

The Community & Built Environment





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للعمارة والتراث

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The Community and Built Environment

As part of our pursuit to preserve and promote Urban Heritage, The Tarek Waly Center has launched a tri-annual online journal

The Waly Center Journal will be composed of a number of essays relaying a particular theme, that declares our point of view about our built environment and also our main interests .

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Announcement:

Urban Research

The Tarek Waly Center has expanded its field of expertise to involve a separate branch for “**Urban Research**” as an added service.

The “**Urban Research**” is based on 30 years of accumulated experience in the field of Urban Planning and Architecture, where we published a number of books and lectured in various institutes around that topic.

The Center has had the chance as well to deal with governmental institutes such as the Supreme Council of Antiquities, The Ministry of Culture and The Ministry of Housing. Moreover, with local governorates such as the Cairo Governorate and Red Sea Governorate, and on the international level with the UNESCO.

The Research comprises of Urban Heritage research which tackles the historical analysis, and Contemporary Urban research which involves issues such as the challenges facing the Egyptian communities. For previous researches on the subject please visit our website.

We would like to announce that the mailing address is now the same as the office's address.



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One of the most important predicaments before the arena of social and contemporary urbanism is the issue of identity;

this is because urbanism is a mirror of society, architecture and urbanism in their totality, in a reciprocal relationship where they are mutually and deeply influenced. Urbanism is originally based on community needs and its physical, intellectual and moral requirements. It expresses in its essence, the culture, aspirations and dreams of the community and its outcome is influenced by community problems and the grief and pain. Urbanism is an entity that may not be viewed in absence of its community context as it is what grants its pride and causes its weakness or fall.

It gets stronger and more harmonious when united and may easily disintegrate when hashed. Urbanism bears within it the principles and values of the community, and displays in its apparent features, the colour, and fragrance of the land on which it was born and thrives.

A community represent the soil that contains the seeds of urbanism until they germinate, its fertility affect the strength of its urbanism, and its richness and originality lead to freshness of its leaves and the proliferation of its branches. Hence, the roots of urbanism and the centre of gravity of its bond with the community and its identity .As those roots always live in the depths of a community , therefore they acquire its colour , revolve in the orbit of the same principles of the community .



Furthermore , it communicates the same message that has been handed over through successive generations of the community . Thus, they suffer the same confusions and face all its problems. Perhaps, this close bondage between the identity of architecture and urbanism on one side and the identity of the community on the other, explains the apparent distortion of the identity of our contemporary urbanism. The identity of Arab urbanism similar to ours, suffer the loss of awareness of their identity and a blurred overview of the past, present and future. Confusion prevails in the paradigms of original versus contemporary, indigenous versus globalization, unity versus division, the visible versus the entrenched, materialistic versus human , etc . .

The identity in question , exists far beyond those visual motifs , configurations , and decorations . Rather it is a true reflection to belong of the human being with its inborn nature and the community with its values and traditions , in addition to a profound respect for the place and its attributes . Identity is born from within us and within us and it grows and is formulated in accordance with our current experiences .

It requires a high degree of flexibility in order for it to live with us and face the challenges of our reality. Enough flexibility in concurrence with the changes of our lives, and updates.

At the same time it requires the rigidity that is to impose the continuity of the constants of our values and principles. It may has become inevitable to undergo a self review in order for us to realize the reasons behind our loss of identity , the role of each of us in this loss and therefore , his responsibility to overcome the crisis that have afflicted our community and its urbanism for decades .



Why Has our Urbanism Lost Its Arabic identity?
The secret behind the split of the identity of Arab urbanism, between issues such as originality versus contemporary, and local versus globalization , has gradually grown as a result of the conflict within our hearts between the tide of contemporary western civilization which encroached on our territories , against our will , first , through colonization , and then , by means of domination and economic control .

Those thoroughbred heritage roots of our community , and its urbanism , which was once a beacon that lit for others ,as well as a University for urbanism sciences which offered education for the western civilization as a whole . What exacerbates this conflict is the weakness of our ability to confront it.

This is attributed to the deteriorating conditions , in general , in our Arab community in addition to the state of loss of self-confidence due to a weakened Arabic culture of , the fluctuations of its economic conditions , the disintegration of its entities , and the corruption of its political systems .



Other factors are the loss of a sense of belonging to the Arab cultural entity and culture , the loss of the concept of Arabism with what it holds of pride of the collective identity , and what it manifests of the principles of common loyalty , a common future , a single nation , one destiny and a common goal , a focused vision to one another and towards the world. And thus, a single identity. This inevitably has led to the exit of the Arab community from the race track of civilization , and has shifted its role to that of a lost entity looking for followers looking to bring it back again to the ranks of the competitors as well as to pursue its underlying dreams for the restoration of the summit once again .



For a long time, the Arab urbanism as a whole and the Egyptian urbanism in particular have reflected the status of our nation at the height of its glory. It was characterised by originality, depth, harmony among its components and integration of its elements in addition to the link and compatibility with the environment. Meaningful architecture and urbanism held respect for community values and derivation of its traditions , within the framework of which is capable of innovation and infinite renewal . Correlations among its elements simulate mutual relations among community members in terms of integration with each other , a sense of attachment and belonging to their place .

Correlations among its elements simulate mutual relations among community members in terms of integration with each other , a sense of attachment and belonging to their place . Its identity has carried the cultural paradigm identified with all of those disparate ages , which have spontaneously rolled on our country , without any posing or apprehension . This identity was originated from the Egyptian, which has been formed through ages of many years and by the multi-cultural accumulation which have influenced this character and added new dimensions to its authenticity .Our present time urbanism illustrates a fluctuating hazy image, devoid of confidence and belonging to our culture and civilization. It further displays a physical outputs which affirm the state of disintegration and minority, which was reached . It is typified with a great break away from the local environment , whether geographically or historically , and a denial of the human conditions and requirements . Thus it has become the random rather than human urbanism. Since urbanism themes , spirit and styles are often imported from other environments which are alien to its indigenous environment that vary in that direction due to the lack of a communal vision and yearning . If one wanders within any of an Arab city , dozens of cities within one city would be perceived which are totally different .

The variations among them are in the economic level architectural design , and relationships of urban fabric which are all often superficial .It has already been asserted that a correlation of the impact between urbanism and community exist. What enhances or spoils one of them eventually leads to the repair or disruption of the other , however , the lead in the process for reviewing and addressing the issue of the loss of identity and belonging lies within the community .



What Next?!

The state of being subordinate , is the key to the mystery of the dilemma of the loss of identity and the origin of the conflict on issues such as originality versus contemporary . A community's continuing search for idols to follow , whether they are prosperous ages in its own history or glories achieved by its predecessors , or whether they are other alien cultures that currently impose their experiences and dominate a community's view of the successes they have achieved , neither can lead in any case , to restore a lost sense of belonging and identity . The debate about the meaning of identity , the interpretation of the principles and rewriting values to comply with our inactivated thinking will not lead us or our urbanism to achieve desired goals . No longer do we have the time to lament over glories of our past or to continue the argument over old and new . Identity stems from an inherent awareness of who we are today. Distortion or haziness of this awareness is the origin of the ailment that we suffer , due to the loss of that identity . The course to restore our lost identity begins with confessing a collective failing we have exercised in the protection of our unity , originality and civilization against an open defiance of its independence and encroachment on its identity . We also have to face ourselves with the fact that the world we live in , no longer offers the largest share for choice as the strongest imposes its control , while the most suitable its dominance . There is no room for more slogans that relate to what we were once , but that the world perceives who we are today . We have to look for our roles as individuals and communities , in restoring the balance of this great Arab homeland . At the same time we have to face the duality that we practice in thinking about our past and future , our exterior and interior .

That , depicts a possibility to separate words and deeds always , and a right to boast of the glory of our ancestors and their civilization at the same time that we follow the footsteps of others to overcome the predicament of economic, political and even social . We are not up against one choice of two but rather , we are facing a third innovation which come from within us and expresses our identity . A review of our vision of ourselves to restore self-confidence, pride of Arab culture and the recovery of sense of belonging to community, is the first step in getting rid of being civilization subordinates. We have lived this situation for centuries, which have caused the loss of community and urbanism identity. A little before this stage we have to grasp the essence of individual and community identities. This is to be done in light of all the enormous cultural accumulations which have formulated our previous civilization. As Arabs and Egyptians we experience an intrinsic battle in our hearts , to impose the presence of our civilization against the invasion of the modern culture, in the hope of correcting this deformity, which has infected our culture and identity . We start from the notion that accumulations of the past are those that form our awareness of our present , that our local community draws our relationship with the whole world and that there is in fact there is no line that separates the past and present , but both lead to the other and impacts and is impacted by one another . The belief that our present is a combination of the fragrance of the past and dream of the future , settle the issue of the conflict between originality and modernity , and that there is originally no conflict , as it is an indivisible whole . **This leads us only to the recovery of identity. It is a dilemma of reviving the essence and restoring that relationship, which has long linked the constants of man and space in the shadow of the ever-changing time.**



Architecture without Architects

Omnia Khalil

At the outset, man's endeavor had been to replicate nature in its creative expressive abilities granted by The Creator. Man has translated them in innovative lines, applied to his products. When Man began to search for a shelter and a place to protect him from natural phenomena, he resumed to caves. This was followed by an attempt to add impulsive aesthetic forms and drawings that depicted his simple primitive life. As Man searched for the origins of beauty and eye pleasing pictures to enrich his spirit and stimulate positive energies towards his life. The search for beauty as an innate sense instinctively, stems from a human being when he creates. The results are associated with several factors, including location, culture or national affiliation. Architecture being the highest medium of art, as it is the form of art which provides man with several needs, including functional and aesthetic ones. Today, after an extended journey of man, spontaneous aesthetic expression pattern continued, in different forms. Building facades are an expression of different cultures of communities and the product of their research expeditions. The urban environment presented in architecture, continued, in quest for beauty and eye pleasing images. At the same time, it has attempted to reach the perfection of the natural environment and its formations. The urban environment presents the formal trend that may not be linked to the broad sector of the community. What is to be addressed through this study are the popular artistic creations, which have kept pace with, and complemented the art of architecture. This non-formal and spontaneous form of art, originates from the people.

The search begins with the morphology of Cairo and the concept of beauty adopted by its inhabitants. Cairo, the Capital of Egypt, has been characterized by its various consecutive epochs. That has enhanced the city

with systems, rich art forms, and elements of meaning. Architecture evolved, since the inception of Cairo, by the Fatimids followed by Ayyubids, Mamluks and Ottomans. Then Cairo entered into a new phase, as it spread to encompass the two banks of the River Nile to the east and west. Life, architecture and art continued to develop, either negatively or positively, according to the circumstances of life and politics in Egypt throughout the nineteenth century. The twentieth century took Egypt on the rise and advancement in various aspects of life, and it was art, architecture and innovation that witnessed a gradual development. As a result of the 1967 setback, the society underwent a massive change on the social and political fronts. That was reflected in architecture, urbanism and art that are the subject of this research.

Viewing the city as a living reflection of life within it, a lot of spontaneity and impulsiveness is monitored even in the finest, most organized and planned districts.





Also, artistic and architectural changes and developments of The Capital Cairo are monitored, since the outset of the twentieth century. This, spontaneity has not only been evident in construction and buildings, but also in man and community, who reflect and are at the same time a reflection of political, economic, and social conditions which passing by were witnessed by Cairo. They express a holistic condition that has afflicted the community, namely individualism. Each individual exists through life as one single unit not belonging to a group. Since buildings contain stone and human beings, who are the same individualists who execute them, hence, the buildings, carry the same attribute. Each building stands firmly alone on the ground, without any interaction or harmony with the rest of the buildings around it.

The transformation of the external shell of a building, containing a skeleton inside, affects and is affected by the external shell, only as a part of the building, not as a part of a combination of buildings. This is a reflection of general conditions of the communal situation in Cairo.



With the rampant ugliness in the city, (not only in poor areas, but in most urban morphologies in Cairo whether they are organized or unorganized) all inhabitants of different classes, attempt to search for beauty and its vocabulary. They even attempt to crea-

ate a beautiful image (from each class' viewpoint). The attempts to achieve a beautiful image by the different classes are expressed by each class according to their vision and potentials. With the loss of identity, sense of distinction and with living under changing conditions economically and politically, each try to beautify his private remaining space.

Research Methodology: We decided to deal with the building facades on 3 levels :

The first level : Is the interface between privacy versus public presented in a building confrontation with the community .

The second level: Deals with the overlook from the inside to the outside presented in buildings balconies.

The third level: Is the interaction of the outside with the inside presented in the shops.

Private and Public Interface

Through the history of Cairo, folk art appeared on the facades of buildings (especially residential), in the form of drawings or writings on external walls. Due to ancient doctrines of religious architecture in Cairo, religious writings occupied religious buildings in an orderly and neat . The development of the urban scene in the last thirty

psychological configuration, resulting from changes in the political, economic, and social, situations. and, as already mentioned for the people and how he became its members live all of them alone in the crucible of isolated, nor live individuals in the community as a group, the



expression of self is missing in the circles of public and try each to prove himself and his presence, which was reflected on cars and buildings of the personal words reflect the owner's identity. The issue of concern in our research is the facades of buildings, which represents an ongoing dialogue between the private and public. Graphics and writings often appeared during the fifties and sixties on the facades of buildings in most of lower class popular culture districts. Those were specifically religious with pilgrimage to Mecca as the prevailing theme. However, what was photographically spotted of the product of the last thirty years in Cairo reflects a totally different trend. It appears to be a real spontaneous expression in quest of the identity of the community. Moreover, it is an attempt to adorn buildings architecturally by architects , despite financial hardships. Beautify architecturally by the architects. I observed a prevailing trend of unfinished red-brick buildings , which legally came to being , due to the creation of new roads, and an unplanned influx of people into the city. I was surprised about the presence of the same formats in districts planned by urban designers and architects. Similarly, they chose to express their identity through writing on buildings. The philosophy of architecture without architects is manifested in the spontaneous expression of people's identity prevails , without waiting or trying to find those who can organize or express it .





Overlook From the Inside to the Outside

The balcony space, which is an evolution of the traditional wooden lattice bow window (Mashrabiya) space , is a semi private space . It is a part of the external interface of the building and an overlook by those inside the building to the outside. Balconies are usually treated architecturally with the same finishing materials of the facade, using the same colors. Lately , a trend of painting balconies emerged , where people from different cultures and different social classes, formulate the spaces of their balconies . This phenomenon may be unraveled by several factors , including lack of interest in cleaning facades which are covered by dreary grey color, in addition to lack of maintenance . Another factor is the development of paints with cheerful colors. People from different cultures and different social classes, form a vacuum in the balcony of their own. People are after individual distinction, in what they can control and beautify in their internal or external spaces in the way that they think appropriate, using the vocabulary and language of their own lives. It is another phenomenon of architecture without architects, where people spontaneously search for elements what is

colors, in search for beauty from their view points.





Interaction Between the Outside and the Inside
Since the seventies , that witnessed an economic openness , resulting in the spread of consumerism in Egypt, trade had flourished . Commercial professions become the ambition of many people. The Egyptian individual underwent a transformation from a manufacturer to a dealer and from a producer to a consumer. This was architecturally translated to the occupation of ground floors of residential blocks for commercial activities on street fronts. Shop owners diligently engaged in a pursuit after forms and configurations, which reflected the theme of the business, to ensure attraction of the public. Being the only concern of traders and shop owners , they embellished shop fronts in complete detachment from the identities of locales , neighborhoods , buildings, and even from the product type offered and how to promote it . Their view- points of shop keepers did not greatly differ from one area to another. When asked about the external form of a shop and the criteria for their choices, similar responses conveyed that they just want to draw attention to the shop and they usually employ advertising agencies to implement their latest trends. They often expressed their surprise over the discussion about the role of architectural design , and most of them retorted that they do not believe that there was any relationship between the design interface between the shops and the building which they were a part of . Shop fronts decorations were similar across different areas. Mokattam which is a relatively modern district, exhibited similar shop designs as those of the ancient buildings with their wooden lattice oriel in Sayyedah Zainab. The use of loud colors and lights to attract attention are a common denominator. This presents another phenomenon of architecture without architects. The same product is used to produce spontaneous motifs and formations on shop fronts, in search of attractive images, of multiple products.





The general characteristic manifested in the architecture and art trends in the last three decades has been individualism. Apart from the evaluation of the aesthetic formations of these innovations, the incidental result is the absence of a mass trend in the overall picture of architecture and associated folk arts. A phenomenon that calls for re-evaluation, so that we can build a status of a new communal architecture and artistic milieu.



A 10 minutes documentary film (Architecture without Architects)
<http://www.youtube.com/user/Okhalil1984?feature=mhee>



Curbitecture

Yahia Shawkat

An urban morphology that is more than just spontaneous

This article outlines a community-based learning (CBL) course; Architecture; Is it Art or Engineering? I taught at the American University in Cairo.

Introduction

The side-walk was imported to Egypt in the second half of the 19th Century when European urban planning thought started shaping our cities; however the tradition of semi-private ownership of the space in front of one's property did not disappear.

Take a walk on any side-walk – if you can find one – and you will be constantly interrupted by a miscellany of produce, parked vehicles, furniture, kiosks and of course, people.

In most neighbourhoods, shops hog their side-walks with their wares, pharmacies and food outlets park their delivery bikes, cafes blanket their pavement and then some with tables and chairs, and business and residential buildings park their cars and seat their porters.

Bridges are no different.

Kubry Al Gam'a that links Al Manial to Giza and, more recently, Kubry Al Munib, part of Cairo's snaking Al Dayry (ring road), have become 'in' places for Cairo's working classes.

Throngs of revellers while the evening hours away, smoking shisha and sipping humous on plastic chairs ferried daily on the backs of push-carts up the on-ramps, and onto the curbs of the highway.

It is not unusual on Thursday nights to find no less than three bridal processions at any one time stopping for a mini-ceremony and photo shoot on the bridge. On highway roadsides, sidewalks grow, or at times disappear altogether, giving way to patches of green, or desert. Here, microbus stops sprout organically at lively junctions, generating a micro-service industry

fuelling travellers with newspapers, tea and coffee as well as sandwiches.

Near places of produce or markets, temporary shacks sell fruits, vegetables and fish.

The Other Five Million

These organic businesses are estimated to employ between 1.3 million to five million people – depending on the study – which translates to up to 12.5% of the entire workforce, quite a significant job creator then.

Needless to say these businesses are self-owned, have no insurance or healthcare, and most importantly, security of tenure is good in well-established areas, where curbs are usually rented out from local strong-men.

It does remain shaky elsewhere with constant acts of eviction by the baladeyya, or local council police that usually mean the loss of their merchandise and set-up, i.e. their capital.

Local residents claim insecurity from street vendors, although in some instances they are also their customers.

Local government claims misuse of public land and right-of-way, but do little to fully utilise. Naturally, almost no public money is allocated to these enterprises, except if you calculate the cost of the sidewalks and a stillborn attempt to organise a union, while private funds largely ignore them.

Money that does go into the businesses is usually eked out by their proprietors from miniscule savings, selling off heirlooms or borrowing off family, although after the collapse of the state's security apparatus the street-vending business has flourished and in lucrative places such as Tahrir Square and Giza Square, vendors turn a considerable profit.



In all, a recent study by a researcher at the Department of policy at the American University in Cairo believes;

“...governments must attempt to understand the underlying factors which cause the young to take up street vending and choose to stay informal.”

Design

The hardscrabble conditions that street-entrepreneurs face have led them to come up with ingenious and quirky solutions, ranging from reused boxes and paint buckets to elaborate shacks tapping in to the grid.

The more dangerous the location, the more portable the material and - in the event of a crack-down - of disposable value.

Image is important in as much as advertising your merchandise and grabbing the attention of passers-by.

It is not all rosy though. We have discovered how most set-ups require a tremendous amount of effort to run and maintain, making it doubly hard for people with ailments and those generally over forty.

Seating posture is the prime culprit, as well as transportation of drinking-quality water for tea. Kiosks generally had a problem with electrocution as wiring in their metal shacks was pretty basic, while petty theft as the sprawl of merchandise outside the kiosk is hard to monitor. We also found ingenious solutions, evidence of how much designers need to learn from the real-world as much or even more than what they learn in the class-room.

Project Brief

To raise the efficiency of an existing set-up through a participatory process with the main aim of easing physical hardship, and secondary aim of raising revenue, while budgeting the modifications to be within 15 percent of the original cost.

Students sought vendors on their own and offered them their design services for free.

Some decided to help out people they already knew who were not vendors, but could not afford design fees, so there are examples of modifications for a home, a security kiosk and a felluca. Interviews were the primary source of their information, after which scale models were built and used to communicate the modifications with their clients, which they consulted with once a week.

They presented their progress in class, also on a weekly basis and in five weeks, most of them were able to reach a level of modification that matched the brief.

A couple of students exceeded the brief and forayed into the world of security of tenure and the right to use land.





Conclusion

I was asked by the department, along with all other faculty, to involve the January 25th Revolution in our courses when the semester started in late February, 2011.

After some thought, my decision was to take the students to the roots of the revolution rather than bring the “Revolution” to them, by having them interact with one of the marginalised communities they would not have normally met, to better understand why the country has reached the point where the current state policy must be replaced by one more inclusive of its people. In the end the course showed how a group of

In the end the course showed how a group of students volunteering their time towards marginalised communities can affect change, but also, how community-based courses are a valuable tool in helping raise the awareness of young generations about disadvantaged groups by channelling their enthusiasm and energy in real-world projects rather than the controlled environments of classrooms.





The Hidden Treasures Project, Tanneries Old Cairo

Omnia Khalil

An Early Start

When I was ten years old I participated in the activities of the Generation Centre activities studies re youth and social aspects . During one of my visits to the Center in The Aqueduct Wall (Ein El-Siera) , on a day dedicated to children working in the local area , I came to realize that there are children who lead a lifestyle different from mine . They did not go to school every day as I did , rather , they went to their work, which was accidentally based in the vicinity of The Aqueduct Wall (Ein El-Siera) . Their work was confined in car repair workshops, bakeries, and tanneries. This issue often arose my awareness ,and provoked questions , that I could not find answers to , with my immature mind . Those persistent queries continued to grow , in search of answers which would satisfy my curiosity , especially when I passed through the same vicinity of The Aqueduct Wall (Ein El-Siera) and the tannery . As I frequently passed by the area with my mother , she explained to me what work in a

tannery entailed . At that instance , I became impressed with these monumental high buildings , consisting of wood slates, wondering about what they were and what was behind them . These queries continued to increasingly haunt me as I opened up to life in the years of the formation of self awareness and thinking , as expected of the youth of my generation . I was never freed of those queries, for which I was looking for answers, even as I joined the Department of Architecture. They continued to accompany me through my journey. My daily route passed through this particular vicinity, back and forth to and from the university. That allowed me to contemplate and view, different and distinct, architectural configurations, while maintaining images of children who work there. Those were images that were deep rooted in my mind and my conscious which provoked my responsibility towards this community. My belonging to a middle class Cairene family which strongly held onto their values was the driving force behind my interest in the co-relation between





urbanism of the city and its community in addition to their mutual influence . This vision was enhanced , by my study of architecture , which crystallized my interests in the approach to the development of such communities that may be subjected to deficiencies , or problems resulting from the loss of the rights of community members for a decent life . My readings on Cairo, assured me of the need for development and reformulating the relationship between urbanism and the community. The outset for this development, I identified with, is community participation. I worked hard to focus on this as the overriding concept of my graduation project associated with this pattern , and my deep-rooted . This was in pursuit of an answer to the queries that have haunted me for years, since my childhood. It was high time to embark on the inquest and the search for the answer. Therefore , I chose to work on a development project of the tanneries in old Cairo. I undertook a research behind The Aqueduct Wall , and the wide eyes that deeply impressed me in my childhood . As well, I aimed for the visionary application to define the link between architecture, history, society, and the upgrading of the place and its inhabitants. The aim is to secure a chance for a better community.



The Choice of a Path through Life and Professional Practice
My search for Cairo and its urban community began, encompassing its morphological formations of overlapping historical periods that have its impact

on its heritage and composition. The legacy, left to us, contains historical places and buildings. A careful review of documented communities of heritage reveals the existence of a lot of hidden areas that are not clearly obvious. These embrace the heritage and the communal collective memory of the city , that span across successive centuries . These are seemingly random and disorganized, but they hold, in their core, the history and life of the community. This applies to areas for industries and crafts , located within districts and areas of heritage , with contains of treasures hidden in buildings and abilities of their inhabitants to work and innovate . As quoted: «Through the trip, you must find a hidden treasure” Paulo Coelho. In Cairo a lot of these communities exist . Such communities , from my view point of , are in need of some development , urban and architecture regulations to operate more efficiently in the endeavors of economic and social improvements in Cairo to serve their inhabitants specifically and those of the community of Cairo in general .

Outset of the Journey

Thus, my journey started. It was in search for the hidden treasures in the tanneries area. This was carried out through frequent visits , as it was difficult to capture all the underlying and obvious patterns of this urban community of industry and craft entity , through a single visit . The location of the area behind the fence of The Aqueduct Wall (Sur- Magra Al Ouyoon) , lends it a historical and heritage significance . In addition, it enjoyed an industrial and artisanal richness. The attributes of its workers are distinctly unique as they are mated with the history and economic potential of a specific craft and a distinctive community . These may be witnessed through very important facts of an earlier stage. The revenues accrued from the tannery industrial community accounted for more than



leading countries in the world in the export of tanned and manufactured leather. However, it has turned now into one of the developing countries, which implements the worst phase of leather tanning in before its exportation. On the other hand, loud claims and proposals for the relocation of the whole tanneries community to Alrubiki area on the Cairo-Ismailia road. Many advocates for the relocation procedure believe that the tannery industrial community area should be expelled from the heart of the capital city to occupy a desert territory of one of a new city. This is perceived in absence of an inspection of alternatives to address the disadvantages, and maximize the pros and the treasures inherent in the community, in absence of the community participation.



Opting for my project my preoccupation became focused on finding an answer to a principle question : How could I defend this area to strive and develop into a better community ?

The answer lied within the area itself, its community regarding its life and requirements in the same place with its history and heritage .The tanneries as identified, consists mainly of workshops and labor teams. Dwellings existed only around the tanneries or on the peripheries of the area. Therefore my attention was focused on studying and attempting to absorb the essence of the tanneries themselves ,

how they operate and their workers on one hand, on the other hand get to know their relics within the vicinity , which forms a part of the tanneries . Repetitive and varied visits took place aiming to discover history of the region , water , and relics , as well as industry , craft, local community and the problems and challenges it confronts to strive and operate .

During visits to the craft community , I held a concept ,a dream and a faith to aim for a better community for those who live and work there . That perspective formed my view, to discover this world and these people. Could I really work out anything to improve this place? With the first visit to the tanneries, the reaction of one of the workers in the region was very violent. He followed my footsteps shouting his flagrant wishes for my death. He thought that I was a journalist, with my camera to force them to relocate to Alrubiky area and destroy their livelihoods. His indignation was in defense of the right to survive, and rejection of injustice. I fully understood his reaction and even sympathized with him, in recognition of his right and rejection of injustice. Successive visits followed, in an attempt to talk to community members, to collect. Their views on problems and solutions to their area. Consequently, a sense of credibility and a humanistic bond emerged, with some of the workers in the area. They allowed me the freedom, and at some instances they even accompanied me to explore to enter this magical world. They explained the tanning processes its stages, and the effects of the relocation , the slaughter house from its nearby old site to its current location . They talked about seasons and holidays and especially Eid al-Adha which represented a high buy and sell activities for them. I gained new knowledge about industries and crafts inherited from old times , as they explained the stages of the tanning industry , as they acknowledged the presence of hazardous



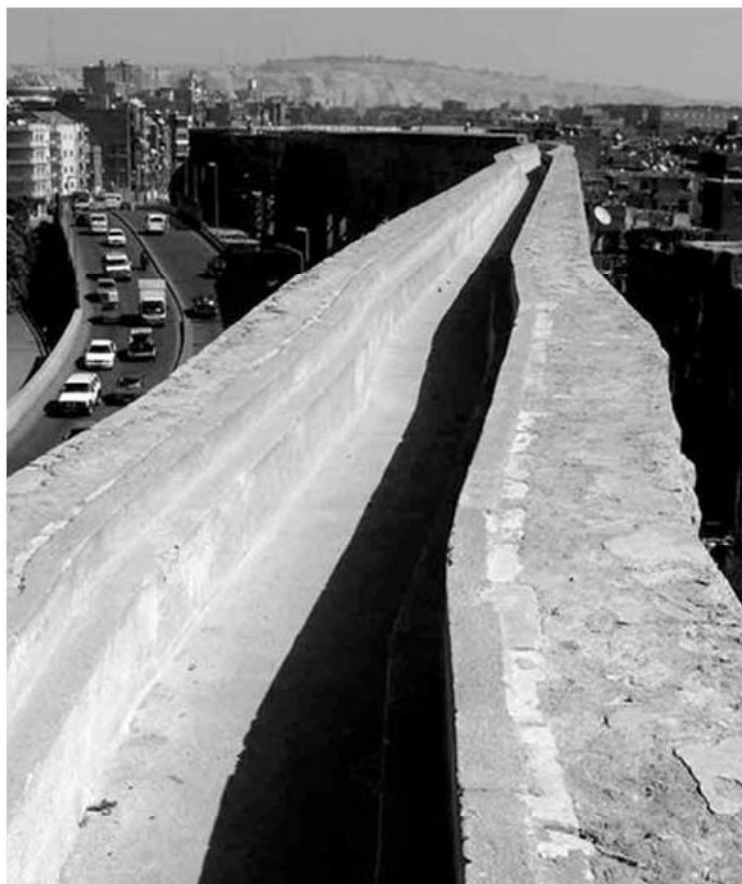
chemicals in use , and the lack of a drainage system allocated for the area . This hindered movement on the streets of the area. They also talked a lot about the industrial craft school of tanning, which offered education of the scientific theoretical aspect of tanning which integrated with the practice applied in the area. While the school building still remains, however, it is abandoned as schooling activities has stopped for years.

Tanneries present a special case by all measures. The more one explores the area the more hidden treasures and underlying meanings are unveiled. The limited presence of a small population who live on the peripheral sides of this triangular area , conveys an appearance of a deserted locale at night , which holds many secrets.

Another aspect of my visits to the area was to detect and identify the monuments within, and the extent of interaction that takes place between the community and its history within the context of a particular location. A bath that belongs to the Fatimid era still stands within the area. It is hardly identifiable, as a monument, for the outsider while entering the area. It is merely perceived as a different building, surmounted by an inclined iron roof to protect it. Its exterior walls are of a bit crumbled, red brick. As the tanners use its floor for sun drying and ventilation, one

may think for a moment that it is a staff work station. An eight acre yard extends close to this monument. It houses the bath and is overlooked by the deserted industrial craft school of tanning as well as the abandoned tannery buildings. On this yard, a great heap of trash, litter and waste accumulates daily by the Governorate garbage trucks. This action is taken to guarantee that none of the individuals may be able to use any tract of the yard for construction. The second trend was the archaeological discovery of the water source in the area, The Aquaduct Wall (Sur-Magra al Ouyoon) . I went to its small viaduct , the ascending path which brought about exciting illusions of the past , as I climbed the same slope, which was used by animals working on the management and operation of major water wheels to raise the water from the River Nile level to that of the fence . Having reached that level, the water was then accumulated in an octagonal basin. The water was then poured in the course of the fence itself, which is fully safe, as one walks through or over it at its soaring altitude, due to its breadth. It is a unique experience , which reveals yet another hidden dimension , of the relationship between this physical entity and its communication with the River Nile , as the water source for the life of the city and its inhabitants. Moreover it is a revelation of the vitality of the interplay of this place with water since previous eras.





The Journey; A Responsibility and a Mission

The question remains as to why I defend the existence of the community of this area , as well as various other areas . They carry a long history of Cairo, with its human richness, urbanism, and architecture. Detaching and alienating people and activities from their original location following an official decision, regardless of community participation, is not acceptable. The presence of a community in a specific location is based on a reason , even if it was not a historical cause , as the past and present of a community grant it the right and cause for their attachment to their place . The tanneries had been located in their place since many eras, for many reasons. The Fatimid were the first to establish leather tanneries in this location , which used to represent the outskirts of the city at the time .The dire need in the tanning industry to an abundance of water, made the area behind The

Aqueduct Wall (Sur –Magra al Ouyoon) distinct and adequate for the required criteria . All of the above , in addition to other reasons urged me to thoroughly explore the tanneries , its craft , workers and residents of the area . All elements were entered in an inter-related and overlapping matrix representing the area's history and present at the same time. Therefore it is logical not to relocate the area, but rather to cater for its development, urban and environmental regulation. The area is in dire need for a drainage system of its own, to handle the waste and chemicals used by the tanners in their industry and moreover, for the development of the industry itself. I wonder about the failure of state institutions to cater for such a network as they add all those millions of pounds annually to state revenues .

After lengthy discussions with my professors at the university, who required to be convinced with the reasons behind my interest in development and its mechanism, I decided to work on a draft. I finally started the project with the intention that it should in part undertake documentation of the existing situation which faces a possible abolition , in the event the state institutions succeeded in the relocation process. In this instance my project would not be limited to a development plan for the area and the community , but it would act as a tool to identify what the area encompasses.

My research tracked details of findings of the area , on two levels . One is only at the level of the tanneries and the other was to unveil and link the various hidden treasures of the site , as they start from the River Nile, the source of life, and the source of water for the tanneries , which is overlooked by the square of Foum Al Khaleeg with its acknowledged history , then , the water viaduct and The Aqueduct Wall (Sur-Magra Al Ouyoon) . The other axis starts from the south of Cairo, where Fustat and the Mosque of Amr Ibn Al-Aas,



through the beginning of The Aqueduct Wall (Sur-Magra Al Ouyoon) and Qantara, followed by Sayyeda Nafisa square to the north of Cairo, At the Cairo Gates Bab-Al Nasr and Bab-Al Footouh . Among all these urban determinants the tanneries triangle is located.

Within the tanneries' triangular site , I began to focus my vision towards creating a project , and to complete the manufacturing process until the leather product of all types is reached . In addition , the project aimed to cater for the aspirations of community members and workers , for the development of tanneries and upgrading the operational processes from only tanning to manufacturing and production . The development program for the area includes a scientific research center, where research and education of modern tanning techniques are undertaken, and then transmitted to workers through their training in a craft school for the education of leather tanning and design. So, the school would satisfy the needs of the workers children to join it following their completion of stages of basic education in state schools. This complements aspects of craft workshops, for workers via which they can work and develop leather products after tanning , as well as their display and sale provisions to the public , in addition to a component and an arena for marketing that offer the products throughout the year and become a major market during seasonal occasions and important holidays especially Eid al-Adha . These are enhanced by a Museum which holds monumental items represented in The Aqueduct Wall (Sur-Magra Al Ouyoon) , memory of water , carried and transmitted by The Wall , in addition to the tanning craft memory in this place , where it has existed since the Fatimid era .

The community of the tanneries directed me towards its basic development needs. I was able to summarize its problems in the issue of justice,



as this community similar to other Cairene communities suffers some kind of injustice . It also lacks guarantee of the provision of its needs to ensure its continued existence, despite its significant contribution to the Egyptian economy. Community participation was the most influential element on the identification of problems and reading of solutions, throughout the research stages. At the beginning of my initial entry to the area, I did not have a preconceived idea about the essence of my project nor its elements. The only element in mind was the tannery buildings. Discussions and statements of community members of the area formed a guide to read out some possible solutions to problems of this productive place. The community members were talking about solutions in detail, which leads to implementation issues and financing feasibility.



I discovered that through the study and research journey , that I have employed all my humanitarian skills ,which were acquired since childhood and up to my graduation . I also realized that one's interaction with people and communities is an integral part of one's own entity and the path to find one's way. However , I deeply feared missing all that I have been concerned with , in case it gets implemented in my absence . I deeply wished to have an opportunity to complete what I have started in that area five years before. As I embarked on the practical professional practice, I had to halt my activities in the area.

We all face difficulties to achieve and work on them because of the urban policies adopted by the Egyptian government and the absence of the development concept,

ignoring community participation and unjust practices.

The only solution employed by a government is to relocate and isolate communities from their original places , although they have all the rights , historical legitimacy , urban and communal reasons to stay .All the hidden treasures that I found my unfinished journey , granted me hope and vigor to continue , to search and get to know areas where their inhabitants urge one to participate in finding a better community and a better life. Satisfying our humanity is well worth such a journey and moreover the battle. It is an incomplete journey which is not yet finished. An urban project which expresses the right of the community for justice and participation in its formulation.



For more about Hidden Treasures : <http://www.walycenter.org/ar/practice/-/174-hidden-treasures>



Struggle for Existence

Mohamed Alaa



Throughout its existence, the city lives in a dialectic relationship with nature, though this dialogue might be dominated mostly with harmony and consistency, but conflict may rise in other times capturing the essence of the city leaving only chaos and despair. In the midst of this turmoil the city inhabitants struggle to survive with memories and events of unforgettable pain, shaking their safety beliefs.

Those events remain to occupy our collective memories, as we witnessed it in Cairo's 1992 Earthquake, just as they were repeated in various other forms in almost every other city and community. During those tough moments our attachment to our city heightens, increasing the sense of belonging, leading us to realize how interweaved are our sentimentalities with our city's streets and buildings, forming a fabric of collective memories and events that we occasionally share. For example when a significant building vanishes from the face of earth, not only the visual factor is in question, but the psychological connection is no longer there as well. When the message of the place ceases to exist, we lose the sense of time and the roots gradually fade away.

The city of L'Aquila: struggle for existence

L'Aquila occupies quite a place in history books, since the time when it was founded in the thirteenth century. A business hub set on the Napoli – Florence commercial route, gaining a strategic momentum gradually. 100kms is what separates it from the Capital Rome. L'Aquila is a city that enjoys relative calm that is only interrupted by the temporary invasion coming from neighboring cities escaping the summer heat. The city is surrounded by a chain of lush green mountains, touching in some parts the near ends of the clouds. The Reality blends in with fiction forming a preferred belief by the citizens that the mother city embraces 99 villages, scattered on the vast stretch of land, in some occasions occupying the high peaks of the mountains. But the city remains dwelling in the valley.

Unfortunately, this location is the prime cause of disturbance, through a series of devastating earthquakes. Most recent was the 6th of April 2009, when a violent 6.3 on Richter scale caused a major impact upon the city, few intact villages survived only due to their elevated location.



It was certainly a catastrophic loss by all means, 11000 building either destroyed or were severely affected, leaving behind 65000 homeless and taking the lives of 308 persons. Moreover, some high profile heritage buildings were profoundly affected, such as the church of Santa Maria di Collemaggio which the middle section from the transept to the back of the church collapsed.

Aid flew in from every corner of the globe, first the plan was to provide immediate shelters for the survivors, emergency tents were deployed forming a whole community of tents which lasted for a few months. But that didn't alter the harsh reality of basically still living in the outdoors. So the call of building new housing was inevitable, and through the synergy of all the parties, a number of new settlements were built, fast assembled houses that strictly comply with the earthquake resistance standards. Parallel to that, there was also a need to save the architectural treasures, though it was considered very critical, but the fact remains that this was the easy part of the job considering the numerous Italian expertise in that matter.

But those housing units were not reflecting any of the local heritage identity. The units are stacked next to another in an expected repetitive formation stripped away from the local urban planning features and the unexpected piazzas interconnecting the city fabric. It comes as a close example to a typical American suburb. The biggest challenge remains in not only rebuilding new settlements, but in the rehabilitation of those who were affected in order to reintegrate back into the society. Surviving two shocks, the first is the incident itself and the second is the sudden change of their surroundings. The whole community, especially children, is exposed to a deep psychological impact, which succeeded the sudden change from a previously accustomed surrounding to an unfamiliar one.





A nongovernmental initiative led by professors from German and Italian universities and in collaboration with the Faculty of Engineering at the University of L'Aquila, to create an architectural workshop in an attempt to propose solutions to tackle adaptation issues in the affected communities. Within the framework of this workshop, it gave me the opportunity along with participants from 10 different countries, to work closely in the new settlement of Bagno. Bagno, one of those new communities built on the outskirts of the city, to attract part of the displaced people of the devastated city.

The Workshop came as an attempt to deal with the current architectural situation of that new community. By low-cost, but high impact concepts that can be implemented in a short space of time, through a simple DIY construction method compatible with the raw materials which are available in the surroundings. Most of the ideas shared the same concerns, the desire to utilize those ideas to tackle issues that concerned children of this community. Basically, it was an attempt to create a link between their childhood and of previous generations. To achieve this it was necessary to involve the community and create an intermediary space to present our thoughts and in return benefit from the comments and suggestions.

One of those ideas was a "Micro-library" idea stemmed from the necessity of creating a point of interaction between the children, a light wooden structure that can be transported easily, built out of re-employment of wood accumulated from the wreckage of crumbling buildings. The Micro-Library could be repeated and integrated into the fabric of the settlement by placing it in the open spaces, creating nuclei of cultural interaction. Another proposal was a Pavilion made out of an old steel frame, creating a shaded space on top of a high hill with views of the surrounding mountains.

The ideas were manifested only after a series of meetings with the city council representative and the local community comprised of all sectors of the community starting with children. It was an attempt to add yet another median that gives them back the opportunity of the choice, which was lost before in the imposed new settlements, rather than being forced into situations again. Moreover, bringing back the notion of community involvement in the design process, as a result the outcome came as close as possible to fulfilling their needs.





This initiative is a simple process of what might happen when nongovernmental parties come together, it might not be the ultimate solution for the situation, but it is rather a starting point for further interactions between communities and the built environment.

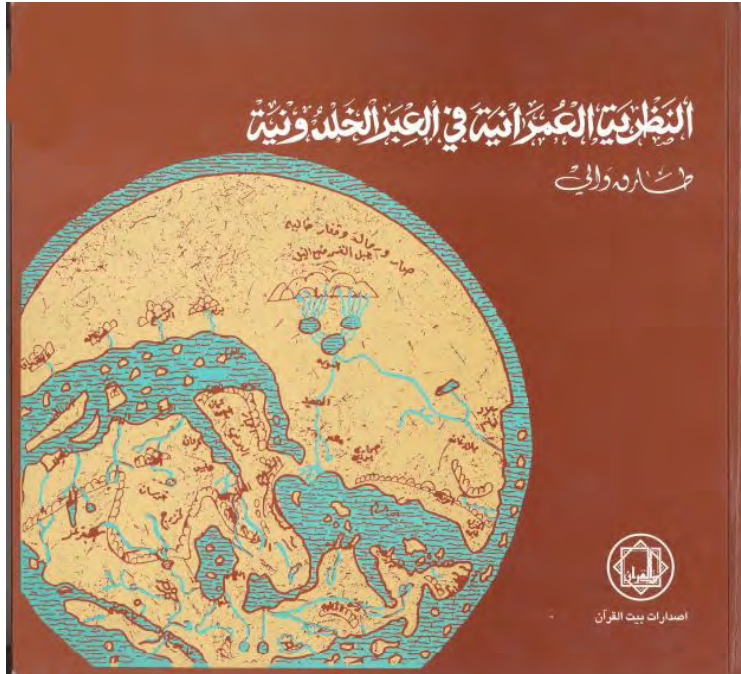
Though the government's position of relocating people to a distant location will continue to be negotiable, still the longing will remain to connect the memories of the people and their city. Nowadays the streets transformed into steel jungle, at a certain point you find a mural on one of the steel fences, reflects the sense of nostalgia rendered in the drawings and phrases from the creativity of the population, spontaneous expression of feelings within them. Hopes of return, perseverance to recreate their dream of even a stroll in the narrow streets and alleys of their beloved city that always lead to sudden spacious piazzas, where the point of meeting and communication is restored back between man with city and nature.





A reading in a Book

Shimaa Shaheen



A reading in the Book of :
The Theory of Urbanism ,
in Al Ebar (Paradigms) Al Khaldouniah

Author : Tarek Waly

Date Published : 1995

The reality of today witnesses a lot of human transformations , on all local, national and global levels .

This makes it meaningful to view this period as a turning point in human history .

Changes taking place during this loaded phase , vary among communities , seeking to rise from a long slumber , other communities that are struggling to maintain their existence and others that stomp , to silently make their way , to mount the summit of human civilization .

This imposes on us , as people of this generation , resolving several dilemmas of intellectual and cultural potentials .

Thus , resorting to energies of the past and the present is inevitable , .

I was allured to read the book « **Al Ebar (Paradigms) Al Khaldouniah** » by Tarek Waly in response to my belief that the first step along the path to a renaissance of Arab communities , is to promote Arab thought . Also , in response to my trust in the role of communication between the past and the present in shaping the future , as a step forward to face the paradigm of originality versus modernity . Moreover , as an attempt to express gratitude and to communicate with previous generations that had devoted their energies to achieve an Arab dream of restoring our role and complete our cultural venture, in the march of humanity .

Why Ibn Khaldun??

This is the question , posed by Tarek Waly the author , within the dilemma of understanding inherited tradition in context of the present .

The need to extrapolate the thought of Ibn Khaldoun , surfaces , as current conditions present the perfect opportunity to take advantage of it . **This thought has long been scientifically considered to be the junction between two phases .**

It has not been limited to the historical Islamic thought , but rather , to the thought of human history as a whole . Firstly : The historical epoch of Ibn Khaldoun , « the eighth century AH _ the fourth century AD » , had been a phase of dramatic historical changes throughout the world . **It had been an era of transformation of political, social, and intellectual aspects geared towards the advancement and rebirth of the Western world . Concurrently , it had been a shift towards disintegration and decadence in the Arab world . At that point , Ibn Khaldoun's contribution was introduced .**



It was not a description of the fall of fighting realms , neither was it a mere record stated by a witness to the fall of states and the rise of others . Rather , it was a quest for the causes behind successive crises , and coups .

It also attempted to unveil the factors of the rise and collapse of nations and civilizations , and the development of the framework of knowledge that embodied transformations of civilization .

Secondly : The intellectual approach adopted by Ibn Khaldoun , through the stages of his studies on various aspects of Islamic thought , earned him a strictly logical intellectual approach .

It combined the power of reasoning with the ability to bring together the social reality in a soundly scientific extrapolation . An approach through which he could go beyond the traditional historical thought , that was limited to monitoring political , facts and events .

Ibn Khaldoun's thought was crowned by his valuable contribution to the field of urbanism . That was extracted from his deductions and comprehensive understanding of the of civilization scheme of the Islamic nation .

His research of the history of human communities and the basis of their civilization , was tackled in a sound realization , and an open-mind . Ibn Khaldoun wanted to reach the essence of what might be called « laws of civilization » . He tried to comprehend the emergence of nations , explain the reasons behind their development , progress and monitor their evolution through auditing , and analysing .

Thus , he reached a comprehensive theory of urbanism , as well as an unprecedented collective rule , and then proved to be a pioneer in this field .

Features of Al khldouniah Theory of Urbanism

The author's vision as recorded , reflects the analysis and deductions of the thoughts of Ibn Khaldoun , within a new or different theoretical context . It related to urbanism as preferred by Ibn Khaldoun and as understood by Tarek Waly , the author .

Ibn Khaldoun tempt us to view urbanism in its comprehensiveness , in order to identify with the eternal law or laws that distinguish right from wrong .

He tried to devise such inherent laws or symptoms , and thus formulating the theory of the paradigm of urbanism , and the state in context of their historical cycles . That , encompassed the creation of the balance required between time and place of the human society in general and the Arab-Islamic community in particular . Urbanism as per Ibn Khaldoun exist within three major dimensions :

Man : Who is the focus of existence and the source of lively relations within a community context .

Place : Which is the focus of work and what ensures the survival of existence and life within the context of the state .

Time : Which is the focus of the change and continuity of life or extinction within the context of a correlation between community and state.

Through an analytical examination of the cultural experience , Ibn Khaldoun , Identified three effective factors in urbanism of communities in general and the Arab community in particular , namely :

The ideological factor : With its basic demeanour



in the Arab community being religion , which plays a pivotal role in the urbanism of Muslim communities. However , the effectiveness of this role is conditional , according to Ibn Khaldoun , by other factors , with the following as the most important ones :

The social factor : Presented in the issue of **solidarity as it is the mechanism of a community for the rise of a state or its fall . The degree of the strength of solidarity , the state rises and develops . Adversely , as solidarity , degenerates in subsequent luxurious generations the state falls or unravels .**

The economic factor : Human needs occupy a prominent place in the interpretation of the emergence and development of urbanism . It is what urges individuals to establish groups , in order to ensure the provision of these needs .

These factors interact among each other , according to the magnitude of each, or its dominance over other factors . Together , they shape human urbanism , determine its attributes , define periods of its brilliance , and determine the timing of its collapse .

Urbanism , for Ibn Khaldoun is presented along two parallel axes that are dependent on one another , and moreover , neither may exist in absence of the other , being : **The state and the city .**

• The State :

“ With regard to urbanization the state , and the realm , act as an image of an object , which , by virtue of its type preserves its existence . The knowledge of wisdom states that both are inseparable , as the state, without urbanism is unimaginable and equally , urbanism in absence of a state and its realm is impossible to achieve . This is due to human temperaments inclined towards aggression which calls for restraint.»

Ibn Khaldoun , perceives the sole of urbanism as being embodied in the state and its relationship with the community . Just as everything in existence , according to old logic , comprises material and image , so urbanism may be described as : « A material of the sociology with its image being the state » .

The cornerstone of this paradigm for Ibn Khaldoun was lied with a **hidden balance between state and society or between the ruler and the ruled community .**

That balance has ensured the progressive continuity of civilization of the society , the state and urbanism . It was held by the cultural scheme of the Islamic nation since its inception , with the hands of the Messenger Muhammad (peace be upon him) .

The early Muslims undertook the conquest of regions , were engaged in holy battles , and at the same time they had diligently organized their affairs , institutions , and particularly their worldly urbanism .

• The City :

The city , as viewed by Ibn Khaldoun is the : **« Ultimate of urbanism » , which was at the same time the : « Ultimate of the realm » , and wherein urbanism reached its end goal , its damage and destruction set in .**

If the emergence of cities is a case of the evolution of the nomadic urbanism , however , this development according to Ibn Khaldoun , is mainly linked to the ruling institution . The presence of this link is the most effective factor in the development of any city as the : **« States precede the emergence of cities and townships , as they follow the realm “ .**



He related the rise of a state , and its development , with the occurrences that impact the map of urbanism of prosperity of civilization movement .

On the other hand , he related the disturbed conditions of the state , in its final days to degradation and destruction , of cities . These are viewed as expected consequences of events that prevail during such phases through lives of states .

The realistic experience of Ibn Khaldoun , was that of an era , through which , the Islamic nation witnessed a loss of balance between forces of the state and society, and dissolution of the solidarity bonds , that have long tied the elements of the nation .

That had resulted in a total collapse of that ancient civilization .

Ibn Khaldoun had the ability to analyze those occurrences in philosophical methods , with a perception beyond the obvious phenomena to infer general rules governing the course of events .

That approach set the basis for the theories of Ibn Khaldoun , related to urbanism , and human civilization , ensuring a sense of reality for those theories .

This is especially remarkable as the transformation phase that he experienced imposed a lot of queries which formed the core of his thought .

He lived as a researcher , attempting to explain and understand :

- why did Arabs lose their dominance ?
- What are the new forms of power ?
- What is the current civilization cycle ?
- Why is it about to expire ?

• Civilization Cycle :

«The conditions of the world, its nations , their traditions and ethnicities are not invariable . Rather , they change , through different times , and the transition from one status to another . As this applies for people, times , and regions, it proves valid for horizons , countries , epochs , and states « .

The transitional phase in human history , experienced by Ibn Khaldoun dictated one of the most important objectives of the study of human urbanism . It is to comprehend the mode followed by these changes , transformations and factors influencing them . Through the study of the emergence and collapse of states according to what we label as the « **civilization cycle** » . His vision of the « civilization cycle » may be summarised in stating that urbanism of the world emerges in historical cycles . These cycles differ from one another in subtly , through the change in eras , during which , conditions of people , clans and nations change . Ibn Khaldoun identified three basis on which history moves :

- The first , view that the fall of one state is not enough to seal a historic period or cycle and the start of a following historical cycle .

- Another key factor must also be added : A form of solidarity must occur in a nation , which was not previously prepared for dominance . Solidarity emerges with the unification , the accord , and taking hold of the power . Only , when those criteria are met , a new historical cycle starts .

- When a nation unites under the new solidarity and a single state is established , it is usually accompanied by either the occurrence of a new faith or at the end of a civilization or a past urbanism . Thus the third base that fulfil a new historical cycle is realized .



Al khldouniah Paradigms of Past and Future :

Cultural heritage is linked to future visions for man to deduce which was , highlighted in the book , according to the analytical methodology adopted by Tarek Waly , the author . In the Khldouniah expression it is a connotation of “**paradigms**” or the experiences accrued for the future .

That integrated vision , in the context of cultural urbanism , may not be merely attributed to Ibn Khaldoun according to his personal experience .

The most effective factor that impacted that vision was the intellectual approach , his views on history , and his belief of the role of extrapolation of history in shaping the present and future . **History to Ibn Khaldoun is knowing the past and not the past events themselves . He considered those as means to understand the present and its problems .**

Ibn Khaldoun discovered an everlasting , dialectical-based debate between the past and the present . “Current problems lead us to refer to the past , and to history .

However , the latter takes us back in turn to the present . Understanding the present , is dependent on referring to the past , and vice-versa « .

The starting point in the book of “Theory of Urbanism , in Al Ebar (Paradigms) Al Khaldouniah “ , is to consider culture as a holistic and integrated entity , and an ongoing process which in its existence reach beyond present moments of time .

Its episodes are connected , throughout the ages and along the extent of place .

This means that the culture carried by the conscience of a community , and expressed in its legacy , as it constantly develop and grow , acquiring novel capabilities .

It is imperative to subject the various inherited intellect to contemporary circumstances , within limitations of time and place , for the researcher , thinker or author . Those theories , were subjected when necessary , in their totality or partially to scrutiny or examination , in light of prevailing current conditions .

This book may present an integrated theory for urbanism according to Ibn Khaldoun .

It guides us through the reasons and the general frameworks for the emergence of urbanism . That theory , explains the relevance of balance between state and society , and moreover , the adverse impact of an imbalance on the on urbanism , state and community . Through this theory we are to discover, for example , one of the most serious ailments that inflicted our communities , which is untying the knot of solidarity , and disintegration of the unity of the nation .

In my opinion , and through my reading , the matter goes far beyond that , as the book offers more than just an analysis of the theory of urbanism .

It provides an extrapolation of the human experience of Ibn Khaldoun . The author presents that experience , adopting the approach which is characterized by moderation and a calculated balance between time and space .

It neither sanctifies the past at the expense of the present and future of a community , nor does it ignore the community civilization in lieu of the present and future .



An approach to study the old with the objective of understanding it and extracting its basic elements to constitute the sources of our knowledge to build upon our thoughts, and mental behaviour, and resolve our immediate problems is inevitable .

He stresses that if such an approach is the one of the secrets of the genius of Ibn Khaldoun , who is the focus of this book , it is also the key to solve our contemporary intellectual dilemmas .

These have long been torn between the past and present and between the old and new .

A contemplative view of this approach reveals at first glance the close relationship between the intellectual methodology , and the objective of this thought .

Ibn Khaldoun embarked on bringing together fragments of his past, and present in addition to a reading of the history of his nation . Further , he undertook the analysis of events to emerge from his psychological and intellectual crisis of his time , that witnessed the collapse of the Islamic civilization . He focused on putting the reasons for the emergence and collapse of civilizations in context , as he believed in the role of scientific basis in laying out a scheme for an Arab cultural renaissance and restoring the glory of the collapsed civilization .

The same route was taken by Tarek Waly the author , who presented us with this book as a re-reading of a part of our history in a way that would act as an entry which opens into new horizons , for the future . It also , would direct us towards the points of strengths and weaknesses in our urbanism and civilization .

It would lead us to a path where at its beginning an effort is to be exerted in history reading , in context of the givens and the tools of the present

However the end of this path may only be discovered if we tread the same path .

The author draws on the advice of Ibn Khaldoun , on how to deal with pitfalls of civilization , as he stated : **« Man is to return to his origins , be in full control of himself .**

He should also distinguish the nature of what is and what is impossible in an uninhibited logic , and a straight outlook .

He should accept the scope of the possible and omit that of the impossible « .

To explore the contemporary thought of Ibn Khaldoun and the timely Khaldounia thought does not come only from a stupid and blind repetition , but rather it means reaching an inquisitive stage of how and why things are as they are in the world that we live in , within the limitations of time and space . Studying this book presents a re-reading of Ibn Khaldoun in a contemporary context with regard to form and vision . This takes place within a temporal concept , which is inherent in the concept of civilization . It is to represent a part of my own view of the book , thought and approach of Tarek Waly the author .

Finally , what remains for the reader , is to discover his own view .

to read more about **“Theory of Urbanism , in Al Ebar (Paradigms) Al Khaldouniah “**
<http://www.walycenter.org/en/research/publications/books/112-al-nazarayah-al-umraneya-fe-al-ebar-al-kholdoonia>