the amount of change that is to occur in a building of value. The article 2.4 goes as follows:

"For every development or conservation action, clear policies and guidelines should be established before starting any intervention, so as to define the acceptable limits of change. A conservation plan/management plan should define the significant parts of the heritage place or site, vulnerabilities affecting it, the areas where interventions are possible, the optimum usage of the

site and the conservation measures to be taken. It should consider the specific principles (such as architectural, planning, structural and so on) and technologies used in the twentieth century.”

Approaches to the Conservation of Twentieth Century Cultural Heritage. ICOMOS (2017)

5. The role of the Public and the Government

In order to face the threat facing Egyptian modernist heritage, cultural awareness programs and legislative amendments need to take place; recognizing that the solution lies in a true interaction between both the public and the officials.

5.1. Public Awareness

Public awareness, and the sense of belonging to heritage in general in Egypt is a problem that needs extensive efforts. One of the basic causes for damage to heritage buildings and sites is the lack of awareness of both officials and owners/users of the buildings; leading to their eventual demolition. Also, the non-involvement of people in the conservation process impedes any sense of public ownership or role in the discourse.

It is necessary to research well the complexity of the relationship between the Egyptian people and their heritage. In order to achieve a stage where people develop a sense of responsibility towards their own heritage, it is important for the conservation, restoration and adaptive reuse projects to embody a participatory approach, where they serve directly the local residents of the neighborhoods.

It is also a governmental role, to consistently launch programs that encourage people to further understand the significance of their heritage and the role they play in its conservation and sustainable maintenance. The programs need to help locals gain insight into the intellectual ideas that gave birth to such heritage. These programs need to take into consideration the kind of community and age groups targeted. None the less, these programs need to be inclusive of all social sectors, especially heritage-buildings-owners, officials of the development authority and people living in and around the heritage areas/buildings.

Various points that can be considered in public awareness programs:

- Workshops, talks and photo exhibitions of modern heritage buildings in specific.
- Identifying and co-ordinate the efforts of different stakeholders and authorities; in an attempt to draw more knowledge and finance into the local modern heritage conservation scene.

The stakeholders being:

- Public authorities that deal with heritage conservation like the NOUH, SCA, Ministry of Antiquities, the Ministry of Culture, and others.
- Private property owners.
- Local initiatives: CairObserver, Baladilab, Cairo urban sketchers, Cairo walks, CLUSTER, Megawra and Studio Lala ... etc.

5.2. Proposed Legislative Amendments

When it comes to culture-related laws, the challenge lies in its relationship with philosophy, government responsibility, civil rights, and the public. It is important that the laws reflect the government's responsibility towards the nation's cultural heritage. It must consider the variable political, social and financial states of the cities. It is about serving mutually the benefit of the state and the benefit of the people as well.

Building on the aforementioned Law no.117 of 1983, Chapter 1, Article 7, that mentions the committees of the Supreme council of Antiquities. If this law is modified to include a council for the modernist heritage, it could

work along multiple local initiatives and in research programs that could directly benefit the modernist heritage scene in Egypt.

In addition, Law no. 144 of 2006, could include a clear process of identifying such heritage buildings and the proper way of preserving them. Identifying categories for modernist heritage based on uses/ state would help identify the different necessities that such buildings requires. Egyptian modernist heritage is mainly governmental buildings and residential ones, each with their own unique challenges that should be reflected in the legislative laws, for example:

Residential buildings:

A major challenge is the public awareness of such heritage, as mentioned above, and incentivizing building owners to accept such heritage. Currently, the way the legislative process works, puts a lot of obstacles in the way of people living in a heritage buildings. The bureaucratic processes put a lot of limitations to what the owner can do or maintain in their own house. Consequently, owners find themselves in front of the choice between preservation versus destruction and building much more profitable high rises.

The legislative law should include incentives like financial support, property tax exemption, as well as settling legal issues in exchange to safeguarding their built modern heritage. As well as remove/speed the bureaucratic process that slows down the maintenance of heritage buildings.

Public buildings:

They are functional buildings, being used every day, with a lot of periodic maintenance needed. Preservation interventions need to be easily managed, utilizing accessible, durable materials and skills.

Abandoned buildings:

The law should include owners of such buildings as an integral part of the conservation effort. Public-private partnership should be encouraged as a way to mobilize finances and resources towards restoration of modern heritage.

In the case of abandoned buildings, adaptive re-use would be a widely acceptable option. On one hand, it would generate profit to the owner, stopping him from demolishing the building while attracting private investments to the modern heritage conservation scene. On the other hand it puts an abandoned building into good use.

The laws however, should be specific in term of:

- The choice of the proper use that fits the existing building spaces
- It has to be a public use, where people would be able to access and get more in touch with the building and its story; uses like: tourist-oriented activities, museums, tourist information centers, tourist hotel, arts and crafts center, ...etc.
- The adaptive reuse should be encouraged in deliberation with the owner(s) of the building.

6. The ICOMOS Burra Charter: A Comprehensive Guide

'The ICOMOS Burra Charter of 2013' includes quite a comprehensive guide that targets the conservation process from the very beginning of assessment of a monument or a site, till the sustainable management of the site after the restoration project had taken place. Under the 'Burra Charter' provisions, people involved in the conservation of heritage places should:

- Develop a vast understanding of the place's cultural significance, which should further determine the decisions about it.
- Involve the community by embodying a participatory approach

- Take all tangible and intangible attributes into consideration
- Consider the monument's surrounding urban fabric
- Provide appropriate adaptive reuse ideas
- Provide means of security for the place
- Use available interdisciplinary expertise
- Document all changes and all the conservation process
- Interpret and present the place in a way appropriate to its significance



Figure 4. TheBurra charter process *Extracted from the Burra charter, p.10

7. Conclusion

The question here poses itself: if international efforts are rather succeeding in saving modernist heritage of the world, why is Egyptian modern heritage suffering such a severely deteriorating condition?

Hayden White spoke of the rupture that isolates a period that is not immediately prior to our present but prior to that, as a moment to remember and look back at. The end of the 19th century until early 20th century is that moment to remember for a certain generation of Egyptians and the cultural and political transformation of the 1950s is its rupture (Elshahed 2007). A short-lived modernist project ended with a state of loss of civic pride. The 1967 defeat against Israel and the subsequent death of Nasser symbolized the failure of the modernist ideology. Consequently, the Egyptian society was facing an identity crisis in the face of the transition towards a more global economy. For an entire Egyptian generation, the ornamentation represents a beauty they long for, where the rise of socialism and the devoid of ornament are not much remembered.

It is possible through some revision and modification of the current Egyptian laws to include modern heritage to the scope of the governmental protection and care. However, for this to happen, local awareness of the Egyptian has to radically change. Luckily, some local initiatives are working hard on the ground to prevent the demolition and deterioration of modernist heritage. Such local movements include Save Alex and Heliopolis heritage initiative that emerged completely from within the community. Luckily enough, the government has responded to some of those local requests.

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