Conserving the Relevance of Heritage

Corrective actions for sustainable historical fabric of the Arab city

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Abstract

Traditional quarters represent a valuable cultural and economic asset in the contemporary city, for which conservation policies are developed. Between the urban fabric, architectural character and the human asset, traditional quarters exhibit their distinctiveness and authenticity. What is unjustifiably ignored is the fact that traditional quarters have never been frozen in time. Rather, they are a product of multi-layered additions of cultures, styles, social and economical development. In their preservation of such history, policies have largely ignored economy, industrial and spatial logic on the old quarters while focusing on style of buildings in forms of touristic attractions and images of the past. Modernity was the aim of every process of architectural production, and technology played significant part in every construction at all historical periods. This paper investigates the tendency to modernity that shaped the traditional quarters of the Arab city and how best new buildings are integrated in the historic core of cities in an attempt to offer new economic and social possibilities for sustainable urban structure. Architectural practice and regulations in traditional quarters, hence, have become counter-productive and misleading, when it comes to the future of historical contexts. By locking traditional quarters in the past, limiting design options in them and restricting building functions, this paper argues, could have damaging effect on the long term survival of these quarters.

Using the analysis of long-term strategies for historical sites in European cities, Asian and Middle Easter Cities, this paper makes case for corrective actions that debate policy-makers approach for the future of historical quarters. It envisages long-term strategies for traditional quarters that are self-sufficient and act as active and dynamic zones rather than being static museum for touristic consumption. The paper concludes that by being part of active everyday life of society, traditional quarters can sustain their continuity and self-sufficiency.
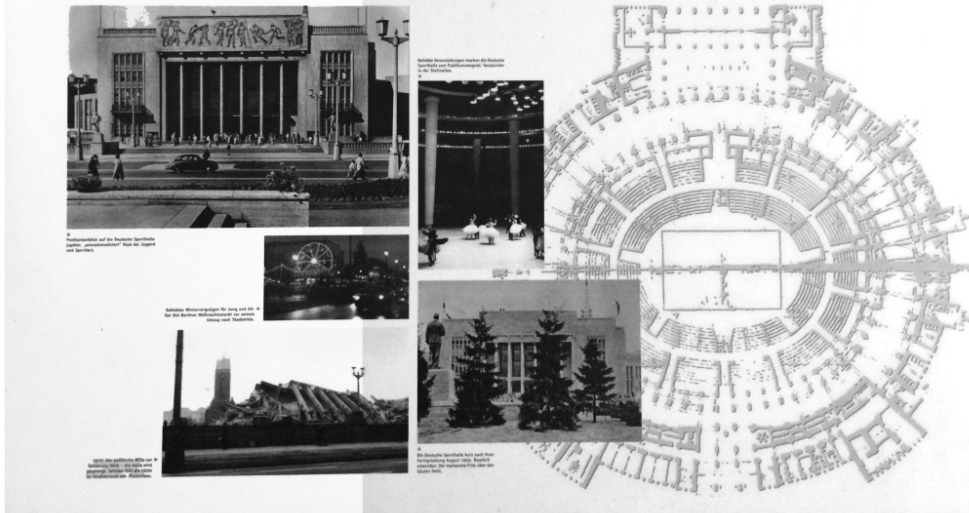
Fig 1, 2. The Archaeology of Stalinallee (Karl-Marx-Allee), Berlin. Café Sibylle, 2014

Introduction: Global Perspectives on Conservation

> *'He who controls the past controls the future.'*
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> **George Orwell**, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 1949
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> *'It is impossible, as impossible as to raise the dead, to restore anything that has ever been great or beautiful in architecture'.*
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> **John Ruskin**, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 1849

The archaeology of our built heritage is centred on the understanding of human experiences, history and narratives through historic fabric, structures and remains. It is a practice of understanding humanity. Conservation, Repair and heritage preservation operate on different levels of research inquiry that involves researching history and physical evidence, validating authenticity and originality of objects and building, surveying their elements, filtering an hybrid alteration and addition, and finally preserving objects, building and spaces. Whilst we cannot live in history or preserve the past, Heritage conservation has become essential asset of the present urban experience (Abdelmonem & Selim 2012). Heritage, good or bad, represent an important platform to understand how the present came about and hence should be used to improve the future. The above figures show the photographic exhibition of the Archaeology of the infamous Stalinallee (Karl-Marx-Allee) in the former East Berlin at display in the Café Sibylle in 2014. This is a local non-profit charity effort that is based at the local coffee shop which became a national attraction as a cultural and business venue in Berlin. In short, the memory of the nation is preserved by a local private enterprise.

The notion of conservation owes much to John Ruskin, poet, art critic and the first preservation theorist of the 19th Century, who first to underline the difference between restoration and repair and two distinct processes. Having studied the decayed walls of Tuscany and the details of geological evidence and plant-life, he called for the 'poetry of conservation' as piece of art that entails thorough grounding in technical matters, materiality and clear distinction of what is authentic and what is addition. Ruskin believed nothing from the present should disturb the remnants of the past and that a building is born, lives and then, dies. He sought originality as an identity of the building with real layers of its fabric as it ages. The craft of preservation and repair of building is like surgical intervention in which the original must remain distinct. In his book "The Seven Lamps of Architecture", he refers to the seven lamps of architecture as principles for the maintenance and importance of those buildings. These lamps are Sacrifice, Truth, Power, Beauty, Life, Memory and Obedience. (Ruskin 1849)

Ruskin work sets out guidelines for the way architects deal with historic fabric and buildings. To make this distinction, architects must study the history of the building, the context within which it was designed and built, craft of the time, ageing materials and their aesthetic and physical features. But, *restoration* also involves correction of misinterpreted facts, times of construction and theories about building designs or the location of historic events. Conservation is equally about the collective knowledge of societies, their origins and habits that are learned through remnants of buildings and objects. But, with conservation comes long-term planning of occupancy and maintenance. According to English Heritage policies, historic buildings are an irreplaceable part of a nation's cultural and built heritage. *"When they are left vacant, they are at a greatly increased risk of damage and decay... the best way to protect a building is to keep it occupied, even if the use is on a temporary or partial basis"*. (English Heritage 2015)

European conservation policies developed the belief that a vacant property is detrimental to the vitality of town centres and if not carefully planned for suitable use valuable buildings are more likely to stand empty for indefinite periods. With empty and none-used historic buildings comes the increased risk of unauthorised access, vandalism and deterioration of built heritage. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) introduced the novel term of "Heritage Crime", defined as *"any offence which harms the value of Northern Ireland's heritage assets and their settings to this and future generations"* (UAHS 2013). Considered a criminal offence, the legislation refers to theft, vandalism, arson, and unauthorised works including demolition and searching for and selling archaeological objects as means of endangering built heritage in the Province. This has resulted in a 'Heritage Crime Taskforce' being established by bodies such

as the Fire & Rescue service, the Police, Building Control and NIEA (Ulster Architectural Heritage Society 2013).

This paper attempts to utilise lessons and strategies of built heritage conservation policies and experiences in European and Asian cities to offer critiques and analysis to contemporary conservation strategies and projects in Middle East with particular focus on Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. It intends to make case for corrective actions that debate policy-makers approach for the future of historical quarters. It envisages long-term strategies for traditional quarters that are self-sufficient and act as active and dynamic zones rather than being static museum for touristic consumption.

Conservation Policies and Practices of Management in the UK & EU

In England, a conservation area can be designated where a local planning authority identifies an area of special architectural or historic merit and deserves careful attention, planning and management to protect its character (Historic England, 2015). The first conservation areas were designated in 1967 under the Civic Amenities Act, and there are now nearly 10,000 in England. Most local authorities have a conservation area within their boundaries, and they are generally valued by those living and working in them as special places. They are maintained in collaboration with National Trust and Historic England, but occupied predominantly by private enterprise, local residents and services. Conservation areas and historic buildings remained largely functional and occupied with positive return to society. Historic buildings are more at risk when they are vacant not because of any lack of potential, but as temporary victims of the economic deficiency. "*The average conservation deficit for buildings has increased as end-values have stagnated or fallen*". (English Heritage, 2012) Hence, economic and social viability of the building within its local contexts and economic environments are central to their revival.

According to the British model, the Local Authority takes the lead in registering and managing local conservation areas and historic buildings. According to the procedures, the local planning authority carries out a Conservation Area Appraisal that includes a photographic survey of all buildings being included at the time of designation. The council establishes the conservation area and requires the specific procedures and aspects of maintenance to be properly followed, or otherwise the designation could be challenged at any point in time. Under the 1990 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act local authority has to review the conservation area and its boundaries and formulates management plan as well as publishes proposals for the preservation and enhancement of the area. (ibid.) Residents and businesses would need permission from the Council before making alterations such as cladding, inserting windows and solar panels, laying paving or building walls to a historic building. According to the register, designated buildings receive particular allowances, financial and technical support. Substantial demolition of a building within a conservation area will usually require planning permission from the Council, without which it is considered a criminal offence. (Historic England, 2015)

Central to heritage conservation in Hong Kong and Malaysia is the impact the conservation area has on the local community. To address the threats of demolition of historic buildings for redevelopment, Hong Kong Government has come up with attractive and effective administrative means to prevent privately-owned historic buildings from being demolished (Hong Kong Heritage Commission, 2003, 2015). They have actively engaged stakeholders in devising appropriate measures including land exchange and transfer of development rights to compensate these owners for their loss of development rights. In addition, the Government adopted creative approaches in preserving historic buildings and expanding their usage, with a view to transforming these buildings into unique cultural landmarks that are used on daily basis. The model of active social enterprise engagement under commercial management becomes central to achieve a win-win situation with local communities and not to isolate them from decision making. The Government also provides financial support as appropriate to render the scheme practicably feasible.

Urban regeneration and heritage preservation for New York in late 1960s is another case for consideration of active strategy of heritage conservation. (Jonathan Barnett 1982) The adoption

of transfer of Development Right which was successful to protect a number of historical buildings in New York from being demolished, helping to get their physical state preserved. Central to this success was that the policy used to successfully take into account the economic and social return of preserving the heritage, which was largely absent from projects in urban areas when accompanied with high redevelopment pressure. In this particular instance, urban design was deployed as urban policy which was an urban regenerator which could particularly attract rather than diffuse population around historic structures and buildings (Punter, 1999). In this sense, it helps to improve the attractiveness of urban settlements as places of live and work that is reinforced by the recognition of the role of urban settings in driving forward economic development. More importantly, this drives the imperatives of 'the entrepreneurial city' and by urban competitiveness strategies, in which cultural heritage and historic venues are critical and valuable economic assets, through valuable properties in iconic buildings and spectacular (Fun 2009).

The use of Cultural heritage and conservation areas in promoting tourism has never been more profound than in Berlin in Germany and Barcelona in Spain, where annually; there are more than 400 Promotional events that used different strategies, central to which Cultural heritage and historic buildings. Barcelona is world-known for being a cultural city with a unique variety of cultural heritage. Barcelona has nine World Heritage Sites that include: Palau de la Música Catalana, Park Güell, La Pedrera, Palau Güell, Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau, Sagrada Familia, Casa Batlló , Casa Vicens and Cripta de la Colònia Güell. During a five-year period, Barcelona enlarged its cultural attractions with new initiatives that designate a particular area for a particular festivity in the Universal Forum of Cultures 2004. In the year 2002, Barcelona hosted the International Gaudí Year, which shed the light on the infamous architect's heritage. Iconic landmarks such as Park Güell, La Ramblas or Gaudi work give the city a unique image, context and economic activities with profound marketable values what keeps them occupied all year around, by local population, businesses, or cultural events (Fig 3 & 4). Barcelona is using several strategies to promote itself; with the most important strategy being destination branding, where the cultural and heritage aspects play a leading role, offering much of economic income, social support and keeping the buildings occupied and fully functional.

Vacant historic buildings are naturally 'at risk' for a number of reasons that chiefly relate to their inability to support itself, covers its maintenance cost, become functional redundancy and suffer from lack of demand from potential occupiers. This will cause difficulty in obtaining funds to repair, inappropriate development and ownership issues. The building is considered 'at risk' based on its condition and state of occupancy. (English Heritage 2015) If economically viable plans cannot ensure that buildings are occupied in the long term, temporary and interim approaches should be considered. The period of vacancy should be minimal and the risks facing empty buildings should be limited through active management approach. In that sense, English Heritage recommend, *"Keep the building occupied through temporary or 'meanwhile' uses to minimise the risk of unauthorised access, physical decay and sudden damage"* (UAHS 2013). By doing this owners can greatly prevent unnecessary damage, dereliction and loss of heritage significance. In recent years, the use of temporary venues has become very popular with the creative communities and often local performing groups find new purpose-built venues beyond their reach to hire. Therefore an empty building may be suitable for a wide range of temporary uses such as: craft studios & workshops; gallery and performance spaces; filming sets and short-term accommodation.

Fig. 3 Music Festival in the Heart of Brussels Historic Centre
The Grand Place, the Central Square of Brussels

Fig. 4 Festival of Light, Museum Island, Berlin.
The festival utilises projected coloured lights on Iconic historic buildings in the Museums Island in
Berlin as an international event to creatively celebrate the city's Heritage.

Practice of heritage Conservation in the Arab City

Conserving the heritage in the Arab city has seen different approaches that vary from passive intervention of the state that keeps buildings as public museums and open chiefly for tourists, to being more interactive which keeps them more integrated in the local businesses, economy and markets. Under the pressure of advanced technology and global economy, The Arab Middle East faced an essential challenge to adopt global forms of architecture and urban fabric, while at the same time devote less attention to their local traditions and national heritage. Dubai, Beirut, and Cairo are very clear examples for Middle Eastern Cities, which had lost their local identity through final decade of twentieth century and early decade of the twenty first century. Scholars in the region called to maintain the presence of local identity of national culture by the conservation of cultural heritage. (Abada 2004, Sedky 2005) Hence, Conservation of Historical buildings have become one of the targets of the national security of many developing countries.

Conservation projects by the beginning of 1990th can be divided into two sectors; the first: was handled by the UNESCO annual programme for the preservation of cultural heritage, Such as Sana'a (Yemen) and Islamic Cairo (Egypt). These projects were funded by UNESCO as they exist on its International Cultural Heritage Sites. While they have succeeded to prevent further damages and retrieved some of their authentic characters, they had limited success on the long term. When external fund runs out, the buildings descend further in state of disarray. The lack of planning and management for the local community benefit hinders the natural course of self-sufficiency within poor and limited resources communities. The UNDP report on Islamic Cairo, admits that in the absence of supporting socio-economic programme that support sustainable income generation activities, all conservation projects will eventually fail. This was made more evident in the short-lived success of both Al-Darb Al-Asfar and AL-Darb Al-Ahmar Rehabilitation projects in Islamic Cairo, which will be discussed in greater details later. Following five years of continuous success to provide integrated socio-economic support to local communities, the area quickly descended into mismanagement and unlawful building practices, following the outbreak of the Egyptian Revolution in January 2011.

On the other hand, Projects that are handled by local authorities or by private sector owners seemed to have better success rate, especially when local residents see the benefit of the conservation and its return. These projects mainly focus on the re-usage and rehabilitation of these historical buildings for economical purposes. In this section, I will shed more light on two particular examples in further details: Al-Bastakya in Dubai, and Al-Darb Al-Ahmar in Old Cairo.

Fig. 5. Barajeel Heritage Guest House, Al-Bastakiyah-Dubai: A touristic venue for income-generating activity.

A. Dubai's Passive reproduction of heritage: Architecture as museums.

Al-Bastakia district is a settlement of initially Iranian merchants from *Bastak* and *Lingah* built around 1902. The location ensures close proximity to the ruling sheikh house of the Al Maktoums as well as proximity to the *Souk* and the merchandise off-loading area of the creek. The houses generally comprises lower level living quarters for storage and merchandise, while private quarters are lift upstairs. The local cluster of houses is arranged in two directions parallel to the creek as well as a perpendicular alignment. The *sikkas* (alleyways) have an average width of 2-3m. An array of open air public spaces is distributed across the district allowing space for socializing. The outdoor areas are often shaded by native trees and shrubs which turn it into a visual pleasant environment. The geographical position of the creek also enables the use of fresh cool air breeze through the *alleys* developing pleasant airwaves. Dubai urban growth has paid little if any attention to its native core, sacrificing many heritage districts to allow space for modern developments. As a matter of fact a large number of these heritage relics vanished in a very short period. In terms of figures, out of a total of 3,000 existing heritage buildings only 371 have survived. (Boussaa 2004)

Houses of Al-Bastak lie in conservation area and most of the buildings are used for touristic purposes, museums and restaurants and hotels that are seasonal and limited in their occupancy. Mostly, they are funded by the government's heritage fund. The passive traditional house would not full fill today's requirements for thermal comfort, the retrofitted units do no doubt – but it would be beneficial if the systems could better integrated within the design for better efficiency and also less obvious visual intrusion.

Fig 6. Al-Bastakiyah Houses: The traditional building forms in Dubai

Fig 7. Al-Bastakiyah Houses: Environmental and material tectonics for weather-related performance.

As the tradition of the gulf cities' constructions by the beginning of 20th century, the construction is mainly made of primitive mud soil available at the deserts. However, the settlers utilized the use of coral stones distributed along the beaches in Dubai and coastal regions to replace the usage of unbaked bricks as main structure component for load bearing walls. That structural system withstands loads until 3 stories high. (Fig.6) Roofs and slabs are built out of available timber and trees branches that work as beams covered with layer of palm leaves. Basic spaces are located in ground floor, minor and additional spaces located in first floor. As these building materials are derived from nature, they are the best to deal with the climatic conditions. (Fig.7) For example; Primitive mud or salt stones with mud mortar walls construction need in wide cross section that was used provided the best thermal insulation due to the huge content of natural fibers and air gaps included in both components. Small size windows and doors oriented mainly towards the middle courtyard are closed with wooden leaves. These openings allow ventilation though the desired access from either the courtyards or from the *Brajeel* (Wind tower), where which incoming air is cooled naturally through wet tissues or through the passive air movement through the court.

The success of the project was related to the types of activities involved in the conservation project, especially the inclusion of Social integration and cultural emphasis. As produced by the occupants themselves these houses are the best to reply their need at the time. Therefore, these constructions are considered social models for family relations in Dubai Community. They reflect basic traditions and relation among the community members and units. The old traditional houses, as found in Al-Bastakia have no doubt their own charm providing strong link with their own context, physically and culturally. These houses concepts and designs' contrast with the western models and estates developments in Dubai, is clearly recognized not only on urban scale but also on the functional plan, materials and systems scales as well.

While there are neither families nor locality present today, there were new beneficiaries and enterprises that help the project run locally and become economically self-sufficient. To maintain continuity and sustainable performance, the project involves long-term economic and cultural activities, such as museums, traditional style Guest House and sites for cultural and arts performances. Combined with several cultural festivals and public performance, Al-Bastakiyah has established itself and the cultural hub in the giant metropolis of Dubai. The flow of people, workers and visitors to the area and their facilities, make sure local businesses and cultural venues are well attended and hence provide another income to support long term management. The situation of course is not ideal, such is the case when the government support becomes limited or income from tourism is reduced, these buildings might suffer on the longer term.

B. Cairo: Al-Darb al-Ahmar Rehabilitation as strategy for conservation in everyday life

Rehabilitation of historical buildings is an old process in Egypt, where many historic buildings have been occupied for centuries, especially when they exist inside the active urban context of a town. When they do, they would naturally be subject to continuous upgrading process to satisfy the requirement of the contemporary life of each age. Many examples of that process started with Saladin's Castle in Cairo, which had been constructed on 1176 AC, and used by many rulers of Egypt until Mohammad Ali 1820s, to Abdeen Palace (the Royal Palace, then Museum currently). These buildings and so many others had been upgraded with new requirements each age of time to suites the modern life of an age. It was a continuous process until the western occupation in 19th century, when people attentions and priorities had been changed to other issues.

In the last two decades, especially when the UNESCO started to fund and supervise the conservation of historical buildings in the developing countries, the system of conservation in general; and rehabilitation in specific; gained a new dimension that concerns with the survival of the building in respect of its value. Such strategy aims to keep building active in priority of having the building in its original image in all aspects of value. It is however complicated and include sensitive operations involves not only the physical structure of the building, but also the social and economic integration within the local context. A conserved project must contribute and benefit local stakeholders, if it could stand chance of long term sustainable operations.

The continuous occupation of homes, shops and businesses in old Cairo remains inevitable for the inhabitants whose needs develop and change over time. The current preoccupation of conservation policy

is on getting conservation agencies/offices to carefully work on historical structures and adjacent urban spaces. Ordinary people's buildings, such as houses, were left in the hands of small offices, lacking any significant experience on such a distinctive area. The product is a set of adjacent box spaces built on top of ground level shops or garages, without even a minimum level of integration or reflection on every day practices of local people. Departing from this awareness of the essential association between the building's value and its suitability to the current needs, some old buildings have been rehabilitated since the 1990s. The work of Salah Said emerged as a ground breaking trend for a socially responsive architectural conservation in traditional contexts. (Said 1999: 6) Said, motivated by his scholarly research to understand the value and identity of Egyptian architecture in the *hawari*, realized that this could only be achieved by understanding the *lived spaces*. In 1999, he displayed this perspective in saying:

> *'When we look to the issue of culture, we will find out that houses and places where people live are of great importance. The study of domestic architecture is actually the only way to relate to everyday life of the people. Naturally we can tell about the customs and habits of the people easily by studying the nature and organization of living spaces in domestic architecture. In our search for the identity of the Egyptian architecture it will always be the case that we will have to relate to the culture of people. And in this regard we need to give stress to and find out about the roots of Egyptian architecture, not only by studying large monuments but also by studying people's habitat and domestic architecture in general'.* (Said 1999: 6)

Said's work considered old buildings that represented social and cultural values to the living patterns of its *hawari* during late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. The house of Sokkar in Bab al-Wazir area was rehabilitated by Said's team in 1995 (Said 1999: 8). Later, the project extended to develop another four houses in the same area. The making of home, for Said, was the making of a useful lived space, facilitating people's activities in secured and safe environments, which at the same time conserve the cultural value of the building. The home, as such, is composed of social elements (residents) and economical value (cost) as principal elements of its survival. (Said 1999) Said's team response to the social analysis was to develop the house in similar manner to those activities. As the building's main problem was in its structure, the architectural intervention involved rehabilitating organization of space and renovating decorative elements.
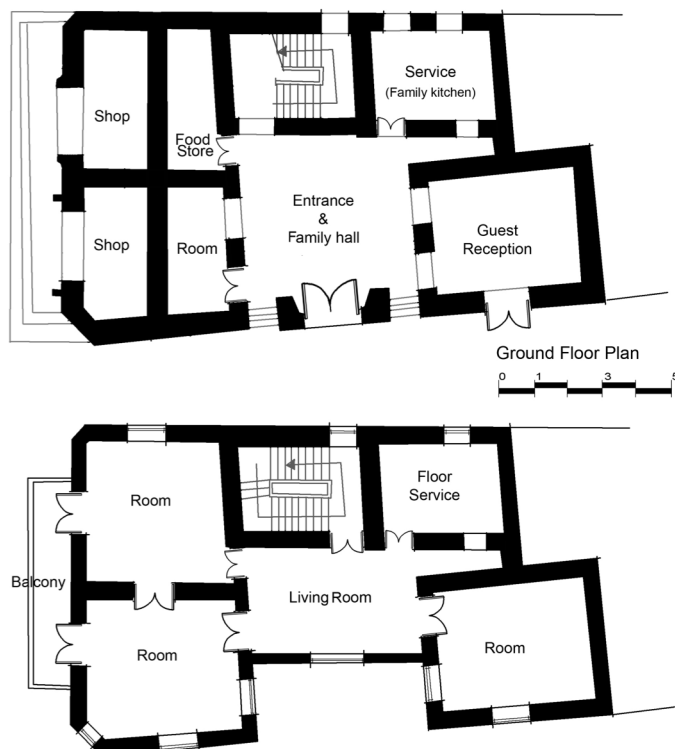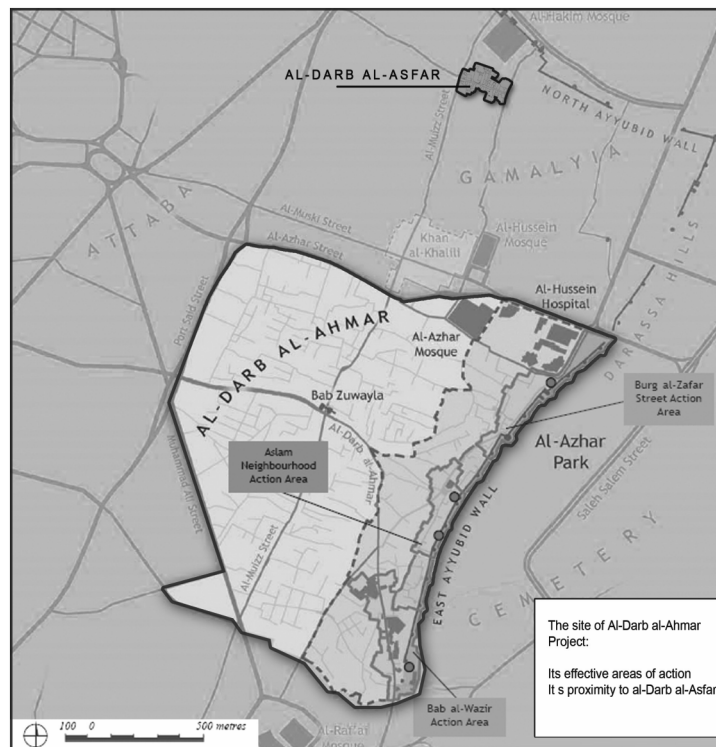

Fig8. Bayt Sokkar, one of the buildings rehabilitated by Salah Zaky Said's team

Said's work has paved the way for socially-informed architectural conservation in Egypt, where solutions are derived from the analysis of existing situations and problems, without preoccupation with architectural creativity or innovation. This practice of conservation and design, as a consequence, supported Said's approach to the preservation of cultural history in the forms of valuable buildings as lived history. While Said understands the intrinsic nature of traditional communities in old Cairo and the association between private and public spheres, his team, with only limited resources, was not able to extend this small-scale practice beyond the individual buildings.

On the other hand, AKTC (Aga Khan Trust for Culture) sponsored an extended project in old Cairo, which aims at improving the physical assets of the hawari of al-Darb al-Ahmar through a continuing open-ended process of enhancing people's lives and activities within both the private and the public spheres:

> '[The strategy] consists of improving the area's physical assets through greater public and private investment and raising family incomes through small business loans and employment generation programmes. No all-encompassing projects and no far-fetched social engineering agendas are required; rather, what is needed is an incremental improvement of what is already in place, and a strengthening of the available social capital and positive economic trends' (AKTC 2005: 2).

The trust manifested its intervention as reviving the urban history through the local process of making homes, by developing, rehabilitating old buildings or building entirely new houses. The implicit target is to put this quarter on the map of Cairene homes' production rather than consuming the past (Sutton & Fahmi 2002). By 2008, *al-Darb al-Ahmar* development project became one of the exemplar projects of its type, with more than 100 buildings being either redeveloped, restored or newly built with the assistance of an extended team of specialists. The long-term project worked on three consecutive stages: defining the needs of current inhabitants and built fabric, maintaining professional adjustment by including multi-disciplinary teamwork, and finally improving the safety and the quality of developed buildings by incorporating creativity and contextual integration (AKTC 2005, Shehayyeb 2002). However, the project does not end at this stage, as the team is situated in the area for long-term adjustments and investigation of emerging problems.

Fig9. Al-Darb Al-Ahmar Map, one of the buildings rehabilitated by Salah Zaky
Said's team

Departing from the inclusive responsibility of the architect, the project aimed at empowering local inhabitants; supporting them financially and technically to reorganize their houses in respect of their needs, as well as restoring structural safety of houses: as in the case of several houses in Darb Shoughlan. Bayt no. 5 in Haret El-Ezzy, for example, was re-planned with some spaces omitted or merged and others added. This was based on the needs assessment survey and study with the house residents, as we shall discuss in detail. It is becoming, according to the project architect, a process of reproducing existing homes [I1.1.09]. This process worked out the home as extended territory that involves the alleys' public spaces, workplaces, and economic affordability of the inhabitants. Realizing the strong association between the houses and residents, the community and inhabitants, the project uses traditional social ties as a resource for positive change that embodies the very essence of place with its complex stratification of spaces and uses (AKTC 2005). It utilized the living community as a vital asset of historic fabric for the future of the district:

> 'Preserved and respected for their intrinsic qualities, the monuments, old buildings and traditional open spaces must be integrated into the everyday life of the residents and reconnected to the complex, multi-dimensional social and cultural character of the area' (AKTC 2005: 4).

Occupied principally by population on low incomes, the homes in Darb Shoughlan alleyway form an inclusive form of home that merges the spectrum of social spheres. The residents are predominantly workers living on often unstable incomes from skilled work like carpentry and work within the vicinity of al-Darb al-Ahmar (Siravo 2004: 177). The instability and insufficiency of family income impacted on the maintenance and the quality of living spaces. Housewives had to maintain local domestic resources/supplies such as raising livestock, using shared services such as water supply and drainage points in the local street. The 2003 surveys show the local inhabitants to be the poorest in Egypt with average annual income level less than 200USD, which means less than a dollar per day. (AKTC *ibid.*) However, the inescapable deterioration of the buildings was exacerbated by the imposition of unrealistic rent controls, counter-productive planning constraints, limited resources and access to credit. (Siravo ibid.)

The organization of homes in this context is composed of blurred organization in which public and private spheres are merged in a disordered mix of activities due to the lack of space and affordability. Residents in the Zuqaq al-Ezzy building complained about the lack of privacy in the most intimate spaces; their cooked meals (representation of affordability) are exposed to their neighbours, and privacy of women (represented in the frequent visits to toilets and kitchen) is violated [I3.1.09]. The public sphere, on the contrary, was an essential participatory venue for daily practices, for females spend significant time in the harah's space washing dishes, cooking, and chatting (different from al-Darb al-Asfar). Women are used to moving between their local social spheres (public and private) without change or enhancement of their clothes/costumes.

Fig.10 Daily domestic activities in al-Darb al-Ahmar's alleyway (AKTC, 2005)
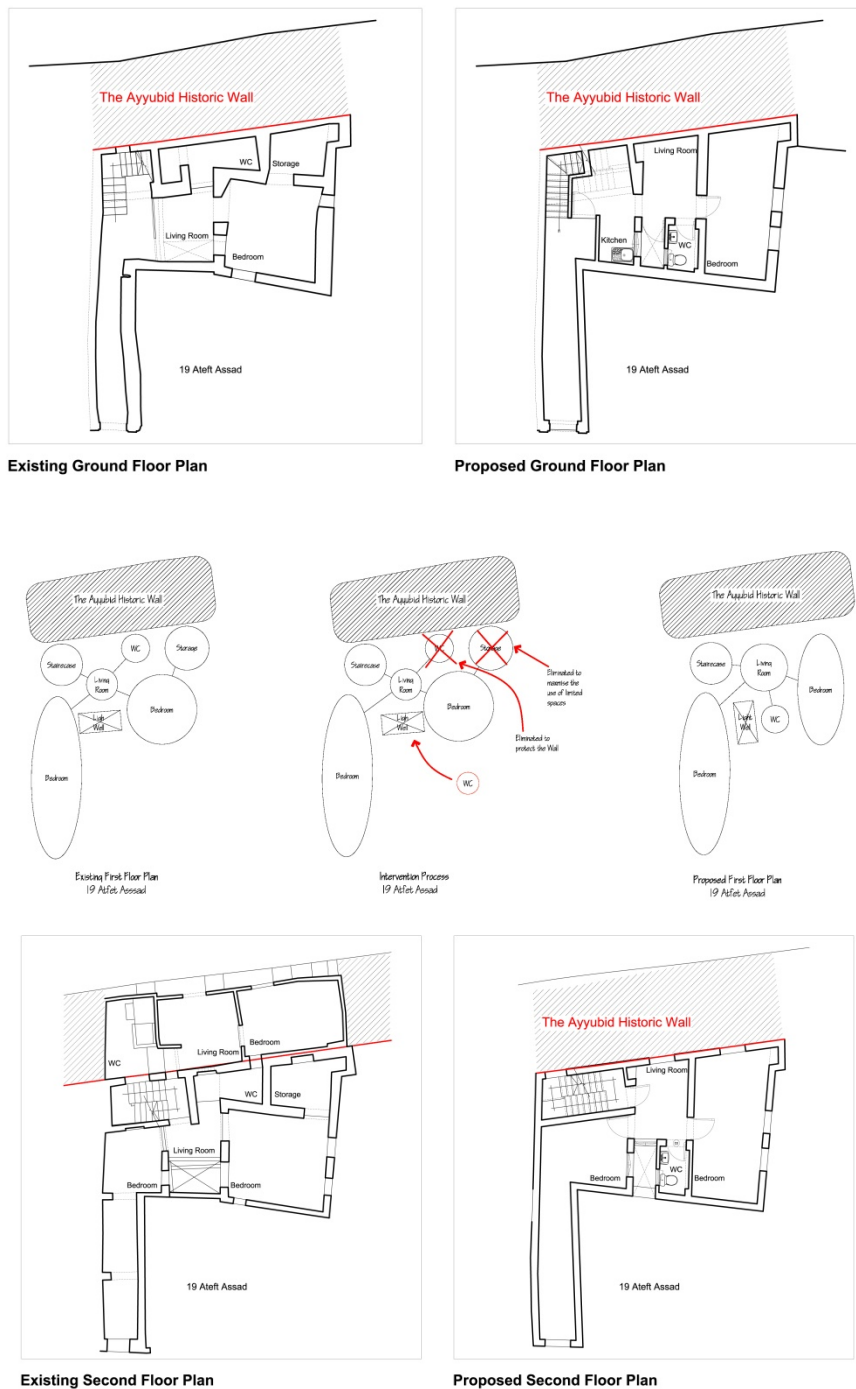
Fig. 11 Stages of Professional intervention

Courtesy of AKTC- Al-Darb al-Ahmar 's Project Team

Architects, joined by an extended team of social workers and economic specialists, using Needs Assessment Strategy (NAS) (Shehayyeb 2002), interviewed the inhabitants and monitored daily activities of the community with the aim of determining the socio-spatial practice and social progress. The interviews revealed the residents' appreciation of the context and community participation at the public sphere level, while they were concerned about the lack of stable, secure jobs, sufficient privacy in their habitual units, both public and private. Following the investigation, a continuous high demand for homes became apparent among existing local residents, who, for various reasons, are unlikely to leave

the harah. As a result, the socio-economic study and interviews with local residents concluded that unless there is rectification of the blurred organization, the current patterns of deterioration will persist:

> 'If the present pattern of abandonment and disinvestment persists, it can only pave the way for further deterioration and the eventual demise of irreplaceable social, economic, and cultural assets. It will also deprive the district of the critical mass of inhabitants needed to sustain the area's social and economic life' (Siravo 2002: 183).

Fig. 12 Redevelopment of façade at houses no. 15-17 Atfet Hozayn , al-Darb al-Ahmar. (Before & After)

This socio-spatial architectural practice required a comprehensive knowledge about dominant architectural style, family structures and shared as well as individual needs. A record of individual as well as collective activities and living patterns was made for every building, following interviews with their residents. Departing from this gathered information, every level was re-planned to suit residents' needs and to provide every family with their required level of privacy while capitalizing on the harah for semi-private activities. As a result, every level has had a distinct layout according to the needs, while structural walls are kept to support the building's structure. Such practice conforms to the process of design of Hassan Fathy and Peter Hubner in terms of the close investigation of socio-cultural structures and needs of the potential residents, followed by professional adjustment of their work (Abdelmonem 2015). However, it differs in that it is a process of production in an existing, long-established and grounded context, not entirely new construction as in those two cases.

Conclusion

Conserving Heritage is no longer a technical process by which architects, archaeologists and engineers embark on the mission of repairing, maintaining historic and heritage buildings. If technical repairs are not part of long term strategic planning that involves socio-economic and urban development, the restoration project may end up more damaging. Heritage buildings must be part of active and successful business and income-generating environment that keeps buildings occupied, functional and subsequently well-maintained by its own occupants, owners or enterprises. European legislations have indicated repeatedly the essential need for social capital and sustainable economic return to be part of heritage conservation

projects. In fact, the governments no longer fund or sponsor a conservation project unless there is a demand by the private sector, social enterprise and evidence on economic return. The state's role has receded and market economy dominated. This has proven effective and successful strategies for many European, British, American and Asian Cities. Suffering from the lack of private investments and support of social enterprise, Arab countries are yet to engage with similar planning and management approached to their cultural heritage, which are still driven by the government or international organisation funding support.

Creative conservation of heritage is no longer grounded in the physical maintenance or restoration of historic buildings. Rather, it is seen in the strategic long term planning and management of heritage that rely largely on the private enterprise, ownership and support of social capital. Creative design, moreover, is represented by the spatial engineering of returning facades to their original styles and features with neither additions nor new creations; also as managing the proper venues for private and public spheres for families lacking clear spatial organization for their activities. Architecturally, successful design, in terms of the facades or forms, is translated into contextual enhancement and improvement in the quality of the collective scenery, rather than changing it. The viability of heritage is in its continuous occupancy, use and integration in the local urban landscape, social context and economic activity of a society. And this is what the Arab Cities needs to develop, if they are to sustain their architectural and built heritage forcenturies to come.

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