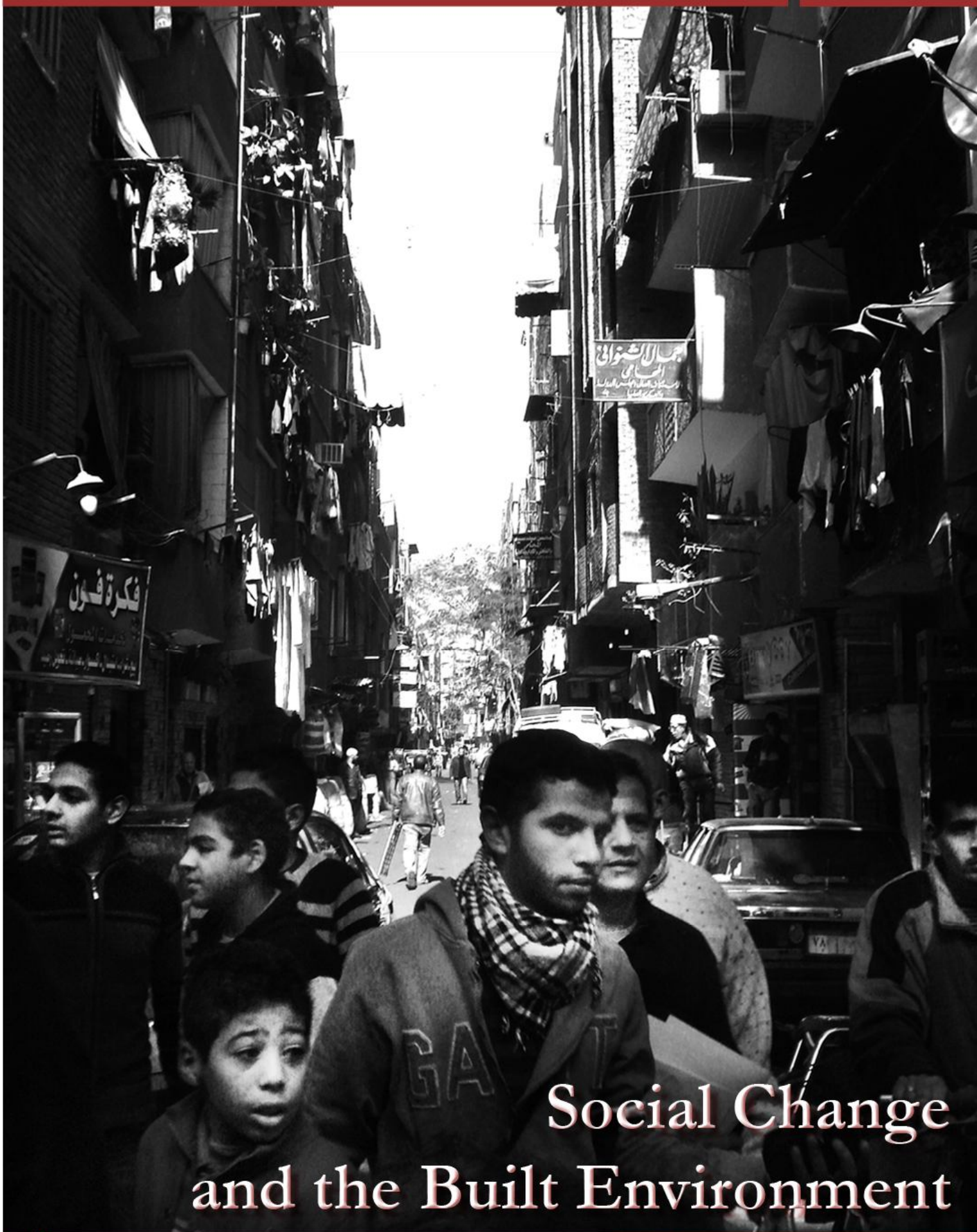




مركز دراسات  
والبحوث  
والثقافة والبيئة

W A L Y  
C E N T E R  
J O U R N A L

Issue No.(03)  
22Feb. 2011



# Social Change and the Built Environment

walycenter.org



مركز الوالى  
للعمارة والتراث

W A L Y  
C E N T E R  
J O U R N A L

Issue No.(03)  
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## Waly Center Journal

### Issue 3:

### The Built Environment and Social Change

The Waly Center Journal is a themed on-line publication that comes out three times a year. Each issue presents a different theme related to the built environment and usually reflecting a topic we are working on. The center produces the WCJ in-house and is open to outside contributions depending on the theme.

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### Cover:

Arab Al Maadi, Cairo, January 2012  
Yahia Shawkat



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مركز طارق والي  
دراسة ونشر

W A L Y  
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## News

As part of The Tarek Waly Center's initiative to celebrate the centennial of renowned architect **Ramses Wissa Wassef**, that includes a series of exhibits and events throughout the years, as well as a publication outlining his contribution to the world of architecture, the Rare Books and Special Collections Library at the American University in Cairo has organised an exhibit of his architecture as well as his art work. The exhibition will move to the Architecture Committee at the Supreme Council of Culture in November, 2012.



THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO  
RARE BOOKS AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

### RAMSES WISSA WASSEF The Architect and The Artist

An Exhibition of his Architectural and Artistic Legacy

Spring Semester  
February 19 - June 28, 2012

Open to Visitors  
Sundays and Tuesdays from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm

To let us know about your visit, please contact us at:  
rbscl-rac@aucegypt.edu  
tel. 20.2.2615.2925/3094/3676

AUC Library, Third Floor, Exhibition Rooms  
AUC New Cairo, AUC Avenue, P.O. Box 74, New Cairo 11835

**Terhal** is a series of workshops that aim to engage young architects with architectural heritage in Egypt. The upcoming workshop will be in the necropolis of Bagawat in the Kharga Oasis and will be coordinated by Mohamed Alaa.

Omnia Khalil has been the proud beneficiary of a grant from the British Council in Cairo under their programme, **Grants for Artists**. Omnia's project revolves around the issues of upgrading the deteriorated neighbourhoods of Cairo and her defence of their communities from the State's policy of forced eviction that has accompanied such projects over the past few years. The project will culminate in the screening of a short film exhibit that reveals the urban and social analysis of a historic neighbourhood in Cairo along with a series of workshops that discuss urban policy in Cairo. The exhibit will be held at the Awan Gallery in July.

We'd like to welcome a new member, Amr Abou Tawila, and look forward to working with him.

### Built Environment Research Department

Our new department on Built Environment Research has started uploading its research reports onto our site, they include:

- Cairo's historic framework
- Urban studies, New Akhmim, Sohag
- Urban studies, Sadaka Neighbourhood, Aswan
- Heritage plan for Al Hufuf, Saudi Arabia

You can find them at

<http://www.walycenter.org/en/research/reports>



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## New Publications

### ***Bayn Al 'Asr Wal Wegdan...Huwar 'Omrany*** **Time & Existence, an urban dialogue** **By Gamal Bakry**

December 2011

Gamal Bakry was finishing writing this book when he passed away nearly ten years ago. His writings were always related to contemporary issues he was not necessarily involved in, but intrigued him nevertheless. Even though Gamal's words remained trapped in an unpublished manuscript, their meaning could still be felt in his architecture, his life and his ideologies.

As a tribute to his legacy, the Tarek Waly Center has produced Gamal Bakry's book as per his wishes, with the hope of keeping his flame alive.

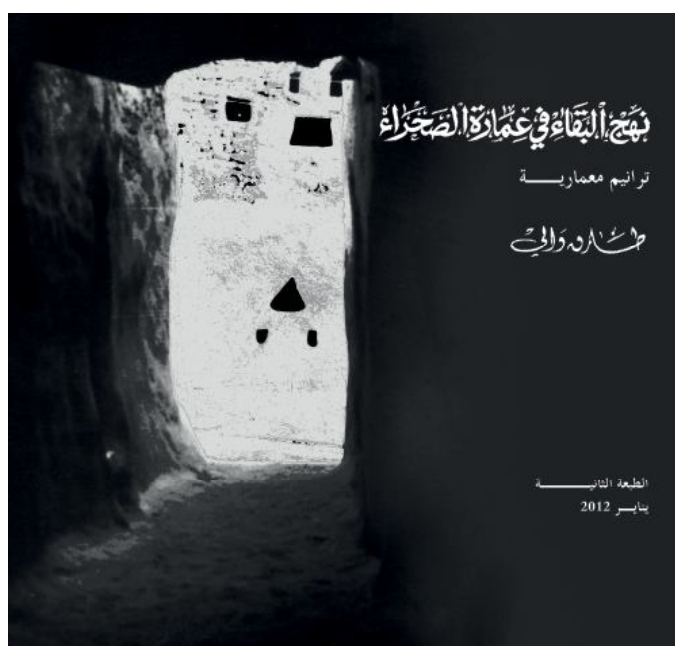


### ***Nahg al Baqa' fi 'Omaret al Sahara'*** **In the Quest of an Approach for Existence in** **Desert Architecture**

**By Tarek Waly**

Second Edition, January 2012

This book describes the desert architecture of Egypt from a social perspective that analyses the relationship between Man and his Creator. Nahg Al Baqa' divides desert architecture into three 'symphonies' of architecture; Al Bagawat, The Oases and Geometry. This edition is an updated and expanded edition that continues on the work of the first edition that was released in 1996.







## , Towards the Development of Existing Communities, A vision



### Prologue ..

*Manshiet Nasser, Tamer Shahine*

This outlook aims to realize the development of existing settlements , especially urban .

It is to be carried out by way of outlining a format which relies on the examination of the various issues that settlements are likely to challenge , such as deterioration and urban problems . It is to enable the formation of a development program for a particular settlement , that may be specified and demarcated by employment of assessment criteria , in line with comprehensive city development .

In addition , this process is to be in accordance with the circumstances of the study area , its socio-urban structure , within the overall definition of development .

This may be defined along fundamental , integrated and inseparable spines and their offshoots . These are :

### Justice ..

Which by definition , refer to the rights of all citizens for a respectful life , readily accessible services , living needs and resources which comply with approved standards both in quality and quantity .

This is to be in accordance with predefined basic criteria for overall evaluation , that are to ensure the efficiency and equality practised in the distribution of such services , needs and resources among communities , and settlements that form the urban entity of a city .

### This process may be defined in :

- Upgrading the urban environment , a process which is to cover , primary infrastructure and movement networks in addition to refuse disposal ...etc.
- Upgrading , maintenance , and rehabilita-



tion of the built-up areas and spaces .

- Development of urban and social services
- Enhancement of social circumstances , conditions and living standards .

### Participation ..

Refers to citizens' involvement in laying –out the overall plans and phases of the processes for the upgrading and development of their communities .

They will be expected to offer their own individual and communal efforts in cooperation with relevant institutions in charge . This is to lead to a balanced state , community relationship . This , calls for the formulation of local , communal and , institutional frameworks for the participation processes .

Some of their facets may be :

- Intensifying , regulating and administering communal participation .
- Expanding the participation base , and deepening the essence of active participation .
- Development of local administration , and efficiency of the mechanisms that regulate the participation process .

### Sustainability ..

Is to extract the inborn capabilities of the community , and moreover , to enhance them , in order to sustain their continuous compliance with contemporary variations .

This calls for individuals of the local community , to exercise positive participation and actions in the implementation of development programs and projects . Sustainability , relies on a variety of prospectus funding procedures . Such are an increased support offered by the state , non government organisations , community and credit societies , co-operatives and other similar entities . These are to coalesce with indirect forms of merging resources to cater for development programs and projects .

This may be through contribution of a land tract , conversion of tenants to co-owners , proliferating such ownerships , or adopting other patterns which enable the community to participate in securing the needed funds and resources in the present and future times .

### Attributes of The Outlook Towards the Development of Existing Settlements May be Identified Through ..

### The Philosophical Essence of Development

#### The Essence of the Philosophy of Justice ..

In order to reach this goal , it is necessary to amalgamate the socio-economic factors as part of the development matrix . This is to ensure justice and equality among all strata of the community in the present and future , in order to realize basic principles , which are :

#### • Enhancing Users' Capabilities

This is to take place through the actual binding between the beneficiaries , development procedures and implementation of projects . The enhancement of the inborn abilities of community individuals present the means to foster the development process through its steps and to raise the communal degree of awareness .

#### • Boosting Up Authority Given to the Community

Leads to taking over , by all community members , of the resources , and decision making processes , which have an influence on their lives . In addition , demarcating the decrees to realize and enact these communal authorities .

#### • Guarantee of Communal Justice

To be Achieved through an equal distribution of interests and advantages incurred by development procedures .The less fortunate groups are to earn their expected share of benefits.



## The Essence of the Philosophy of Participation ..

No dispute is to take place over the right of a citizen to identify his needs , participate in delineating policies , their implementation , follow-up and assessment . This is to be realized only through the efforts of active community participants collectively . The relevance of this process , arises when the issue of justice is severed in any of various way . This would lead to a consecutive urban deterioration , regardless of the socio-economic strata of these communities . The communal participation , by definition , strengthens the sense of belonging , the keen preservation of funds , and public ownership . This is to ensure the realization of current goals as well as long term sustainability .

## The Essence of the Philosophy of Sustainability ..

Some of the major problems , that present a challenge to development procedures , are the pre-definition of spending commitments , the implementation schedules of programs and elements that comprise projects . These present a burden on the community , a fact which requires laying out unconventional procedures and mechanisms for funding . Therefore participation in limited and medium or small sized development projects proves to be more viable . Some kind of flexibility is required , in response to the gradual growth of the capabilities of the community , especially in the funding procedures which rely on lending , to be guaranteed by the community , and repayment is to be through communal or co-operative participation .

## Development Procedures ..

### Justice Procedure ..

This procedure requires laying out the rules to evaluate status of settlements , in terms of suffered setbacks , needed requirements , rating and listing their priority in a manner that is to ensure justice for the society as a whole . This

may be achieved through :

- **Urban residential Interventions By Means Of ..**

Applying community participation mechanisms to cater for residential and environmental current and future needs and requirements . These are to aim to meet set standards that secure decent and safe living conditions , subject to real estate situations , conditions and the available means towards market prices .

- **Community Services ..**

Development of all basic and supplementary services by applying optimization measures of available land usage , upgrading movement , mass transit and communication networks .

- **Economic Resources ..**

Boosting commercial services that support living conditions and advancing service oriented production elements . In addition , facilitating funding opportunities for small and medium sized projects along with promoting craft skills through training programs .

### Participation Procedure ..

Community participation especially at the collective level takes place through an institutional framework that is a true representation of each community member individually . It attains its communal legitimate status which validates its participation . These institutional frameworks , obtain their relevance and inevitability in upgrading and development procedures of a settlement by undertaking the effort of organizing local community members of different social strata and parties to play a collective or an individual role . In addition , it protects the rights of citizens , presents their interests in the dialogue , through all phases of development . Moreover , it secures funding sources that are compatible with circumstances and capabilities of community members .

The concept behind the formation of this institu-





tional entity , is based on profound comprehension of the socio-urban structure of the community , the settlement patterns , and morphological elements of socially harmonious neighbourhood . Consequently , representatives and delegates are nominated , in accordance with the size and structure of each unit . These individuals are to form an acceptable representation of the community . Collectively , these form an optimum communal and institutional panel . The development program may include a project for the development of a permanent location for such an institution which will materialize as a community centre , within the settlement , ensuring sustainability .

The participation procedure , is realized through the identification of cooperating and participating entities , which may include :

- **Government Sectors** .. Specialized and in charge of roads , infrastructure , public services , urban administration , decree of building regulations and by-laws , authorizing building and demolition licenses ...etc .
- **Private Sector** .. Participating in development projects that it may undertake in the context of the overall approved vision . Also , contributing in upgrading the local community or the broader scope of the city .
- **Non- Government Organizations** .. Represented in societies that are concerned with development activities , or that capitalize on citizens' own efforts , aiming to provide job opportunities that integrate with the development scheme for the settlement .
- **Communal Institutions** .. Represented in members of the settlement themselves with nominated local elite as their delegates . They contribute in addressing issues related to citizens' interests and rights .

### **Sustainability and Funding Procedure ..**

This procedure relies on a variety of executable methods , that aim to attract inherent resourc-

es , especially when seriousness in implementation , actual improvement in living standards and proper dealing with concerns of priority are felt .

In addition , there is a vital aspect of obtaining financial sources for the development and upgrading procedures , especially , for what concerns the least privileged households, which is augmenting support of the state , non government organizations , communal and citizen societies , including credit organizations , co-operatives and entities of the sort .

These entities have the ability to provide funding , offer small loans for the poor , at irregular intervals , in a simple application mode and with flexible settle up practices .

At the same time , it is more feasible for these communal and cooperative institutions than individuals , to deal with official state and private sector entities . Also , they act as an underwriter for borrowing individuals . Thus , the funding procedure for development and upgrading should focus on such cooperatives with a backup by the state funding . It is these entities through which a continuous provision of required funds may be anticipated .



*Kubry Al Tonsi, Tamer shahine*



## Development Mechanisms ..

### Justice Mechanisms ..

In order to achieve justice , preparation of detailed plans and identification of urban and architectural projects is required, in order to implement approved development programs and policies . These aim to provide for the requirements and services that are to support decent life standards in the desired quality for all community members . In addition , the formulation and provision of funding sources for these projects , within the framework of a clearly defined and planned schedule is essential . These programs have to merge with the axis defining the overall vision , through an active participation . Features of these mechanisms may be defined as follows :

- Opting for a study area and its community , in accordance with the overall evaluation prioritization .
- Preparation of existing socio-urban investigations , jointly with community members .
- Subjecting elements of socio-urban studies to a collective comparative analysis , and defining relative values for the relevance of the implementation of the basic living requirements .
- Preparation of comprehensive and detailed development plans in addition to mechanisms and development project implementation documents .
- Identification of implementation priorities according to a time schedule .
- Assessment of financial requirements , and provision of funding sources according to circumstances and capabilities of the community .

### Participation Mechanisms ..

These are to cover different sectors of the community to ensure an actual community participation .They are not meant to serve merely some dominant groups nor those groups which are interested in or having interests in proposed development programs or what they comprise . Participation mechanisms remain

to operate on both of the direct individual level or on the collective level which presents the communal composition . A lot of mechanisms that may be followed and applied may be employed for the various phases according to the nature of participation , its levels , activeness , and requirements in each stage . Some of the steering mechanisms are stated below :

- Undertaking field trips , demographic census and urban surveys . These are meant to obtain direct individual opinion polls with regard to the requirements of the community with all its morphological strata .
- General get-togethers in the area subjected to development and upgrading . These aim to publicize ideas and basic visions to community members , attract their attention , and exchange view points , prior to preparation of proposed designs for projects .
- Specialized meetings for urban issues which form the basis for participation in the development processes and urban decision making . General meetings may be periodically held as well as others that address specific tributary issues . These are meant to arrive to a vision which gains the accord among specialists and either community members or their representatives .
- Training programs for local community groups that cover related scopes to proposed development projects , their implementation requirements , administration and follow-up . These are meant to ensure development sustainability through active innate mechanisms in the community itself according to its local circumstances .

Through this community participation in the settlement development process it becomes feasible to convince residents of the value of their cooperation and positive interaction in the development process throughout its phases . The desired goals are to be achieved according to :

- Communal participation in the implementation of the development program projects . This





is to take place through cooperation among local community members , and their contributions in the form of labour , financial support or needed objects donations for projects during their implementation or progress .

- Augmenting efficiency of development program projects , exercising consultations with end users during the process of projects planning , and ensuring their continued involvement during administration of implementation or progress of projects .
- Increasing the effectiveness of development projects by means of a more intense involvement of end users . This is to guarantee the realization of projects' goals and the delivery of their benefits to the development interest groups .

### **Sustainability Mechanisms ..**

The state may allocate , budgets and plans for these projects , which present an inherent right for the community . Sustainability may be achieved , however , through locating direct or indirect funding mechanisms . Direct mechanisms imply securing necessary funding for the development plans and upgrading projects as defined by the socio-urban studies , prioritization scale and their timetable . This may take place through the following main channels :

- Authorized international funding organizations , with special funds targeting development and upgrading of derelict urban areas .
- Local funding organizations , working in development programs and projects whether official or communal and civil .
- Self funding which involves community members with financial abilities willing to pitch in for funding development projects , even with symbolic sum . This leads to an increased sense of preservation of what has been upgraded .
- Provision of borrowing feasibility for the implementation of the micro development projects aimed to limited income community members .

Indirect mechanisms are defined for sustainability and securing the necessary funding for the

development plans and the upgrading projects , are not limited to , but as guides are as follows :

- Land sharing .. As land is considered to be one of the most important assets in the communal urban development programs , especially in existing urban areas in the old city , it presents a major obstacle facing this process . These facts validate the land sharing practice as means to guarantee ownership rights for limited income households through a partnership between the owner and the tenants .
- Development of publicly owned land , where civil societies may acquire land at a subsidized rate on the basis of redeeming the cost . The objective is to develop its usage for the benefit of limited income groups as part of the proposed development project for the area .
- Development of state owned sites by private sector , is a practise which may not be applied over a broad range . Rather , it may be relied on within the narrowest boundaries . Its application is to be within the overall framework for the development of the area itself , while maintaining its social fabric , as a great risk lies in the private sector's broad intervention with a notion of mere financial investment . Such a practise is likely to have a direct negative impact on the local community , as it will result in an exodus of the less able groups in contradiction with the objectives of the development process .
- Issuing decrees , reviewing laws and legislations which impact the socio-urban structural correlations . This is especially relevant with regard to leasing regulations , sales of premises , and regulating owner tenant relations . These are in addition to , regulatory bylaws pertinent to actions of demolition , maintenance , and the preservation of real estate assets . Also , bylaws for urban planning and building licences ...etc . The overall goal is to foster an innate capability to continue the endeavour of the protection of the real estate balance and its nurturing for the benefit of the settlement occupants and the community .



### Summing Up ..

Thus , to achieve this vision , it is required to adopt policies , undertake detailed plans , work programs , and secure necessary funding for development processes which complete one another. They , then form the basis to launch development projects in existing urban communities in areas that suffer problems or deficiencies . These are chosen and identified according to evaluation standards . As well , the comprehensive development priorities of the city as a whole on one hand and the local conditions and its unique socio-urban structure on the other .

These plans and programs are to be identified with well defined goals , implementation time schedules , proactive community participation , to ensure a good living standard for members of the community under study . **The structural features of these programs may be defined as follows :**

- Approval of the overall strategy and laying out development and community participation policies .
- Choice of the study area according to priority evaluation and identifying its morphology and relevance .
- Undertaking the preparation of existing socio-urban studies of the study area , which are to take in :
  - Overall urban studies of the study area specifically and of a wider scope of the more comprehensive urban area .
  - Evaluation of current housing situation , and the definition of methods to reach the end goal of provision of suitable housing , an endeavour which is to involve residents to take into account their views , needs and problems .
  - Inventory of the numbers and types of available services on both levels of the development area boundaries and on the more comprehensive vicinity level . Also , definition of their efficiency and the degree of compatibility of the

existing situation with the needs of the community for services .

- Evaluation of situations , resources and economic and production structures on both levels of the development area boundaries and on the more comprehensive vicinity level. Also , definition of their efficiency and the degree of compatibility of the existing situation with the needs of the community for services .
  - Undertaking a comparison among issues of the socio-urban studies in a collective analytical mode ( SWOT) .
  - Preparation of comprehensive and detailed development plans along with implementation mechanisms .
  - Assessment of financial requirements and estimated cost for projects and securing them . In addition , a cash flow timetable for the implementation of approved plans , and evaluation of economic feasibility of development programs , plans and projects .



Al Azhar, Tamer Shahine





## Malek Bennabi's Revivalist Ideology

Shimaa Shaheen

***"Coincidences do not make history,  
neither the consequences of occupation,  
rather what societies accomplish in their  
countries"***

His faith in the accomplishments of societies was his main motivation to pursue his dream of a New Arab World renaissance.

A liberating renaissance from the setbacks of long years of occupation.

Erasing the feeling of alienation within the boundaries of home and beyond. For people to regain their dignity and the glory of land.

A revival that only those who possess an inner belief of their will to make, change and create history.

The vision of the revival of a society is a fundamental part of an Arab world as it should be, holds within the comprehension of a glorious past and a full understanding of the present time.

Caught in the midst of a bright vision for the future, and the contemplation of its current problems in order to recognize the facing obstacles.

Between understanding reasons for the state of aimlessness and despair, and finding the essence of its power and methods of revival.

### **This was Malek Bennabi's Vision.**

Malek Bennabi (1905-1973) was born and also died in Algeria. But between those two moments was a life's journey that took him from Algeria to France, to Egypt, and then back to Algeria again.



He spent his youth trying to dedicate his efforts for the sake of his country, realizing eventually the need to reinforce his efforts by education and experience. So the decision was made to pursue a degree from France, where he witnessed - for the first time - a society with a clear cultural identity unlike his home country which was occupied by the French at the time, and didn't have an identity of its own. He contemplated this contrast throughout his years in France, trying to answer a pondering question;

### ***"How do we revive our identity?"***

His efforts to liberate the Arab world had to wait till the Egyptian revolution of July 23rd, 1952, which was a turning point in his life, and the Arab societies, as the first foundations of an independent cultural identity were set, enticing him to return back and join his fellow Algerians in the process of rebuilding.

This was a big change that followed in the footsteps of other minor ones. Bennabi's concept of rationalism in understanding and practicing Islam was presented in his first book ***"The Quranic Phenomenon"*** 1946, which was in response to the then common practice of taking religion as a refuge from the challenges of time, as many Arab youth had.

Continuing on the same path, came his second book, ***"Conditions of a Renaissance"***, which focused solely on the topic of the obstacles of cultural identity.

Bennabi contributed to this particular topic under numerous titles, attempting to establish a plan



for the revival of the Arab World. The titles were divided into two groups. The first group dealt with issues of the past that led to such conditions, from which came ***“Algerian Perspectives”*** and ***“The Ideological Struggle in Third World Countries”***. The second group introduced contemporary views like in ***“The Problem of Ideas in Muslim World”*** and in ***“Birth of a Society”***. Some of ideas revolved around the ideological difference of dealing with problems between the Arab World and other nations that had a mature cultural identity.

Bennabi also introduced collaborative revivalist concepts within the rising nations that were recently freed from occupation, like the ***“Afro-Asiatisme”*** theories and ***“An Idea of Islamic Commonwealth”***.

He did believe in the power of a single individual to inspire a nation.

***“One fulfills his role by not only his inner motivation but through inspirational guidance from his society. And if one surrounds himself with isolation, one becomes fragile regardless of the sheer intellectual status”.***

He also said that the ***“society isn’t a group of individuals but an organization with a humane essence set under a certain order”*** where this organization consists of three major elements:

- A collective sense of motivation.
- Product of a motivational movement.
- Determination of the desired orientation.

For Bennabi, those were the crucial factors that a society should function by.

The group is defined as a society when such factors are found; they acquire this when they go through a process of transformation in order to reach their desired targets.

Whereas the inert groups, they have a worthless social status. As they live in the pre-civilized era, without an identity.

Therefore the community is in a constant state of transformation and movement. The movement of a group is directly related to ***“its elevation to a much more sophisticated social form”***

Bennabi saw that what lay ahead of each society was a desired goal that requires a collective movement in order to fulfill, which in return progresses it to a more civilized state.

When the group lacks the movement, their message is lost as is their history, which is mainly controlled through:

- The effect of the human being, the building brick of society.
- The effect of the concept, the true treasure of a society
- The effect of the material, the means of forming the idea in order to be perpetuated.

And so the history of a society comprises the potential of its people, a concept to define it and material to preserve it. This trinity is thought by Bennabi is be only achievable when there is a network connecting these three factors, this network being the nerve system of a society.

***“The first act of improving a society is transforming the individual into a Person”***

***“It’s certainly true that the wealth of a society is solely measured on the capacity of ideas and not the material, since the lack of the first can only lead to vanishing of a society, but the later can easily be regained”.***

But the act of establishing a well-structured society needs also a **network of relationships** in order for the ideas to be effective. This network ensures the harmony within the Ideas, the people and the material world.





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Bennabi mentions that If a society developed into any form, this form is recorded in the network of relationships

***“And when the network lines get loose the collaborative work in a society decreases and this in fact is a sign of immaturity. And if the network lines are permanently broken, then the society is already history, regardless of the high intellectual level and the abundance of ideas.”***

This is a result of the corruption of the relationships within the society where the “I” overcomes the “We”. Bennabi sees the intensification of the ego as when a person in a society is transformed to a single individual. Therefore the collaborative work becomes tougher or even impossible, since the debate changes from seeking solutions, to an endless process of finding evidence and proof, and the main concerns denigrate to imaginary problems instead of realistic ones.

This lack of collectivism results in the breakdown of society, something Bennabi sees in The Arab World, where the network of relationships is at its lowest. If priorities shifted to increasing awareness of the importance of social education, crucial notions of how members of a society could function in harmony within a group to form a driving force to a more developed state of cultural identity and the making of a true legacy.

Bennabi goes on to relate his theories of collectivism to urbanism, where **The Human factor** is in this case the architect or the planner, the member affiliated with the built environment. **The Concept is then** the ideas derived from the experiences and the culture of that community. And **The Material** is the resulting creative product, the streets of the cities and the villages.

Bennabi continues to stress on the fact that this urban development process will not be effective unless there is a constant communication between the specialist - the architect - and the community.

In the Bennabi's vision presents an analysis of the present but with a historically aware perspective, which is able to summarise theories of the evolution of societies within a series of writings.

Such a rare perspective makes it all the more worth exposing, especially so in tougher times where the issue of identity is being discussed.

■ **For more on Malek Binnabi':**

**[www.binnabi.net](http://www.binnabi.net)**

**[www.malekbinnabi.net](http://www.malekbinnabi.net)**



## The architect in Egypt, a brief history

Yahia Shawkat



Tel Al Azizeyya, Mit Rahina, Giza. Yahia Shawkat

The *bashmohendiseen*, the pasha engineers, are seen as the saviours and geniuses that flung Egypt into the Modern age, building bridges, dams and water works that are seen by many to be vital to the country's progress. Engineers probably also see themselves as such, and many made the career decision based on a sense of duty mixed with pride. Even the word *muhadis*, meaning 'calculator of the waterways' stems from *hindis*, one of the words meaning lion and courage in particular as well as knowledge

The *bashmohendiseen* have a rather obscure cousin; the *mohandis mi'mary*, architectural engineer. Architects graduate after five gruelling years from the same engineering colleges, where they are taught to be highly competitive and where their egos are stoked. But, anti-climatically, few people know what they do. That anonymity is reflected in a study by the USAID that shows that between 1977 and 1982, 80%

of building work in Cairo did not involve a registered architect.

Some of us architects, especially as students, have struggled with how the *mi'mary* always works for the privileged few, and how our profession has only been concerned with the wealthy and the state and a private drive to achieve. Indeed, Philip Johnson, a 20<sup>th</sup> Century American architect had pondered that "architects are like prostitutes, they do what their clients pay them to do".

But has it always been that way?

### Overseer of works

Imhotep, who the Ancient Egyptian historian, Manetho, called "the inventor of the art of building with stone", was the king's vizier, chief physician and royal architect. He is credited with building Zoser's





step-pyramid in Sakkara no less. His full title was; *Chancellor to the king of Lower Egypt , a subordinate to the king of Upper Egypt, administrator of the great domain, administrator of the Pat, great visionary (high priest of Heliopolis), master craftsman of sculptors and masons.*

But did Imhotep have the time between all those responsibilities to actually design and build the pyramid himself? In much the same vein as today's large projects, Imhotep probably had an interdisciplinary team of builders, designers, calculation specialists and surveyors that he directed and discussed problems with, but left the day-to-day operations to them. In effect he was probably more like a minister of housing or a CEO of a large architecture firm, rather than being the one that did the actual work.

The Egyptian state, being one of the earliest centralised bureaucracies, wanted to ensure that all its royal architecture that would be built in different parts of the country, would reflect its policy and image. The organic, community-based architects of over seers, artisans and families who were traditionally responsible for construction had to be informed by the state when it came to royal architecture, and so the 'over seer of the king's works' was born.



*Life size statue of the architect Hemiunu, Pilzaues Museum, (Right), Laet period bronze statuette depicting Imhotep, The Louvre (Left)*



When the community-based over seers worked with the state under royal over seers like Imhotep, Hemiunu or Senenmut, they were allowed to live tax-free on royal land associated with the project like with the Giza pyramids, where archaeological evidence of a settlement there shows how well fed and well cared for they were. The community-based over seers had say and were listened to when it came to developing building techniques as Giza shows much evolution during the course of building even one pyramid. However they had to conform to the concepts and overall design criteria set by the royal over seer, which in turn reflected the state's directives.



*Al Madaab, Aswan. Yahia Shawkat*

When the same community over seers worked with their community, one can imagine that much like the Nubians have done till very recently, they did only the basic construction work alongside the men of the family, where the women made the sun-dried bricks and the children painted and decorated the walls.

The workers' town and necropolis of Deir Al Medina in Luxor, is evidence of the vibrant and creative way in how the artisans built and decorated the tombs of their fellow workers. The scripture on the walls is a painted cursive writ rather than the etched formal hieroglyphs we see in royal tombs. The walls themselves are mudbrick rather than stone, and the scale is much smaller than the tombs they built for their kings. But one can argue that the quality of space is on par.



## Master builder

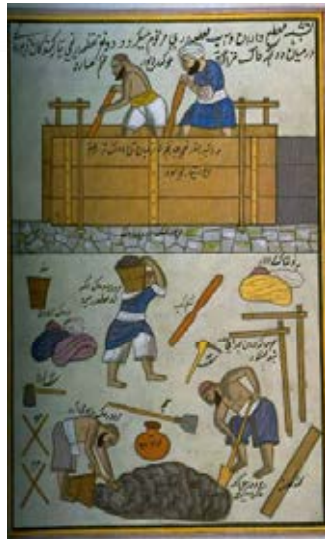
The Muslim Era also had its share of architects, some royal and known, but most popular and anonymous.

Most of the architects were craftsmen that rose up the ladder and managed to become foremen of their craft and then chiefs of an entire job, much like the Ancient Egyptian overseers, only here they have been referred to as *mualem banna* or *shiekh banna* or *muhandis banna*, master builder. We know of Master Bricklayer 'Ustadth' Mohamad Ghadir, Master Carpenter Niyaruk, and Qiwan Addin Shirazi "At-Tayyan", or The Mason. One of the better known Egyptian master builders was Mohamad Ibn Baylek Al Muhsiny who built the Madrasa of Sultan Hassan in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century.

We can imagine how smaller gangs with the basic crafts built the humbler houses, while large, multi-craft gangs with an older more experienced *mualem banna* – who was elected by them - built the higher-end houses and public buildings patroned by the local elite.

Egypt became an Ottoman province in 1517, and the nature of the more culturally centralised empire meant a return to an imperial architect, this time working from the capital of the empire, Istanbul.

Koca Mimar Sinan Aga started out as a Janissary soldier, and was taught engineering at military school where he built bridges and canals. When he was about 40, the Ottoman Sultan assigned him as his *hassa mi'marlari*, court architect, or Chief Architect of the Ottoman Empire, where he became responsible for all the empire's civil structures such as mosques and palaces as well as water works. In effect he was what in Ancient Egyptian times was the Overseer of King's works.



19th Century Drawing  
from Kashmir depicting  
construction related crafts



Madrasa of Sultan Hassan. Yahia Shawkat

Like his historic counterparts, he didn't design everything himself, except maybe the royal mosques in Istanbul, but his school of design was imposed on much of the Ottoman Empire. Even though he didn't visit Egypt, the Sinan mosque in Bulaq – named after a local waly and not the architect - or the Suleyman mosque at the citadel in Cairo are very clearly Ottoman.

Still the state did not yet control the planning of cities and villages, leaving much of the built environment in the hands of local communities.



Enlarged area of "Sultan  
Suleiman's Funeral", 1580,  
the person holding the ruler  
is thought to be sinan





## Engineer

In 1747 a small college was established in France that would change the way architects worked all over the world.

The Ecole Nationale des Points et Chaussées, or the National School of Bridges and Roads, was set up to teach engineering of civil works, for up to that moment the vast strides in engineering technology were kept within the military corps designing military works.



*Linant Pasha, Chief of Public Works between 1831 and 1869*

The Industrial Revolution had arrived in Europe and meant that the traditional ways of doing things was changing; architects were deemed not specialized enough by the industrialists who were relying more and more on the mechanical engineers to design both the machinery and the structures where they were housed and so, a civil engineer was needed.

However, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Egypt's administration had become a highly centralized and ever more formalised bureaucracy. The state, a military British occupation by then, along with a ruling elite had become the main patron of all building and engineering work throughout the country, as they monopolised land and resources. This forced the traditional master-builder architects to work at the behest of foreign and local civil-servant engineers and European building stylists, or to just make do with work on rural village houses.



*19th Century house, rural Sohag. Yahia Shawkat*

The Industrial Revolution didn't take much time to reach Egypt, where, at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Muhamad Ali, Egypt's self-appointed ruler, started importing the entire spectrum of industrialization. Everything from the machinery to the French industrialists and engineers that ran it, to the houses and districts they lived in, was brought in.

At first the traditional process of architecture in Egypt didn't seem threatened, as the state introduced a new realm that didn't directly compete with the existing one. Al Muhandis Khana, Egypt's first college of engineering was established in 1812, but it was a military engineering college that served Muhamad Ali's army while Pascale Coste and Linant Pasha, Muhamad Ali's Chiefs of Public Works, were French.

## Architect

During the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the mould in which all registered architects in Egypt would be shaped to this day would be cast. For this was the century where professionalism would trump artisanship, formal would outclass the informal and masses of Egyptians would chose a university degree over an apprenticeship, an almost direct copy of the global trend.

Local departments of architecture were established, mostly within colleges of engineering and a few in arts colleges, to produce registered architects, for they would be responsible for producing permits for the buildings and drawings for the contractors, as the entire scope of construction was becoming ever more formalised.





**Fahmy Bey and Her Highnees, with Hassan in the background... The Architect, The State and The Community. Scene from "Al Gabal", The Mountain, 1965, directed by Shawky Khalil**

Community-based architects remained responsible for the bulk of construction in the popular domain where permits and contractors didn't operate. Registered architects patronisingly referred to the work of community architects as vernacular architecture to separate it from their own work, which was simply referred to as architecture.

It was also rare that a registered architect would take interest in community-based architecture. An exception is Ramses Wissa Wassef whose entire design and construction process was inspired by community-built architecture and traditional Coptic wood-work and stained glass. Later in his life he would patron a small community of artists and artisans in the village of Haraniyya on the outskirts of Cairo.

As the 20<sup>th</sup> Century progressed, the state took on a more social role. After the revolution of 1952, the public sector Development and Housing Company was established and started a national housing project to build identical apartment buildings for the poor in different parts of the country. This move thrust the formalised contracting machine into the domain previously exclusive to the community architect

forcing most to find work only as labourers or sub-contractors if they were lucky, within the large, formal contracting companies.

Along with the massive shift towards the city that came with the stronger distinction between the rural and the urban in terms of services and job opportunities provided, this process of formalisation almost put paid to the role of the community architect and his and her architecture.

But it was not to be. In the 1970s two new urban phenomena emerged.

One was the large, urban, self-built communities constructed without state permission or formal contractor on the fringes of Cairo and other cities that would become known as 'ashwaeyat, random urbanism. As the state abruptly reversed its social role with the *Infitah*, along with the previous state of war with Israel, the number of state-provided housing units shrunk, and so people started turning once again to the community architect to help them build a place to live.



**Ramses Wissa Wassef, the architect, sculptor, carpet maker and teacher. Werner Forman, from the book, "Woven by Hand", 1972**



*The community of Duweiqia, Cairo. Yahia Shawkat*

The other was the so-called New Cities programme initiated by the state's own Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction. These were low-density High Modernist utopian cities designed around the automobile and envisioned to magically vacuum the ever-crowding population of Cairo – and eventually other cities – with the promise of open space, clean streets and American-style strip-malls.

### **The future**

Over thirty years on, the 20 or so “New Cities” designed by registered architects and planners have only managed between them to reach an average of 40% capacity, by contrast over 60% of Cairo's population live in neighbourhoods built by community architects. In rural Egypt, almost all of it is community-architect built.

Meanwhile registered architects and the state's chief architect, renamed for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century as the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Development continue to operate in much the same manner as they have been for the last four decades, failing to address the reality literally surrounding them.

A handful of architects and donor agencies have attempted to improve neighbourhoods and villages, while students in schools of architecture have come out with very creative solutions when given a rare chance to partner with a community. However it is the exception and not the norm to find professionals and professors that tackle the norm of our built environment rather than the exception.

There is a glimmer of hope though.





As the January Revolution has gripped us with a rallying call for social justice, a spot light has been flung on the inequities of our built environment, presenting a unique opportunity where forces both from below and from above are pushing to change the way our built environment is designed and managed.

The new state that is currently being put together has little choice but to address these inequities if it is to in any way show the millions of people who revolted that it is worth keeping. Its policy makers and chief architect will have to completely overhaul their approach to the built environment to include the participation of the very communities they have been mandated to serve, in order to serve them well. This will entail the introduction of participatory measures through local councils compelling the registered architect that works with the state's blessing to open channels with the community architect after almost a century of their parallel existence.

There is even more reason to be optimistic.

Lately a nascent student movement has started to gain steam, mostly sparked by the outrage at the Portsaid massacre that touched many of them on a personal level. There's a strong chance that students of architecture will start demanding a bigger and more relevant role in their community, one that reflects their new found sense of agency and responsibility towards social justice.

Their professors would do well to heed to their calls to redefine their chosen profession, for here is an opportunity to reinstate the role of the university as one that is by and for its community.

This may be the century where the melting of the artificial divide between what is formal and what is informal will restore the balance between the state and the community it represents, the architect and the people he or she works with, the architecture and the generations who live in it.

***Students protest at Cairo University's Faculty of Engineering, February, 2012.***

***Abdel Rahman AlShamy***







## Creative thinking

Mohamad Alaa



Scene from the 1982 film, *The Wall*

**What are the factors that dictate the variation of such principles in which the levels differ from one community to the other?**

**What are the causes that produce a lack of creativity that some communities experience?**

The question is; why do certain communities fall behind while others advance. What are the factors that affect such denegration?

The people of any community are always in a state of debate. They affect and get affected by their surroundings, a series of reactions. What is called creativity is the ability to effectively express what concern is.

Creativity is a tool of communicating ideas to others, and to express the collective ideas and thoughts of a community to form a unique culture. This element is the most crucial to our culture, since when it declines the whole cultural curve takes a dive, but when it's at its best the flourishing of the society is guaranteed as well as the sustainability of its ideas.

### **The means of creative thinking**

The collective creative thoughts of the innovative

minds in various fields; those minds reflect the status of ability of their communities. In a rational thinking community, the innovative minds take upon themselves the task of tackling the challenges of their community, and as there is a state of constant challenges they start offering a spectrum of applicable concepts using a process of creative thinking.

### **Does the community offer creative opportunities to individuals?**

This creative thinking is primarily affected by the environment by which a person is raised in, starting from the fundamental education that a person receives, to the later surrounding intellectual circles from which he or she interacts and acquires knowledge.

Most of the people are exposed to an education system which is either in an academic form or a real life one.

But the question in general is what the quality of such an education is; does it really fulfill its task? If the majority of a population are high school graduates, so the question becomes what makes an education system affect their creativity in either a positive or a negative way.

When you have an idle system like the one that that governs schools here in Egypt - a non-motivational based system that does not reward for gaining extra knowledge and does not tolerate deviation off its course for the sake of curious minds - you get the phenomenon of what is "in the curriculum" and what is "out of the curriculum".

So what is the curriculum!

It's actually an act of freezing the knowledge, the term itself provides a controversial situation, because what it indirectly indicates is that students have to study a predetermined *amount* of knowledge, rather than a certain quality of



understanding. At the same time it urges students not to seek beyond the boundaries provided by the curriculum. The bottomless depths of general knowledge are thus left un-plunged as the act of molding the mind into concrete forms ensues, rendering students unprepared for practical real-world situations.

Yet another obstacle to creativity is the choice students have to make between either humanities or science when they start their last two years of high school. Such a choice could be a major setback in the process of developing creative skills within children as it specialises them too early on.

Ultimately the national curriculum does not accommodate experience-based knowledge. A great loss as the continued process of trial and error, requiring the full coordination between the mind and body, is what elevates our skills to a more sophisticated level.

Our schools these days depend mostly on oral information; studies have proven that the percentage of information retained from such a method is around 10%, whereas the use of visual methods could raise this to around 30%. This might explain why students forget most of what they had learnt within the first few weeks of their summer vacation.

But the ultimate method of presenting information is still the one where both visual and oral methods are used as its rate of retaining information could reach 80%. This may be explained by how we humans are considered visual creatures since around 80% of the information acquired by us is actually visual. A baby can process visual information from the first few weeks, whereas language is a tool since we acquire later as we gain vocal communication tools in our later stages.

A study has shown that a human brain is capable of processing visual information 60,000 times

faster than text. In that sense a picture actually is worth much more than a thousand words.

Another study by Jerome Bruner, a psychologist at New York University, uncovered that a person can remember only 10% of what they hear, and 20% of what they read, but 80% of what they see and do. The more interactive a person can get the easier he or she can remember events.

Applying this concept alone to the school system shows how students are in a constant position of receiving information, though interaction is still extremely modest where it is directly requested. Such a system can raise the percentage of recalled information to about 50%.

What is also obvious is the inadequacy of art education in the national curriculum, art being in its broader definition, one of the means of visual communication. Our schools give us drawing lessons where we are asked to summarise various forms into just a splash of colours depending on a chosen national occasion, like Easter where we draw eggs and picnics. Not exactly a method to develop talent or a sense of critique

Communities known for their creativity are usually advanced in the fields of art, architecture and the built environment. Architects and designers excel whenever they are well established on ideas of creative communication, they reflect the society's thoughts onto their built environment.

The negative effects of the current education system on generations are enormous. One can see it in how most of us have lost our sense of curiosity, and how our ability to spontaneously express thoughts is diminished, something social pressure is also a culprit in.

### A way forward

Our current education system needs to be restructured into one that is student-driven. Schools can provide the basic knowledge tools and then the students can decide and implement



a set of projects within an agreed framework.

By integrating the means of creative thinking and the design process into the education system, students can effectively express themselves, and thus develop creative methodologies in their daily lives.

As one of the elements of the human composition is the satisfaction achieved when making or creating something physical, these projects should involve three-dimensional products like sculpting or model making. This sense of adding

something to the environment gives students the confidence of applying change.

Offering students an interactive environment where they are continuously stimulated is a crucial element, challenging their minds to generate their own ideas. Because eventually when they are provided with a chance in the future through a democratic opportunity, they can actually implement ideas of change within their communities.

**1971 Caricature  
by Salah Jahine  
in Al ahram  
newspaper on  
education reform**







## The January Revolution and the Built Environment

Amr Abou Tawila

### The Community Leads the Design and creativity



Mohamed Mahmoud St., Cairo.  
Gigi Ibrahim

Urban spaces are dynamic spaces formed by the continuous dialogue in which the architect and the community exchange roles. The architect would also analyse the community's cultural fingerprint on their space, and proceeds to translate it into urban and architectural solutions. At a certain part of this dialogue the architect fades into the background, allowing the community to start adding its own mark in a way that pumps life into the space. Both the architect and the community keep shifting roles throughout this process and as the situation gets more critical and important, the role of the community increases, often with surprisingly creative outcomes.

A vivid example of how a community can handle an urban space with flexibility, shaping it according to its needs, or even changing its morphology, can be seen in "Tahrir Square".

Through out the January Revolution the space went through various phases of change, each affected by the needs of people using the space. Sometimes the change was so huge that you had to stop and stare for a while, bemused by the beauty of change. After which you could start moving again adapting with the space.

The community isn't just brilliant in shaping urban space, but in shaping buildings, redefining their function and use to suit the situation, as we saw the "**Omar Makram Mosque**" excellently used as a shelter for protesters and a field hospital for the injured. It wasn't only the mosque that was adapted. The "**Qasr el-dobara Church**" was also used as a hospital.

These winds of change extended reaching many surroundings. Turning apartments into broadcasting studios, and building facades into



Tahrir Sq., Cairo. Maggie Osama

huge billboards displaying revolutionary chants and lists of demands.

The narrow streets surrounding the squares easily shifted into shelters in the times of brutal attack by government forces.

While in more peaceful times, breath taking open art galleries formed where walls were taken over by graffiti artists expressing the demands, dreams and hopes of the revolution. The art work isn't only about what is good, horrific events are also depicted on the walls of the American University in Cairo, and the Egyptian Museum. Such amazing dynamic contrast narrates a story for history.

The reason behind this article is to highlight the power of the community as an urban designer, opening the door for architects to recognise the community's role, especially during massive events such as the Million-person Fridays and the battles of Mohamed Mahmoud St., Qasr El-Ainy St., and Mansour St. Architects would do well to observe and analyse the spaces created by protesters during their interaction with the big events and question why they needed to create each space the way they did, based on the daily and temporary actions that lead to re-functioning and re-forming the square.

*The harsh clock just rang  
The radio at the café broadcasting obsolete speeches  
About riot advocates  
When they are turning;  
Raging over the "Stone cake" around the memorial  
A candlestick of anger  
Is glowing at night ....  
And the sound is sweeping the remaining darkness*

These are **Amal Donqol's** verses from his song, *Stone Cake*, where he was describing the students' sit-in of 1972 in Tahrir square during the "Universities Outbreak". Donqol described how they pumped life into the square through their voices declaring the birth of a New Egypt.

Now after 39 years, the square has witnessed a bigger multiclass and nonviolent revolution.

The January Revolution sparked from the very same place carrying with the spark of urban change in the square, converting it from a traffic circle into a multiple activity urban formation.

Over the course of the initial 18 days till



Tahrir Sq., Cairo. Jonathan Rashad





*Tahrir Sq., Cairo. Jonathan Rashad*

Mubarak was toppled, protesters did not leave. Tents were set up in the middle of The Stone Cake, and the forecourt of El-Mogama", the large government building to the south of the square, was used to protect the protesters from the different weather conditions. Tents weren't the only form of the square's adaptation to the needs of the people. Cloth and plastic sheets were draped over the Stone Cake from light poles and make-shift structures, shading protesters from the summer sun. People even tapped into the electricity connections, extending outlets to charge cell phones, laptops and any needed electrical device, keeping them connected to the world throughout social networks and internet connections.

With the continued mobilisation and the presence of the people in the square, a public .social need was raised, requiring a new service

The urgent need of protesters to express their opinion aloud brought in stages that grew with time as did their speaker systems. The square formed its own Media & Culture Ministry, and the stages were used by revolutionary figures to give inspiring speeches, artists to perform songs or read poetry, or even comedians doing stand-ups.

The need for food and drinks brought in street vendors, where each vendor created his own urban character around him depending on the type of product he's selling. Some use wooden

carts, others use the pavements to sell their products, or stake a wide swath of land with old sheets of cloth. Their uniqueness made it easy to recognize them when the square was crowded.

Another need, storage, developed as the sit-in continued. Protesters' supplied from blankets and food to first aid kits needed to be kept in a safe place during the day when more people crowded the square. As a result of these needs Rations' Centers appeared. These centers were divided into two types; the first was the 'infill' type, which is a big tent set in the square, supervised by a group of volunteering protesters. The second type was a room or part of an office or apartment near the square lent by its owners, where donations of supplies get organised before they are distributed in the square.



*Filed Hospital, Omar Makram Mosque, Cairo  
Jonathan Rashad*



*Tahrir Sq., Cairo. Mostafa AlSheshtawy*





Tahrir Sq., Cairo. Mostafa AlSheshtawy

Despite the use of human shields to defend the Stone Cake, brutal attacks by counter-revolutionaries and the security forces led to countless instances of injury from bullets or suffocation from heavy use of tear gas. **Field Hospitals** spontaneously sprouted and were almost as quickly staffed with doctors and medical supplies, where vital first aid and even more was done till the injured were taken to hospital. The field hospitals varied in shape and size, the smallest were the ones nearest to the front line so they can be easily moved if attacked. Bigger ones like the one located at the church and mosque acted as supply centers and held a large stock of medical supplies, mostly donated by the protesters' families and individuals that believed in the revolution.

As the attacks increased in brutality, the number of protesters grew to defend fellow protesters, but the crowds made hard work for the ambulances that tried to reach the injured in the front lines. Here was another instant of spontaneous action, where people who owned motorcycles, most of them from working class backgrounds, started piercing the crowds to get to the injured and deliver them to the field hospitals. Protestors started calling them **Al Is'aaf Al Sha'aby**, "Popular Ambulance". That's when the "Popular Ambulance Pathway" appeared, basically two rows of protesters holding hands lined a path to allow the motorcycles and ambulances a clear access route between the crowds. This

spontaneous pathway became one of the most important spaces during clashes.

Deadly attacks such as the so-called Battle of the Camel, when thugs and camel drivers stormed in to the square and ran down protesters while the army, which was deployed at the time, stood watching, meant that the Stone Cake needed its own Ministry of Defence. This ministry was called **Al Legan al Sha'beyya**, Popular Committees, and they spread round the square securing entrances with barricades and frisking people as they entered and searching their belongings. The popular committees' role also extended to taking care of the traffic around the square while the traffic police was absent.

Change weren't confined to reforming the space, as sometimes protesters needed to partially or totally change the center of the square coping with their needs and activities, such as marches, prayers, or even circling around a singing protester. The form of the square partially differs in the daily prayers where all the chants stop, the platforms are silenced, raising the call to prayer, the protesters then stand in lines for prayer, sometimes with people surrounding them to prevent others walking through them. On Friday the square's form totally changes; one platform is used for the Friday prayer speech and the



Tahrir Sq., Cairo. Mostafa AlSheshtawy



Tahrir Sq., Cairo. Jonathan Rashad

protesters gather around it sitting on the ground. During attacks, protesters still perform their prayers, lining up in the face of tear gase and rubber bullets in such an amazing scene.

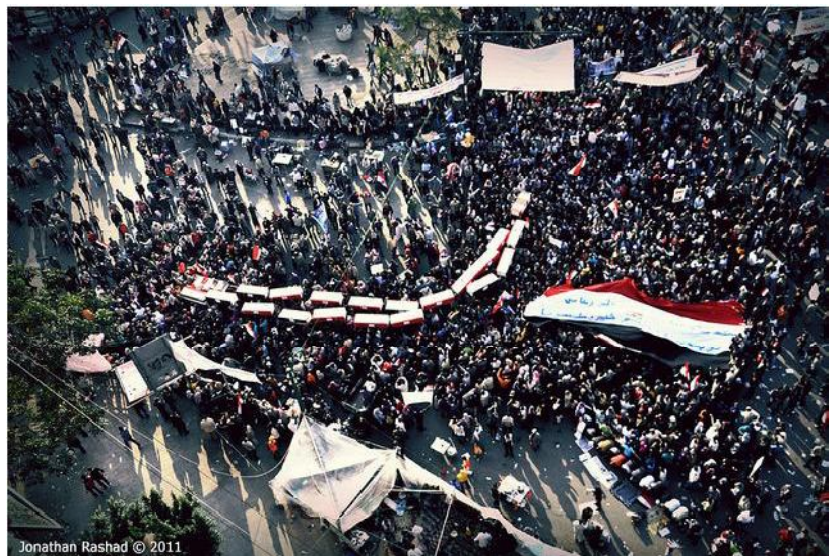
At times where political events are happening, heated discussion between the protesters turn into **discussion circles**. Protesters use such circles to debate the country's political issues and the revolution. Sometimes they use it to sing revolutionary folk songs to raise their spirits up high, mostly by chanting their demands. Even the circles' function may change as sometimes it's used as a welcoming tool for a public figure or the ejection of one out of the square.

Over time, marches became the most powerful way to support the square. Crowds of people would march together from where they lived towards Tahrir Square, chanting their demands out loud all the way there. The moment when the march merged with the square is always an exquisite one, two human masses melting together forming a huge human force that fills the surrounding areas with its chants. Sometimes marches may even be a funeral to mourn a martyr, or even may be fulfilling a martyrs' wish that the square is the last place for his coffin to pass by.

All these events that were formed in the square reshaped it adding a special value to each space, echoing the protesters' chants, carrying in its corners the meaning of '**Aeish, Horeyya, 'Adala Igtema'eya!**, Life, Freedom, Social Justice.

**Tahrir Square** became a miniature state where the revolutionaries built the country of their dreams, where no one sleeps hungry, where they had their people and worked for their good. They even created a place for weddings and also funerals. The protesters created the country they had always longed for during the reign of an unjust regime, they built it literally with their own sweat and blood, establishing how government should work to realise the main principles of the revolution; Life, Freedom and Social Justice.

Here comes our role as architects, where we need to observe and analyse the noble meanings implanted by the revolutionaries across the Square, and be inspired by these spontaneous acts of creating space in our work, and also to apply the principles of social justice to our design. We too can help build a State that respects justice on the ruins left by an unjust regime, one that holds the same values demanded by the people, scaling up the model of Tahrir Square, the square of liberation.



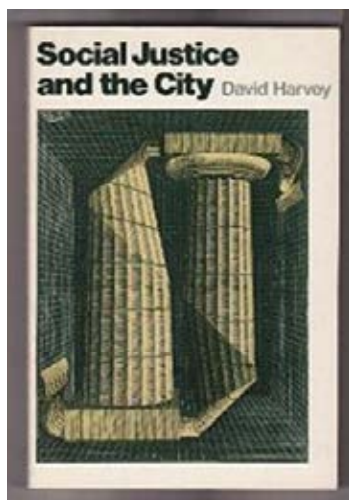
Tahrir Sq., Cairo. Jonathan Rashad





## Book Review: Social Justice and the City

Laila Hafez



**Social Justice  
and the City**  
*David Harvey, 1973*

Forty years ago a book was published by the title of «Social Justice and the City», by geographer and philosopher David Harvey, that critics acknowledged to be a revolution in geographic thought. And some other critics found that it will be controversial «for it brings into question, concepts and values that are fundamental to our way of life».

In «Social Justice and the City», Harvey assembled essays written at different stages in the study of urbanism and the city, and discussed the contemporary city «or the development of the modern movement in architecture» and offered a unique vision of what might be called by many, as utopianism.

David Harvey, is a British professor of Anthropology at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, and leading social theorist of international standing. He is a geographer and author of many books and essays that backed social class and Marxist methods as serious methodological tools in the critique of global capitalism, and the one who brought into light the idea of «the right to the city». He became concerned mostly with issues of social injustice and the nature of the capitalist system itself, and criticized absolute space and exceptionalism in geography.

Moving to John Hopkins University in Baltimore in the USA, Harvey positioned himself centrally in the newly emerging field of radical and Marxist geography when he met with injustice, racism and exploitation in the

city. In the seventies Harvey formed with others «the Boston Association of American Geographers» that became a landmark in their activities in disrupting the traditional approach of their peers, and exposing what he called «a revolutionary theory», a theory «validated through revolutionary practice».

In his book «Social Justice and the City» that was published in 1973, Harvey argued that geography cannot remain objective in the face of urban poverty and associated ills. And that capitalism annihilates space to ensure its own reproduction.

Harvey explained in the book that he found it important and appropriate to explore how ideas in social and moral philosophy could be related to geographical enquiry and to those fields of intellectual endeavour such as planning and regional science with which geography has much in common.

Harvey assumed that principles of social justice had some relevance for the application of spatial and geographical principles to urban and regional planning.

Harvey approached the idea of social justice in the city in his book, and in many of his works, and asserted that there is something innately wrong with how cities are today (the seventies) be it with layout, design, power, or history. He also viewed the question of «social justice» in terms of economy and the concerns of social organization being more or less peripheral.

To pursue this aim Harvey found it appropriate to use the city of Baltimore, together with other cities, as a backdrop against which to explore questions that arose from the projecting social and moral philosophical considerations, for he found the city broad enough to provide material examples of unjust nature, and challenged the apparent lack of alternatives to the status quo, and heralds the example of activism to initiate a living wage, as opposed to a minimum wage policy. He said how “feeding the downtown monster” has drained Baltimore of both its moral and fiscal wealth.

Problems of social processes and spatial forms are explored in the book through different evolutions: in





chapter one the problem is regarded as linguistic and linguistic solutions are explored. But by chapter 5 the problem has become one of human practice, and so solutions for it lie in the realm of human practice. In later chapters Harvey discusses the problem of the distinction between social processes and spatial forms, explaining that spatial forms are seen not as inanimate objects within which the social process unfolds, but as things which “contain” social process in the same manner that social processes are spatial.

From these essays Harvey tried to explain to the reader how each theme is viewed at the beginning and how it appears at the end, and how each theme evolves in a different manner, and how these evolutions seem complicated.

In explaining the nature of theory, the writer showed how some regarded theory as the artificial separation between methodology and philosophy, Harvey on the contrary, did not regard this separation as anything more than a matter of convenience. But then later he rejects all forms of separation, even that of convenience, that regard facts as separate from values, objects as independent of subjects, “things” as possessing an identity independent of human perception and action. And the “private” process of discovery as separate from the “public” process of communicating the results.

At the same time, Harvey, initially, saw that the construction of theory requires the manufacture of an adequate and proper language, with fixed definitions and meanings, but then he recognized that definitions could dictate conclusions, and that a system of thought erected on fixed definitions and fixed categories and relationships could inhibit rather than enhance our ability to comprehend the world. In the same way there was an evolution in the approach to verification, which Harvey views that it cannot be separated from social practice in general, for verification is achieved through practice which means that theory is practice in a very important sense.

Harvey proceeds in saying that if theory becomes practice through use, then and only then, is it really verified. Dealing with the nature of space in the early chapters, Harvey takes a philosophical approach of “space” arguing that once we have discovered what space is and have discovered ways of representing it, then we can proceed with our analysis of urban

phenomena by fitting our understanding of human behavior into some general conception of space.

But this approach changes later in the book, and Harvey argues that space becomes whatever we make of it during the process of analysis rather than prior to it. And he further explains that space is neither absolute, relative nor relational in itself, but it can become one or all simultaneously depending on the circumstances.

Harvey approached the nature of social justice and its evolution throughout the book from a liberal to a socialist or Marxist conception of the problem. He moves from a predisposition to regard social justice as a matter of eternal justice and morality to regard it as something contingent upon the operation of social processes in society as a whole.

Concerning the nature of urbanism Harvey regards it as “a thing in itself”, which can be understood as such, later urbanism appears as a vantage point from which to capture some salient features in the social processes operating in society as a whole - it becomes as it were a mirror in which other aspects of society can be reflected. This transformation occurs partly because urbanism comes to be defined relationally.

But the collapse of the distinction between production and distribution has an impact upon the way in which urbanism is viewed.

Thus an initial concern with urbanism as a thing in itself fades into a concern with all facets of man, society, nature, thought, ideology, production and so on, built around the concept of a relationally defined urbanism.

Harvey acknowledged that these four themes do not evolve independently from each other, but that there are similarities and interactions between them all the time. And since evolution is a continuous process specially in the realm of science and philosophy, Harvey is proving this in his new book, due to be published next April titled “Rebel Cities: from the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution” where he promises to expose the inner characteristics of cities as they became the central sites of revolutionary politics as we have seen over the course of the past year in our region, as well as in other cities in Europe and the United States of America.