

Reconciliations and Continued Polarities
in the
Works and Theories of Halim and Bakri

by

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ABSTRACT

The Egyptian society today is facing many socio-economical, political and cultural challenges that are directly influencing the living standards and circumstances of its members despite their position in the society's hierarchy. The most important of these challenges is the struggle between the *Inherited* and the *Imported* that takes the modernization processes that were repeatedly implemented by the different rulers and elite class of the society as its active field. These modernization processes almost always mean *Westernization*. They have resulted in the separation of the society into two distinct segments; a Westernized rich and powerful high-middle class and up, and a more or less traditional poor and powerless low-middle class and down. As a direct result of these challenges the society is experiencing problems of inequality, class conflict, search for identity, among many others. These problems have a great impact on the living standards of the majority of the society. Additionally, they greatly influence the power relations both between the different segments of the society and between the society as a whole and the Western societies.

This thesis discusses some of the attitudes and positions towards this issue of the *Inherited* versus the *Imported* and the problems that resulted from it. It attempts to achieve this from within the architectural profession by taking the attitudes, theories and works of two contemporary Egyptian architects -- Abdel Halim Ibrahim Abdel Halim and Gamal Bakri -- as examples of the moderate position that tries to rid itself from any emotional or unrealistic biases towards either end.

Through the study of the origins and the nature of these two architects' attitudes, theories and works I have showed how they have raised the level of sophistication and complexity of the discussion of these challenges. In other words, certain levels of reconciliations have been achieved. Nevertheless, despite these reconciliations that narrow the gap between a number of polarities within the Egyptian society and despite the agreement on the nature of the main issues at stake, issues of the role of the Egyptian architect in the development process, the nature of the architectural profession -- being an art form or a social reform tool, how to deal with the latest available technologies that appear in the West, the universality of the current dominant civilization versus the regional identity of each society, and why and how do we relate to history, among many others, are still being debated. Thus, clear biases are evident in the two architects' underlying attitudes towards the two poles of this dilemma .

With this research, I hope that the level of understanding of the problems that this society is still experiencing slightly increased so that, then, these two Egyptian architects, as well as others, will either further develop these attitudes to reach a better solution, or change some or all of their aspects in order to come up with a new and better solution that will further bridge the gap in the hope of a better life for the Egyptian society.

Thesis Supervisor: William Lyman Porter.
Title: Muriel and Norman Leventhal Professor
of Architecture and Planning.

To my mother and father
for the real lesson in life

To my wife and two children
for the love and comfort that they provide

To all the young and responsible Egyptians
for their struggle for the benefit of their society

To all of them I dedicate this humble research.

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INTRODUCTION

The Egyptian society today is facing many socio-economical, political and cultural challenges that are directly influencing the living standards and circumstances of its members despite their position in the society's hierarchy. Yet, each segment of this hierarchy is feeling and experiencing these challenges in drastically different ways and thus, their reactions towards them are different too. As a direct result of these challenges the society is experiencing problems of class conflict, search for identity, urbanization among many others. These problems have a great impact on the living standards of the majority of the society. Also, they greatly influence the power relations both between the different segments of the society and between the whole society and the West.

For the Egyptian society to be able to change its current situation to the better it has first to critically analyze and deeply understand this situation, its origins and the influencing forces that shaped and is still shaping it. Only then will it be able to maturely deal with this situation and change it completely or partially in the hope for a better life.

To speak of such an analysis and influencing forces without dealing with the issue of our relation with the powerful West is inconceivable. Whether we like it or not, this relation between Egypt as an Eastern country and the West is the major factor that plays the largest role in formulating and influencing many of the countries problems and challenges.

Since Egypt's first direct and most influential contact with the West in the

modern age- during the French Expedition (1798-1801)-, and until this day, the issue of our relation with the West as the privileged *other*, and to what extent our attitudes are influenced by it in one way or another has dominated all intellectual spheres; from science, to art, to philosophy.

This relation has triggered off different reactions over different periods of time within the last two hundred years. Yet, most of these reactions can be placed under two major contradictory attitudes -- or so they seem. On one hand, there are the *Tradition* crusaders who strongly reject all that is Western, and in the process build up a cultural identity, based on the local context, to re-establish a lost sense of security. Nevertheless, with a careful study of how they implement their ideas and theories, we find that even the most conservative of them can not escape at least a small portion of what they fiercely reject, i.e., Modernity. On the other hand, we find the *Modernity* crusaders who strongly advocate the complete adoption of all that the powerful West has to offer with the hope of balancing the inclined power scale. Yet, when we look deeper into their attitudes and their ways of implementation, we recognize the great difficulty with which they try to ignore their own culture and traditions and, at the same time, running a great risk of complete subordination to the source of their knowledge and their organizing systems, i.e., the West.

Fierce battles have been fought between the two attitudes over the years, each time under different slogans symbolizing each pole. In spite of this,

and however different the slogans may have been, it was always one issue at stake; *tradition vs. Modernity*, or better yet, *Tradition vs. Westernization* that took the form of the *inherited* versus the *imported*.

Describing these two positions or attitudes Geertz says that "to stress the first of these is to look to local mores, established institutions, and the unities of common experience -- to "tradition," "culture," "national character," or even "race" -- for the roots of a new identity. To stress the second is to look to the general outlines of the history of our time, and in particular to what one takes to be the overall direction and significance of that history. There is no new state in which both these themes ... are not present; few in which they are not thoroughly entangled with one another; and only a small, incompletely decolonized minority in which the tension between them is not invading every aspect of national life from language choice to foreign policy [to architectural ideology]."¹

Between these seemingly two oppositions there has been a number of conciliating resolutions introduced either by members of that society or by outside pressures. However, not one of these attempts has succeeded in formulating a solution that will resolve the tension that these societies are living in.

In general, all middle ground solutions started by defining these two oppositions and, then, attempted to develop a reconciling formula. Also, they all have one mutual embedded attitude towards the development of developing societies like Egypt; they

rely on the idea that those societies, if given time and the right initial driving forces, can somehow catch up on the development process and eventually reach a satisfying state of modernity. Yet, in my point of view, advocates of these solutions forget or do not recognize two crucial points: First, the conditions that these societies live today in are in no way comparable to the conditions of the western societies during their rise towards modernity. Developing societies in our time do not have the necessary resources to back up their uprisal, or their development process. In addition, they are a part of an un-even two-sided relationship with the West that puts them under constant strong pressure, and of course this kind of relation did not exist in the age of Western development. Second, they do not consider the possibility that, at some point, those societies themselves might choose not to take Western modernity as their ultimate goal.

Due to this cultural dilemma, the society is living a daily struggle between a traditional way of life that they have known and got used to over hundreds of years and a modern new and imported way of life that was introduced to them, and still is, by the power of Western media and politics through the rulers and the elite segments of each society. Thus the interplay of the inherited and the imported is not only a kind of cultural argument of abstract ideas, but "a historical process as concrete as industrialization and as tangible as war. The issues are being fought out not simply at the doctrine and argument level -- though there is a great deal of both -- but much more importantly in the material transformations that the social structures of all the new states are undergoing. Ideological change is not an independent stream of thought running alongside social process and

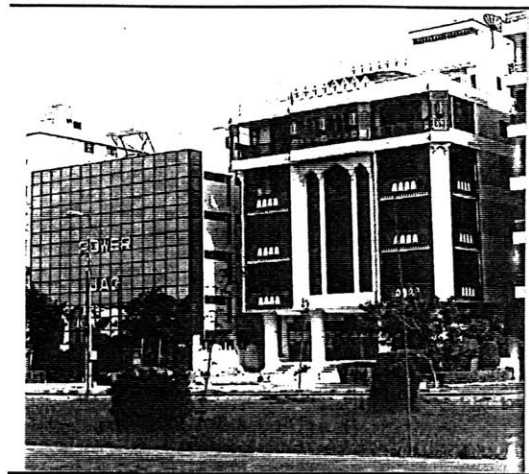
¹Geertz, Clifford, "The Interpretation of Cultures," Basic Books, A Division of Harper Collins Publishers, 1973, pp. 241.

reflecting (or determining) it, it is a dimension of that process itself."²

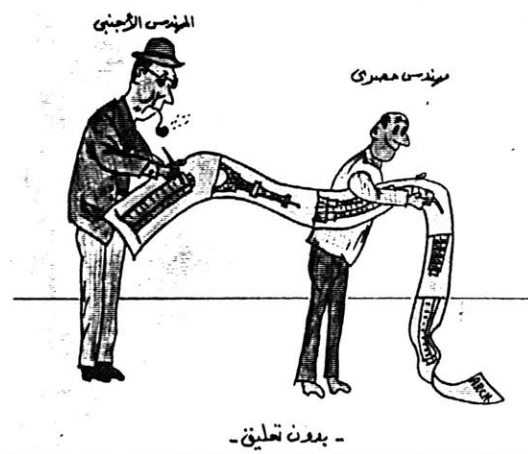
This idea of developing the Egyptian society by implementing a modernization process that is based on a Western model, i.e., Westernization, that appeared for the first time during the rule of Mohammed Ali (1805 - 1849) has resulted in the separation of the society into two main segments; one adopting Western value systems and organizational structures and the other continuing to abide by the inherited traditional systems and structures. The first attitude was adopted by the rulers of the country and the elite class that surrounded them leaving the inherited to the rest of the society that constituted the majority of the Egyptian society. This situation resulted in what is called the Duality phenomenon; The difference in the political power of each segment consequently lead to the unjust distribution of the countries wealth and resources in addition to the great difference in the quality of services provided to each segment. Thus, a great state of inequality occurred. Coupled with the rapid urbanization process and the increase in the population, the living standards of the poor segments of the Egyptian society steadily decreased.

For these reasons, the society is in desperate need to be confronted and challenged by a rational critical analyses of its member's values, ideas and conditions. This is crucial for it to be able to reach a new positive understanding of its position and resources. Furthermore, it should be noted that the whole society, including the rich educated elite, who are in need for such a confrontation and not only popular segments of the society.

²Geertz, Clifford, "The Interpretation of Cultures," Basic Books, A Division of Harper Collins Publishers, 1973, pp. 243.



(fig. 1) The inherited versus the imported; two new apartment buildings in Cairo.



(fig. 2) A caricature commenting on the influence of Western architects and their theories on the Egyptian architectural scene.

The question that rises here is: can the discipline of architecture contribute in this needed critique, and thus contribute to the development of the society? In spite of the answer, what is strikingly evident on the architectural scene is that signs of these problems are very much apparent in the architectural production of the last two hundred years and until this day.

Throughout most of the history of Modern Egypt members of the

architectural profession have always been aware of this strong relation between architecture and the prevailing cultural attitudes and how it can be used to enforce or reject one attitude over another.

This thesis attempts to discuss some of the attitudes and positions towards this issue of the *Inherited* versus the *Imported* and the problems that resulted from it such as the duality problem and the inequity problem that the Egyptian society is still suffering from until this day. It attempts to achieve this from within the architectural profession by taking the attitudes, theories and works of two contemporary Egyptian architects as examples of the moderate position that tries to rid itself from any emotional or unrealistic biases towards either end.

The first of these architects is the recent Aga Khan Architectural Award recipient (1992) Prof. *Abdel Halim Ibrahim Abdel Halim*. He is a professor of Architectural Design and History of Architectural Thought in Cairo University. At the same time, he is the head of an architectural office by the name of "CARAVAN, Community Design Collaborative," based in Cairo. The second architect is *Gamal Bakri*. He is the head of an architectural office by the name of "Consulting Group Gamal Bakri & Associates," also based in Cairo.

While both architects recognize that the complexity of the current cultural, socio-economical, political and architectural situation of Egypt does not leave any room for a stagnant position or a restricted view of an 'either - or' attitude, and at the same time attempt to achieve an equilibrium between the poles of several issues such as tradition and modernity, architecture as art and architecture as a social reform tool, the elitist approach towards development and the popular approach to it and local

systems, techniques and materials as opposed to international ones, among others, I hope to show how we can still recognize a number of evident biases in their works and theories.

Both of these architects have a leading position in forming and presenting a critical attitude to the general architectural profession in Egypt. They are considered by their contemporaries as being from the same *oppositional* or *resistant* professional group. Both of them admit in their writings, either explicitly or implicitly, that they are opening un-explored grounds and by this they are defining a new language for Egyptian thought in general and architecture in particular. They also clearly advocate *innovation* in architectural practice by either calling for 'creativity' and 'redefining the organizing systems and institutions of the profession' or by calling for 'spontaneity in the design process' respectively.

Furthermore, they both recognize the dominant intellectual issue of our relation to the West and the tension that occurs between the fear of complete subordination to it and the desire of obtaining all signs of progress from it. They also recognize the complexity and the ramifications of the issues influencing or leading to the problems of contemporary Egyptian architecture. They attribute the crises of contemporary architecture in Egypt mainly to the blind adoption of either Western theories or inherited traditions without any critical assessment of their degree of compatibility with a developing society such as ours. Yet, at the same time, their education was completely Western oriented and, unlike most contemporary Egyptian architects, they are always up to date with the rapid change in Western architectural theories with the help of books, periodicals, international conferences,

trips, international competitions and direct involvement with Western architectural firms and institutions.

By understanding the origins and the nature of these two architects attitudes and positions and critically assessing them, I hope that we can unveil some of the internal difficulties that are inherent in the dilemmas facing Egyptian architects as an example of the whole intellectual society of Egypt. This is very important for any field of knowledge, for this act of unveiling in any such study becomes an act of freeing the researcher from all kinds of constraints that he/she may have been committed to before that. In this case, the level on which the researcher has to make his choices is raised from the level of how the ideas and beliefs were implemented to the level of the ideas themselves.

This is specially important in architecture. For an architect to know the circumstances that led to the emergence or the adoption of a certain style or form is to change the kinds of questions that this architect raises during his/her own design process; from 'how can he/she implement a certain style in his/her new building?' to 'should he/she implement it?' from 'what architecture should look like?' to 'what architecture is or should be in his time and place?' and, finally, from 'which style should he/she use?' to 'which ideas and beliefs does he/she really comply to?'

Organization:

This research is organized in three main chapters in addition to two attached appendices. The first chapter tries to sketch out the current socio-economic, political and cultural issues

that are related to the development and advancement of Egypt. This brief review will act as the foundation layer that will then be used to situate the two architects that I am concerned with in this research. In this chapter I will only address and comment on the aspects of this situation that I feel might have some bearing on the articulation of this thesis. I will then focus on the current urban and architectural context.

In the second chapter I will deal with the backgrounds, theories and attitudes of the two architects only to, then, go on to the third and final chapter where I analyze these theories and attitudes with the help of their works in the light of the issues and problems of the Egyptian cultural scene that were discussed in the first chapter. Through this analysis, I will attempt to relate the two architects to the different cultural and ideological attitudes of the contemporary Egyptian context.

The first appendix at the end of this research consists of the two architects biographies. The second consists of some background material that is, in my view, important for further relating these architects to both the historical development of the cultural issues that are discussed in this thesis and to the development of the architectural ideologies of Modern Egypt.

CHAPTER - 1 -

The Current Situation

This chapter will try to sketch out the current socio-economic, political and cultural issues that are related to the development and advancement of Egypt. This brief review will act as the foundation layer that will then be used to situate the two architects that I am concerned with in this research. However, when one is faced with the situation of having to go through a very complex and multi-layered issue in a very brief way, as I face now, one is forced to reside to a certain level of abstraction. This fact I acknowledge, but given my main objective in this thesis this could not be avoided. Thus, I will only address and comment on the aspects of this situation that I feel might have some bearing on the articulation of this thesis. I will then focus on the current urban and architectural context.

Today, almost every research that takes the development of Egypt as its studied object neglects all approaches of the development process but one, i.e., economic development. Accordingly, all recent development policies, starting from Saddat's rule (1970 - 1981) can only be characterized, described and implemented using economic vocabulary and strategies. All social reform has been, and still is, completely neglected and un-addressed by most official authorities.

Furthermore, a deep and careful look into these studies reveals the great limits and the exclusive approach of them. The economic problems of Egypt are almost always portrayed as a problem of 'geography versus demography'; the

long and narrow Nile valley with its limited resources and virtually no possibilities of expansion what so ever, versus the rapidly multiplying millions of inhabitants. This portrayed view has a number of very serious implications. It defines the problems of Egypt as being derived from three seemingly *natural* sources: limitations of nature, a defined physical space and human reproduction. These natural causes thus formulate the solutions offered: increasing management of Egypt's resources and the adoption of the latest technology to achieve maximum utilization of the existing resources. "Yet, the apparent naturalness of this imagery is misleading. The assumptions and figures on which it is based can be examined and reinterpreted to reveal a very different picture. The limits of this alternative picture are not those of geography and nature but of powerlessness and social inequality. The solutions that follow are not just technological and managerial, but social and political."¹

Equally important is how this portrayed view is greatly beneficial for those who sketch it. The confinement of the causes of the economical problems of Egypt within the boundaries of being *natural* treats Egypt as a mere object that is separate and *out there*. The discourse of development, in this case, is designed and portrayed by an external expertise that is completely objective in its

¹Mitchel, T., "America's Egypt: Discourse of the Development Industry," Middle East Report, March - April, 1991, pp. 19.

attitude. Yet, it is nowhere pointed out that the designers of these development policies themselves, be it the World Bank, the USAID and other international -- Western -- organizations, or the decision-makers and power alliances within Egypt itself, are pivotal players on the economical and political Egyptian scene and stand to benefit greatly from the implementations of certain policies or loss enormously from the implementation of others.

While this point is extremely well taken and articulated and proved by Tim Mitchel in his essay entitled *America's Egypt: Discourse of the Development Industry*, we should not be led to believe that all of Egypt's problems are only either externally imposed or imposed by the decision-makers and the small powerful class. In addition to the strong political and social inequity in the Egyptian society the other cited problems are equally true and real. The problems of rapid population growth, rapid urbanization and considerably limited resources are all normal problems that face many countries at one time or another, nevertheless, dealing with such problems is made more difficult by the local and international political, economical, social and cultural pressures.

In the following few pages I will try to briefly review the main issues that rise in any discussion dealing with the development process of Egypt and the problems that face any such process.

Westernization:

Since the French Expedition, the idea of Westernization can be seen as one of three ideological choices that the Egyptian society, or the Egyptian rulers and elite to be precise, had to choose

from as a way to deal with the new and serious situation that they were confronting, i.e., the unbalanced power relations between them and the new Western powers, or in other words, what came to be known as underdevelopment.² These three choices were:

First, complete immobility and stillness. This approach would have meant the retreat to the inherited and the refusal of everything imported from the West.

Second, Egyptian rulers and technocrats, together with their Western advisors and experts, believed that the only

²There are generally two main lines of thought that attempt to explain Underdevelopment: modernization theories and dependency theories.

Modernization: During the nineteenth century, a growing sense of economic and cultural superiority of the Europeans over the rest of the world either led to the belief in the permanent inferiority of those *other* countries and their cultures or to the belief that the only way these other countries could advance and progress is through their acquiring European ways. Hence, three themes were chosen as the back bone of any modernization process: religious conversion, technology transfer and political reform.

Dependency: This theory was developed during the fifties and sixties of this century in South America. People who developed this theory -- mostly sociologists -- noted that the only difference between the situation of the so-called Third World countries since the nineteenth century and between the conditions of today's industrial First and Second World countries during the sixteenth century is the European colonization of these Third World countries. These countries were rich in resources that were badly needed by First and Second Worlds. This left the colonized societies with collapsing social, economical and political structures.

solution for underdevelopment was the diffusion of the developed countries' model, i.e., the Western model. For materialists, this meant technology and capital. For idealists, it meant Western modern values and attitudes.

Finally, the attempt to reconcile the two poles of this struggle, i.e., the *Inherited* and the *Imported*, by adopting whatever is appropriate and beneficial from both to achieve the resurrection of the Egyptian society. This approach depended on the adoption of some materialistic aspects of the imported culture and, at the same time, bringing the inherited up to date and freeing it from the negative aspects that hocked upon it over the years. This position was advocated by a number of important figures in the history of Modern Egypt through the whole two hundred years; people like El-Tahtawee, Mohammed Abdu and Lotfi El-Sayyed are but a few examples of these key figures.

This idea of Westernization was first implemented during Ismail Pasha's rule (1863 - 1879) when he wanted Egypt to be "a Part of Europe and not of Africa."³ He thus adopted all Western ways of life and Western systems, specifically the French,⁴ and enforced them on the Egyptian society.⁵

³This is a well-known phrase that Ismail used repeatedly. El-Sawee, Ali, "Transformations in Architectural Thought and Expression During The Reign of Khedive Ismail: A Critical Study of the Phenomena of Transformation in Architectural Expression," Masters dissertation, Architectural Department, Cairo University, Egypt, 1988, pp. 99.

⁴He lived and studied in France for a number of years and was fascinated by Paris.

⁵For more details on this period refer to appendix no. (2).

Since then, this attitude towards the solutions of Egypt's problems dominated the Egyptian official scene, despite some changes in the source of the model that was seen to be appropriate for the Egyptian society.⁶ Recently, from the time of Saddat's rule, Egypt is experiencing a development process that is based upon the capitalistic Western systems of Western Europe and the United States.

Duality:

As a direct consequence of the ideology of Westernization that the rulers and the elite segments of the Egyptian society adopted since Ismail's rule, there raised the issue of the dual nature of that society. While the rulers and the elite class that was first created by Mohammed Ali (1805 - 1849), re-organized its structure and regulating systems and ideas on the bases of the imported Western model, the rest of the society that was composed of the middle and lower classes -- and which represented the greater majority of the society -- still lived by the inherited systems and social structures and rules or a mere copy of them that experienced some changes in order to correspond to what was happening in the upper classes. This situation led to the separation of the society into two distinct segments; what can be described as the 'official' segment represented by the elite, and the popular segment represented by the rest of the society.

⁶The origins of the adopted Western model changed from France and England until 1952, to the Soviet Union in the form of a socialist regime during the rule of Nasser and finally to Western Europe and the United states in particular during Saddat's rule and until now.

This phenomenon was manifested in most societal systems and structures in Egypt; in the social structure as the separation between the elite and the popular, in the educational system as the separation between the new Western based schools and Al-Azhar, in the judicial system as the co-existence of both the man-formulated laws and regulations and the Quranic ones, etc. These dualities resulted in many contradictions and dichotomies on many levels, all of which the Egyptian society still face today.

Un-equity:

As a consequence of this duality phenomenon, the strength, power and influence of each segment of the society differed tremendously and thus there rose a state of un-equity in the Egyptian society. This problem has escalated rapidly since the *Infetah* process (the Economic Liberalization of the country) implemented by Saddat during the second half of the 1970s. This process was a modernization attempt to achieve development by taking the Western capitalist model of the United States and Western Europe as its inspirational model. Commenting on this Western influence on the *Infetah* process, Dr. Saad-Eddin Ibrahim says:⁷

“His vision [meaning Saddat’s vision] was similar to that of Khedive Ismail. Saddat wanted to develop Egypt along Western lines with Western economic aid, Western technology and Western experts. If Paris and Rome were the favorite

models for Ismail, Los Angeles and Houston were favorite models for Saddat.”

Yet, implementing such a process was not in any sense smooth or easy. The imported systems and structures were not integrated with other social and organizational underlying requirements necessary for the success of these policies. Consequently, a great tension between these imported policies and the existing attitudes and ideologies occurred. Coupled with the problem of duality and the unbalanced distribution of power and wealth, this tension resulted in a great distortion in the value system of the society. The bases on which each cultural aspect from tradition or the West could be accepted or refused greatly varied between each segment of the society each depending on its cultural, political and economical status.

Janet Abu-Lughod comments on this phenomenon of un-equity in the Egyptian context by the following remark:⁸

“I believe the issues of equality and social justice are central to the diagnosis of [Cairo’s] problems and to their solutions. One may think about the long process of Cairo’s history as a series of alternating periods during which social inequalities first increased, then decreased, only to increase once again. The fabric of the city reflected these social cleavages and rapprochements in sensitive fashion ... In the last decade there has been a substantial increase of capital in Cairo, but it has tended to benefit only the rich rather than

⁷Ibrahim, Saad-Eddin, “Cairo: A Sociological Profile,” in “The Expanding Metropolis: Coping with the Urban Growth of Cairo,” Singapore, Concept Media LTD, 1985, pp. 28.

⁸Abu-Lughod, Janet, in “The Expanding Metropolis: Coping with the Urban Growth of Cairo,” Singapore, Concept Media LTD, 1985, pp. 34.

help the poor. A factorial ecology of the city based on the census of 1976 would, doubtless, reveal increased class distinctions once again, and that these inequities are intensifying rather than leveling off."

As a result, the situation now can only be characterized by a state of unjust distribution of the country's wealth and resources; "the richest 5 per cent of the country's population has raised its share of national income from 15 to 24 per cent between the early and late 1970s; while the share of the lower 20 per cent dropped from 17 to 13 per cent."⁹

Another manifestation of this inequality problem is the co-existence of parallel institutions that provide the needed services for different segments of the society, each with drastically different levels of quality. Schools, hospitals and transportation services are but a few examples that prove this situation.

Increasing population:

With the improvement of health care services, child care and the use of vaccines, death rates among the Egyptian population decreased dramatically while child birth rates did not change. Thus, the population of Egypt experienced a rapid growth during the last one and a half centuries; from three million people in the year 1800 to ten million in 1900 and to 21 million in 1950.¹⁰ In the present days it is estimat-

⁹Ibrahim, Saad-Eddin, "Cairo: A Sociological Profile," in "The Expanding Metropolis: Coping with the Urban Growth of Cairo," Singapore, Concept Media LTD, 1985, pp. 33.

¹⁰Ibrahim, Saad-Eddin, "Cairo: A Sociological Profile," in "The Expanding

ed that the total population is in the range between 50 and 60 million. It is worth noting that Cairo by itself holds about 30 per cent of the total population of the country and about 55 per cent of the urban population.¹¹

At the same time, the poor segments of the society are the ones that are experiencing this rapid growth the most, and hence, their living standards and their urban environments are worsening even more. While this increase in the population is now taken to be a heavy burden on the shoulders of the government and the decision-makers, it could just the same be taken as an important, available and valuable resource for any development process.

Urbanization:

One of the main problems of Egypt and the whole Third World is the rapid migration of the population to the urban centers. This is, of course, not defined to the Third World countries alone. It is a phenomenon that all the world has been experiencing in the so-called 'Modern Age' with different degrees and during slightly different periods of time. Yet, in these Third World countries this phenomenon is characterized in recent times as being intensive and at a very large scale. Going back to Egypt, the urban population grew from 19 per cent in 1907 to 33 per cent in 1947 and to 44 per cent in 1976. At present, it is estimated that the percentage of urban

Metropolis: Coping with the Urban Growth of Cairo," Singapore, Concept Media LTD, 1985, pp. 29.

¹¹Ibrahim, Saad-Eddin, "Cairo: A Sociological Profile," in "The Expanding Metropolis: Coping with the Urban Growth of Cairo," Singapore, Concept Media LTD, 1985, pp. 30.

Egyptian population is somewhere between 55 and 60 per cent of the total population.¹²

In most of this urbanization process the poor peasants of rural Egypt move to the cities, mainly Cairo, in the hope of better job opportunities and life standards. Consequently, Cairo is faced with tremendous pressures to provide these new comers with the needed services and with an acceptable level of quality.

Change versus No-change in Contemporary Egypt:

Since the death of Nasser, 1970, and the 6th of October war, 1973, the idea and influence of 'Social Mobilization' have been characterized by most as having declined both steadily and rapidly. It is always said that the ability of the Egyptian society to accomplish any collective act -- as during the time of colonization resistance or during the modernization process and Arab nationalism of Nasser's era -- has lessened dramatically. This is because there is, in fact, much less Social mobilization. However, as Geertz points out,¹³ the changing process continues and may even be accelerating under the illusion that nothing significant is happening. All there is, is a replacement of this previous movement of the whole society with a complex combination of a number of different and multi-direc-

tional movements by its various divisions.

Cairo, as an illustration, is where most of the cultural struggles and its material manifestations occur. It has been continually injected with numerous new-comers. While some of these new-comers can be considered 'modernized' or at least modern oriented, the majority are bearers of a traditional culture of sorts. This situation has helped in maintaining a kind of power balance in Cairo between the various cultural and ideological forces. Even in the case of some 'modernized' migrants, such as university graduates, they have shown an aversion to modern metropolitan culture in so far as it means, as I have tried to show often does, "Western Culture." During the 1970s, an estimated 300 new nightclubs were opened in Cairo -- twice as much as those that were opened in the previous twenty years. Nonetheless, this was balanced by the foundation of about 400 new privately financed mosques -- again double the number in the previous twenty years.¹⁴ This is but one example of how this balance is continually maintained.

This balanced and multi-directional situation is what gives the general feeling of stagnation instead of the feeling of development or progress. This feeling of stagnation, among other political and social discontents, have helped in developing or strengthening the feeling of a lack of achievement motivation and an absence of personal potency. This is considered among the main cultural and psychological prob-

¹²Ibrahim, Saad-Eddin, "Cairo: A Sociological Profile," in "The Expanding Metropolis: Coping with the Urban Growth of Cairo," Singapore, Concept Media LTD, 1985, pp. 29.

¹³Geertz, Clifford, "The Interpretation of Cultures," Basic Books, A Division of Harper Collins Publishers, 1973, pp. 236.

¹⁴Ibrahim, Saad-Eddin, "Cairo: A Sociological Profile," in "The Expanding Metropolis: Coping with the Urban Growth of Cairo," Singapore, Concept Media LTD, 1985, pp. 32.

lems that hinder the development process.

On the cultural scene of Modern Egypt, there appeared five different attitudes that can be considered as the main attitudes towards the development process. Some or all of these attitudes may have or had partially mutual objectives such as the freedom of the country from any occupation, social advancement, the establishment of an identity of Arab or Islamic unity. Nevertheless, these attitudes differ with the different ideologies and positions. These five attitudes are:¹⁵

First, the *Re-Conciliation* idea that attempts to combine the importing process from the advanced West with a diligence process of redefining the inherited tradition and bringing it up to date. This, by time, took the form of the reconciliation between 'originality and contemporariness' or 'tradition and modernity' among other slogans. This idea of reconciliation can be seen as either a maneuver by traditionalists to resist the imported modernization process or an attempt by modernists to justify it by giving it a traditional credibility.

Second, the *Islamicist* belief that the only way this society will ever progress is by adopting what achieved its progress from the start. Within this project there are a number of variations: from rational enlightenment with a religious base, to an Islamic ideology that is in a state of truce with the state, to the fanatic refusal to everything that is

Western without giving any logical alternative.

Third, the belief in the idea of *Arab Nationalism*. Advocates of this attitude sees the only chance for any improvement in the status of the country and the whole Arab World is in the unity of that world on the bases of its mutual historical, social and traditional constants.

Fourth, the *Liberal* attitude that is an expression of the modernizing process that advocates the incorporation of the capitalist model. This project can be characterized as being dependent on a combination of the truceful Islamic ideology and the 'positivist pragmatic utilitarian' attitude that adopts the idea of catching up with the West.

Finally, the *Rational* attitude with all its various levels; from Rationalism, to Critical Rationalism, to Secularism, to Socialism and finally to Marxism all of which expresses with different degrees the belief in the need for a complete radical social change to reinforce the society's freedom and independence and at the same time not braking all ties with either its tradition or the contemporary age.

During the beginning stages of the modern encounter between Egypt and the West, during Mohammed Ali's rule, the Reconciliation attitude prevailed as the base for this encounter. Then, after Ismail took over, the liberal attitude completely dominated the scene. For more than seventy years, no other attitude was able to win the cultural battle within the Egyptian society, not until Nasser's socialist/Arab Nationalist regime managed to over through the ruling family of Mohammed Ali. Nevertheless, it could not maintain it's leading position for long, and thus the capitalistic liberal attitude came back to dominate during Saddat's rule and until now.

¹⁵Mahmoud Ammeen Al-Aallem, El-Hellal Seminar review, "Towards a New One Hundred Years of Enlightenment and Modernization," *Al-Mosawer* 3547, Sep. 25th 1992, pp. 71.

However, in spite of all the great differences between the various political, cultural and ideological attitudes towards the development process that each ruling regime adopted, it has always been the case of a centralized administrated and controlled implementation of any and all of the approaches and solutions suggested or actually realized throughout the two hundred years of the history of Modern Egypt.

It is important to point out that all these changes, with all their ups and downs, only affected the urban Egyptian society and especially the educated segments of them while most of the rural communities were almost completely left out of all these struggles and continued to blindly follow what happens in Cairo and the other major city of Egypt. Perhaps it is this disconnection or 'rupture' in the Egyptian society that had the greatest impact on all of the development processes that were attempted and resulted in their failure in various ways and different degrees.

To sum up the state of the Egyptian society during the late 1980s and the impact of government policies and the social status of the different segments of the society on the future of the Egyptian cultural and ideological scene I would like to quote Dr. Saad-Eddin Ibrahim when he was commenting on the future of Cairo, but, as he notes, the future of Cairo is strongly linked to, and determining, the future of the Whole of Egypt.¹⁶

"All in all, Cairo's overcrowding, deteriorating physical infrastructure and public services are made worse for the majority of its population by glaring inequities of power and wealth. As there is a struggle among its subcultures for Cairo's soul, there is even more intense struggle for its limited resources and privileges. The elites of Cairo (top 5 per cent) in recent years have been oblivious to the fate and conditions of the majority of the rest of the city's popular quarters. The physical development of Cairo in the 1950s and 1960s was shaped by the lower-middle class and the technocrats. It may have been austere and lacking in aesthetics, but was not lacking in equity. In the 1970s Cairo's development was more vulgar and replete with social inequities. The fight over Cairo's soul and body is far from being settled in the 1980s [and 1990s]. The poor crowd in older quarters, cemeteries, or engage in wild-cat development. The *nouveau riche* still continue to be oblivious to the rest of the city, as long as their immediate districts and homes are in good shape and as long as they can spend a good part of the year abroad. It is the middle classes, especially its lower rungs, which feel the squeeze. Its youngsters are teeming with frustration and anger. Much of Cairo's future and hence of Egypt, may very well lie in their hands."

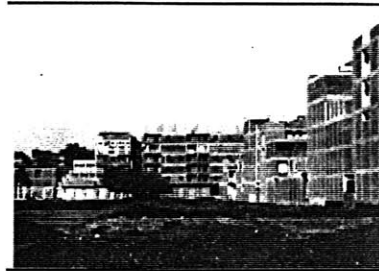
¹⁶Ibrahim, Saad-Eddin, "Cairo: A Sociological Profile," in "The Expanding Metropolis: Coping with the Urban Growth of Cairo," Singapore, Concept Media LTD, 1985, pp. 33.

Architecture and Urban Context

As a result of all the above, a rather simple dichotomy can be noted on the Egyptian architectural scene; a state of 'Architecture' versus a state of 'no-Architecture,' or, to put it in another way, building under professional supervision and control versus building without any such supervision (fig. 3, 4, 5). On the professional side, we find two influencing parties; the architect and, strangely enough, the civil engineer. Because the Egyptian law only requires a qualified engineer to be responsible for buildings, civil engineers have often taken up the responsibility of the design stage.¹⁷ With great regret, in most cases, it is very difficult to recognize or differentiate their designs from the designs of the architects. These designs unfortunately, have set the standards for the other side of the dichotomy. Buildings produced without the interference of a professional, either an architect or a civil engineer, resemble the first group in many ways.¹⁸

¹⁷Both the architects and the civil engineers are under the supervision of the Engineers' Syndicate that is governed by a powerful civil engineering section. This civil engineering section holds the majority of leading seats on its boards. Thus, laws and conditions of practice are, of course, biased in their favor.

¹⁸It is estimated that more than 60 per cent of the building activities are without any interference of any professional party and outside of any governmental supervision. However, exact figures are very hard to reach. Most likely, the actual percentage is much higher.



(fig. 3)
A state of no Architecture; squatter buildings in Cairo.



(fig. 4)
A state of poor architecture; Apartment building, Cairo.



(fig. 5)
A case of no architectural professional supervision, Cairo.

Some Observations on the Organization of the Profession:

An apparent manifestation of the duality and equality problem is the total separation and parallel existence of the architectural services institutions that serve the two main segments of the

society, i.e., the rich and powerful high-middle class and up, and the poor powerless lower-middle class and down, with vast differences in performance and quality. For this later segment, seeking professional architectural help in order to overcome their lack of housing and other services is out of the question. In the best cases, members of this segment acquire the help and guidance of some skilled labor to provide for their architectural needs. In most cases, among the very poor, people build their own houses using whatever limited resources and materials that are available, and then expand through time on the bases of the families savings opportunities while the house is inhabited. This form of building is usually out of any official or professional jurisdiction and thus the natural result is informal *squatters*.

On the other hand, with regard to the architectural institutions that serve the higher segments of the society, we find that they have their own problems. In an attempt to diagnose the technical and organizational problems of the architectural profession that have led to the very weak and low status of the architect in the *Muslim world* today -- and this also applies to all developing countries in general and Egypt in particular -- Dr. Serageldin gives three broad issues that encompass most of these problems:¹⁹

First: The field of influence of the architects is very small and weak. Thus, their impact on their surrounding environments is limited to a great extent.

¹⁹Serageldin, Ismail, "Architecture and Society," in "Architecture Education in the Islamic World," Proceedings of seminar Ten in the series: Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World, held in Granada, Spain, April 21 - 25, 1986, Concept Media Pte LTD Singapore 1986, pp. 84.

Second: The architectural profession is not considered as a distinct entity by itself; it is subsumed under the greater professional title of Engineering. This situation is reflected in Egypt on both the educational system and the organizational system of the profession. As a consequence, their views and concerns are not amply reflected within these broader professional associations.

Finally: The recommendations and views of the architects are ceaselessly considered as a matter of "taste," and therefore, can be easily discarded on the bases of the incompatibility of the client's *taste* with the architect's *taste*, and not his *professional opinion*. This leads to the 'demobilization' and the decline of the 'professionalism' of the architect.

The Organization of the Building Sector:

While all important projects are handled by large firms, the majority of the built urban environment is realized by small-scale construction enterprises.²⁰ Among these small enterprises are architects. These enterprises buy the right to build on a piece of land from a landlord in return for a percentage of the final profit. They build apartment buildings, small shops, etc., and sell them while they are being erected -- and sometimes even before the construction process begins -- and then split the profit with the original owner of the land. Indeed, the architect, in this case has two characteristics; First, he is a contractor that provides housing for the middle and upper-middle classes, and secondly, he is an architect providing architectural

²⁰These enterprises are generally small groups with technical know-how -- mostly young civil engineers and architects -- and very small initial capital.



(fig. 6) The contractor taking the commissions from the architect.

services for his clients. Eventually, what happens is that his contracting role defines his architectural one. He will strive for maximizing his profit and will adapt the quality of his architectural services for the sake of that. Thus, he will be directed by the prevailing values of the market and will lose his ability to influence it (fig. 6).

In such a situation of high and easy profit, architects who confine their work to their specialization, i.e., Architectural Design, are always faced with great pressures just to be able to professionally survive and are always pushed to engage in such small-scale, but largely profitable, contracting enterprises.

Another important issue in the contracting system in Egypt is that the way it is presently organized leaves little chance to incorporate the skills of craftsmanship such as stone cutting, mud brick masonry and the like. This is mainly because of the fact that these craftsmen are not considered as technicians that can read construction drawings, specifications and so on, thus contractors tend to avoid the help of such craftsmen. Additionally, the majority of the professional building activities discredits such craftsmanship either on the bases

of its supposed state of backwardness or for its seemingly high cost and long executing time.

The Organization of Architectural Services:

On the other hand, positions in the public sector and government sponsored firms are equally disturbing. In general, architects working in such institutions do not actually produce projects. Their role is limited to the definition of the needed projects, handling bids, following up on the development of the sponsored projects and sometimes to the construction process itself, but never actual design. Ilhan Tekeli describes the consequences of such a situation as follows:²¹

“Architects employed in such offices very soon take on a bureaucratic identity. In most cases, a large part or all of their professional knowledge is unnecessary for carrying out their job. ... This situation, the result of an organization that is not producing anything itself, causes a perpetual movement of creative and successful people into the private sector. At the end of this shifting process, a bureaucratic structure emerges that is manned by people who are not particularly bright in a professional sense and who are in complete harmony with the political administration. This is a structure that is conservative with regard to change and innovation.”

²¹Tekeli, Ilhan, “Architecture and Society,” in “Architecture Education in the Islamic World,” Proceedings of seminar Ten in the series: Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World, held in Granada, Spain, April 21 - 25, 1986, Concept Media Pte LTD Singapore 1986, pp. 70.

The flow of work in the majority of small-scale architectural firms in Egypt is not regular or constant. Public work sponsored by the government heavily depends on available resources and usually goes to specific firms. Private work from the free market can not provide the needed number of commissions to cover all local architectural firms.²² To this end, those firms have a limited chance of growing into large consulting firms that encompass various related disciplines. Unless the international market is penetrated, a continuous flow of commissions can never be achieved and therefore the scale of the prevailing architectural firms will never change.

It is very difficult -- practically impossible -- to speak of a professional architectural consensus in Egypt, even with the existence of an organization that encompasses all practicing architects in the country, in this case, the Department of Architecture within the Syndicate of Engineering. The ability to refer to such a consensus is normally high in a state of homogeneity that is only possible when the number of practicing architects is small. However, in a state of great numbers of architects that dramatically vary in their social status, such as the case in contemporary Egypt, it becomes virtually impossible to achieve such an organized professional consensus.

Describing the consequences of this state of heterogeneity in the architectural profession within developing countries,

²²In 1986, the registered number of architects in Egypt was approximately 16,000. This number increases by an average rate of 1000 architects per year.

of which Egypt is a perfect example, Ilhan Tekeli states:²³

“The architectural community is no longer homogeneous. There is a large salaried laborer section. Internal conflicts gain importance. In such a case, it is difficult for the professional organization to maintain its unity. Parallel to the internal differentiation of the community, new professional organizations emerge, defending different interests, and inter-professional ideologies differentiate. Once this point is reached, in order to grasp the position of architects within the society, it becomes necessary to enter into special analyses for different groups. Among architects, while the segments which manage to stay in the upper-middle classes do manage to keep its old ideological position to a certain extent, the group that has turned into salaried workers gets closer to the political ideology of the working classes. The intellectual architects are open to utopian reformism. The conflict between mental and manual labor makes the architects’ total identification with the working class impossible.

This new tendency brings a fresh critical approach to the existing architectural practice. However, the political milieu that is needed for this criticism to turn into a new and applied architectural movement never materializes.”

²³Tekeli, Ilhan, “Architecture and Society,” in “Architecture Education in the Islamic World,” Proceedings of seminar Ten in the series: Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World, held in Granada, Spain, April 21 - 25, 1986, Concept Media Pte LTD Singapore 1986, pp. 72.

Some Observations on Architectural Education:

When I speak of architectural education in Egypt I refer to two distinct kinds of educations, each directed towards a totally different end and with totally different intentions in mind. By this I mean the specialized education of the professional architect and the general architectural education of the public.

In spite of the previously portrayed view of the conditions of Egypt and the problems it faces, most architectural curriculums in the architecture schools of Egypt focus on too narrow an understanding of the problems that this profession can address and the issues that affect it and determine its success or failure. These curriculums only concentrate on one of two directions, either civil engineering classes concerned with structural systems, materials, etc., or architectural classes, both design and history, only concerned with pure formalistic and aesthetic issues. In these curriculums little or no attention and emphasis is given to the cultural significance of architecture and the historical context in which it was realized. Questions of how the architectural profession can contribute, or if it can contribute to the improvement of the state of poverty and unjust distribution of wealth, resources and services that prevail in the Egyptian society are completely un-addressed.

Even the teaching of Building Technology within the architectural curriculum does not include such important issues as 'available materials' or 'appropriate techniques' in and for the Egyptian context. Instead, it is focused solely on the materials and techniques that are needed for the realization of the un-critically imported Western forms and structural systems.

Until the present day, there are no high specialization requirements on the Egyptian architectural professional scene. At the same time, the prospect of any architect working in a large firm so that then he can specialize in a certain field is very low. In such a case, the education system tends to prepare the new architects for the individually owned small-scale architectural offices where everything has to be under the supervision of the owner. Accordingly, the educational system tends to provide its students with a certain amount of knowledge in a great variety of fields. As a natural result of this situation, the education process becomes too broad to achieve any level of deep understanding of the issues at stake.²⁴

With respect to the latter kind of education, i.e., the general architectural education of the public, it can be said that it is almost non-existent. Most of the public can not differentiate between the civil engineer and the architect;²⁵ for them they both do the same thing, build buildings. From this situation, an architect can not even begin to interact in a constructive dialogue between himself and such a client. A dialogue between them will almost always be channeled in two non-intersecting concerns: the clients concern in budget and the architects concern for aesthetics

²⁴For more details on the present situation of the specialized architectural education in Egypt see Abdel Mohsen Barrada's essay in "Architecture Education in the Islamic World," Proceedings of seminar Ten in the series: Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World, held in Granada, Spain, April 21 - 25, 1986, Concept Media Pte LTD Singapore 1986, pp. 181 - 185.

²⁵I myself, along with a number of my colleagues, have personally experienced many situations where people have asked us the difference between what we do as Architects and what the Civil Engineer does.

and form articulation. This situation gets even worse if the architect starts to be concerned with cultural and ideological issues. What is more, there is no general interest in the public media in architecture. Un-specialized architectural programs, architectural essays and reports in newspapers and magazines are almost non-existent. Whenever there is such a program or such a report it is either handled in a very specialized way that does not appeal to the public or on a very immature level that does not convey the right picture of the architects concerns and challenges that is needed. Even children's education is deprived from any architectural content; according to a survey carried out by the Supreme Council of Culture in 1980, the word "Architecture" does not appear in any educational text used at any stage of education.

The Current Architectural Context:

Most practicing architects in Egypt today are mainly concerned with the same two issues; function and aesthetics. One can not deny the importance of both. But if we take a deeper look into how those architects define these two terms, one realizes the deficiency of their definitions. Aesthetics of architecture is almost always changing. The architectural fashion of today will most likely be gone in a few years. Therefore, architects should always search for more lasting values, just as their buildings will probably last for decades. Similarly, their attitude towards function is very limited; due to the increasing complexity of technical and organizational issues of contemporary architecture, architects have tended to completely neglect the social and cultural aspects of architecture and the possible influence of its

products on the surrounding environment.

Furthermore, with regard to the relation between the society and the architecture it produces, contemporary Egyptian architects tend to fall back on the idea of architecture as a cultural mirror of society, to justify the deficiency of their work.²⁶ Consequently, these attitudes reflected on both the education and the professional scope of architecture and, thus, the relation between the architects

²⁶Architecture, on one hand, is considered to be a reflection of the particular socio-cultural conditions and background of its setting. In addition, it corresponds to the political and economical atmosphere in a certain time and place. In other words, architecture is influenced by all those factors that constitute a society and its dynamics. On the other hand, the architectural profession, in most societies, is still considered to be among the most respected professions. Thus, the architect, too, is considered among the elevated few of society's hierarchy. He is considered to be educated, artistically sensitive and technically knowledgeable. For these reasons, it becomes possible for him to be a part of the so-called established power structure within the society. At the same time, and for the same reasons, the society can sometimes accept the periodic departure of the architect from conventional behavior and attitudes. Consequently, he obtains the power and capacity to influence, change or at least contribute to the development of that society.

This is a particularly crucial issue for architecture because the tightrope upon which this discipline balances is between, on the one side, the representation of society's needs, aspirations and values, but, on the other, the personal creative search of the architect, who might wish to express, through his production, not only an identification with the accepted conventions, but also a critique of the embedded values.

and their society became more and more diluted. Therefore, those architects have lost the ability to actively and positively engage in the social and cultural problems of their society through their profession.

When these architects accept to design in such an ideologically, culturally and socially charged context without any feeling of an intellectual and social responsibility and when the competition between those architects is not in excellence but in fees, because they have not been adequately exposed to the issues at stake, they contribute to the strengthening of the roots of the problems and thus add to the feeling of alienation that the whole society, with its two major segments, is experiencing.

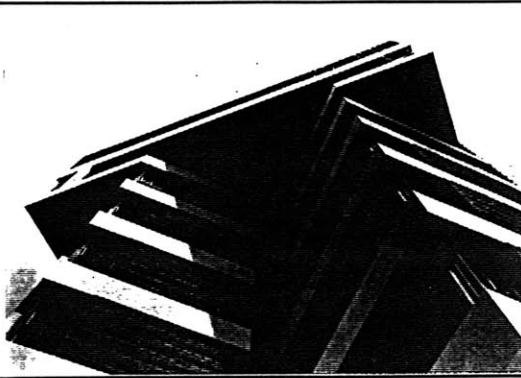
The two major segments of the architectural production of Egypt, i.e., the Official and the Popular, are influenced by many different aspects. In the case of the popular, it is directly influenced by the state of cultural enlightenment and architectural education and knowledge of the public. This degree of Knowledge differs from one class to another on the bases of social, economical and cultural status of each class. Depending on the specific combination of these three elements we can recognize various architectural trends and degrees of weaknesses or strengths. We can, for instance, recognize a high level of cultural enlightenment accompanied by a low level of income, or vise-versa, and so on. Accordingly, this is reflected on the state of the architectural production, especially in privately sponsored projects where the *push and pull* mechanism operates between the two sets of values and belief systems of the architect and the client. Hence, the private architecture production in Egypt, in reality, reflects a number of permutations of these previous elements and thus all signs of a collective per-

sonality of various communities within the society disappear.

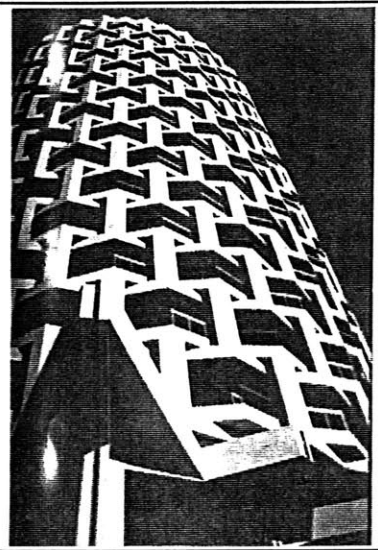
Conversely, the Official architecture is directly influenced on one hand by the state of cultural enlightenment of the decision-makers and on the other by the state of the architectural profession. Economic circumstances, in this case, cannot be considered as a determining factor, yet the architectural educational system and the organization of the architectural profession discussed previously are very important factors in the state of this official architecture.

In general, with regard to the cultural dilemma that Egypt is living through today, i.e., the struggle between the *inherited* and the *imported* value systems, Egyptian architects can be seen as having two main attitudes towards the inherited which, in turn, reflects on their attitude towards the second part of this equation, i.e., the imported. These attitudes are *historicism* and *anti-historicism*.

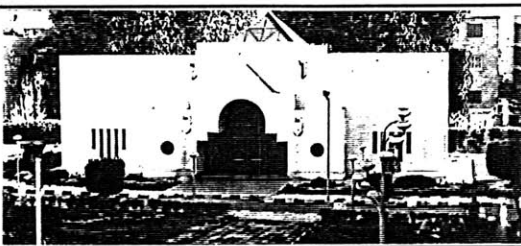
Patrons of Anti-Historicism always search for new forms of architectural expression that assert the spirit of the age. They see historical architectural forms as belonging to those past ages and not adequate for the present. Their argument for rejecting past architectural motifs, styles or vocabularies is based on four main points: (1) those motifs and vocabularies are useless and expensive to incorporate, (2) building technologies have dramatically changed, (3) historical revivalist buildings are in many senses impure and do not do justice to the architects of the past, (4) residing to the use of historical architecture is an escape from the need to face the challenges of the present. Good examples of this attitude from the Egyptian context are the works of Farouk El-Gouhary (fig. 7, 8)-- based in Cairo -- and Magd Massarah (fig. 9, 10, 11)-- based in London.



(fig. 7) Residential building, Cairo, by Farouk El-Gouhary.

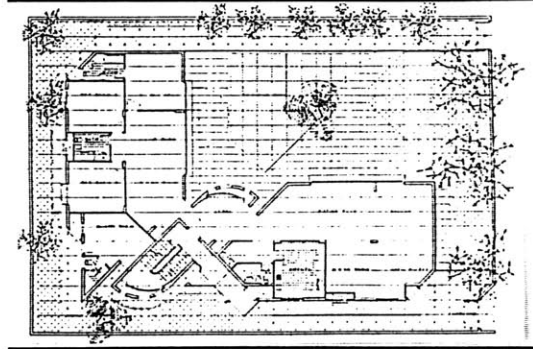


(fig. 8) Residential building, Abu-Dhabi, by Farouk El-Gouhary.

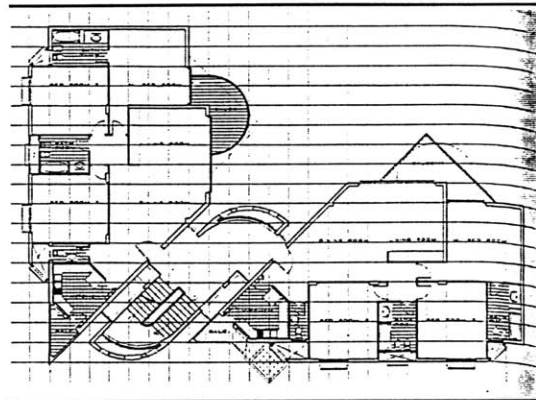


(fig. 9) Computer Lab. in the 6th of October Children's park, by Magd Massarah.

Patrons of Historicism, on the other hand, defend their position on the bases that being respectful and referential to history makes buildings more personal and thus people can relate to them more easily. In other words, they fell that



(fig. 10) Ground floor plan of a villa by Magd Massarah in Giza, Egypt.

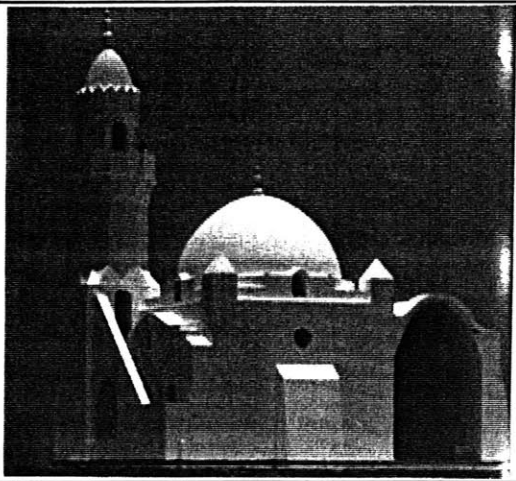


(fig. 11) First floor plan of a villa by Magd Massarah in Giza, Egypt.

historicism responds to a need in people -- not just architects -- to relate and respect their past in a direct way. Within the historicism ideology, three main levels of handling or referring to history in the making of architecture can be categorized:²⁷

One is at the level of imagery; that is to deal with the architecture of the past in a "photographic sense," assuming that the architects of the past have already produced adequate prototypes and models and that all the architects of today have to do is update these models. The architect, in this case,

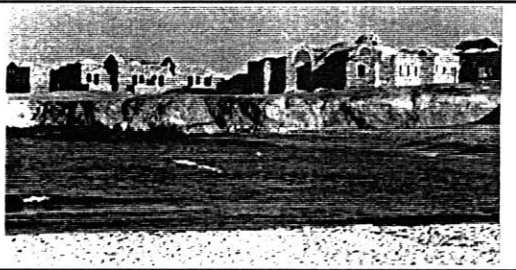
²⁷Khaled Asfour, "Abdel Halim's Cairo Garden; An Attempt to 'Defrost' History," *Mimar*, V. no. 36, pp. 72.



(fig. 12) Cornish Mosque, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, by Abdel Wahed El-Wakil.

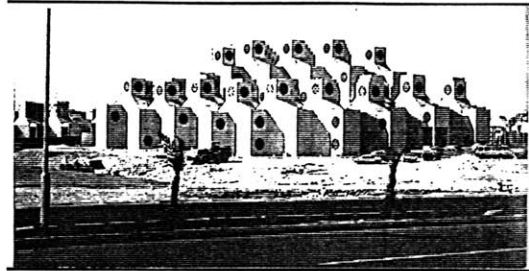


(fig. 13) Felfela Tourist Complex, Red sea, Egypt, by Omar El-Farouk.

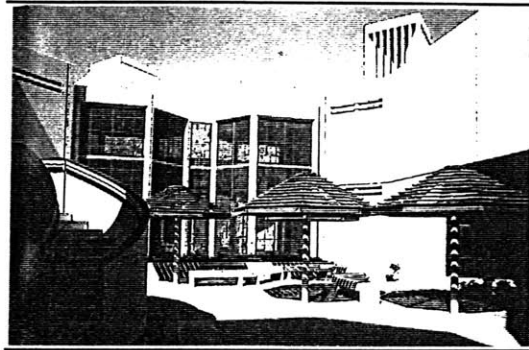


(fig. 14) Al-Kussier Touristic Village by Ramy El-Dahan and Suheir Faried.

either literally or with slight adjustments, reproduce historical architectural elements from plans or elevations of historical buildings. Perfect Egyptian



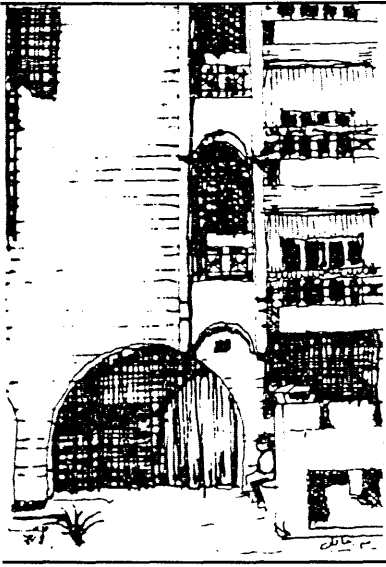
(fig. 15) Library and exhibition building, Qatar University, by Kamal El-Kafrawi.



(fig. 16) Courtyard, Qatar University, by Kamal El-Kafrawi.

examples of this level of dealing with history are Abdel Wahed El-Wakil (fig. 12)-- based in London -- and Omar El-Farouk (fig. 13) and Ramy El-Dahan (fig. 14) -- both based in Cairo.

The second level is the principle or conceptual one. Here, the architect extracts the concepts behind the design of the historical building and which transcend specific periods, and then tries to utilize these concepts in his new design whenever appropriate. This new design might have no resemblance what so ever to the original historical source and may incorporate the highest technology available. Systems of circulation, ratios of open versus solid and of projected versus recessed masses are some examples of those principles. An example of this level of handling might be the work of Kamal El-Kafrawi (fig. 15, 16).

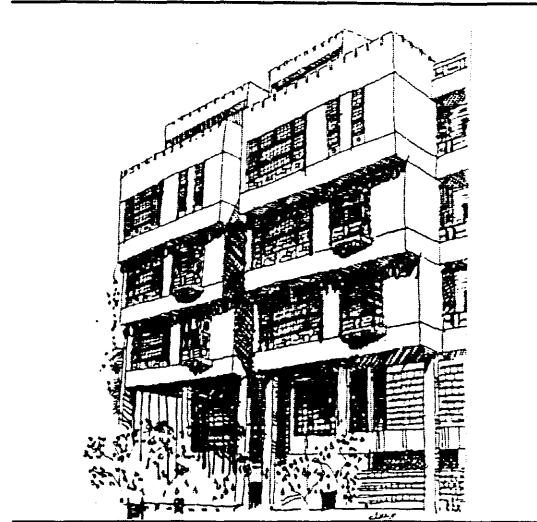


(fig. 17)
Residential
building,
Nasr City,
Cairo,
Egypt, by
Center of
Architectural and
Urban
Studies,
Cairo.

The final level of handling history in the making of architecture is somewhere between the previous two. This level is a mixture of both visual and conceptual incorporation from historical precedents in the new design on the bases of rational thought.²⁸ The success of this approach depends upon achieving a fine balance between both levels equally and simultaneously. The works of *Markaz Al-Derrassat Al-Takhteeteia Wa Al-Mimaria* or the 'Center of Architectural and Urban Studies in Cairo (fig. 17, 18), headed by Abdel Baki Ibrahim are perfect examples of this attitude.

Indeed, this attitude of 'either - or' and this situation of Historicism *versus* Anti-Historicism is too simple a view to be accepted and adopted by the whole society. Even patrons of these two polar positions, unknowingly, can not escape the influence of both the past and the present. As Geertz points out, "rarely is

²⁸Adopting only what proves to be relevant to current circumstances. For more details on this subject see John Hancock's article "Between History and Tradition: Notes Towards a Theory of Precedent" in *Precedent and Invention*, Harvard Architectural Review, V. no. 5, 1986.



(fig. 18) Center of Planning and Architectural
Studies, Cairo, Abdel Baki Ibrahim.

such an ideology anywhere purely essentialist [traditionalist] or purely epochalist [modern]. All are mixed and one can speak at best only of a bias in one direction or another."²⁹

In an essay by Tarek Abdel Fattah³⁰ on contemporary Egyptian architecture he interviewed thirteen different practicing Arab architects -- most of them Egyptian -- to find out their views on the issue of the state of architecture in Egypt. A quick look into this interview uncovers two major observations on the issue:

First: While there is a general agreement on the fact that contemporary Egyptian architecture is going through a state of crisis there are thirteen different views -- among thirteen different interviewed architects -- on the causes of this crisis, and even greater disagreement on how to resolve it.

²⁹Geertz, C., "The Interpretation of Cultures," Basic Books of Harper Collins Publishers, 1973, pp. 243.

³⁰Tarek Abdel Fattah. "Egyptian Architecture... Present and Future." El-Benna'a, V. no. 57, January, 1991, pp. 32 - 41.

Second: In most of the interviews there is an acknowledgment of the lack of two crucial things: 'rational criticism' and 'open-minded professional dialogue.' Yet in no instance did an interviewed architect recognize himself as a part of these problems.

In short, while many diagnoses have been made by the interviewed architects in an attempt to define the causes of the *crisis*, ranging from public and specialized architectural education, building regulations, foreign influences, the inability to balance tradition and modernity, among many more, I think it is essential to add one more, i.e., the non-existence of any kind of self-criticism and the disappearance of any feeling of the need for self-improvement.

To conclude, we can say that the Egyptian cultural and thus architectural scenes of today are not that much different from how they were at the beginning of this century, or even the second half of the previous century. The same pressing issues still operate today. On one hand, the call for redefining and developing the inherited culture and integrating it with contemporary systems and methods, and the state of duality within the various institutions and organizing systems of the society is as real and urgent today as it was then. The impact of this call can be noted on many levels; sociology, economy, politics, philosophy and art, with numerous indications in the field of architecture as well. On the other hand, most of the ongoing transformations in recent days are occurring within the same places and under the same circumstances that witnessed the early transformations and introduction of the imported *Western* trends. However, we have to be aware of the different circumstances that prevail in our time;

the historic context has changed significantly, the country's population has swelled, the country's problems have grown in magnitude and changed in character to a great extent and the urban economy has become far more complex.

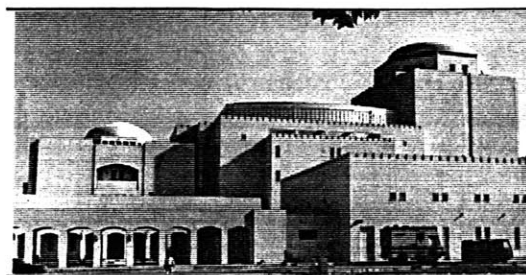
It is clear from the above that the Egyptian society still suffers from the major problems that we have followed through this brief review of the Modern Egyptian context, i.e., Westernization, Duality, en-equality and rapid Urbanization. These issues have resulted in the dichotomization of the whole society manifested in the striking un-equity phenomenon within the Egyptian society. Accordingly, the society is still split into two major groups: a powerful rich elite that has a tight grip on all the resources and policies of the country, and a powerless poor public that has almost no saying what so ever in influencing where the country is heading. This has led to another dichotomization in the cultural attitudes of those two groups; where the inherited -- cultural, religious or spiritual -- is equated with the past, with backwardness and with poverty while the image of any future progress is found in what is imported from the advanced West.

Also, there are internal dichotomies that the architectural profession specifically is suffering from. If we accept Ilhan Tekeli's view on the raise of a new critical architectural attitude towards the state of the profession and the demands of the market mechanism within the developing societies, on which many others -- Egyptians and non-Egyptians alike -- agree upon, and if we agree that utopian reformist elements have an important place in the architects' ideologies, then there raises a strong conflict between those market-defined demands and the critical and professional demands of the architects

themselves. A similar conflict also emerges between, on one hand, local and appropriate building technologies and on the other, advanced, international and imported technologies. To the extent that architects confine their practice and education to the local context, they deprive themselves from the opportunity to compete within the broader international market that they desperately need in order for them to continue practicing their profession in the desired way, as has been discussed previously. However, if they concentrate on these imported and advanced technologies and take them as a comparative benchmark they will be contributing in their own alienation from their own context.

This state of dichotomization poses the major challenge that faces all members of the Egyptian intellectual scene in every field of knowledge, be it philosophy, sociology, economy, architecture, planning and so forth. At present, most of these intellectuals only pay lip service to this problem by calling for 'cultural authenticity' while their actual productions speak for themselves by adopting the most superficial aspects of Western cultures. For them to successfully stand up in the face of this cultural dichotomy they will have to formulate and articulate a new vision of progress that is both 'culturally authentic' and, at the same time, incorporates the 'progressive' elements that the Egyptian society aspires to.

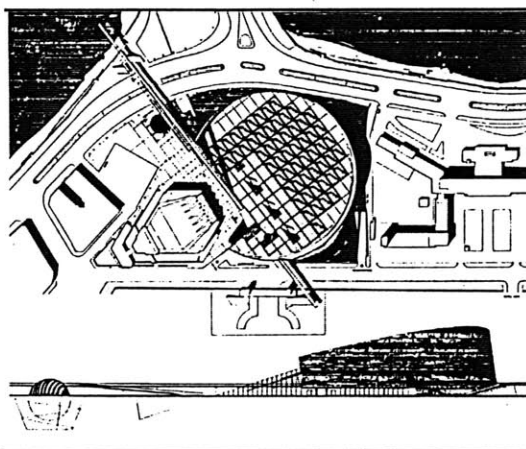
Meanwhile, foreign architects continue to have the final saying in all the major architectural projects in the country; the new Opera House (fig. 19) is designed by a Japanese architect, the new International Convention Center (fig. 20) is designed by a Chinese architect, the new Alexandria Library (fig. 21) is designed by a Norwegian Architect, most of the major hotels and administrative



(fig. 19) The new Opera House, Cairo, Egypt.



(fig. 20) The new International Convention Center, Nasr City, Cairo, Egypt.

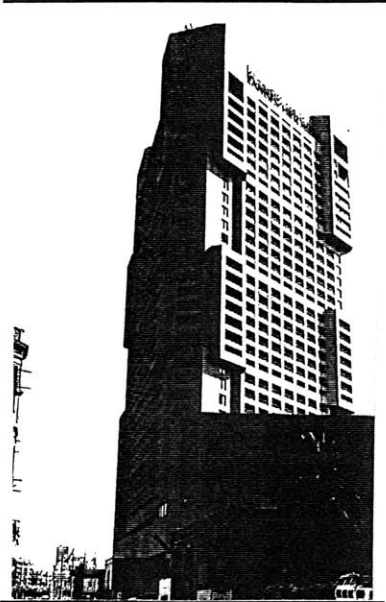


(fig. 21) Site plan and South Elevation of the new Alexandria Library, Alexandria, Egypt. (Not yet built)

buildings in Cairo and Alexandria are designed by American, English and French architects (fig. 22, 23) and finally most of the major planning projects of Egypt were influenced greatly by foreign planning consultants. At the same time, the local architect still faces a fierce struggle while only armed with



(fig. 22)
Ever Green
Center,
Cairo,
Egypt.



(fig. 23)
Ramsis
Hilton
Hotel.
Cairo,
Egypt.

cultural, social, economical and political problems facing the Egyptian society. In their work they have attempted to acknowledge both the past and the present. They have tried to live their present through their past; relating to their history while, at the same time, addressing the problems, and respecting the essence, of their age. In the next chapter I will attempt to analyze and discuss some of the architectural productions and theories of two of those architects in relation to the issues that I have raised so far, as an example of this new effort to resolve the *Crisis of Architecture* in Egypt by dealing with the issues at stake with a much broader and deeper understanding of the challenges that they are faced with today.

limited resources and the non-existence of a strong professional organization that can help him in resisting this foreign dominance.

Recently, many Egyptian architects have renounced both camps of historicism and anti-historicism. Recognizing that reality is far more complex, too complex, for such limiting philosophies. They have acknowledged the organizational and educational problems of the profession in the Egyptian context and are trying to relate more and more to the

CHAPTER - 2 -

Two Architects

After having laid down some general observations on the current situation of the Egyptian context covering very briefly, on one hand, the cultural, socio-economical and political scenes, and on the other hand, in a slightly more comprehensive way, the architectural and urban scene, I will now focus on two specific contemporary Egyptian architects. The first of these architects is the recent Aga Khan Architectural Award recipient (1992) Prof. *Abdel Halim Ibrahim Abdel Halim*. He is a professor of Architectural Design and History of Architectural Thought in Cairo University. At the same time, he is the head of an architectural office by the name of "CARAVAN, Community Design Collaborative," based in Cairo. The second architect is *Gamal Bakri*. He is the head of an architectural office by the name of "Consulting Group Gamal Bakri & Associates," also based in Cairo.

While both architects recognize that the complexity of the current cultural, socio-economical, political and architectural situation of Egypt does not leave any room for a stagnant position or a restricted view of an 'either - or' attitude, and at the same time attempt to achieve an equilibrium between the poles of several issues such as tradition and modernity, architecture as art and architecture as a social reform tool, the elitist approach towards development and the popular approach to it and local systems, techniques and materials as opposed to international ones, among others, I hope to show how we can still note a number of evident biases in their works and theories.

Both of these architects have a leading position in forming and presenting a critical attitude to the general architectural profession in Egypt. They are considered by their contemporaries as being from the same *oppositional* or *resistant* professional group. Both of them admit in their writings, either explicitly or implicitly, that they are opening un-explored grounds and by this they are defining a new language for Egyptian thought in general and architecture in particular. They also clearly advocate *innovation* in architectural practice by either calling for 'creativity' and 'redefining the organizing systems and institutions of the profession' or by calling for 'spontaneity in the design process' respectively.

Furthermore, they both recognize the dominant intellectual issue of our relation to the West and the tension that occurs between the fear of complete subordination to it and the desire of obtaining all signs of progress from it. They also recognize the complexity and the ramification of the issues influencing or leading to the problems of contemporary Egyptian architecture. They attribute the crises of contemporary architecture in Egypt mainly to the blind adoption of either Western theories or inherited traditions without any critical assessment of their degree of compatibility with a developing society such as ours. Yet, at the same time, their education was completely Western oriented and, unlike most contemporary Egyptian architects, they are always up to date with the

rapid change in Western architectural theories with the help of books, periodicals, international conferences, trips, international competitions and direct involvement with Western architectural firms and institutions.

At the present day, both architects are collaborating with non-Egyptian architectural offices in the hope of expanding their market and insure an efficient flow of commissions that will help them endure the low amount of work that is provided by the Egyptian market alone.¹

With that said, I would just like to make one more important point; by selecting these two particular architects I am in no way claiming them to be the only architects to have this important status in contemporary Egyptian architecture, or even that they are the most important. They are selected only because of their unique position within the professional architectural scene in Egypt. This uniqueness derives from the ironic fact that, in spite of their abilities to express through actual buildings what others had been able to suggest only through words, and in spite of the professional recognition that they have received as a result of this ability, either in Egypt or internationally, they are largely isolated and do not have many followers or students.

It is important to note that sometimes there exists a gap, wide or narrow, between the theories of an architect and his designs due to circumstantial reasons. It is not the objective of this research to criticize the two architects on these grounds. Instead, I will only address such cases if they have a

¹In this, they are both facing the dilemma of international versus local requirements of each market.

significant contribution to the articulation of the main objective of this thesis. I will, instead, focus on the theories of the two architects so as to relate them to the general cultural discussions that exist today on the Egyptian scene.

It is also important, for the sake of clarifying a certain aspect of the method used to study and analyze the two architects, to note that in the case of Abdel Halim, I will focus more on his major work, that is the Children's Cultural Park in Cairo, because of the fact that this is where he has invested most of his efforts during the last ten years or so. His other works will be discussed in a more brief way. On the other hand, in Bakri's case, he has no project that can be considered his major work. Therefore, the discussion on him will not focus on any one project.

Another point that we have to keep in mind is that Halim is what can be considered as 'an Academic Architect' while Bakri can be considered as 'a Practicing Architect.' By this I do not mean that each is confined to either. However, because of the fact that Halim went through a more academic path by the fact of his graduate studies and his teaching in the university while Bakri, on the other hand, went through a more practical path after he completed his undergraduate studies, there is, I think, a difference in their style and attitude within their writings. This, of course, does not negate the fact that Halim is very much practicing architecture and Bakri is very much self-educated on a very high level.

I will now begin by giving a broad view of both architect's attitudes and theories only to, then, go on to the analysis of them in the light of what has been discussed so far. Through this analysis, I will attempt to relate them to the different cultural and ideological

attitudes of the contemporary Egyptian context while trying to critically assess each of them.

Halim's Background:

Abdel Halim comes from a normal average Egyptian family from a small village in the Egyptian countryside by the name of El-Saff. This segment of the society, as I have tried to show, has been under the continuous pressures of the un-equity problem that was a direct result of two things: First, the various modernization efforts inflicted upon them by their rulers and the elite class of their society -- which, most probably, meant Westernization --, and secondly, the duality problem between the different segments of the society on all levels.

The major driving force that controlled the atmosphere in which he was brought up during his first ten years was the country's resistance against the English occupation of Egypt. After the 1952 revolution, and the independence of Egypt, Nasser became the president of the Arab Republic of Egypt and adopted a socialist regime in the hope of establishing a new system based on social, political and economical justice, and of eliminating class differences, all of which the Egyptian society painfully suffered from until that day. The new government took the initiative to provide equal opportunities for all classes to obtain necessary services. Health, education, housing and cultural activities were the main services sponsored by the government.

This was also a period during which the idea of 'Arab Nationalism' was the main driving force. During that time, Cairo was always portrayed as the capital of the Arab World. Also, this Arab

nationalism was seen as an important ingredient of the developing process and as a pre-requisite for its success.

In 1967 the six day war against the Israelis took place and resulted in the defeat of the Egyptian army for different reasons. This defeat came as a shock to the Egyptian society. They believed, at that time, that Egypt, through the modernization and industrialization process that was implemented by Nasser, was becoming stronger as the years went by. This event had a great impact on the whole society; Abdel Halim was no exception. In many of his writings, he refers to this event as a major shifting point in his life and attitude towards what was happening on the Egyptian scene in general and the architectural profession in particular. As he says, it was the breaking moment in his belief in the modern movement that he was educated on the bases of its principles and the initiating point for his search for a suitable alternative.

In 1970, while Halim was continuing his studies in the United States, Sadat became the president of Egypt. The drastic shift in the country's policies, from Socialism to Capitalism, after the 1973 war resulted in many ways in the deteriorating status of the poor segments of the Egyptian society. When Halim came back to Egypt from his graduate studies in the United States in 1979, it was the peak of this shift.

In the present day, Halim is collaborating with Jordanian architect, Rasseem Badran on many projects. He has been acknowledged as a leading architect in the Egyptian Context both locally and internationally.² Yet, his

²Besides the 1992 award, Oleg Grabar refers to one of Abdel-Halims designs in "Architectural Record," June 1984, as one of the most pioneering and innovative designs

students and followers are very few in number, and even those do not stay with him for more than a few years.

Bakri's Background:

Bakri was born and raised in the city of Port Said during the thirties and forties of this century. During that time, the city was experiencing a great struggle against the English occupation. Because of its location on the Mediterranean sea at the entrance of Suez Canal, the occupation took Port Said as a main economical base and shipping port. The importance of the city grew for both the Egyptians and the English. Even after the 1953 revolution, the city suffered again from occupation during the 1956 attack by England, France and Israel. In an attempt to recapture and control Suez Canal, the three countries launched a massive attack on the whole Suez Canal region. Consequently, the City of Port Said went through a fierce urban war. This experience, I think, influenced Bakri to a great extent. It was his first direct confrontation of the economical, political and cultural struggle between the East and the West. He states:³ "I grew up in-between the mallet of the Western culture and the anvil of the Egyptian culture. During my youth, the issue of contemporariness and originality was in every aspect of my environment. There was no escape." Even during his professional architectural education, the two main trends that were operating on the Egyptian architectural scene were, on

in contemporary Muslim World and the Third World in general.

³Bakri, Gamal, "In search for the Egyptian Essence," in Tarek Abdel Fattah's "Egyptian Architecture... Present and Future." *El-Benna'a*, V. no. 57, January, 1991, pp. 32 - 41.

one hand, the modern trend of Ali Labib Gabr, and on the other, the traditional trend of Hassan Fathy.

During Nasser's socialist rule in Egypt, he aimed at the complete industrialization of the Egyptian society. This, I think, made Bakri more aware of the issue of the use of technology in a developing society such as Egypt.

After the great shift in the national policy from Socialism to pure Capitalism, when Saddat came to power, and because of the *Infetah* process (the economic liberalization of Egypt) that he advocated, the possibility of enhancing Egyptian relations with the West greatly increased. As a result, Bakri's office was joined with a German architectural office. Because of this collaboration, Bakri was exposed more and more to a large international professional scene that was otherwise not easily accessible to him.

Bakri is the seventh generation of an urban living, fairly wealthy and highly educated family. His first encounter with the traditions and ways of the rural majority of Egypt during his youth was as a student when he lived in the dormitories of Cairo University.⁴ The dormitories, at that time, were generally occupied by students coming from all around the country to continue their studies in Egypt's biggest University. The majority of those students were originally from rural areas.

Bakri has different artistic interests, either by study or actual practice; he practices abstract photography, painting and some sculpturing. He is greatly interested in music, Eastern as well as

⁴From a personal interview with Bakri by architect Mai Fawzy in January 1994.

Western, in addition to playing the violin.⁵

As an attempt to increase his level of education and knowledge, during his first ten years after his graduation, and while he was working in governmental organizations, he started reading anything and everything about architecture, history, philosophy, etc., that he can get his hands on, most of which was probably, at that time, all Western sources.

At the present day, he has designed numerous projects of which only about two per cent has been actually built.⁶ However, many professionals, young and old, consider him to be one of the important oppositional architects that criticize the current state of architecture in Egypt and that has presented a different approach to the design process.⁷

Halim's Main Attitudes, Theories and Design Strategies:

Halim sees architecture as having a very noble role in the society. It is "an art that deals with *Community Building* [my italics] and not just the

⁵Summaia Saad El-Deen, "From The New Generation: Engineer Gamal Bakri," *A'alam El-Benna'a*, V. no. 6, pp. 15.

⁶Bakri, Gamal, "In search for the Egyptian Essence," in Tarek Abdel Fattah's "Egyptian Architecture... Present and Future." *El-Benna'a*, V. no. 57, January, 1991, pp. 32 - 41.

⁷At the present day, Bakri is one of the main speakers in many seminars concerned with the state of architecture in Egypt and its future. Also, he is cited by a number of professors in the Universities of Cairo and Ean Shams as a leading figure in the contemporary Egyptian architectural scene.

building of a number of beautified buildings or the numerous buildings that form our ugly urban environment."⁸ It is essentially, for him, a means of enhancing human life by the application of artistic imagination, rather than a method of simply heightening corporate profits and profile.

At the same time, he emphasizes *beauty* as the starting point for creative acts in architecture. He considers this approach as crucial for achieving better living standards for the whole of mankind and especially the poor.⁹

His design strategy is based on four basic points:¹⁰

(1) Determining the *symbolic* function of the building: To think of the building in a creative philosophical framework by responding to the functional aspects with symbolic and conceptual attitudes. A good example of this emphasis on symbolic and conceptual ideas that drive the design is the idea of growth as the relating aspect

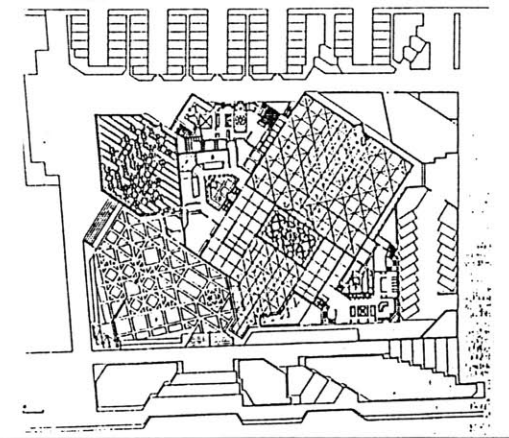
⁸Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "From Granada to the Park of *El-Houd El-Marsoud*; The Position of the Architect on Urban and Architectural issues in the Developing World," *Magazine of the Department of Architecture*, Cairo University, Egypt, V. no. 6, pp. 58 - 62.

⁹Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "From Granada to the Park of *El-Houd El-Marsoud*; The Position of the Architect on Urban and Architectural issues in the Developing World," *Magazine of the Department of Architecture*, Cairo University, Egypt, V. no. 6, pp. 61.

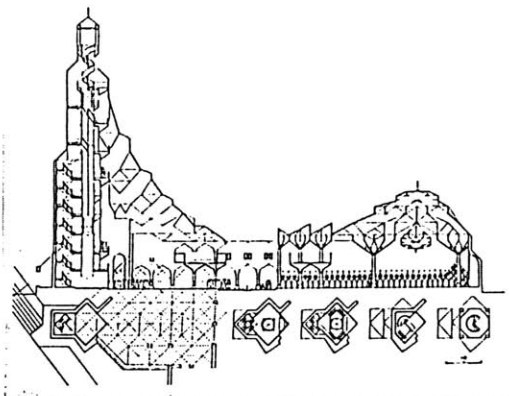
¹⁰Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "A Ceremonial Approach to Community Building," in "Theories and principles of Design in the Architecture of Islamic Societies," the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, 1988.



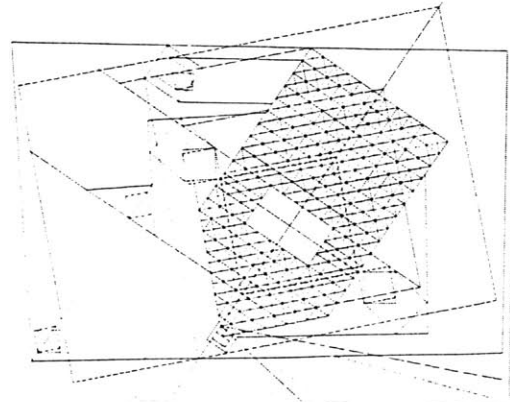
(fig. 24) Layout Plan of the Children's Cultural Park by Halim.



(fig. 25) Plan of Othman Ibn Afan Mosque, Qatar, by Halim.



(fig. 26) Longitudinal Section through Othman Ibn Afan Mosque, Qatar, by Halim.



(fig. 27)
The Geometric system and the unfolding of the two crystals as a symbol of the two domains.

between both children and garden in his Cultural park and thus, choosing the spiral as the symbol of growth and vitality (fig. 24).¹¹ Another perfect example is his meditation on the recent scientific discoveries and how they have affected the relation between the *sacred* and the *profane* in his mosque in Qatar (fig. 25). He describes the rationale behind his crystal-like roof design (fig. 26) as follows:¹²

"The content of the crystal, its substance, is defined by its interaction with light,

¹¹-Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "El-Houd El-Marsoud, Cairo," *Mimar*, V. no. 8, April - June 1983, pp. 31.

¹²"A Geometry for Prayer," *Architectural record*, June 1984, pp. 153.

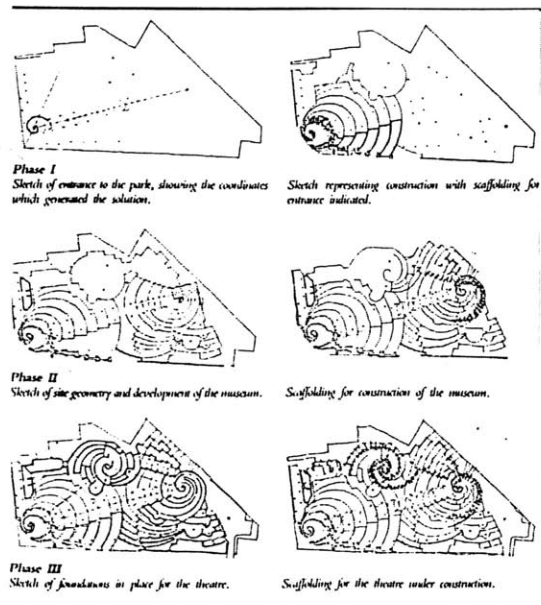
its ability to turn light into illumination. Thus the crystal stands as a significant symbol of the meaning and the structure of the mosque." He also uses two grids, one slightly rotated in relation to the other so as to express the mosque domain and the city domain. At the point of rotation rises the minaret as a symbol of the transformation from the earth to the sky or from the profane to the sacred (fig. 27).

(2) Determining the spatial *geometry* and *patterns* of the design: He heavily depends on geometry as a main ingredient in his design strategy. He uses it as a way of ordering and conceptualizing the project in its context as well as a way of convey the cultural and symbolic concepts of the building to the users. Using the same two examples, in the garden we find him using a very sophisticated system of geometric co-ordinates to lay down the spirals of his design (fig. 28).¹³

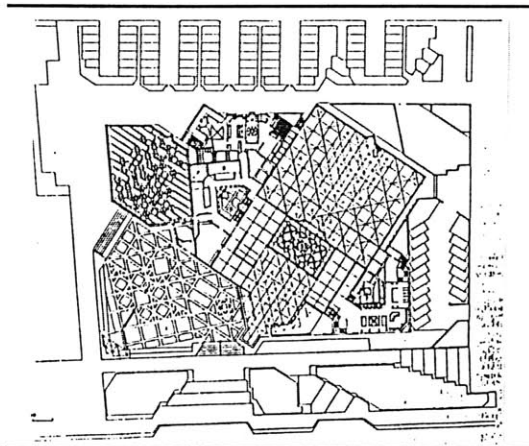
Similarly, the Qatar Mosque "appears as a stunning geometric composition in three dimensions, based on a simple square that is subdivided, multiplied, rotated, and otherwise manipulated in a most spectacular way (fig. 29)."¹⁴ However, as Grabar points out, this approach could easily lead to "empty geometric exercises" if handled by less talented architects. Therefore, it is difficult to conceive of this method as a model for other architects to follow.

¹³Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "A Ceremonial Approach to Community Building," in "Theories and principles of Design in the Architecture of Islamic Societies," the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, 198(?), pp. 139 - 148.

¹⁴Oleg Grabar, "From the Past into the Future: On Two Designs for State Mosques," *Architectural record*, June 1984, pp. 151.



(fig. 28) The spiral as the organizing geometry for the whole park.



(fig. 29) Plan of Othman Ibn Afan Mosque, Doha, Qatar, by Halim.

(3) Redefining the *production process*: To re-connect the broken links between the society and its production procedures and systems through reorganizing the building process as well as redefining the tools and systems of the profession when ever needed so as to permit such a connection.

(4) Relating all three previous aspects to the cultural structure of the

society through the use of public cultural events such as what he calls the *building ceremonies*. These last two ideas will be discussed in more detail below.

From these four stages of design, and as Asfour points out,¹⁵ Halim's design process can be divided into two main layers. The first is formal; where he comes up with the driving concept behind the project and realizes that concept in the forms and organizational systems and patterns of his design. This layer consists of the first two stages cited above. The second layer is circumstantial; where he devises ways of implementing his design, developing it, relating it to its social, economical, technical and natural contexts, and establishes appropriate organizational systems that help in the realization of the design. This layer consists of the third and fourth stages cited by the architect.

Halim strongly criticizes the architectural theories of the Western World through three basic aspects:¹⁶

- The failure of these Western architectural theories to keep up with social changes and their demands after World War II and until now.
- The failure of all attempts by governments and research institutions to solve the main problems that faced the architectural profession during this period; starting from mass housing in the 1940s, then displacement and urban renewal in the 1950s and early 1960s, and finally, site and services projects.
- The excessiveness of individuality in the postmodern era.

¹⁵Khaled Asfour, "Abdel Halim's Cairo Garden; An Attempt to 'Defrost' History," *Mimar*, V. no. 36, pp. 76.

¹⁶Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "Architectural Crisis In Egypt," *A'alam El-Benna'a*, V. no. 73, pp. 9.

These three points, in his view, have resulted in three manifestations of the medial state of the profession in Western countries:¹⁷

- The distancing of the architect as a professional from political and social influential positions and his irrelevance in the decision-making process.
- The raise of unemployment within the architectural profession.
- In response to this trend of confining the architectural profession from the process of social change and restricting it to the symbolic representation of authority, some new trends have appeared in the schools of architecture and on the practicing scene that try to restore this lost relation with the society it service. Yet, non of these trends have proven their success.

He sees Egypt as a developing country and a part of the Developing World in a larger context that is organized on the bases of a power relation between the *center* of the dominant civilization and the developing *peripheral* countries. Any attempt to understand the problems of the architectural profession in Egypt has to be viewed in this context as a whole. From this relation, he mentions three illusions that might lead some to the assumption that the Egyptian architectural profession, as a profession, is not in a state of crisis. These illusions are:¹⁸

- The illusion that the architect in Egypt is in the center of the decision-making process. In this, the architects are, in effect, mere tools in the hands of

¹⁷Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "Architectural Crisis In Egypt," *A'alam El-Benna'a*, V. no. 73, pp. 10.

¹⁸Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "Architectural Crisis In Egypt," *A'alam El-Benna'a*, V. no. 73, pp. 11.

the real decision-makers, i.e., the rulers and the elite.

- The relative high income rates of some of the architects in private practice in Egypt. This is, to him, a manifestation of the bankruptcy of the economy at large.

- The great numbers of architectural students graduating each year.¹⁹ This, to him, is a perfect manifestation of the shallowness of the architectural education system.

In an attempt to determine the state and the role of architecture in developing countries he makes five major points:²⁰

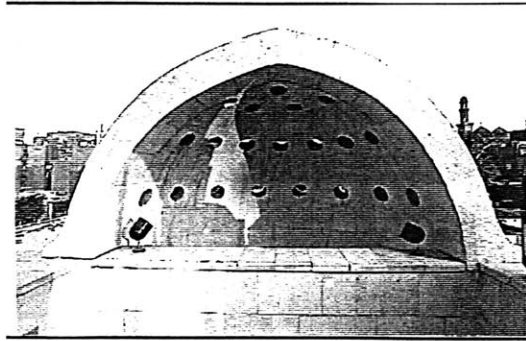
First: Developing societies live in a state of an almost total separation from their personal creative capacity.

Second: The distance between these societies' creative moments of the past and their present can not be crossed by imitating the past and its symbols, but by the stimulation of the forces of creativity and liveliness of the whole society in general and its intellectuals in particular.

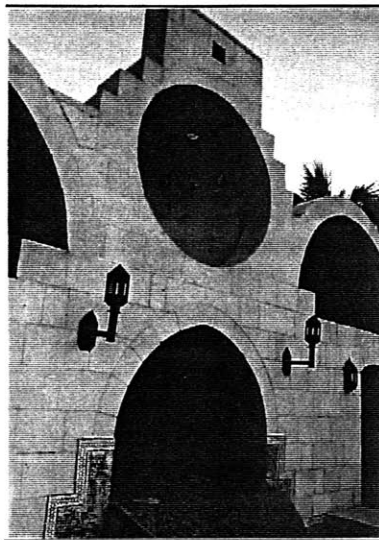
Third: Architectural and Urban design, more than any other activity in our developing world, have a great capability to stimulate these forces and express them through the act of building. By starting from the existing conditions of the site as well as of the society, and working with that by building up on it, reinforcing it,

¹⁹An estimated number of 1000 architects graduate each year from Egyptian architectural schools.

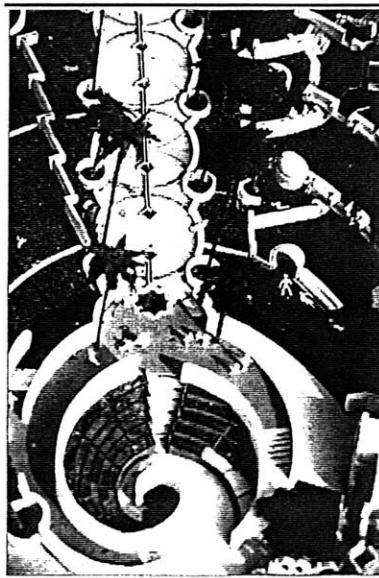
²⁰Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "From Granada to the Park of *El-Houd El-Marsoud*; The Position of the Architect on Urban and Architectural Issues in the Developing World," *Magazine of the Department of Architecture*, Cairo University, Egypt, V. no. 6, pp. 60.



(fig. 30) Geometry of Half Dome as a Wind catcher.



(fig. 31) Arches and Circles of the Sabeel.



(fig. 32) The spiral and the modular coordinate based on the spacing of pre-existing palm trees on the site.

challenging it or altering it, architects can make a difference. This attitude derives from his belief in the possibility of using architecture as a teaching and developing tool, i.e., a 'pedagogic' tool, to change established and taken for granted attitudes.

He always intends his projects to act as such a tool in various ways. If we take his Cultural Park as an example, we can note three levels of engaging in an educational process: The first concerns the literal meaning of education, i.e., teaching children. Teachers from the surrounding schools use the domes, arches and the ordering co-ordinates in their geometry lessons (fig. 30, 31, 32),

particularly "al-Khwarizmi's contribution to mathematics; and by learning in the workshops provided, pupils see their lessons as a continuation of their cultural heritage, not as mechanical exercises that are separated from it."²¹

This brings us to the second level of education that this project achieves. Through this project Halim addressed many issues and attitudes prevailing in the surrounding community and on the level of the decision-makers, criticizing these attitudes and challenging them in different ways. Commenting on this level of education, Mr. Al-Gabarty, a senior writer and journalist from *Akhbar El-Yom* Egyptian daily newspaper, says:²²

²¹James Steele, "Cultural Park for Children, Cairo, Egypt," in "Architecture for a Changing World," Edited by James Steele, The Aga Khan Award for Architecture and Academy Editions, Great Britain, 1992, pp. 32.

²²Al-Gabarty, Sayyed, in Jamel Akbar's "Cultural Park for Children, Cairo, Egypt," 1992 Technical Review Summary for AKAA, appendix no. (1).

"I understand that they [the children] call it: "Geneniat Goha" (Goha's garden). The name "Goha" denotes for the Arab a world of mirth and ambiguity (lovable ambiguity) which the children cannot find in the world outside the garden. They can have fun in its spirals and what seems to them its labyrinths. Everyday, they discover something new, a discovery that satisfies something deep down in them (fig. 33, 34). They learn from the nature and art (architecture and library). I saw a child crying because he was denied entrance to the park, and when I intervened on his behalf, and managed to get him in, he rushed into a world of freedom for him. I noticed that the very same children, who are experts at vandalizing Government property, are doing their utmost to preserve this Park, their Park. They can relate to it, make use of it, find themselves in it, and, therefore, it is not the property of the others.

As for the grownups, the Park was a radical challenge at the beginning; for it redefined their habits of thinking and of seeing. I once asked a man about his impressions about the park, he said: "Are they building a new cemetery, or what?" in reference to the white stones of the Park. It all goes to show that the Islamic and Arab architectural idiom has been confined to tombs and mosques. To see the same architectural style used to build a Park for children was a bit disconcerting. However, the Park was built, and the same man was seen sitting in Abu Al-Zahab Street praying on his prayer carpet there, and then relaxing with his friends. When I asked him about his feelings, he answered: "I feel comfort here, and it does not cost anything," really meaning that the Park has



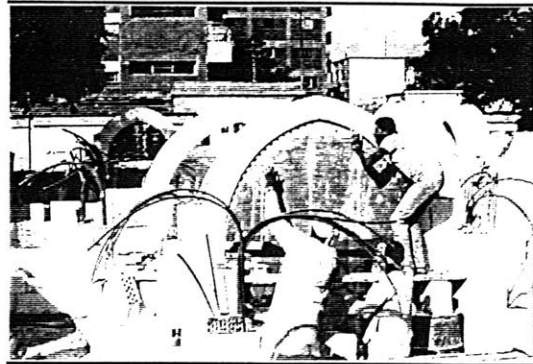
(fig. 33) Children playing in the Park.



(fig. 34)
A world of
fantasy for
children.

become part of his life style, not well defined, separate place from his daily universe."

Then finally, there is the most specialized level of education. This project has challenged the attitudes of both the Egyptian professional architects and the craftsmen, technicians and contractor who worked on the project. With respect to the latter group, by re-organizing the building process to accommodate both craftsmen and technicians and by facing them with new ideas and new ways of doing what they do, by making the technicians and the craftsmen work together, learning from each other while equally contributing to the construction process,



(fig. 35) Craftsmen while constructing a stone arch.

and by forcing the contractor to include craftsmen in his crew,²³ Halim has taught each party to respect the others and what they master finding out that they do not necessarily have to be contradictory to each other but, in fact, if they collaborate they will achieve great success, as they have achieved in the park (fig. 35). On the other hand, this project has shown the Egyptian architects in general and the official architects employed by the government -- with their bureaucratic identity -- that there are other ways to do architecture, other than the normal formal way that is separate from the society, its needs and its circumstances. As Azim Nanji says in his comments on the projects of the 1992 AKAA:²⁴

"... they all relate to education, not in the functional sense, but in their ability to convey a new attitude about architecture. Each speaks to a

²³Detailed description of the organizational changes that Halim implemented in this project is discussed below.

²⁴Nanji, Azim, in James Steele's "Continuity, Relevance and Change; The Fifth Cycle of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture," in "Architecture for a Changing World," Edited by James Steele, The Aga Khan Award for Architecture and Academy Editions, Great Britain, 1992, pp. 33.

growing awareness of a change in sensibilities about the role that Architecture should play in society, which is much different from the one it has played in the recent past. The aspects of that change ... center[s] around participation rather than exclusivity, raising serious questions about the position that an Architect will have in this process in the future."

Forth: Whether we consider architecture as art, the appropriation of building technologies or as a social act that is connected with the society's institutions, regulating laws and their variables, the basic role of the architect in developing countries is "re-defining all inter-relations and institutional systems of the architectural profession so that they can help in this stimulation." In his own work, he has often attempted to do this when ever possible. Many exemplary acts can be noted in his process for designing and building the Cultural Park. His use of a particular construction drawing system that depends on proportions instead of dimensions for the craftsmen to be able to fit the design into the existing site with all its trees, slopes and other features, and the reorganization of the nature of the relation between the architect, the contractor, the technician and the craftsmen in order to comply to regulations of government sponsored projects and at the same time permit each party to contribute to the realization of the Park, are but two examples of this effort to redefine the professional tools and systems that govern the profession in order to help in the realization of his design.²⁵

²⁵For detailed descriptions of such examples see Halim's "A Ceremonial Approach to Community Building," in "Theories and principles of Design in the Architecture of

Fifth: The task is not to preserve tradition, nor to reproduce it, but to revive the creative capacity and formulate new spatial relations and configurations that are connected with the creative moments of the society. Yet, in itself, it has to be independent from its history. In other words, what is needed today, more than any other time, is the concentration on the architectural and urban concepts and experiences that have the capacity to take us on into the boundaries of the future in a way that consolidates our present existence.

Additionally, he believes that the problems of the so-called developing countries reside in "the separation between the production process and the society's culture;"²⁶ and, thus, he calls for re-connecting them. Describing this idea of the separation between production and culture, Halim says:²⁷

"At present, production is viewed as an accumulative process. Culture has always been and can still be seen as a regenerative process.

The aim of production in our time is the accumulation of capital, authority and knowledge. The aim of culture is to regenerate the sense of identity; the creative energy and the mutuality of exchange between people.

Islamic Societies," the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, 1988, pp. 139 - 148.

²⁶Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "A Ceremonial Approach to Community Building," in "Theories and principles of Design in the Architecture of Islamic Societies," the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, 1988, pp. 139.

²⁷Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "The Building Ceremony." Ph.D. dissertation, advised by Christopher Alexander, University of California, Berkeley, 1978, pp. 18 - 22.

... Growth is the aim of production, while vitality is the aim of the culture. Modern institutions and modern thoughts see them as separate, and often contradictory. Growth is associated with progress, and is defined at the present time as the fulfillment of the material needs of the people. Vitality is associated with rebirth and recreation, and is defined at present time as the fulfillment of the spiritual needs of the people.

When seen separately, production would appear as a forward movement towards progress; culture would appear as a regressive movement towards the past. In the context of this separation the reproductive tendency in modern building would inevitably contradict the regenerative tendency of the cultural process."

He sees the great importance of the true integration of them so that the production process can contribute in the forming of the society's identity and its creative abilities. For him, "this is not a luxury but a necessity for the increase of the level of performance, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in addition to giving an artistic value to that product."²⁸ His Ph.D. dissertation can be considered as his major attempt to understand the relation between the reinvigorating nature of the society's culture and the accumulating nature of its production systems in the field of building. His Cultural Park is his major effort to experiment his theories in an actual design process where he tried to integrate 'culture' and 'building production.'

²⁸Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "The Development of Popular Quarters in Urban Centers; The Park of El-Houd El-Marsoud-Ahmed Ibn-Toloun- El-Sayeda Zenab" *A'alam El-Benna'a*, V. no. 102, pp. 24.

He diagnoses the causes of the Egyptian architectural crises in four ideas:²⁹

- First, the difference between the architect and the architectural engineer, based on the definition of architecture as art, and deriving from that the ability of the architect to use the language of cultural and architectural symbols in a creative way. To this end, he supports raising, forming and educating the *architect* instead of the *architectural engineer* who does not rise to that level of cultural sensitivity.³⁰

- Second, the difference between the specialized architect and the 'encyclopedic' architect. He clearly supports the idea of the architect as an interdisciplinary professional who 'organizes' and 'harmonizes' instead of 'defines' and 'forms' solutions. In his own work he puts a large portion of his efforts in achieving this objective. As a direct result of these efforts, he was awarded the AKAA prize as it is clear from James Steele's comment when he was presenting these awards when he said:³¹ "[The award] has emphasized the importance of an informed interdisciplinary dialectic in trying to

²⁹Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "Architectural Crisis In Egypt," *A'alam El-Benna'a*, V. no. 73, pp. 8.

³⁰This is a point that is raised by many professionals interested in the Third World in general, as Ismail Serageldin as was mentioned in the previous chapter, or interested in Egypt in particular, as is evident in a number of editorials published in *A'alam Al-Benna'a* architectural magazine that is issued in Egypt.

³¹James Steele, "Cultural park for Children, Cairo, Egypt," in "Architecture for a Changing World," Edited by James Steele, The Aga Khan Award for Architecture and Academy Editions, Great Britain, 1992, pp. 104.

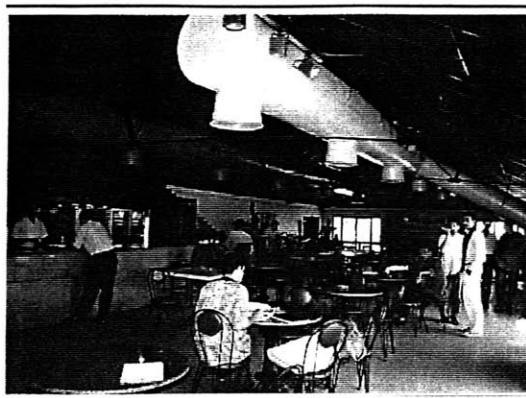
come to terms with the problems of the built environment."

- Third, relating the architect to the engineering profession. Based on the definition of architecture as a professional act with a determined function dependent on scientific knowledge, he advocates the scientific education of the architect with all the basic reasoning strategies that come with it.

- Last, but most important, is the fact that the architectural crisis in Egypt is a part of the larger cultural and political crisis of total subordination of the decision-makers and the elite classes to the developed West.³² This subordination is manifested within the practice of the architectural profession in the blind adoption of the three previously discussed points that have already proven their failure in the West itself, i.e., modern architectural theories, modern systems of organizations since World War II and the recent experimentations that have not proven to be successful till now. As proof of this subordination, we only have to refer to the recent so-called Postmodern buildings that are built in Egypt (fig. 36, 37, 38); "if the architecture of the 1920s till the 1960s of the Egyptian architects can be explained as a result of their belief in the universal claims of the time, then it is not possible to explain the adoption of the same forms that the Western architects have used in the postmodern era to refer to their history and culture, for, obviously, our architectural history and culture is different from theirs."³³ It is clear that

³²Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "Architectural Crisis In Egypt," A'alam El-Benna'a, V. no. 73, pp. 11.

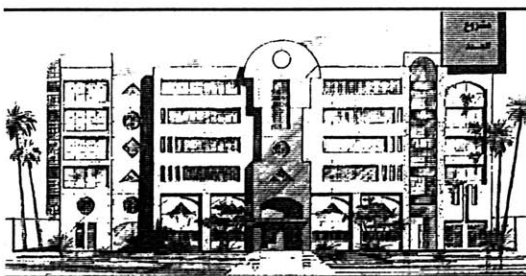
³³Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "Architectural Crisis In Egypt," A'alam El-Benna'a, V. no. 73, pp. 12.



(fig. 36) Interior of the cafeteria of El-Manager Theater, Cairo, by Farouk El-Gouhary.



(fig. 37) Red Crescent Hospital, Cairo, Egypt, by Ahmed Fou'ad Hafezz.



(fig. 38) Secondary School, Nasr City, Cairo, by Hesham Hussien and Essam Moussa.

these imported forms were implemented without any critical assessment of how some of them can

help improve our situation and how others can not.

He completely rejects Modernity; he says that "the state of modernity that we live in today is based on a number of propositions, principles and doctrines that are not suitable for our lives."³⁴ With regard to the Modernization process of Egypt, he also rejects it as long as it means Westernization; he states that "there is a necessity to formulate an architectural understanding that responds to the state of Egypt as a developing country. The world of this architecture should be the village, the oasis and the Egyptian city."³⁵ Additionally, his position towards the modern movement in architecture is very clear;³⁶ he is totally against the standardization and universal claims that came with it. Yet, when we reach the postmodern age, his position is not that clear. On one hand, he emphasizes the importance of meaning and symbolism in architecture; he states that "the world of architecture is the creative handling of the language of symbols in forms, thoughts and buildings by the architect so that then, the public can, consciously or unconsciously, experience it and elevate."³⁷ On the other hand, he criticizes the un-humanistic,

³⁴"Architecture for society," Seminar, Al-Benna'a, V. no. 64, March 1992, pp. 54.

³⁵Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "Architectural Crisis In Egypt," A'alam El-Benna'a, V. no. 73, pp. 11.

³⁶It is important to differentiate between the three terms of Modernity, Modernization and Modern Movement; the first can be considered as an attitude for thinking, the second a process of development and the third an architectural style. and attitudes towards the use of history.

³⁷Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "Architectural Crisis In Egypt," A'alam El-Benna'a, V. no. 73, pp. 9.

individualistic and anti-social attitudes of that movement. This indeterminate position is best extracted from a comment on his Cultural Park in the *Architectural Review*;³⁸ when reviewing this project they stated that "The built result may look a little PoMo to western eyes, but it lies within the great traditions of gestural garden architecture, and its many layered conceptions allows for far more possible interpretations than the standardized commercial Postmodern Classicism of the West."

Commenting on the prizes of the AKA, 1992, the *Architectural Review* says:³⁹

"All the prize-winning buildings have been chosen as being repeatable, not as exact forms, but as models of how good building can be created within particular societies. And they set examples of how traditional craftsmanship can be adapted and made relevant to contemporary technology and ways of life."

While the idea of adapting traditional craftsmanship is completely true to Halim's design process of the park, it is highly questionable if this process is a repeatable one. With respect to the first point, Halim went through a great amount of struggle with the existing building and organizational systems to be able to accommodate the stone craftsmen in the team that was assigned to build this project. I think Halim's

³⁸"Cultural Park For Children, Cairo, Egypt," Architectural Review, Oct. 1992, pp. 62 - 3.

³⁹"Courageous Criteria," Architectural Review, Oct. 1992, pp. 50.

own description of the situation that he faced is worth direct quoting:⁴⁰

“In Egypt the law requires that publicly financed projects be assigned to general contractors through public bidding. This means that contractor’s crews usually will not include craftsmen. To surmount this difficulty we divided the work up into two categories of operation: ordinary work -- including the foundations, damp-proofing, and regular walls -- that would strictly adhere to the dictates of the drawings, and extraordinary work -- arches, vaults, domes, and curved walls -- that would require both technical work and the expertise of craftsmen. For the extraordinary work, we required the technician to prepare a full scale model of each element, with the craftsmen present to advise on the materials and the techniques involved. These models were then used as patterns for carving stone and building vaults and arches. This way we were able to combine the skills of the stoneworker and his instinctive knowledge of geometry and measurement with the technician’s ability to work from written instructions and drawings. The combination also made it easier to introduce innovation. It allowed the craftsmen to rescue lost skills with the aid of the technicians and the technicians to add advanced skills to their ordinary tasks of steel reinforcement and waterproofing.”

⁴⁰Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, “A Ceremonial Approach to Community Building,” in “Theories and principles of Design in the Architecture of Islamic Societies,” the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, 1988, pp. 147.

On the other hand, the idea that this process can be considered as a model that can be referenced and repeated by others in the same context may be a little too much to ask from the rest of the Egyptian architects. If we note that it took Halim nearly seven years of struggling with the client, the contractors, the community and the building regulations and laws to only partially complete this project, in addition of the fact that during these seven years, he was also struggling on other fronts of recognition and income, we can see that it is, in fact, a very difficult path to follow. James Steele acknowledges this struggle in presenting the project in his book *Architecture for a Changing World* as follows:⁴¹

““Intervention” is a popular word in architectural schools today, but Abdelhalim’s design really is intervention in the most positive sense, meaning to arrest the deterioration that was accelerating here at such a rapid rate and to turn it around. The story of the architect’s vision for the scheme, which he has consistently seen as a response to the difficult physical and historical constraints presented to him, is one that is characterized by a mixture of courage and sensitivity, and determination not to allow the formidable bureaucracy he was faced with to defeat him.”

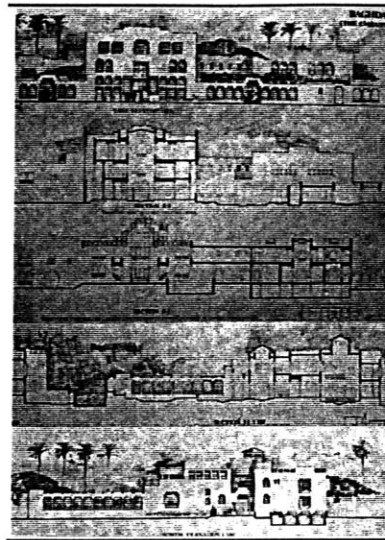
As much as we would like the architects in Egypt to have the conviction and the fighting abilities needed to overcome

⁴¹James Steele, “Cultural park for Children, Cairo, Egypt,” in “Architecture for a Changing World,” Edited by James Steele, The Aga Khan Award for Architecture and Academy Editions, Great Britain, 1992, pp. 120.

the many problems of the architectural profession in Egypt, we must, I think, realize that it is not wise nor practical to depend on such abilities in formulating the solutions we see fit for these problems.

This difficulty of repeatability is manifested in the 'Documentation, Analysis, and Development Scheme for Al-Darrasah Park Study.' In this study he proposes a development approach for the park that is based on a very similar approach that he adopted in his Cultural park of El- Sayedda Zenab. This approach depended on the participation and involvement of the surrounding communities in design, organizational and maintenance stages of the development process and thus using the building of the park as a regenerative event that revives the creative abilities of the communities. However, when this study and these recommendations are past on to the architect that is going to do the actual design, we see him taking into account all recommendations that concerned the actual site, but leaving all recommendations that concerned the surrounding communities. If anything, this indicates the difficulties that face any architect if he thinks of implementing Halim's ideas and attitudes.

In spite of this fighting and enduring ability of Halim, sometimes his creative abilities overpowers the pure functions of the project; in other words, in order for Halim to adequately express the underlying concept of the project he sometimes goes to far, to the extent that he might compromise the functionality of the project. Commenting on his entry in a competition for the design of the Egyptian Embassy in Baghdad (fig. 39) the



(fig. 39) Elevations and Sections of Halim's entry in the competition for the Egyptian Embassy in Baghdad.

jury says the following:⁴² "The project included a jungle of columns just for the sake of achieving the architect's concept and philosophy behind the design without regard to functionality and performance." Obviously, the large number of columns do not satisfy security concerns because of the nature of such a building.

Bakri's Main Attitudes, Theories and Design Strategies:

Architecture, for Bakri, is a "fabric that contains three main threads; *Function, Structure and Beauty*."⁴³ This is, of course, based on Vitruvius' definition of the three elements of architecture. However, Bakri adds to this trinity by attempting to analyze it

⁴²"A competition for the Design of the Egyptian Embassy in Baghdad," in "Egyptian Architecture, Where to? The Role of Competitions in Formulating Architectural Thought," *A'alam El-Benna'a*, V. no. 79, pp. 18.

⁴³Bakri, Gamal, "Architecture... Design... Forms," *Al-Benna'a*, V. no. 57, Jan. 1991, pp. 58 - 62.

and redefine it within his present context. He believes that after a long period of down to earth architectural practice, the architect is gradually pushed towards emphasizing the first two threads, i.e., function and structure, while neglecting the third, beauty. This results in a state of imbalance in the architectural work and eventually turns it to a mere structure, or, at best, a building -- as opposed to architecture. Therefore, every architect, once in a while, has to free his artistic abilities through another form of art such as sculpture or painting.

Moreover architecture, for him, is an art that takes "space" as its field of creativity and manipulation. He believes that "the basic game of any architect is the "space." Space is the psychological container in which the architect consigns his excessive emotions, sensations and his aesthetical values."⁴⁴ In his work, we can sense a very strong relation to this view of 'architecture as art.' He clearly draws upon the principles of formalism and art, and uses painting as a major designing tool. Furthermore, when he describes the design procedure he stresses the fact that he has to rely on his artistic abilities to come up with the final design; he states that the design procedure has to start from accounting for all needs and resources, but then the architect has to choose from the numerous possible solutions in order for him to reach the ideal one. Due to the complexity of the influencing factors, the designer has to rely on his *artistic senses* and great experience to be able to

choose the right and most suitable solution.⁴⁵

The various stages of his design procedure, as he categorizes them, are:⁴⁶

(1) *The dream*; "Sometimes we are able to detect some influences that affect the formulation of this dream. However, the preference of one dream over the other is completely un-understandable and sometimes mythical."

(2) *Interpretation of the dream*; "This is strongly related to the personality of the designer. In this stage, an artistic attitude and the urge to express the self dominates."

(3) *The implementation of the idea*; "From this point, the impact of relating the society, its needs and its resources on one hand, to the assimilation of the architect on the other, begins."

In Bakri's view, the state of Egyptian architecture is the same as the cultural state of the whole *popular* society; a superficial imitation and a shallow understanding of either the Western culture, or the centuries old traditional culture of Egypt. He sees this as a natural result of the loss of self-confidence and the infertile nature of the society to produce the needed creative abilities for it to be able to confront its contemporary challenges.⁴⁷

He lays the blame on the intellectuals of the society whom do not understand that their thoughts should emerge from

⁴⁴Bakri, Gamal, "Architecture... Design... Forms," *Al-Benna'a*, V. no. 57, Jan. 1991, pp. 58 - 62.

⁴⁵Bakri, Gamal, "Architecture... Design... Forms," *Al-Benna'a*, V. no. 57, Jan. 1991, pp. 58 - 62.

⁴⁶Bakri, Gamal, "Architecture... Design... Forms," *Al-Benna'a*, V. no. 57, Jan. 1991, pp. 58 - 62.

⁴⁷Bakri, Gamal, "The Paradox of Tradition and Contemporariness," in "A Dialogue on Contemporary Egyptian Architecture," *A'alam Al-Benna'a*, V. no. 123, pp. 8.

the needs of that society and whom do not recognize that their benefits and prosperities totally depend on the benefits and prosperities of it.⁴⁸

Additionally, he sees the Egyptian architectural education process as both Western oriented and very superficial in the way it is handling these imported Western theories. At the same time, all available educational resources, like books and magazines, are all Western and address the needs and circumstances of the Western context instead of the Egyptian one.⁴⁹

Other causes cited by Bakri as the problems of Egyptian architecture in particular, and the Egyptian cultural scene in general, are: the separation of our traditions from our present context, the non-existence of a open-minded dialogue, the dictation of knowledge as indisputable facts, the weakness of the general public's cultural awareness and education, among others.⁵⁰

As a direct result of this feeling of backwardness of his society his attitude towards the parties that he has to deal with within the architectural professional field is one of discontent and, in many ways, superiority; if it is the government, they are 'bureaucratic institutions that kill all creative thinking,' and if it is the client, the contractor or technician, they are 'under-developed, stubborn and are

living in a cultural coma.' This feeling of superiority is clearly evident in some of his other statements; for example, he says: "We, who are affected by the virus of art, are the heart beat of humanity, trying to help the society to overcome its primitive instincts so it can elevate towards progress."⁵¹

In his view, there is a big difference between a traditional human being (which he strongly condemns) and a human being that has tradition (which he believes to be un-escapable for anyone); he says:⁵² "I refuse to be a museum-like person producing museum-like architecture. Instead, I would like to be a person that has a strong tradition and thus, who is producing an architecture that has tradition." Then he defines this traditional architecture as "the architecture that always gets weaved by and woven into the architect's unconsciousness."

Consequently, his attitude towards his architecture is as follows: he believes that any human being is a container of the memory of all his history. In addition, his personality is a combination of his feelings that are from within and everything that influences it from without. These outside influencing factors range from scientific knowledge to gained experiences and finally, to current circumstances. If this person acknowledges both inside and outside factors without any biased attitudes, he will always be able to produce architecture -- or any other form of cultural expression -- that is true to his *time* and *place*.

⁴⁸Bakri, Gamal, an un-published and un-titled book, pp. 88

⁴⁹Bakri, Gamal, "The Search for the Egyptian Essence," in "Egyptian Architecture... Present and Future," by Tarek Mohammed Abdel-Fatah, Al-Benna'a, V. no. 57, pp. 32-41.

⁵⁰Bakri, Gamal, "The Paradox of Tradition and Contemporariness," in "A Dialogue on Contemporary Egyptian Architecture," A'alam Al-Benna'a, V. no. 123, pp. 8 - 13.

⁵¹Bakri, Gamal, "Architecture... Design... Forms," Al-Benna'a, V. no. 57, Jan. 1991, pp. 58 - 62.

⁵²From a personal interview with Bakri by architect Mai Fawzy in January 1994.

He believes that the dilemma between *Tradition* and *Modernity* is a superficial one and who ever clings on to it is merely escaping the real issue. All his attempts drive "from the conviction that you can not escape, neither time nor place; you can not deny neither modern technological achievements nor your own intuition & culture. At the same time, it is affected by all the trends & debates occurring at all schools or architectural thought all over."⁵³ At that point, the architect has to design "spontaneously" and "intuitively" for him to be able to achieve this required balance. This outcome would be, in effect, a dialogue between the architect's conscience or sentiment -- place -- and the age that he is living in -- time.⁵⁴

He strongly believes in the abilities and efficiency of modern technologies, as opposed to handicrafts. He says:⁵⁵ "We [meaning the profession] are in a period of transition from a state of craftsmanship to a state of industrialization. Thus, the society, with both its theoretical and practical segments, is sailing between the grounds of both, not being able to perfect either. Neither can be blamed; it is the responsibility of the design as much as it is the responsibility of the construction. It is the duty of both to push that society towards the more solid and inevitable industrial grounds that is the characteristic of the present age." In an another occasion he says:⁵⁶ "The passionate emotions that are created during a ceremony for cutting stones

from a mountain does not erect a temple with the same accuracy and capability of the contemporary machine." Moreover, he believes that this technology is not produced by one person, or even one civilization; it is the accumulation of the efforts of different individuals and different civilizations, over the years. To this end, technology is, in effect, the property of the whole of mankind. Therefore, we do not only have to adopt the new technologies of the age, but we also have the right to do so.⁵⁷

He refuses the Modernist movement of the first half of this century and his preference of the Postmodern movement of the second half. He states that "Recent statistics have shown that the match boxes that were built after the second World War, and spread through the world -- and we were with the herd -- contributed in the destruction of the nervous system of the people who inhabited them. In addition, it resulted in the increase of crime rates. All because of its negation of the human and natural logics. Today, developed countries are substituting these buildings and whole districts, just as what happened in America. During the last quarter of the twentieth century, new theories and buildings have appeared that are in harmony with the latest scientific advancements and the physical and psychological human needs that they serve."⁵⁸ It is very clear that he is greatly influenced by the postmodern theories and critiques of the modern movement. While he criticizes the blind adoption of the modern architectural theories, i.e., housing theories of the modern movement, he

⁵³Bakri, Gamal, "A Dialogue Between Time and Place," unpublished statement.

⁵⁴From a personal interview with Bakri by architect Mai Fawzy in January 1994.

⁵⁵Bakri, Gamal, "Architecture... Design... Forms," *Al-Benna'a*, V. no. 57, Jan. 1991, p. 58 - 62.

⁵⁶Bakri, Gamal, an un-published and un-titled book, pp. 63.

⁵⁷From a personal interview with Bakri by architect Mai Fawzy in January 1994.

⁵⁸Bakri, Gamal, "The Paradox of Tradition and Contemporariness," in "A Dialogue on Contemporary Egyptian Architecture," *A'alam Al-Benna'a*, V. no. 123, pp. 11.

fails to see the same danger in the blind adoption of the architectural postmodern theories.

He declares that he is opening new and unknown grounds that have no previous precedents. He is thus formulating a new vocabulary for contemporary Egyptian architecture. This vocabulary is the result of the integration or a combination of the Pharonic, Coptic, Arabic and contemporary architectural vocabularies respectively.⁵⁹

With regard to the forces that shape the environment, he recognizes four systems as the main factors of this shaping process; they are:⁶⁰

- The *natural* system: this system is given and is different from one place to the other.
- The *produced* system: this is the materialistic production of mankind. It is always changing and developing according to the technological advancements of the age.
- The *cultural* system: which is the moral or immaterialistic production of mankind that controls his beliefs and attitudes.
- The *media* system: which is the system that spreads information and knowledge. It reaches everyone with or without his approval and influences his or her aspirations and thoughts.

His attitude towards the natural environment, on the other hand, is to try to preserve it and cause as little destruction to it as might be possible. He says:⁶¹ "When I visit the site of

every new project that I start to work on, I feel an overwhelming desire to leave nature in its present form. This is the best a man can do."

⁵⁹From a personal interview with Bakri by architect Mai Fawzy in January 1994.

⁶⁰Bakri, Gamal, "Towards an Urban Understanding," unpublished statement.

⁶¹Bakri, Gamal, an un-published and un-titled book, pp. 88.

Reconciliations and Continued Polarities

Addressing the problem of our relation with the West, Dr. Foa'ad Zakaria points out two major pitfalls that characterize the understanding of the majority of the society;¹ The first is a historical misunderstanding, where people confuse the colonizing act of the West beginning with the French Expedition with its scientific and cultural advancements that we see today. The second is geographical, where they confuse the 'old' West that has always been active with the Egyptian society with other new regions that are new to this categorization such as Japan, Korea and may be China within the next few years. These two misunderstandings have resulted in the great effectiveness of the cultural aspects of the Western civilization over the Egyptian society and, at the same time, the political resistance of that society towards the regional expansion of the West.

Most, or all, of the positions that either accept or refuse the West usually stress only one view of this double-sided nature. In some cases, even though people recognize the scientific advancement of the West, they judge it as guilty of being a mere tool of establishing power and authority therefore rejecting it, even the most

¹Zakaria, Foa'ad, "The West and Us," unpublished paper, presented to *El-Hellal Seminar One hundred years of Enlightenment and Modernization*, Sep. 13 - 17, 1992.

recent of these critics, i.e., Edward Said, stresses this point. However, as Dr. Zakaria notes, this position has a great danger embedded into it; if we totally accept this view, we fall into the danger of blindly discrediting all that is characterized as being Western, even if it is of our best interest to adopt it or learn from it. We should not always conclude that all that the West has to offer is un-avoidably evil and that we have only to rely on what we have inherited to advance and develop. Mr. Arkoun gives us a perfect example of this danger from the Egyptian architectural context when he speaks of the city of Heliopolis -- a city or district built by the West in Egypt in the beginning of this century, he says:² "We should not forget architectural and urban problems associated with Heliopolis just because we happened to think first of denouncing and rejecting the colonial aspect of the place."

Another misunderstanding in our relation with the West is the belief that all our problems are dramatically different than the problems of the West and that either the solutions must come from them, because they are much more advanced, or can not be taken from them because they are not experiencing the same problems as we are and thus,

²Arkoun, Mohammed in "The Expanding Metropolis: Coping with the Urban Growth of Cairo," Singapore, Concept Media LTD, 1985, pp. 234.

what they have does not address our needs.³ A good example of this misunderstanding from the Egyptian architectural scene is Prof. El-Touny's description of the problems of the architectural profession in Egypt as being the weak and fragile nature of the relation between the architect and the society and the in-ability of the architect to address the real problems of the society.⁴ Indeed, this is a true problem in Egypt, but it is a problem that the whole profession is suffering from and debating all over the world.

Be that as it may, we must also recognize that there exists some problems that are indeed different from the general problems of most of the societies of the modern age. These problems may have some resemblance to problems of other countries, yet they are very specific to the Egyptian context and its circumstances in their history and details. Examples of such problems are the un-equaty problem, the duality problem and the nature of the distribution of wealth and resources both naturally and socially.

That said, I will attempt, in the remaining part of this research to situate both architects within the context of how they reacted to the cultural issues that resulted from these previous misunderstandings. I will focus on the ideas that have already been discussed so far within this research, i.e., Westernization, Development,

Modernization, Un-equity, among others.

I will deal with these issues under five broad titles: Their position within and towards the current context; Their attitudes towards their profession; Their views and attitudes towards East - West relations; How they are dealing with the dilemma of Traditional versus Modern; and finally, Their proposed 'way out.' In spite of this categorization, inter-relations and inter-referencing between the boundaries of each issue are both un-avoidable and un-desirable. The five categories below have to be seen as an un-dividable whole.

Current Situation:

While the condensed feeling of a cultural crisis in Egypt can be considered as strong and evident proof of the existence of such a crisis, great disagreements arise when attempting to pin point its origins, its history and its manifestations, and even greater disagreements on its causes and the ways of resolving it.

Both Halim and Bakri strongly criticize the current conditions of the urban Egyptian environment; Describing the design process of his Cultural Park, Halim says that "it was an attempt to present a system or method for facing up to the architectural shallowness and the structural and expressional deterioration of most of our urban environments."⁵ Similarly, Bakri resents the fact that the building regulations that are applied within the urban areas

³Ghorbaal, Mohammed Shafeek, "The Configuration of Egypt Through the Ages," the General Egyptian Book Organization, 1990, pp. 102.

⁴El-Touny, Sayyed, "Thoughts on Architecture and Culture," Annual Magazine of the Department of Architecture, Cairo University, Egypt, V. no. 6, 1988, pp. 44.

⁵Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "From Granada to the Park of *El-Houd El-Marsoud*; The Position of the Architect on Urban and Architectural Issues in the Developing World," Annual Magazine of the Department of Architecture, Cairo University, Egypt, V. no. 6, pp. 58 - 62.

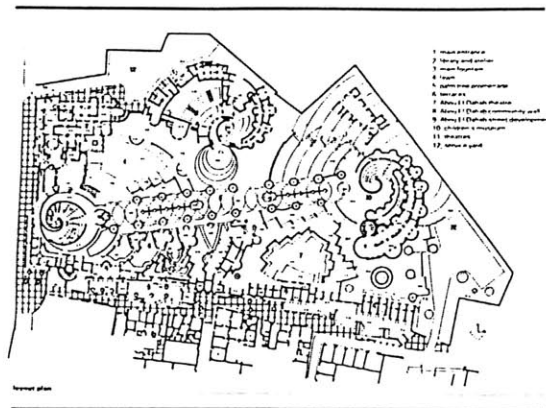
of Egypt were, in fact, imported from the West in the 1940s in spite their incompatibility with the local circumstances. He notes that since then, the regulations in the West itself has changed and developed dramatically corresponding to the needs and circumstances of each locality. Yet, in Egypt, the architects are still governed by the out-dated Western regulations in spite of their incompatibility even with recent architectural principles let alone the local circumstances. This, in turn, resulted in an incompatible environment that does not suite the conditions of the Egyptian society.⁶

In Egypt, both architects are considered by many as attempting to reconcile the *inherited* architectural values and features with the *imported* ones. Yet, in my view, their general underlying attitudes are different to a big extent. On one hand, Bakri's underlying attitude can be summarized more as: 'look at the glory that comes with modernity and modernization' as opposed to 'lets look at what we have and rapidly loosing.' On the other hand, Halim's underlying attitude can be summarized as exactly the opposite. In spite of this, neither of them go to the extent of being anti-historicists or historicists respectively.

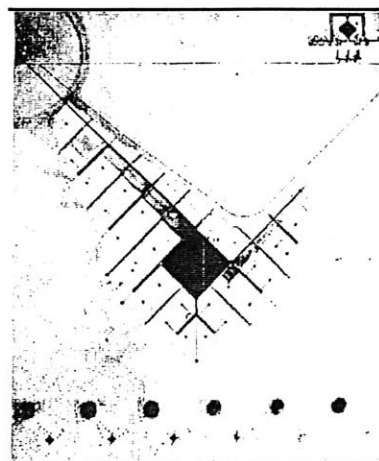
This miss-interpretation by the public is specially evident in the case of Halim, and contrary to the way he is portrayed by many of his contemporaries, i.e., as an innovative contemporary *Islamic* revivalist in the field of architecture,⁷ I

⁶Bakri, Gamal, "In search for the Egyptian Essence," in Tarek Abdel Fattah's "Egyptian Architecture... Present and Future." *El-Benna'a*, V. no. 57, January, 1991, pp. 32 - 41.

⁷A quick look at what has been written about him after the completion of the Cultural Park both in newspapers and in the statements by a number of Egyptian



(fig. 40) Plan of the Children's Cultural Park, Cairo, by Halim.



(fig. 41) planing of the housing cluster and its relation with the well in the Farafra Oasis Settlement by Halim.

do not think that he is really that. Commenting on his design of both the Cultural Park (fig. 40) and the Farafra Oasis Settlement for University Graduates (fig. 41) he says that he "really never thought of these gardens as Islamic, nor of paradise as [he] was designing them." On an another occasion, when he was asked by Jamel Akbar:⁸ "How can you claim that this building [i.e., the Cultural Park] serves Muslims when you have space which

intellectuals in Jamel Akbar's technical report for the AKAA clearly shows the Islamicist portray that Halim is being put in.
⁸Akbar, Jamel, "Cultural Park for Children, Cairo, Egypt," 1992 Technical Review Summary for AKAA.

allows teenagers -- boys and girls -- to mix together and be alone in some spots? One might argue that this is not Islamic! Did the design ever consider this aspect?" Halim's response was that "our society accepts mixing teenagers. ... But more importantly, we are not interested in the superficial aspect of Islam; rather, we are interested in the deeper structure of *culture* [my italics], which is crystallized in epistemology."

This, I think, breaks down any attempt to categorize him as an Islamicist. Furthermore, in most of his writings and previous work his main emphasis was on the idea of community development based on the underlying cultural structures of each community, whether this is in Egypt, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Philippines or even in the United States.⁹

With regard to the five development attitudes that appeared on the Egyptian cultural scene during the history of Modern Egypt and that were discussed the first chapter, Halim's attitude, on one hand, can be seen as a combination of the Nationalist view that believed in the necessity of the unification of the Arab region as a prerequisite for development and the Re-conciliation attitude as a maneuver by him to resist the imported modernization process. Bakri attitude, on the other hand, can be seen as a combination of the Rationalist belief in the necessity of radical change and at the same time not breaking all ties with either tradition or the contemporary age and the liberal view that adopts the idea of catching up with the West.

⁹Halim has actually worked on projects that were in all of the cited countries. In each case, he was interested in reviving and updating the creative abilities within the specific culture of each society.

Already we can see the formation of a set of oppositions that become increasingly important: Western oriented versus locally oriented and "modernization" as a changing process versus "modernization" as a development process.¹⁰

Attitudes towards the Architectural Profession:

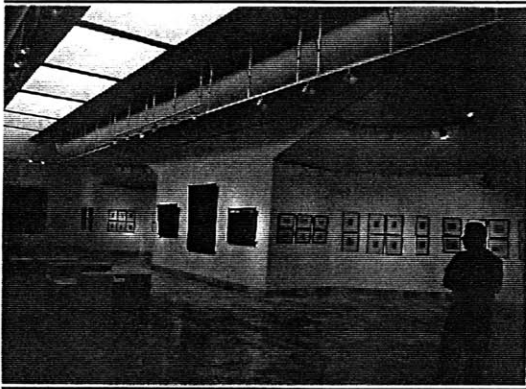
By looking at the works of both Halim and Bakri, and by tracing their attitudes through their writings, we can sense a very strong belief in ARCHITECTURE as a profession and as an important ingredient in the formulation of the environment. Furthermore, in spite of Halim's social orientation on one hand, and Bakri's artistic orientation on the other, their architecture, in most cases, has a strong presence in and by itself.

However, the way they handle their projects and their design process is totally different. For Bakri the form-making role of the architect is seen as directly increasing the well-being of the user through the mediation of artistic creation. In contrast, Halim sees the well-being of the user as the result of this user's own spontaneous activity that would integrate the form with the surrounding environment. The role of the architect, in this case, is not just creating the forms but also coming up

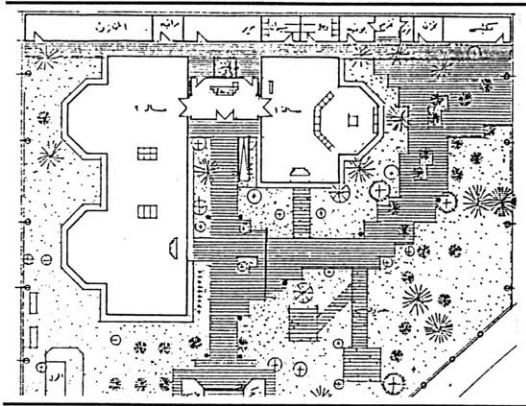
¹⁰A changing process in this case is a process that attempts to substitute the existing situation with a new and different one. The developing process, on the other hand, is a process that attempts to build up on what is existing to improve it and alter it in the hope of achieving a better version of the existing situation.



(fig. 42) The old studio that was designed by Naggi the painter.



(fig. 43) The new exhibition extension of Naggi Museum, by Bakri.



(fig. 44) Plan of both the old and the new exhibition halls of Naggi's museum, by Bakri.

with ways to trigger this integrating activity.¹¹

Bakri's emphasis on 'Architecture as Art' is further manifested in his opinion on how the architect has to act within the society. In his view, the only way that the architect can retain his credibility in the society is by retaining his *artistic* ability and dialogue. If he fails to do this, the society will continuously put the obstacles of priorities in front of the architectural profession and its members will always be reluctant to provide the architect with adequate funding.¹² In this view, he completely neglects the social aspects of architecture, as opposed to the artistic ones, as a way of retaining this needed credibility. In many ways, this later attitude may well be the most needed in a society such as ours with all its previously discussed circumstances.

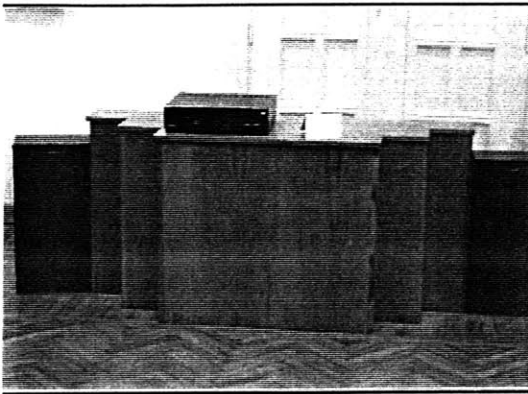
Also, he emphasizes the importance of art as an inseparable ingredient in any development process as it is clear when he says: "Art education is very essential for any humanistic development to succeed, as essential as reading and writing."¹³

This artistic attitude and respect for art and the true artist is reflected in most of his productions, yet it is particularly evident in his design for the extension of the museum for the works of an important Egyptian painter by the name

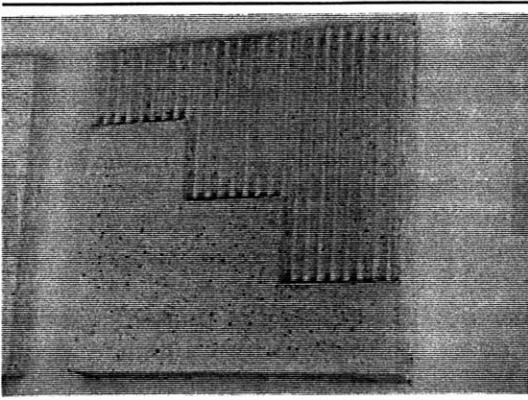
¹¹These two positions are discussed in detail in a different context by Alan Colquhoun in his "Centraal Beheer," in his collected essays *Essays in Architectural Criticism*, 1981, pp. 104 - 109, (Article first published in 1974).

¹²Bakri, Gamal, "Architecture... Design... Forms," *Al-Benna'a*, V. no. 57, Jan. 1991, pp. 58 - 62.

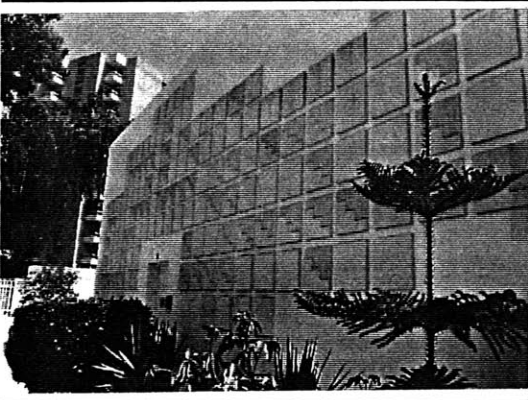
¹³Bakri, Gamal, an un-published and un-titled book, pp. 25.



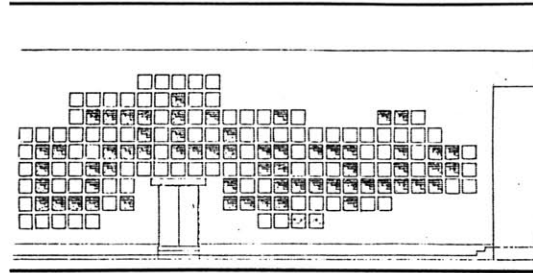
(fig. 45) Motif used by Naggi in his original studio.



(fig. 46) Detail of motif used by Bakri in his extension of the Naggi museum.



(fig. 47) Exterior facade of the extension of Naggi museum with new motif.



(fig. 48) Exterior facade of the Museum with Naggi's name inscribed on it using his own motif.

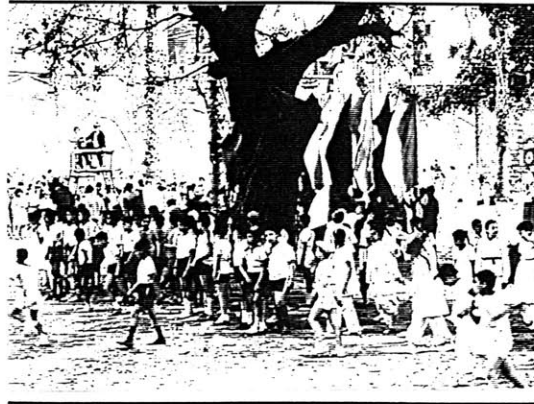
of Naggi. Before he died, Naggi turned his small studio into a public museum. This studio was a very simple structure that was designed by Naggi himself (fig. 42). When Bakri received the commission of designing the extension of this small studio he thought it best to replicate and thus duplicate the forms, structural system and exterior finishings of that initial small studio so as to expand the exhibit space of the museum and, at the same time, show respect towards the original vision of Naggi -- the Artist, -- as much as he can (fig. 43, 44). In a brief statement describing the design concept he states that "the architect that has a sense of responsibility is the one that uses his knowledge and veil his personality and identity in order to reveal the identity of the artist, his works and his museum."¹⁴

Even in the details of the exterior facade of the new extension he tries to pick up on a motif that Naggi used in his studio (fig. 45) to tell the visitors that this is Naggi's museum and not his in a very abstract and artistic way. By using 50 * 50 cm. units, some blank and some have this motif carved into them, and then repeating these units he make a pattern that outlines the name of the museum with Naggi's name within it (fig. 46, 47, 48).

¹⁴Bakri, Gamal, "The Philosophical Vision for the Renewal and Expansion of Naggi Museum," an unpublished statement.

Halim, on the other hand, emphasis social responsibility and social interaction in his architecture. He is concerned more with how his designs and buildings integrate into the surrounding community and how they will affect it. In this, he does not differentiate between the various segments of the society, i.e., he does not consider the issue of who the client is or who the users are as a decisive factor in determining this interest. Nevertheless, he tries to use his designs and the design process to help the deprived segments of the society, and specially in developing countries where he mostly practices. This can be seen as his personal attempt to blur the boundaries that exist between the two very different and separate institutions that were discussed in the previous chapter, and that parallely exist and serve the two main segments of the society. It is his attempt to provide the deprived segments of the society with the same quality of professional guidance and help that serve the rich and elite.

In these attempts, he takes the idea of architects helping the poor to a new level. It has always been the case where the only kind of help the architect can offer the poor is providing them with infrastructure and, in the best cases, mass housing. Yet, what Halim proposes through his designs and design strategy is something that surpasses this limited service. This can be clearly seen in many of the projects that he designed in Egypt. For example, his attempt to integrate the Cultural Park of Sayyeda Zenab with the surrounding community by using *building ceremonies* that increase the involvement of the users in the design and building process (fig. 49), and trying to address this communities needs by extending the program to accommodate new elements and usages that were needed by the community (fig. 50).



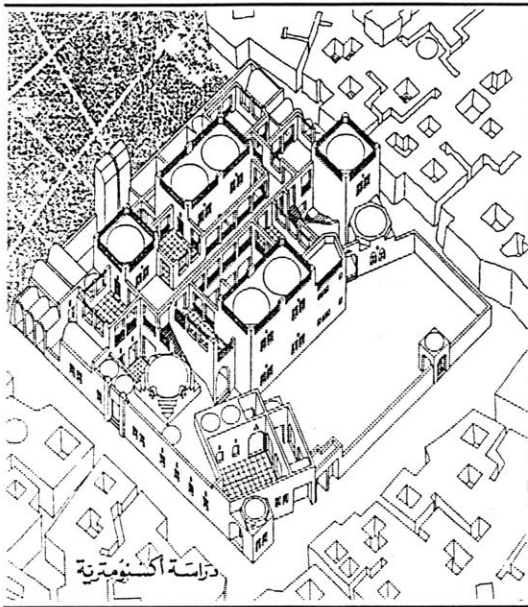
(fig. 49) Community participation in the ceremony of the laying of the corner stone for the park.



(fig. 50) Abu El-Dahab St. after being turned into a pedestrian street.

Another example of this new way of helping the poor segments of the society is his attempt to come up with a system for the design of schools in the Egyptian Country-side that would not adopt a repetitive model and, at the same time, solve the problem of the limited resources available for the building of such schools in the Villages of Egypt (fig. 51).¹⁵ Yet, this tendency to engage in the development of the urban environment in spite of the nature of the actual project at hand is most evident in the way he handled the organization

¹⁵Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "The Problem of School Designing", *Al-Benna'a*, V. no. 72, pp. 61 - 5.

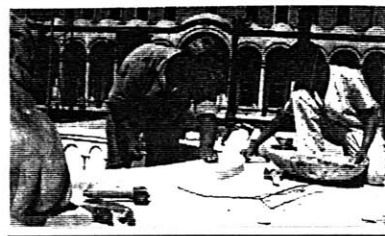


(fig. 51) Isometric of one example of the schools that can be designed on the bases of the design patterns that were formulated by Halim.

and design of the settings for the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, 1992, held in the Citadel of Cairo.

In this project Halim based his design and organization of the prize ceremony trying to use it as a regenerative event of the surrounding neighborhoods.¹⁶ Starting from this idea he worked on two fronts: First, he tried to stimulate the surrounding communities' participation by developing a process of upgrading the routes leading up to the citadel, recruiting craftsmen from the surrounding communities for the restoration works in the citadel itself and finally, providing a small amount of capital that would circulate within the communities for continuing the upgrading process even after the AKAA ceremony. Secondly, he tried to stimulate the creative abilities of all parties involved and at the same time,

¹⁶Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "The City and Citizenship", *Al-Benna'a*, V. no. 66, pp. 14 - 8.



(fig. 52) Craftsmen from the neighboring communities working to erect the AKAA prize ceremony in the citadel of Cairo.

connecting the officials and the public communities by forming three working groups: the first composed of representatives of all the involved governmental parties, the second composed of representatives of the surrounding communities in the hope of coming up with a new concept of upgrading that will prove to be permanent, and the third composed of the different craftsmen with some collaboration with a designer, an artist or a high technician (fig. 52).

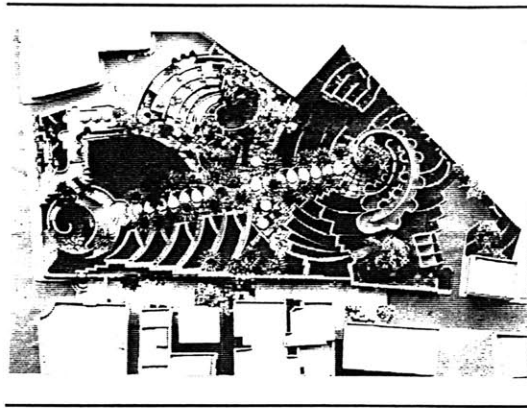
These, among a number of other projects, all show Halim's attempt to provide the same level of high quality

professional services for the poor as is delivered to the rich. As Suha Ozkan points out,¹⁷ this attempt was, in fact, one of the main concerns of the AKAAs 1992 jury that awarded him the prize.

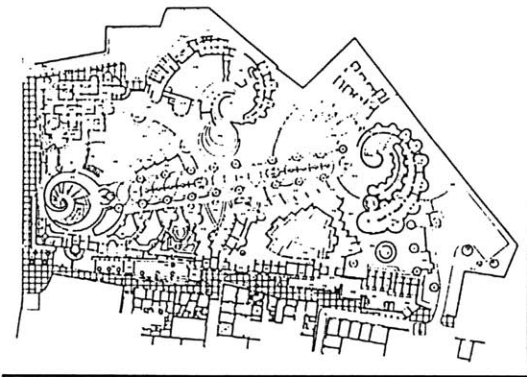
While Halim calls for 'User Participation' and 'Community Involvement' in the design process, this idea of participation is not a revival of participation theories of the 1960s and early 1970s. In Halim's approach, he strives for two things: First, he attempts to obtain all possible input from the actual users of the proposed design. By this he does not mean the actual participation of these users in the design process, but, instead, he sees this as a tool that gives him, i.e., the architect, some information during *his* design stages concerning the ways in which *his* design will be used, perceived and reacted to, so that he can then improve this design in the way *he* sees best. In other words, users and community participation, to him, only adds to the design; it does not make it. In his design for the Cultural Park, for example, he made many fundamental changes in his first proposed scheme (fig. 53, 54) based on the input that he could gather from the ceremony for the laying of the corner stone. The community that did participate in this ceremony did not suggest these adjustments but they were the idea of Halim himself.

Secondly, he sees the involvement of the community as a way of political mobilization of the users in order to help him overcome the bureaucratic obstacles that he has to face. His own description of these obstacles, of

¹⁷Ozkan, Suha, "Quality in the Built Environment and the Third World Reality," in "Architecture for a Changing World," Edited by James Steele, The Aga Khan Award for Architecture and Academy Editions, Great Britain, 1992, pp. 9.



(fig. 53) The first proposal for the design of the Park without Abu El-Dahab St. extension.



(fig. 54) The final scheme with the new proposed pedestrian street and the facilities that serve the public.

basically changing the attitudes and habits that have now been instigated since the time of the industrial revolution, is a perfect example of *political* rather than *aesthetical* innovation. He states:¹⁸

"After the competition awarded the scheme to our firm, a contract was signed for design development and construction, funds were allocated

¹⁸Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "A Ceremonial Approach to Community Building," in "Theories and principles of Design in the Architecture of Islamic Societies," the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, 1988, pp. 144 - 5.

for the building, and then ... nothing happened. The project had been blocked by political-interest groups in the parliament. Several confrontations with officials, including the prime minister and the minister of culture, resulted in an official go-ahead, but still nothing happened. Something was wrong.

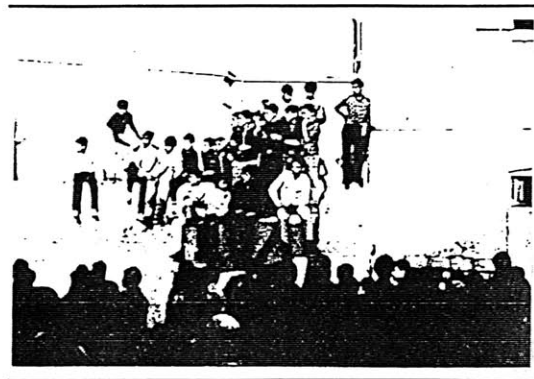
We soon realized what it was. We had been trying to defend the project through public meetings and through the media, but the people in the community, the real supporters of the project, had no contact with either. They were cut off from the press and from the power structure, which in any case were confused about the image of the project and argued against its order and character. We realized we would have to mobilize the community to get the project moving, not just to defend the project but to build it. We looked for an opportunity to do this.

The opportunity came when the minister of culture decided to lay the cornerstone of the project during the national festival for children, a celebration held in Egypt in November of each year. Some officials, the architect, and representatives of the local community were scheduled to attend.

... The minister was eventually won over to our scheme, though mainly because the ceremony was to be attended by the President and his wife and would draw attention to the significant role it was playing in the development of local communities. The image of hundreds of children playing and dancing around the mocked-up park and the full-scale model (fig. 55), while tens of thousands of citizens



(fig. 55) The tent erected for the festival; it represents a full-scale model of the children's museum.



(fig. 56) People watching the festival.

looked on (fig. 56), appealed to the political instincts of the Minister, and he approved."

Another important aspect of this positive influence of this project is its impact on how the poor communities perceive their environments. Mrs. Ragab, a TV Newscaster, comments on this impact as follows:¹⁹

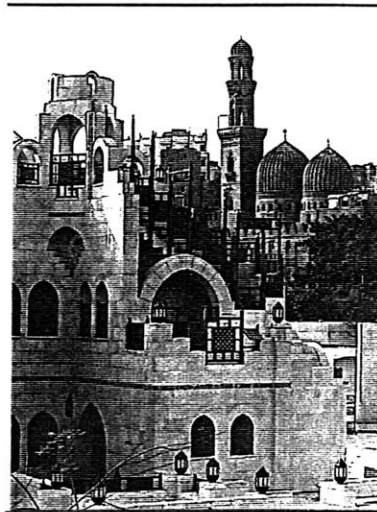
"[The poor] started feeling that they live in are *athar*, namely monuments, traces or relics. If these "*athar*" are in good condition, they are preserved,

¹⁹Ragab, Mervat, in Jamel Akbar's "Cultural Park for Children, Cairo, Egypt," 1992 Technical Review Summary for AKAA. appendix no. (1), pp. 7.

then become tourist attractions, if old and dilapidated, they become garbage dumps. Their buildings lost any interesting cultural value ... that give them self-respect and self-esteem.

Now, Dr. Abdelhalim's cultural Park makes a different statement altogether. Here is a building made of stone, high walls, vaults and domes, here is a building similar to the ones they are from and perhaps live in, built by one of their contemporaries, a modern architect who received his education in the West, yet, comes back to use their language, telling them that the words are theirs, the grammar is theirs and it is all quite beautiful in itself and exquisitely fitted to their environment. The statement even tells the poor of Al Sayeda Zeinab District [specially after receiving an international award] that their architectural idiom is something that the rich can admire and emulate. Self-confidence is thereby restored."

This described statement by Halim is very evident on various levels; the use of the same stone construction materials, the same craftsmanship, the same architectural vocabulary of domes, arches, steel and wood works (fig. 57), etc. What is more, it is also evident that these similarities are exactly that, they are not imitations. The development of such features from their original forms to suite the architects visions and objectives as well as to benefit from all available techniques and materials is noticeable all through the design; the use of concrete in the foundations, the use of half domes beside the full domes (fig. 58), the conversion of the space of the Mukarnas to a void instead of a solid (fig. 59) and, of course, the use of the spiral forms (fig. 60) are all examples of such developments.

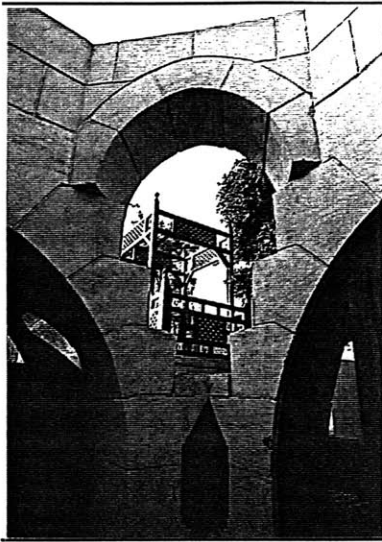


(fig. 57)
The Park
with the
near by
mon-
uments.



(fig. 58)
Half a
dome in
the
Chidren's
Park,
Cairo,
Egypt, by
Halim.

It is evident from the above that Halim's attitude starts from the bottom and works upwards. This, however, does not mean a belief in *popular* architecture. On the contrary, as I have tried to show, he strongly believes in the important role of the architect to direct the public towards a better environment, but he attempts to achieve this while not distancing himself from that public. By dissolving the existing barriers of class conflict and the feeling of elite superiority and popular inferiority that exists in-between the architect and the public, he tries to narrow the gap between his professional standards and



(fig. 59)
A void in
place of the
traditional
solid
squinch.



(fig. 60)
The near
by spiral
minaret of
the mosque
of Ibn
Toulon.

ideals on one hand, and their visions and aspirations on the other. Bakri, on the other hand, has a totally opposite attitude when dealing with the public; describing his responsibility towards this same public he says:²⁰ "We [the architects] refuse to be categorized by history, as we sometimes categorize and limit ourselves, as being the production or a manifestation of a pragmatic and utilitarian age, giving up everything for

the sake of materialistic benefit. We, the carriers of the virus of art in this age, will continue to debate, circumvent and create forms, consciously at sometimes and unconsciously at others. It is not for us to decide to stop, for we are the pulse of mankind, trying to push the society to overcome its brutish instincts so it can elevate towards progress. We then promise the people a new society with humanistic values that were woven by their struggle between mere existence and identity, between need and expression and between individualism and communality. If they ever neglect either of these sides their whole existence is disturbed. We her call upon the architect: Do not let the superiority of science in our present age frustrate your artistic energy and transform you to only a mason, thereafter our architecture and civilization will be set to withdraw" The feeling of Superiority or elitism is, I think, clearly evident.

This major difference between the two architects can, I think, be linked to the backgrounds of each. As was shown previously, Halim's origins are rooted in the larger segment of the society that was seen to be inferior in many ways by the elite classes in Egypt for many years. Therefore, I think, Halim attempts to negate this view by giving these poor communities a stronger voice in the development process of their environment while at the same time not giving up his upper hand as a professional architect that is providing architectural services to his society as a whole. In Bakri's case, however, he considers himself as a member of that elite class in Egypt who have the responsibility to lead and educate the rest of the society. This idea is further strengthened by the fact that he did not encounter any of the ways and values of the majority of the Egyptian society at that time, i.e., the peasants, until his university years. At this point, all the traditional values and systems of these

²⁰Bakri, Gamal, "Architecture... Design... Forms," *Al-Benna'a*, V. no. 57, Jan. 1991, pp. 58 - 62.

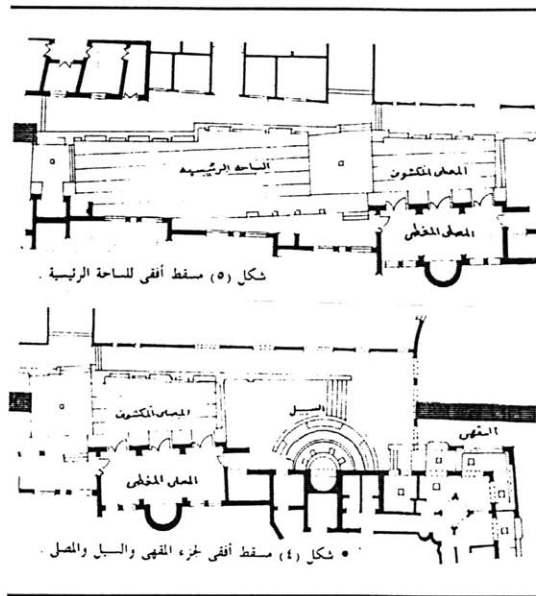
peasants were completely new to him. As a result, this sense of superiority can still be traced in his writings as was shown above.

The previous responsibility that I have just commented on can be described as the Cultural responsibility of the architect towards his society as a whole. However, on another occasion, when speaking about the architectural profession, Bakri acknowledges the existing dichotomy that Egypt is experiencing between the requirements of the market, that are mainly quantitative and the requirements of the experts and the professionals that are, in contrast, mainly qualitative.²¹ He states that the responsibility of the architect as an *Architect* is to "spread the general knowledge of architecture and raise the level of architectural education, awareness and appreciation of the general public"²² so as to bridge the gap between both.

Halim, on the other hand, has a broader view of his responsibilities both culturally and professionally. In his projects, he tries to engage himself in different issues other than the purely architectural. For example, in the case of his Cultural Park, he involves himself with the government to cancel decisions to pull down the neighboring buildings. In another instance, he proposes to change the program to accommodate newly suggested items that are needed, in his view, to further enhance the development of the surrounding community. From these efforts, we can confidently assume that he believes that doing architecture alone can not change and improve peoples lives and that the

²¹Bakri, Gamal, an un-published and un-titled book, pp. 58.

²²"The Exhibition of 'Architectural Tradition within Modern Architecture'," *A'alam Al-Benna'a*, V. no. 92, pp. 20 - 23 & 30.



(fig. 61) Partial plans of Abu El-Dahab pedestrian street and the facilities provided on it.

architect's role has to expand to include other responsibilities if he is to have an affective role in the development of his society.

His view of the architect as a multi-disciplinary professional that has to deal with many aspects of the problems of the society can be clearly noted in his involvement in legal and institutional aspects of the society that his projects serve. A perfect example of this involvement is his efforts to convert Abu El-Dahab street to a pedestrian street (fig. 61) and canceling the expropriation laws of the building looking upon it. Describing these efforts Akbar says:²³ "... by the inclusion of the street into the domain of the project, another level of complexity has been introduced to the process. Street utilities, infrastructure of the city, and zoning ordinances had to be dealt with. Extensive effort was necessary to co-

²³Akbar, Jamel, "Cultural Park for Children, Cairo, Egypt," 1992 Technical Review Summary for AKAA, pp. 10.

ordinate between the many agencies of the city, and sometimes, on a national scale."

Another responsibility that Halim puts upon the architect is the redefinition of the organizational systems and tools that are presently used by members of the profession. His attempt to reorganize the relation between him -- the architect, the contractor, the technician and the craftsmen in the building process of the Cultural Park that was previously discussed is a good example of how he suggests to change the systems that regulate the profession. With respect to the tools used, his invention of a new system for the construction drawings for the same park that are based on a proportional system rather than a dimensional system, in order for the craftsmen to be able to execute his design and integrate it with the existing element of the site is a perfect example of how he thinks that architects should utilize any tool old or new to realize their designs as long as they are appropriate to the circumstances.²⁴

Engaging the surrounding community in the development and construction of this Park and changing its brief to respond to their needs has helped a great deal in reviving a sense of collective community and self-empowerment. As a result of Halim's success to cancel the 1949 expropriation law of the buildings on Abu Al-Dahab street for the sake of widening the street for traffic needs, the inhabitants of these buildings felt that the ownership of their homes has been actually restored to

²⁴Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "The Development of Popular Quarters in Urban Centers; The Park of *El-Houd El-Marsoud-Ahmed Ibn-Toloun- El-Sayeda Zenab*," *A'alam El-Benna'a*, V. no. 102, pp. 24.



(fig. 62) The Park with the adjacent buildings renovated by the efforts of the owners and residents.

them and thus began renovating the buildings (fig. 62).

On another occasion, after the opening of Abu Al-Dahab street as a pedestrian street beside the park, the issue of who will be responsible for the maintenance of that street arose; it was not a part of the actual Park and thus the ministry of culture was not responsible. At the same time, it is no longer considered a street, therefore the ministry of transportation is not responsible. It became no-man's land. With the fear of the deterioration of their new building, the community stepped in to resolve the problem. An elected committee from the community formed a board that would be responsible for the street if they can have some financial aid and went to the governorate of Cairo and presented the idea. It was immediately accepted and even encouraged as a model for other streets.²⁵

As we can see, while Bakri can be considered as a perfect example of the architect as a 'provider,' Halim takes this role further to the middle grounds of the architect as a 'provider' and at the

²⁵Akbar, Jamel, "Cultural Park for Children, Cairo, Egypt," 1992 Technical Review Summary for AKAA, pp. 10.

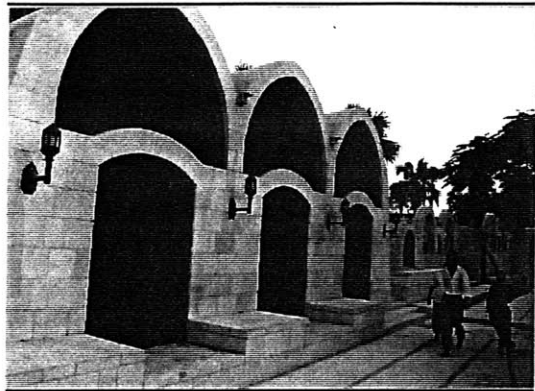
same time an 'enabler.'²⁶ Nevertheless, the enabler in Halim does not go to the extent of only giving people the tools to build and do architecture themselves; on the contrary, Halim still 'provides' the architecture but at the same time he tries to raise the political power of the poor users while raising their self-consciousness in the process.

We should not think that Halim was successful in all the efforts he made. To this day the Park stands uncompleted for financial reasons; due to the enlargement of the program by the introduction of the facilities on Abu El-Dahab street to the project the original amount of money assigned to the project has been spent on building the surrounding walls, Abu El-Dahab street community facilities, the library and the fountain in addition to the works of landscape and gardening. However, the museum has not been built and a temporary and very simple theater that was designed by another architect replaced the original one (fig. 63). Additionally, some spaces, such as the mosque and the café, have not yet been activated because of coordination problems between government agencies (fig. 64).

As a direct consequence of these different attitudes, we can note great differences in the way each architect gives presence to his designs. Bakri's buildings, on one hand, achieve their presence by either their masses as can be seen in the articulation of entrance corner of his residential building in Nasr



(fig. 63) The temporary Theater.

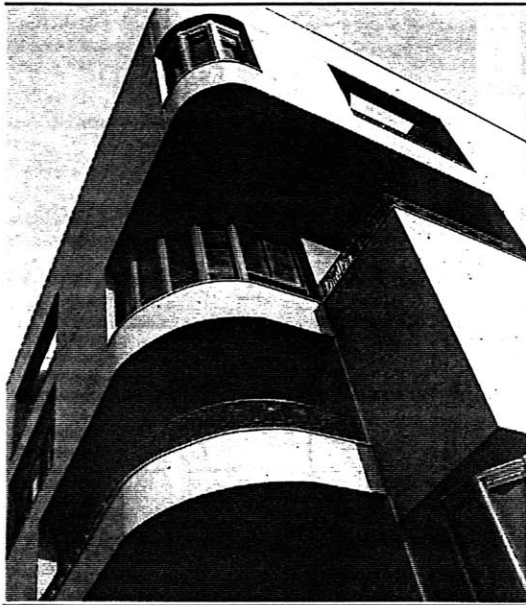


(fig. 64) Facilities on Abu El-Dahab St. not yet opened to public use.

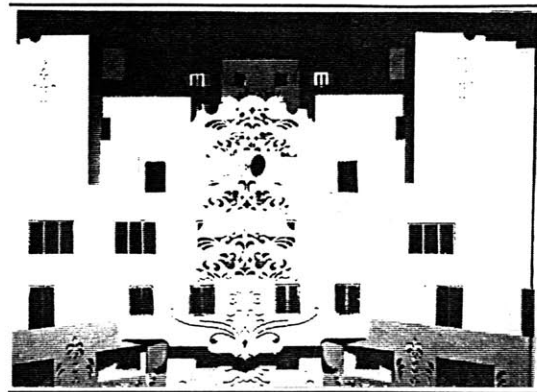
City (fig. 65) and in his design for the headquarters of the engineering syndicate in Alexandria as on solid mass with a narrow strip opened to the inside (fig. 66), or their facades as can be seen in the Baharah residents in Dokki, Giza where he uses a large *Mashrabiya* on most of the main facade (fig. 67) and the lace-like concrete work in the facade of a commercial and residential complex in Alexandria (fig. 68), or finally, their materials as can be seen in the use of exposed steel trusses in his scheme for an office building in Cairo (fig. 69) and again in his wooden *Mashrabiya* in the facade of the Baharah residents previously shown.

Halim, on the other hand, does not depend on that alone. It can be said that

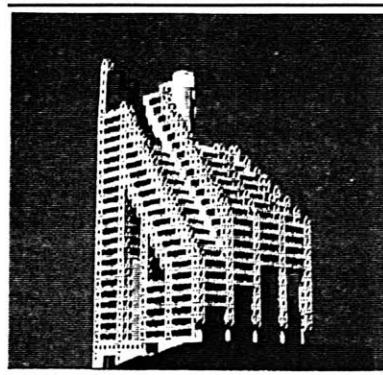
²⁶Tochtermann, Wolf, "Training Architects: Some Comments," in "Architecture Education in the Islamic World," Proceedings of seminar Ten in the series: Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World, held in Granada, Spain, April 21 - 25, 1986, Concept Media Pte LTD Singapore 1986, pp. 177.



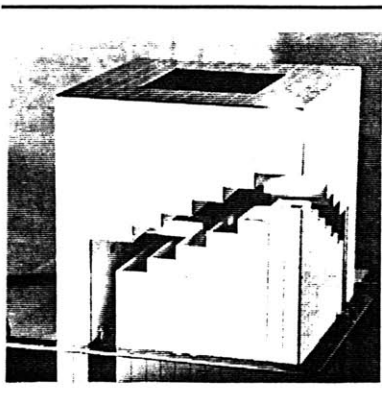
(fig. 65) Corner of a residential building, Nasr City, by Bakri.



(fig. 68) Residential building, Louran, Alexandria, Egypt, by Bakri.



(fig. 69) Office / Commercial building, by Bakri.



(fig. 66) Model of Bakri's entry in the competition for the headquarters of the Engineering Syndicate in Alexandria



(fig. 67) Facade of El-Baharah Residents, Cairo, Egypt.



(fig. 70) General view of the Park within its setting.

if Halim had depended on the masses and the materials of the Park for instance (fig. 70), then probably it would have been rejected by the surrounding community -- as is shown in Mr. Al Gabarty's story. Instead, Halim

depended on both the forms and community involvement and building ceremonies to achieve the required presence.

At the same time, they both believe in architecture as both a mirror of the



(fig. 71) View of the Park. Building or Garden?

cultural context and as an influential factor in the formation of that culture. In other words, they tread on the middle grounds between 'Architecture as an instrument of culture'²⁷ that embodies signs and symptoms of cultural value, and 'Architecture as an autonomous profession'²⁸ that uses *Geometry, pattern* and *form* to act upon, or at least influence, that culture.

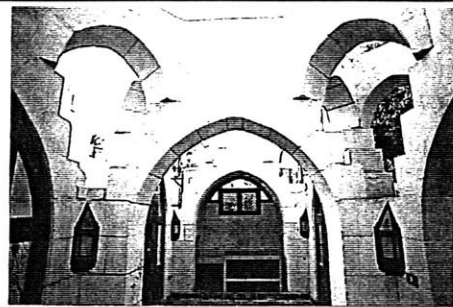
In many ways, Halim's architecture is ambiguous and thus provides settings that allow different activities and ways of experiencing the spaces. For instance, with respect to his Cultural Park; Are you in a building or a park (fig. 71)? Are you in the library when you are on the outside staircase and roof of its building, or are you outside it (fig. 72)? With respect to some of the uncovered spaces

²⁷Advocates of this position emphasize the cultural nature of architecture. They believe that culture is the main operating factor in the production of any piece of architecture and, thus, the architectural product always embodies all cultural values surrounding the production process.

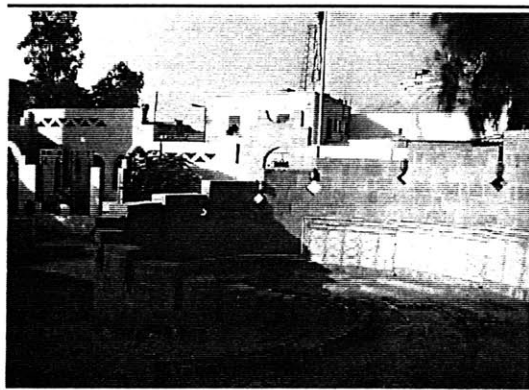
²⁸This position comes from the absolute belief in the subjectivity of any historical or cultural investigation. Consequently, people advocating this position take refuge in the study of form as the only *true* dimension of the architectural object.



(fig. 72) Roof level of the library building. In the building or out?



(fig. 73) Uncovered spaces. Room or courtyard?



(fig. 74) Spiral fountain or space?

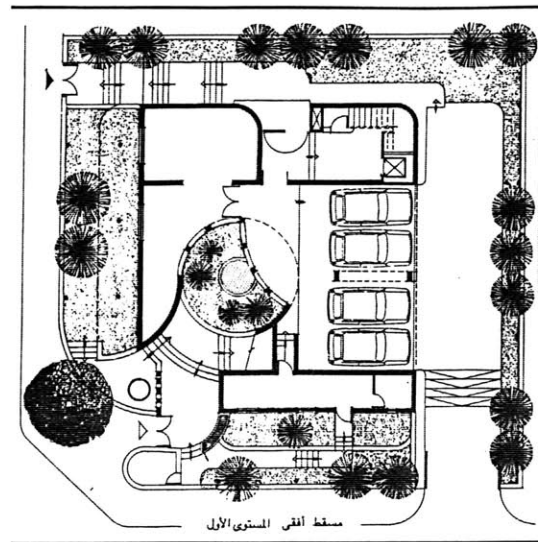
of the library and theater (fig. 73), are you in a room or a kind of courtyard? Is this piece of architecture a part of the past or is it apart of the future? And when you are in the fountain space (fig. 74); are you then, actually inside the fountain or within a space? This

ambiguity was referred to in the 1992 Aga Khan Award for Architecture jury's citation as follows: "[The park is] an environment which engages curiosity, fantasy and play."²⁹

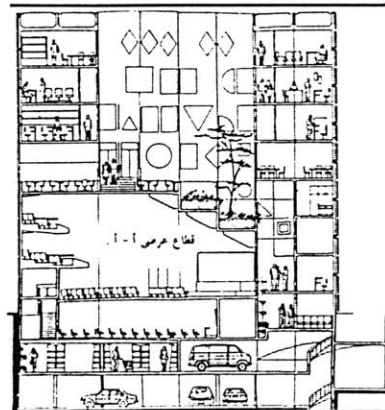
However, this ambiguity is not carried over to the significance of the architectural elements or features that he uses; they are culturally loaded and specially designed as cultural symbols in order to be able to convey a specific cultural messages that the architect intends. Thus, there is no ambiguity in his use of stone as the main building material or in his use of arches and domes as a structural system, even in his use of the spiral, it is an obvious message to relate to the adjacent minaret of Ibn Toulon (fig. 60).

Bakri's architecture, too, is culturally loaded; by using various traditional elements like the *Mashrabias* of the Baharah residents, or organizational patterns and traditional references as when he used the idea of the courtyard in his Nasr City residential building (fig. 75) or as when he completely implements the concept of introvertness in his design for the headquarters of the Syndicate of engineers (fig. 76) in Alexandria, Egypt, even if he attempts to up-date these patterns and elements and integrate them with modern technologies, the building or the design always has a cultural dimension added to it and by that it culturally addresses the viewer on a certain level.

In engaging in such levels of cultural communication through their architecture both architects are still highly influenced by structuralism



(fig. 75) Ground floor plan of a residential building in Nasr city, by Bakri.



(fig. 76) Section of the headquarters of the syndicate of Engineers, Alexandria, Egypt, by Bakri.

theories that helped architects to formulate architectural theories that relate to linguistics and by that giving it the ability to transfer *meanings*.³⁰ Bakri, for instance, states that "Architecture is an art form that speaks to the people through a language,"³¹ and then goes on to describe the mechanisms of language comparing it and relating it to the logical and organizational system of

²⁹"Architecture for a Changing World," Edited by James Steele, The Aga Khan Award for Architecture and Academy Editions, Great Britain, 1992.

³⁰Colquhoun, A., "Postmodernism and Structuralism, a Retrospective Glance," *Assemblage* 5 (Feb. 1988), pp. 7 - 16.

³¹Bakri, Gamal, an un-published and un-titled book, pp. 36.

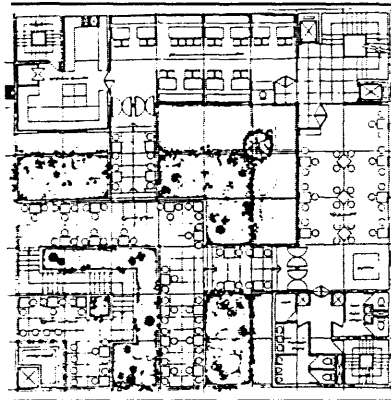
architecture in an attempt to prove the complete correspondence of architecture to this language system. On the other hand, Halim's close relation over the years with Christopher Alexander and his theory of the "Pattern Language" is enough to show how Halim is associated with such theories.³²

Structuralism theories of the 1960s and 1970s have produced the architectural postmodern movement that attempted to relate buildings to its locale through the use of traditional elements from every specific region. This idea was based on the belief that every culture, and thus every region or community, has a specific operating sign system that is only completely understood by the members of that community. This movement contributed in the strengthening of a regional view of architecture. This regional view is, I think, the one that both Halim and Bakri adopt.

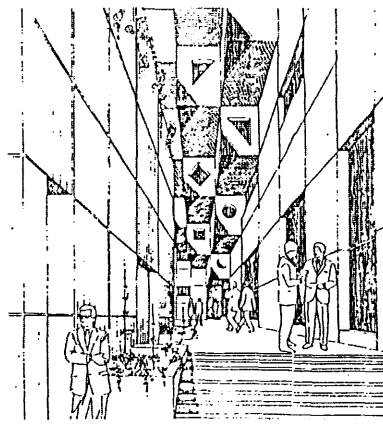
Bakri does not fall into the pit of conceiving the whole West as one, as many others do. Instead, he recognizes the differences between its different parts. He states that "while distances are continuously decreasing between the different parts of the world due to the information and technological revolution, we can still differentiate between American, English and Japanese architecture. This is the result of their different roots, environments and their level of advancement."³³ In many ways, this recognition supports his belief in the 'Regionalism of architecture' in the sense that an architect has to integrate the qualities of

³²Besides having Christopher Alexander as his Ph.D. advisor he has also worked closely with him in the Center for Environmental Structure in Berkeley, California.

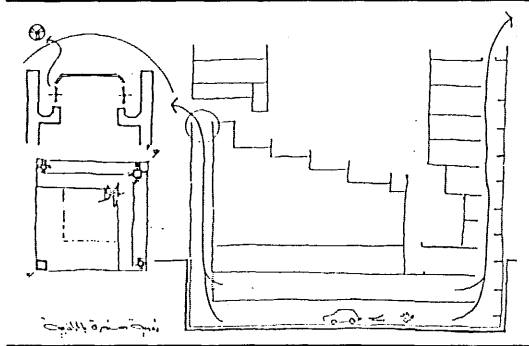
³³Bakri, Gamal, an un-published and un-titled book, pp. 101.



(fig. 77) Plan of the seventh floor of the headquarters of the syndicate of Engineers, Alexandria by Bakri.

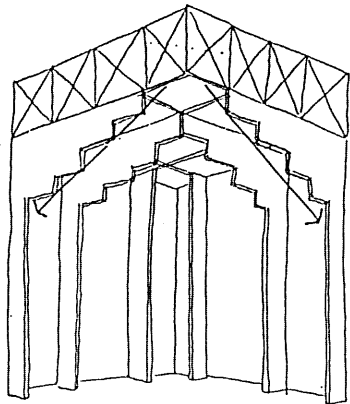


(fig. 78) Interior of the headquarters of the syndicate of engineers, Alexandria by Bakri.



(fig. 79) Air circulation system in the headquarters of the syndicate of engineers, Alexandria, by Bakri.

his *place* with the spirit of his *Time*. This belief I think comes through his design for the headquarters of the Syndicate of engineers where he acknowledges the place by addressing the psychological aspects of the community and the ecological aspects of the environment by



(fig. 80)
Cantilever
structure of
the
headquarte
rs of the
syndicate
of
engineers,
Alexandria
by Bakri.

using the idea of introvertness, the simplicity of the exterior and the complexity and vitality of the interior, the use of the courtyard and its benefits of air circulation (fig. 77, 78, 79). With regard to time, he attempts to acknowledge it by the use of modern construction techniques that permit him to achieve such large cantilevers (fig. 80) and at the same time designing a form that could act as a symbol of the engineering profession and its abilities. Halim, too, clearly advocates the adoption of a *Regional* view of architecture as opposed to the universal claims of the modern movement. Besides teaching a graduate course entitled "Between Regionalism and Universality" that focuses on the study of the distinct characteristics of the different regions of the country,³⁴ he adopts this attitude in most of his work. A perfect example of this attitude is the way he handled the Farafra Oasis project; before he started the actual design he conducted a very elaborate study of the desert region in general and

³⁴I myself took this course with Halim in 1991. I worked within a team of three students on the study of the regional character of El-Kharga and El-Dakhla Oasis and the impact of modern urban and architectural concepts and systems on their urban environments.

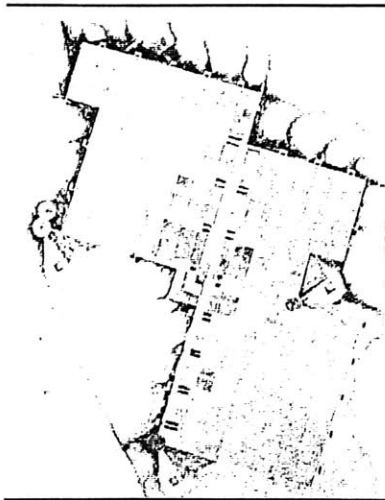
the Farafra Oasis in particular and came up with the idea of the "Oasis as a concept for Development." He describes his findings as follows:³⁵

"The form of the northern settlement and the southern one follows certain fundamental laws which governed the formation and life of the oasis. First of all, we learned that water circumscribes and defines life in the desert. The flow of water from wells determine the organization of the community. Secondly, we learned that the balance between irrigation and drainage lies at the heart of sedentarised life in the desert. Thirdly, we came to realize that an oasis takes the shape of a boat floating against the wind; in other words, its shape resists the forces of desertation: wind and the movement of sand.

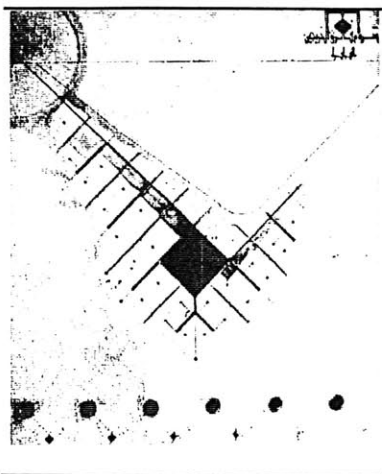
The pattern of the settlement, or oasis, as a whole is determined by the above three realizations. Villages are shaped by the same forces which shape the overall pattern."

In this project, we see Halim basing his whole design on the specific systems and characteristics of the region. He responds to the main problems of the settlements, i.e., desertation by using local plants with a certain organization that corresponds to the natural patterns of the oasis (fig. 81). Similarly, on the smaller scale of the village, he bases his design on the idea of the importance of water and the strong relation between the inhabitants and the well. The village is organized around an axis that links the village to the well (fig. 82). This axis is actually a wall/aqueduct that

³⁵Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "Farafra Oasis Project, Egypt," *Mimar*, V. no. 8, April - June 1983, pp. 34 - 6.



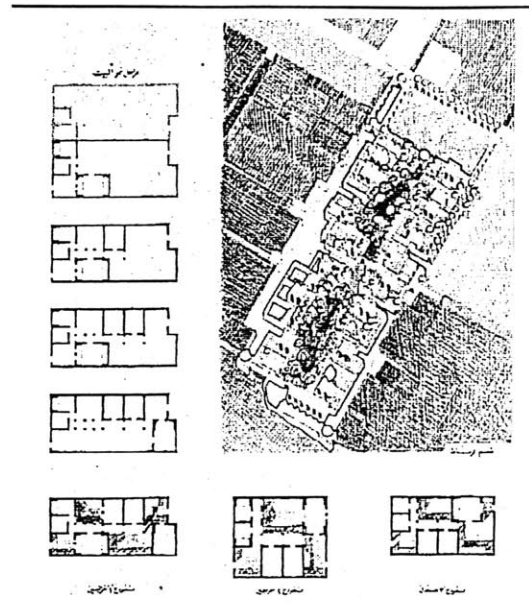
(fig. 81)
General
Layout of
the
settlement
for
university
graduates
in Farafra
oasis, by
Halim.



(fig. 82)
The Rabat
or the
housing
cluster and
its relation
to the
water well,
Farafra
oasis
settlement
for
university
graduates,
by Halim.

transports water to the houses. The elevated water guarantees that any leakage will be spotted immediately since the soil swells to a great extent if the water is absorbed by it which can cause many problems to the mud brick houses (fig. 83).

Of course, many other factors contribute to the formation of these two architects. I will only mention at this point a few that I feel to be the most influential: In my view, there are three main forces that helped formulate Halim the architect, two of which are architectural and one non-architectural. The non-architectural on the first hand is his



(fig. 83) Stages of the house plan and its expandability with time, Farafra oasis, university graduates' settlement, by Halim.

social, political and cultural background that were previously discussed. From them came his social conviction. The architectural, on the second hand, are two very important architects, i.e., Christopher Alexander -- from whom came the idea of the separation between the production process and the culture of the society³⁶ -- and Hassan Fathy, how was the main reason for his return to Egypt, as he himself notes,³⁷ and from whom the idea of user participation and the interest in the inherited building techniques and the locality of Egypt arose. These three forces represent his present circumstances (context), his inherited traditions (Fathy) and the Western culture (Alexander). However, we can

³⁶Refer to Christopher Alexander's "Perspectives: Manifesto 1991," Progressive Architecture, July, 1991, pp. 108 - 112.

Halim has expressed his great admiration for this manifesto on different occasions.

³⁷"Architecture for society," Seminar, Al-Benna'a, V. no. 64, March 1992, pp. 56.

see that even when he is influenced by a Western idea or position, it is an idea of opposition to the current major trends, not of compliance to them.³⁸

Hassan Fathy is, I think, a mutual factor in the cases of both architects. Bakri, when asked about the two most important architects in Modern Egypt he mentions two key figures: Ali Labib Gabr, as the modernist Egyptian pioneer, and Hassan Fathy, as the regionalist or local crusader. On the international level, I think he is very much influenced by Louis Khan. If we keep in mind the way Bakri describes his design process or strategy discussed previously and then compare it to Khan's view when he says that:³⁹

"A young architect came to ask a question. 'I dream of spaces full of wonder. Spaces that rise and envelop flowingly without beginning, without end, of a jointless material white and gold.' 'When I place the first line on a paper to capture the dream, the dream becomes less.'

This is a good question. I once learned that a good question is greater than the most brilliant answer.

This is a question of the unmeasurable. Nature, physical nature, is measurable.

Feeling and dream has no measure, has no language, and everyone's dream is singular.

Everything that is made however obeys the laws of nature. The man is always greater than his works

³⁸For more information on Alexander's opposing position refer to Alexander's "Perspectives: Manifesto 1991," *Progressive Architecture*, July, 1991, pp. 108 - 112.

³⁹Kahn, K., "Two Statements by Louis Kahn," in V. Scully's *Louis I. Kahn*, New York, 1962, pp. 114.

because he can never fully express his aspirations. For to express oneself in music or architecture is by the measurable means of composition or design. The first line on paper is already a measure of what cannot be expressed fully. The first line on paper is less.

'Then,' said the young architect, 'what should be the discipline, what should be the ritual that brings one closer to the psyche. For in this aura of no material and no language, I feel man truly is.'

Turn to Feeling and away from Thought. In Feeling is the psyche. Thought is Feeling and presence of order. Order, the maker of all existence, has No Existence Will. I choose the word Order instead of knowledge because personal knowledge is too little to express Thought abstractly. This Will is in the Psyche.

All that we desire to create has its beginning in feeling alone. This is true for the scientist. It is true for the artist. But I warned that to remain in Feeling away from Thought means to make nothing."

We can note the striking resemblance between the two.⁴⁰

East versus West:

The main cultural issue that dominated the Egyptian intellectual scene, starting from the beginning of the 19th century and until this day, is our relation to the West as the privileged *other* and to what extent does the nature of this relation define and configure our attitudes towards the West itself, and everything that comes from it, as well as

⁴⁰Bakri has expressed his great admiration for Khan on different occasions.

our attitudes towards ourselves, and everything we already have. Both Bakri and Halim, as members of that intellectual scene did not, and could not, disregard this dilemma. They recognize that in order for anyone to deal with any cultural act in Egypt, he can not avoid formulating his personal point of view concerning this issue.

Both architects view the relation between Egypt and the West as based on a Center - Periphery power relation. They also refer to the nature of this relation when describing the nature of the problems of the Egyptian society. With respect to the four systems that Bakri cites, and that influence the urban environment, he differentiates between societies that are in the center and that are in the peripheries of today's dominant civilization, i.e., the Western civilization. He believes that people in the center do not experience any conflicts between the four systems while people in the periphery are continuously faced with such conflicts. This results in the deformation of their urban environment, where the 'natural' becomes a feeling of disregard, the 'produced' becomes exportation, the 'cultural' becomes a battle field and the 'media' becomes mere noise. In Halim's case, as we have seen from the brief review of his ideas and attitudes, he directly relates the problems of Egypt to the un-balanced relations with the advanced West.

To this end, Halim and Bakri, among most of the intellectuals of Egypt, emphasize the necessity to study all aspects of the Western culture. But, again, we can see a great difference in the underlying attitude that directs this study; Bakri, on one hand, thinks that it is essential for the Egyptian society to seek and understand the achievements of the Western culture, both ideologically and scientifically, so we can benefit from it and take it as an

aspiration in our attempt to solve our own problems.⁴¹

Halim, on the other hand, advocates the deep study of Western culture in general and architectural theories in particular so that this study might make the Egyptian architects realize the strengths and weaknesses of these theories, that they were formulated to address certain contexts that are specific to the West and that they have their own internal deficiencies. May be then, he hopes, they will realize the necessity to develop their own theories that address their specific context.⁴²

The difference between the two attitudes are a perfect example of the general dilemma facing the Egyptian society of 'how to deal with what the West has to offer.' The Egyptian society is torn between the seducing glamour of the advancements of the West and the feeling of being forced to adopt everything that comes from it without having a choice. This dilemma can be noted in many statements by a large number of Egyptian intellectuals. As an illustration, I will quote briefly two persons addressing the same issue: Mr. Mahmoud Ameen El-A'alem and Mrs. Ne'amat Ahmed Foa'ad. Mr. El-A'alem states that "privacy and identity do not mean separation or confinement. Instead, it is a project opened towards the future. It can not, and should not, be enforced on any one from either the top or the outside."⁴³ Similarly, Mrs. Foa'ad

⁴¹Bakri, Gamal, "The Paradox of Tradition and Contemporariness," in "A Dialogue on Contemporary Egyptian Architecture," A'alam Al-Benna'a, V. no. 123, pp. 8 - 13.

⁴²Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "Architectural Crisis In Egypt." A'alam El-Benna'a, V. no. 73, pp. 11.

⁴³El-A'alem, Mahmoud Ameen, El-Hellal Seminar review, "Towards a New One Hundred Years of Enlightenment and

states that "to reserve our cultural identity does not mean the refusal of all that is Western; what we seek is the right of choice, not to be overwhelmed."⁴⁴

The difference between the two architects' attitudes, I think, is a direct result of the difference in their view of the nature of the current power struggle between the different active groups on the cultural, political and economical scene of today's world. Bakri believes that the current struggle in the world is one over technology and not over ideologies as before.⁴⁵ Halim, judging from his various writings and theories, does not agree. On the contrary, he feels that technology is a result of, or a part of, a whole system that has ideology as its driving force. This is true, in his view, to both the East and the West.

This major difference between Halim and Bakri has a great impact on the general orientation of both. In Bakri's case, if the struggle is technological and technology is a product of the different societies contributions during different times and thus it can be considered that the center of radiation has only shifted to the West then it is perfectly acceptable to seek the latest of this technology from today's center, i.e., the West.⁴⁶ Therefore, Bakri is very much Western oriented. Halim, on the other

hand, is oriented to the local region and the local society, its circumstances, its resources and its methods. Because of his view of technology as a part of a whole ideological framework he does not see the adoption of Western technology as appropriate for the Egyptian context. To benefit from it is perfectly acceptable but total adoption of it *as is* just because it is the latest advancement might prove to be fatal.⁴⁷ He cites the difference between the economical status of the West -- as the source of the imported model -- and Egypt and refers to this difference to further prove that it is not conceivable to implement the imported technologies and systems exactly as they are; he says that "there exists many problems in the developed world. However, their economical status helps them in overcoming many of them."⁴⁸

On a similar bases, Bakri believes in the universality of the present dominating Western civilization. From this point of view, he rejects the idea that the present Western culture is an innovation to our beliefs and ideologies.⁴⁹ On the contrary, it can be seen, in his view, as a mere continuation and development of it. In my point of view, he fails here to differentiate between scientific and technological advancements that, indeed can not be rejected on such grounds, and ideological beliefs and value systems that no one can claim the total and unquestionable rightness or wrongness of them and no one has the

Modernization," Al-Mosawer 3547, Sep. 25th 1992, pp. 72.

⁴⁴Ne'amat Ahmed Foa'ad in El-Hellal Seminar review, "Towards a New One Hundred Years of Enlightenment and Modernization," Al-Mosawer 3547, Sep. 25th 1992, pp. 73.

⁴⁵Bakri, Gamal, an un-published and untitled book, pp. 63.

⁴⁶Bakri, Gamal, "The Paradox of Tradition and Contemporariness," in "A Dialogue on Contemporary Egyptian Architecture," A'alam Al-Benna'a, V. no. 123, pp. 8.

⁴⁷Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim in "The Expanding Metropolis: Coping with the Urban Growth of Cairo," Singapore, Concept Media LTD, 1985, pp. 23.

⁴⁸"Architecture for society," Seminar, Al-Benna'a, V. no. 64, March 1992, pp. 55.

⁴⁹Bakri, Gamal, "The Paradox of Tradition and Contemporariness," in "A Dialogue on Contemporary Egyptian Architecture," A'alam Al-Benna'a, V. no. 123, pp. 8.

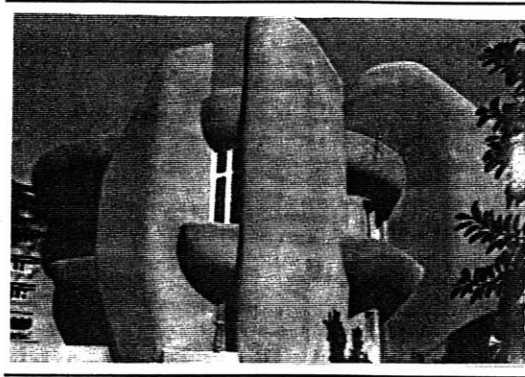
right to impose them on any other person or society. These beliefs and value systems fall under a category that has, as a pre-requisite, the very personal and individual belief as a basic condition for abiding by their rules. If these ideologies are imposed on a certain individual or a certain society, they will inevitably have a very negative and opposite affect than the one required.

On another occasion he states that "when ever two cultures meet, one vigorous -- like the Western culture -- and one submissive -- as the Eastern cultures in general, then, what happens is either absorption or dissolution; either acceptance or refusal."⁵⁰ In this view, he rules out the chance of any interaction or any interplay that results in the change of both cultures without either of them loosing their belief and value systems. Thus, we can see how this view has an underlying Western oriented attitude.

Furthermore, Bakri strongly criticizes the attitudes of the intellectuals of Egypt as being too romantic towards their history and inherited traditions. He states that "the word "intellectual" to us is equivalent to a person that, besides what he has inherited and obtained from his culture, has increased his knowledge from the Western culture with its scientific, artistic and technological dimensions. He might surround himself with all kinds of manifestations of this modern culture. Yet, with very few exceptions, what makes these intellectuals feel joy, delight or ecstasy, dates back, in the most optimistic sense, to the nineteenth century."⁵¹ This is true to a great extent.

⁵⁰Gamal Bakri, an un-published and un-titled book, pp. 29.

⁵¹Gamal Bakri, an un-published and un-titled book, pp. 19.



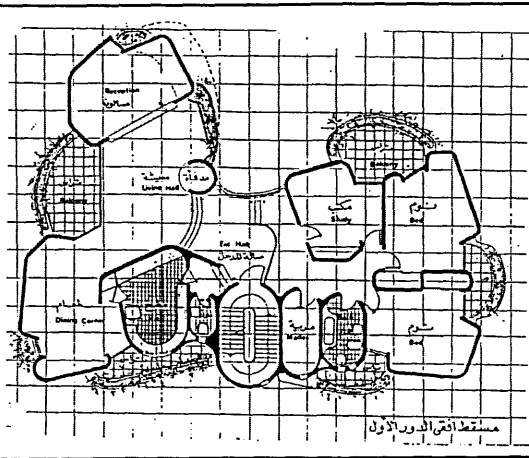
(fig. 84) Villa Badran, Giza, Egypt, by Bakri.

However, we can not blame the intellectuals for not enjoying the modern manifestations of the modern culture because, in most cases, it is imported and not emerging from their own culture. Instead, we can blame them for not succeeding in producing contemporary manifestations of their own culture and, in a sense, surrendering to the chains of that imported culture. Even if and when they do produce such a culture, they should always have the freedom to choose elements from either the old or the new. We should always understand that the emergence of a new culture, the manifestation of an existing culture or even new technologies does not mean that we are obliged to implement them in our lives. We always have a choice.

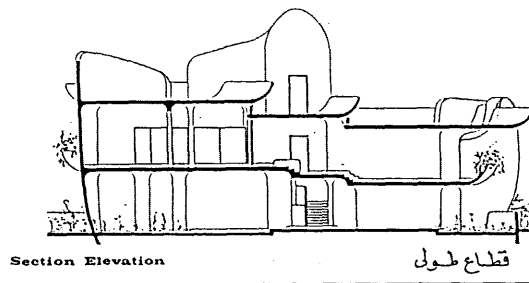
This Western oriented attitude of Bakri can be clearly noted in his description of the state of discontent and struggle he feels he is living through; he says:⁵² "All my meditations and experiences causes me many pains. I always feel that I am involved in the tune of *Hassabbalah* [a well-known popular tune in Egypt], while I long for Beethoven."

Also, he cites Villa Badran (fig. 84), 1968-69 as his first major design that

⁵²Gamal Bakri, an un-published and un-titled book, pp. 88.



(fig. 85) Ground floor plan of Villa Badran, Giza, Egypt, by Bakri.



(fig. 86) Section, Villa Badran, Giza, Egypt, by Bakri.

responded to the problems of architecture in Egypt. In his view, he intended it as a professional statement of opposition to the current architectural trends that were adopted by the practicing Egyptian architects of the time. He wanted this Villa to show these architects that all their professional architectural vocabularies are a mere distortion and a deformation of Western architecture and culture. He attempted to challenge these adopted imported trends by adopting, instead, a kind of mixture or a combination of the contemporary needs of his client and some of the vocabularies of the architecture of the Egyptian peasant in

the country-side.⁵³ By avoiding the use of angles and straight lines (fig. 85, 86) he attempted to achieve a certain level of resemblance to the intuitivity of the self-built houses of these peasants. He also wanted to use mud bricks as a construction material as a further tool for achieving this required resemblance but due to the unavailability of craftsmanship and resources he opted for the use of a concrete structure with a concrete exterior finish.⁵⁴ Yet, he fails to mention that he himself was influenced by Western theories when he designed this house; he had just come back from Holland at a time when the idea of designing curvilinear buildings as a way of reacting to, and blending in, nature was becoming very popular.

Contrary to this Belief in a universal civilization and to this orientation to the West, Halim completely rejects the idea and thus orients himself to the local region or the locality of the site of each project, trying to trace and understand its laws and systems as opposed to looking towards the West and adopting its latest methods and technologies, he states:⁵⁵ "... it seems to me that we will not necessarily find solutions to our problems by simply adopting a modern way of thinking [i.e., a Western way of thinking]. On the contrary, it is more important to identify a new mode of thinking which will not only get us out of our problems caused by the rupture [that took place in the Islamic cultures as a result of the impact of modernity] but, hopefully, solve the very problems of modernity itself." A perfect example of

⁵³From a personal interview with Bakri by architect Mai Fawzy in January 1994.

⁵⁴"Private Residents in Cairo," *A'alam Al-Benna'a*, V. no. 45, pp. 17 - 9.

⁵⁵Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim in "The Expanding Metropolis: Coping with the Urban Growth of Cairo," Singapore, Concept Media LTD, 1985, pp. 23.

this is his design for the Farafra Oasis Settlement previously discussed.

In this attitude, Halim is very much in compliance with a strong trend or attitude towards this issue of universality. Mr. Shaker, for example, states that "there is no such thing as a "universal culture" when there are people with different languages, beliefs, localities, etc. This is an idea that is spread and advocated to achieve and strengthen, or will result in, the control of an overwhelming culture, i.e., the Western culture, over other overwhelmed cultures."⁵⁶ Another idea that has, I think, the same underlying danger of strengthening the control of one culture over another is what Janet Abu-Lughod defines as "Disappearing Dichotomies: First World - Third World."⁵⁷ In my own opinion, one can not claim that the difference between developed countries and developing ones are disappearing because of the fact that "in every First World there exists a Third World, and in every Third World there exists a First World." This idea is based on the existence of a small segment of the Third World society that lives by the standards of the First World societies in developing countries and are connected to their economy, industry, etc. At the other end, there exists a small segment of the First World societies that are deprived of the benefits of the major systems of that society and are living in low standards similar to the standards of the majority of the Third World. Two main deficiencies exist within this

⁵⁶Shaker, Mahmoud Mohammed, "A Message on the Path to our Culture," Hellal book 442, *Dar El-Hellal*, Cairo, Egypt, Oct. 1987, pp. 112.

⁵⁷Abu-Lughod, J., "Disappearing Dichotomies: First World- Third World; Traditional- Modern," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, vol. III, no. 11, Spring 1992, pp. 7-12.

theory; First is the fact that you do not judge any state of existence on the bases of the status of a privileged few or a deprived few. And Second, is the relative relation between both societies with the declined power balance. It is not conceivable that two groups of people can be considered equal when one is actually producing everything that the other consumes. As Mr. A'ead points out, "if there exists any two partners are of different power and their interests are different then, if the weaker party is convinced by the views of the stronger this actually means its deceivment by the stronger other."⁵⁸

As a further manifestation of this regional or anti-universal view, Halim also believes in the necessity of viewing the problems and solutions of Egypt as a part of a whole context composed of the regions of the Arab world. He states that "it is necessary for us to recognize that we are a part of a whole cultural region, which is our Arab World. The truth of our creative existence is related to the fact that we are the natural result and manifestation of this region. The possibility of crystallizing a significant attitude resides in the establishment of strong connection and dialogue between the architects of this region through large-scale projects and intellectual meetings in the field of architecture."⁵⁹ This vision is reflected in his recent collaboration with the Jordanian architect, Rassem Badran.⁶⁰ If we

⁵⁸A'ead, Shoukri Mohammed, "The West and Us," Hellal book 477, *Dar El-Hellal*, Cairo, Egypt, Sep. 1990, pp. 25.

⁵⁹Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "A Dialogue on Contemporary Egyptian Architecture." *A'alam El-Benna'a*, V. no. 123, pp. 13.

⁶⁰In a personal meeting with Rassem Badran in November 1992 at MIT, I personally asked him about the reasons for his collaboration with Halim; he specifically referred to the fact that it is an attempt to

compared this collaboration with Bakri's collaboration with a German architectural office, we can clearly detect the difference in orientation and attitude.

Tradition versus Modernity:

An important cultural issue that is very much alive on the Egyptian scene today is the usefulness of the Western culture to our context, or in other words, what is the right approach to deal with this advanced and encroaching culture? Are we obliged, as was called for by many Egyptians and Westerners, to take the Western culture as an un-dividable whole that consists of both prevailing ideologies and advanced sciences and technologies, of both attitudes and organizational systems, in order for us to be able to achieve an acceptable standard in our ways and circumstances of living? Or, do we have to refuse the whole package to save our inherited beliefs and value systems from the complete desolation by this foreign imported culture, as is still called for by many so-called *fundamentalist* groups in the country?

Is there some kind of middle ground that we can stand upon without losing our *identity* and, at the same time, catch up with this great advancement that we see in the West, as many people call for and attempt in the present day? Or is there, even, a fourth choice that we can adopt that could compensate our situation and the unbalanced power scale of our relation with this dominant West?

Indeed, the first position was advocated by such highly intellectually respected

reconnect the broken, yet necessary, links between the Arab architects.

people as Arnold Toynbee from the West and Tahha Hussien from Egypt, among many others. Both of them wrote books on the nature of the relation between the East and the West advocating the impossibility of dividing the Western culture and the importance of adopting all its aspects as the only means of progress for the East.⁶¹ But as Edward Said points out,⁶² it is no where mentioned why this is the only way available to these societies to develop. Modernization, or better yet, Westernization should be seen as a mere alternative for such developments and that it has its negative and positive points. If it is seen as it is portrayed by Toynbee or Hussien, then the societies that do adopt the Western ways run the great risk of complete subordination to the source of their attitudes, knowledge and organizational systems, i.e., the West. This contradicting dilemma is best manifested by Toynbee himself in his same book when he states that there are, in fact, some aspects of the Western culture that he does not wish to be exported to the rest of the world for its destructive consequences such as Nationalist Ideologies.⁶³

The second attitude, I think, has been discredited since the fall of the Ottoman Empire in the face of the new Western culture.

The reconciling position that was advocated by both Egyptians and non-Egyptians alike, and that called for the integration of tradition with the

⁶¹Refer to Arnold Toynbee's book: "The World and The West," and Tahha Hussien's book: "The Future of Culture in Egypt."

⁶²Said, E., "Orientalism," Vintage Books edition, Oct. 1979, pp. 304.

⁶³Toynbee, Arnold, "The World and the West," translated to Arabic by N. Hager and S. Al-Gozi, Al-Maktab Al-Tugary press, Beirut, Lebanon, 1960, pp. 34.

imported culture, generally started by defining these two oppositions, i.e., tradition versus modernity, and then, attempted to develop a conciliating formula. Also, they all have one mutual embedded attitude towards the development of Third World societies; they rely on the idea that those societies, if given time and the right initial driving forces, can somehow catch up on the development process and eventually reach a satisfying state of modernity. Yet, in my point of view, advocates of these solutions forget or don't recognize two crucial points. First, the conditions that these societies live in are in no way comparable to the conditions of the western societies during their rise towards modernity. Developing societies in our time do not have the necessary resources to back up their uprises, or their development process. In addition, they are a part of an uneven two-sided relationship with the West that puts them under constant strong pressure, and of course this kind of relation did not exist in the age of western development. Second, they do not consider the possibility that, at some point, those societies themselves might choose not to take Western modernity as their ultimate goal.

Coming back to our two architects, we find them both recognizing that they have to deal with the two widely spread opposing positions on the Architectural Egyptian scene within the last two hundred years; between "traditionalistic tombstone polishing" and "compulsive progressive reflex". Furthermore, they both attempt to deal with the struggle of "radical adaptation of the methods of scientific discovery with neither the implications of a scientific determinism nor the advocacy of leaping on the latest bandwagon."⁶⁴

⁶⁴Anderson, S., "Architecture and Tradition that isn't Trad Dad," in The History, Theory

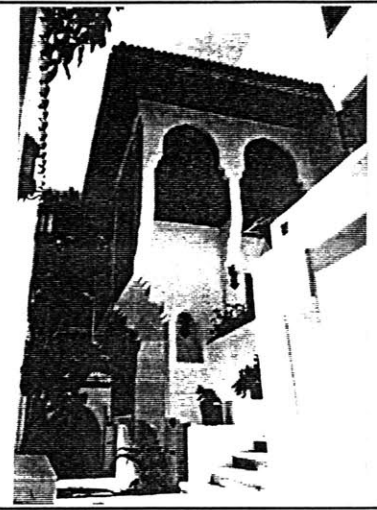
Tradition, as we all know, is not a simple issue that can be understood and handled reasonably so easily. Many have recognized this, and are trying to convey this complexity to the public; Dr. Ne'amatt Fou'ad explains that "to know our tradition is one issue, to study it is an issue, to analyze it and purify it is an issue, to be proud of it and use it as an inspiration is an issue, to benefit from it and take from it is an issue and to updated it without historicizing, subordinating or being cutoff from the rest of the world is another issue."⁶⁵ As we can see, the different positions of the Egyptian architects today relies heavily on the integration of some or all of these issues and on what level of sophistication they are working on when they are dealing with them.

Both architects see the necessity for developing tradition so as to suite the present age. But, again, we can note two different attitudes towards why and how to develop this tradition. Bakri, on one hand, has the tendency to justify and categorize the traditional elements and vocabularies as purely emotional and have nothing to do with appropriateness. This can be noted in many of his writings; for example, he states that "the reconciliation between reason and emotions [as a metaphor for the imported and the inherited, or the modern and the traditional] is the *laissez-passer* or the passing license or the social acceptance of any architectural work."⁶⁶ From the use of these

and Criticism of Architecture, M. Whiffen (ed.), Cambridge MA, 1965, pp. 71.

⁶⁵Ne'amatt Fou'ad in Abdel Baki Ibrahim's "a Historical View of Architecture in the Arabian East," Center of Architectural and Urban Planning Studies, Cairo, Egypt, 1986, pp. 47.

⁶⁶Bakri, Gamal, "Architecture... Design... Forms," Al-Benna'a, V. no. 57, Jan. 1991, pp. 58 - 62.



(fig. 87)
El-Baharah
residents,
by Bakri.

synonymous terms, we can note his underlying attitude towards tradition we have just discussed.

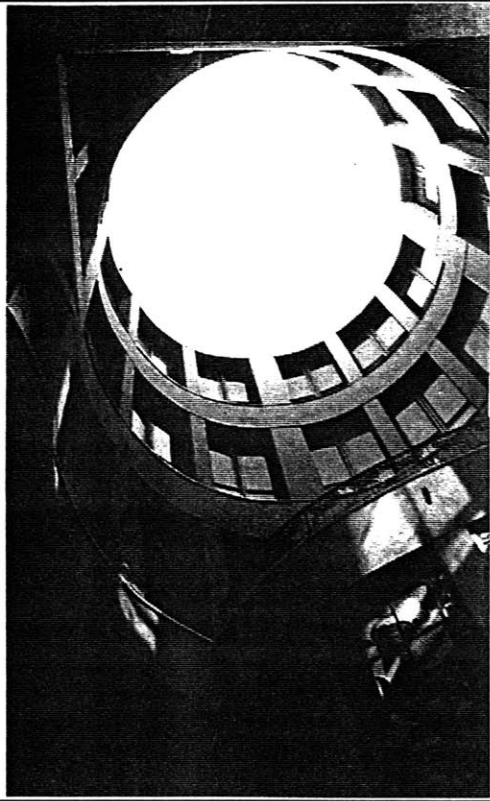
The Baharah residents (fig. 87), Mohandeseen, Cairo, can be seen as an additional practical example of this attitude. In this project the client, being from the Baharah sect that has Fatimide origins, specifically asked the architect to employ the traditional Fatimide style in his design. As Bakri believes that historical guidance does not mean the neglect of the time we are living in, he saw best to put together a team of specialists in the history of art and architecture of that period to try to develop that style so as to suite modern circumstances and needs.⁶⁷ Here, Bakri did not see any reason to refuse the idea of adopting a traditional style because the client, for emotional reasons, wanted that particular style. How much did the specialized team actually develop the traditional style that was employed in the actual building can be greatly disagreed upon. Nevertheless, the building is highly acknowledged by the client, the general public and the near by neighbors in particular.

⁶⁷The most prominent of these specialists were the artists Mostafa El-Razzaz and Mohi Eldeen Hussien.

In both of their approaches to design, Halim and Bakri take history as a means rather than an end in itself. Bakri uses history to achieve the required relation to tradition that he sees as important to achieve psychological and emotional satisfaction . This is his way of reconciliating the *inherited* and the *imported*. He takes form as the most essential element in historical architecture, totally neglecting the cultural, economical, political and social circumstances that have resulted in producing these historical architectural forms. He states that:⁶⁸ "historical eras have left us architectural towns and edifices of different shapes and formations, and we do not know which had fulfilled requirements best, and which was economically ideal. But the formation has lasted as an expression of urban and historical being in its singularity with respect to its time and place, and also as an expression of the inner feelings of the social intuition represented in its aesthetical sense, and reactions with environment and available time, and incarnating that in a building." Starting from this position, he attempts to come up with a "new Egyptian architectural vocabulary" by integrating Pharonic, Coptic, Arabic and contemporary vocabularies. Hence, for him, tradition is not challenged but taken for granted and updated. Modernization, therefore, is a method for this updating and postmodernism is a tool that provides continuity.

To illustrate how he incorporates forms in to his buildings I cite his design for a residential building in Nasr City, Cairo. In this project he tries to come up with a design that is not historicising and, at the same time, is not considered alien to its urban context. He, thus, picks up

⁶⁸Bakri, Gamal, "Architecture... Design... Forms," *Al-Benna'a*, V. no. 57, Jan. 1991, pp. 58 - 62.



(fig. 88) Courtyard, residential building, Nasr city, by Bakri.

and benefits from "the aesthetical and functional residential architectural experiences of Egypt from the different periods of Egyptian history and, then, expressing these experiences in a modern and abstract way that embodies the spirit of the age."⁶⁹ Some of these features that he employees are, courtyards (fig. 88), the variousness of the shapes and locations of the openings, the levelness of the wall surfaces, the feeling of heaviness and a strong relation to the ground and , finally, the simplicity of the outside and the richness of the inside (fig. 89).⁷⁰ As we can see, all, or most, of these features are on the level of architectural concepts.

⁶⁹"Residential Building in Nasr City," *A'alam Al-Benna'a*, V. no. 123, pp. 19 - 21.

⁷⁰"Residential Building in Nasr City," *A'alam Al-Benna'a*, V. no. 123, pp. 19 - 21.

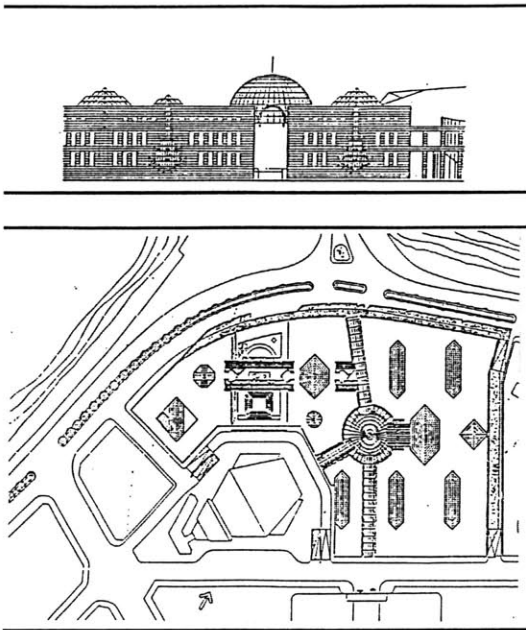


(fig. 89) Exterior view, residential building, Nasr city, by Bakri.

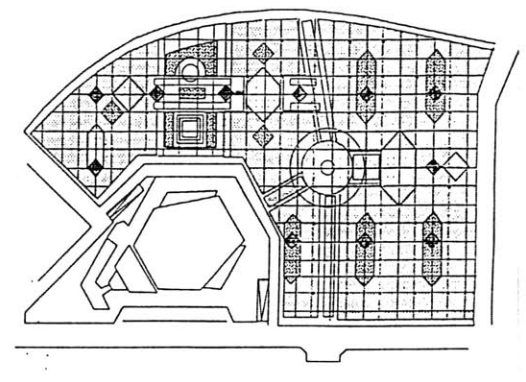
Nevertheless, they all concern aesthetics and the articulation of forms in the sense that they only deal with the organization of the elements and the relations between them. They do not address such issues as how these elements represent the culture of the society and thus how can the architect create new ways of expressing that culture instead of how he can reorganize the same features so as to suite the present days.

Another perfect example of this attitude is his entry in the new Alexandria Library. In the report that he handed in with his design he states that one of his objectives is "to form an architectural synthesis of Egypt's cultural heritage Pharonic, Greco-Roman, Coptic, Islamic and contemporary influences."⁷¹ He then cites six architectural features as common in the architecture of all the above periods in Egypt: continuity of walls, purity of forms, geometric spaces, arcades, inner courts and atriums. He then integrates these features with concepts of contemporary standardization and modulation of the structure system and circulation elements in addition to the use of

⁷¹Technical report presented with Bakri's scheme in the New Alexandria Library international Competition.

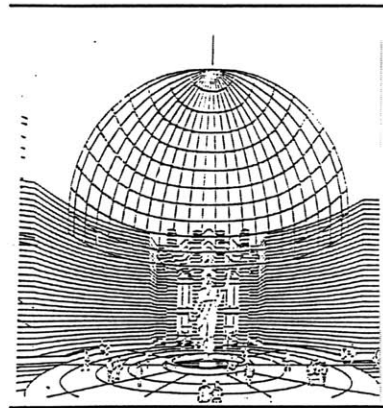


(fig. 90) Mass plan and partial Elevation, Bakri's entry for the international competition of Alexandria Library.

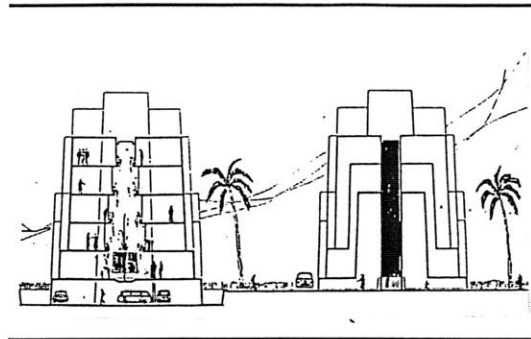


(fig. 91) Standardization and modulation of structure system and circulation elements in Bakri's entry in the competition for the Alexandria Library.

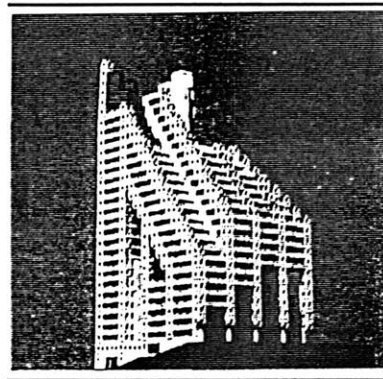
modern materials in the central glass dome to achieve the require ambiance (fig. 90, 91, 92). In this scheme, we can also see his emphasis on aesthetics and the articulation and organizational systems of the used forms. Even when he does not attempt to combine different styles into one building, as when he employs a developed or updated Islamic



(fig. 92) Central Glass and steel Dome.



(fig. 93) Elevations and cross-section of an office building, Giza, Egypt, by Bakri.



(fig. 94) A model of a suggested design for an office and commercial building by Bakri.

Fatimide styles in El-Baharah residents that was previously discussed, or when he uses an updated Pharonic style in an office building in Giza near the pyramids (fig. 93) and when he uses a near high-tech style in an office and commercial building in Cairo (fig. 94) among others; while he usually has a very good reason for justifying the use of one style over another in each case,

the fact that he does go through Egypt's history selecting any style from any period indicates a clear formalistic attitude towards his architecture. By the recycling of these architectural elements or features he neglects the fact that each style comes with its cultural package that includes different meanings to different people within such a complex and ideologically charged society like in Egypt. Especially during the last two hundred years of the history of the country.⁷² As Janet Abu-Lughod tries to point out, "we must make a decision about which "level" [of tradition] to save, and, unavoidably, which levels to ballast. Do we concentrate on the ones closest to the surface (e.g. the most recent past)? The one associated with the period of "highest" cultural achievement (regardless of when that occurred)? Or the one we prefer aesthetically? ... The resolution of this dilemma is not easy, nor is it by any means "determinate." One must recognize that the criteria for selection among potential "traditions" are indeterminate because they are ... highly political and normative."⁷³

Halim, on the other hand, has a totally different view of tradition and history. He sees tradition as not an object that we can use in itself but as what contains the clues and aspects of the creative abilities of the society; he states:⁷⁴ "Once you start looking for the creative capacities within local communities,

⁷²For more details on this ideological complexity of the history of Modern Egypt refer to appendix no. (2).

⁷³Abu-Lughod, Janet, "Disappearing Dichotomies: First World- Third World; Traditional- Modern," Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review, vol. III, no. 11, Spring 1992, pp. 10.

⁷⁴Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim in Heba Saleh's "Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim," Cairo Today, Nov. 1989, pp.102 - 3.

then you will have to resort to traditions. Traditions are envelopes. They are reservoirs of creativity." It is clear from this statement that he seeks from history a design attitude and not an end product. As Khaled Asfour tries to show, on one level, Halim "utilizes history through conceptual and visual abstractions."⁷⁵ On the conceptual level, he abstracts the idea of the nearby helix of Ibn Toloun's minaret and uses it as a conceptual icon. On the visual level, his use of domes, vaults, arches and transitional zones that resemble the numerous surrounding historical buildings achieve this association. However, if he had stopped at this point, he would have been categorized with the third group mentioned in the previous chapter, i.e., the group that attempts to incorporate visual and conceptual historical features.

Halim, in fact, takes his association with history one step further; on the occasion of the laying of the corner stone of his Cultural Park for Children in Cairo -- an event that is considered the marking of the beginning of work on any state-sponsored project -- he came up with the idea of building a full-scaled model of his proposed design out of a well-known Egyptian canvas that is used in the construction of the settings of different kinds of occasions. He then invited several hundred children from the neighboring schools to participate in this occasion. To this end, both the officials that attended and the surrounding community were faced with an actual manifestation of the proposed project instead of the traditional drawings, charts and wooden or plastic small-scaled models.

⁷⁵Khaled Asfour, "Abdel Halim's Cairo Garden; An Attempt to 'Defrost' History," Mimar, V. no. 36, pp. 76.

This *ceremony* resulted in two major things; it gave Halim tremendous amount of input on his design that he then used to develop and improve his scheme and, it very effectively introduced the new project to the surrounding neighborhood.

Asfour comments on this process by the following remark:⁷⁶

“The idea of a ceremony recalls a similar tradition that was associated with the completion of a school/mosque complex during Mamluk times. The process and the scheduling of the two ceremonies, old and new, differ, but what they have in common is that they both announce effectively the emergence of the project into the cultural system. In our case, the garden’s ceremony marked the beginning of a design process; accretionary in nature, and interactive with the community. Consequently, Abdel Halim transcends the boundaries of the third approach -- [of the three discussed in the first chapter] -- and merges into a ‘living’ process of design philosophy.”

As we can see, to Halim, it is not the external architectural forms that has to be studied and revived from tradition. On the contrary, the real lesson that he would like to extract from history is the organizational systems and the cultural mechanisms of building, such as the *Building Ceremony*.

Halim’s Cultural Park is considered by many, locally and internationally, as a very successful integration of the inherited and the imported, or in other

⁷⁶Khaled Asfour, “Abdel Halim’s Cairo Garden; An Attempt to ‘Defrost’ History,” *Mimar*, V. no. 36, pp. 76.

words, of tradition and modernity; in the *Architectural Review’s* review of the project they state that the “new garden for children ... gives hope that some integration of tradition and modernity may be possible.”⁷⁷ However, this statement, I think, wrongly uses the word “modernity,” for in my opinion, Halim himself did not view his design as such. Instead, he always said that he is trying to update and redefine tradition to suite the contemporary context. This, for him, in no way means Western modernity. A better term that can, and should, be used in such a statement is ‘contemporariness,’ because this term leaves the chance for a locally developed situation that conforms with the contemporary context,⁷⁸ it does not imply importing a foreign context as a model or inspiration. This, as I see it, is what Halim attempted to achieve.⁷⁹

Another very important issue that is intensely debated on the cultural Egyptian scene today is the issue of technology and industrialization. The general feeling that is overwhelmingly popular is that we have to differentiate between ideological and cultural aspects

⁷⁷“Cultural Park For Children, Cairo, Egypt,” *Architectural Review*, Oct. 1992, pp. 62.

⁷⁸The term “contemporariness” as defined by Halim means the ability to live and express the age in a productive way. He characterizes this age as: (1) Scientifically advanced, (2) This advancement is manifested in the technological, economical, industrial and political sophisticated systems. (3) It is an age of cultural integration on an international level accompanied by the recognition of the individuality of the different cultures and its right to manifest itself in the way it sees best.

⁷⁹Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, “A Dialogue on Contemporary Egyptian Architecture.” *A’alam El-Benna’a*, V. no. 123, pp. 11.

of a certain civilization and its technologies. The first corresponds to only one civilization and the second is the property of all the human race.⁸⁰

Technology in itself has never been refused by most of the different acting parties on the cultural Egyptian scene. Nonetheless, this acceptance of the idea of technology does not always mean the same thing to all the parties and groups involved. While some take that acceptance to mean the complete adoption of the most advanced technology that might exist, in spite of its origin, on the bases of the universality of pure technology and the fact that every culture and civilization has contribute to the evolution of this technology at one time or another through history, as does Dr. Shaker,⁸¹ some refuse the fact that this might lead to the continuous importation of all the technology that we need and thus, this technology would become a tool for continued control, over the creative abilities of the society and also a political and economical tool that will have a very influential role in the power balance of the East and West. So, this second position refuses technology as long as it means imported technology and will continue to mean that.⁸² For the advocates of this position, technology is not -- as is always said -- universal. Instead, it has to be either taken or it would be even better to be

⁸⁰Shaker, Mahmoud Mohammed, "A Message on the Path to our Culture," Hellal book 442, *Dar El-Hellal*, Cairo, Egypt, Oct. 1987, pp. 112.

⁸¹Shaker, Mahmoud Mohammed, "A Message on the Path to our Culture," Hellal book 442, *Dar El-Hellal*, Cairo, Egypt, Oct. 1987, pp. 112.

⁸²A'ead, Shoukri Mohammed, "Towards an Alternative Culture," *El-Hellal*, August 1993, pp. 19.

invented in a way and amount that would most benefit the society using it.

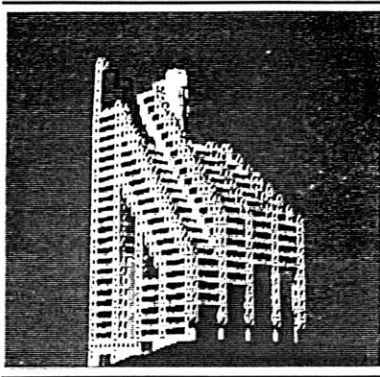
The same difference in attitudes can be found in the attitudes towards culture. No one refuses Culture, but what they disagree about is 'which culture?' Is it the culture of the rich, advanced and dominant societies, or another kind of culture that originates from the needs of the poor societies of the so-called developing world? Here, again, there is a group of people that refuses the helpless attempts to achieve a high level of the first kind of culture by importing it from its sources. This results, in their view, in the failure of these societies to ever achieve the cultural status that they desire.⁸³

All the previous disagreements originate from the fusion of two different concepts into one, i.e., *Modernization* and *Westernization*. Mr. Nabil comments on this phenomenon by saying that "modernization, the pursuit of the age, planning for the future and dealing with the variables are an essential need for all societies, but Westernization is another matter. It is the right of every society to preserve its individuality and to be proud of its historical experience. This is also noticeable even within the West itself; between the United States and Europe, for example and also between European countries."⁸⁴

With respect to our two architects, we can note another major difference between the two. Bakri, on one hand, stresses the adoption of the most recent technologies of the age more than he stresses the critical assessment of these

⁸³A'ead, Shoukri Mohammed, "Towards an Alternative Culture," *El-Hellal*, August 1993, pp. 21.

⁸⁴Nabil, Mostafa, "Islam and the West," *El-Hellal*, Nov. 1993, pp. 56.



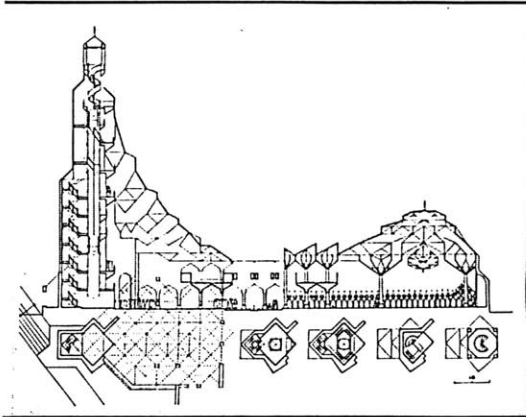
(fig. 95)
A model of
a
suggested
design for
an office
and
commercial
building by
Bakri.

technologies; if they are appropriate to a certain locality or not? Is it for the best interest of that society to import such technology or is it best to develop its own? And, if the society is equipped to handle such an adoption of imported technologies without, first, changing certain value systems and organizational systems that are needed to fully benefit from these latest technologies without having too strong and negative an influence on the members of that society. This emphasis on adopting modern technology more than the critical assessment of this technology is very evident in his proposed design for an office and commercial building in Egypt (fig. 95). While it is known by every architect practicing in Egypt that steel construction is both very slow and un-efficient in Egypt due to the un-availability of the needed skills and technical know-how, we see Bakri using steel trusses as the main construction system for the whole building. In all this, I think he forgets to acknowledge the circumstances of the Egyptian society with its limited financial resources and the un-availability of the technical know-how that are needed for adopting these latest advanced technologies. In my point of view, it is essential to first create these elements before you attempt to completely push the whole society towards industrialization and advanced technologies.

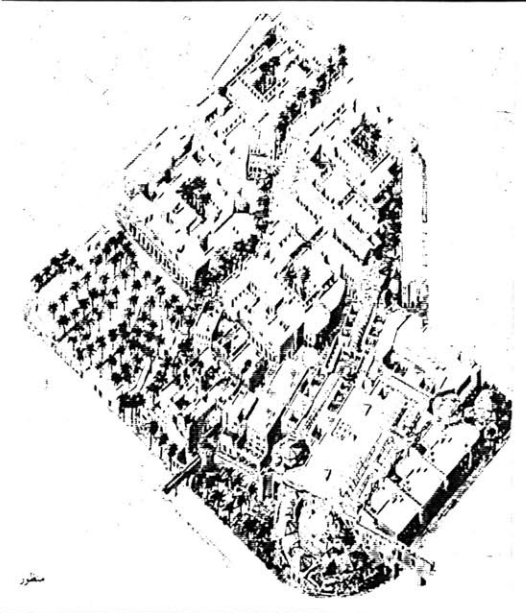
This belief in the necessity of industrialization and the adoption of the latest technologies clearly comes through in his comment on the state and nature of the architectural tools and vocabularies when he "calls upon the architectural schools to guide the new generations of Egyptian architects through the road of industrialization of the building sector. In spite of any noticeable actions or steps towards recent technological trends, the majority of the current architectural vocabulary in Egypt is a vocabulary of craftsmanship, both professionally and emotionally. It is not a matter of fancy, fashion or desire; it is an evident and simple necessity."⁸⁵ Yes, to him, the latest technology is a necessity, even if it is from the West, forgetting that the West itself, as the main source of technology, did not agree upon the necessity of the application of this technology in all circumstances. In the United States, for example, despite the fact that it is *the* major producer of technology, we find that a very large portion of the produced buildings nation wide are, in fact, applying very traditional building technologies like wood construction, adobe construction, etc.

On the other hand, Halim's attitude towards modern technology is, I think, an attitude of acknowledgment and approval *if* it is suitable and appropriate for the available economical resources and the technical know-how. This attitude can be traced from a simple comparison of his projects in Egypt, on one side, and the Gulf States on the other. If we take, for example, the Children's Cultural Park, the Farafra Oasis Settlement or the School Design for the Egyptian Country-side where he

⁸⁵Bakri, Gamal, "Architecture... Design... Forms," *Al-Benna'a*, V. no. 57, Jan. 1991, pp. 58 - 62.

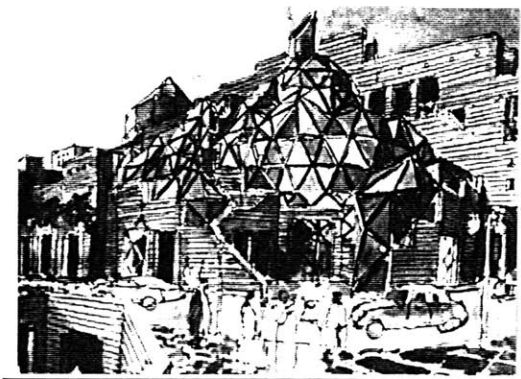
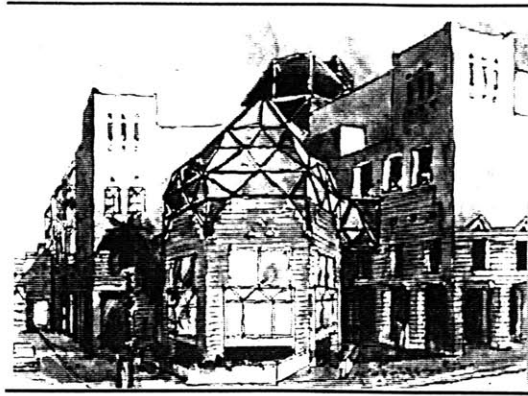


(fig. 96) Longitudinal section, Othman Ibn Affan mosque, Qatar, by Halim.



(fig. 97) Isometric of the commercial center in Riyadh, by Halim And Badran.

uses local materials, local craftsmen and developed local construction systems and compare them with his design of Othman Ibn Affan Mosque in Qatar (fig. 96) and the design for a Commercial Center in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in coordination with Rassem Badran (fig. 97), with their crystal-like roof structure that utilizes steel, glass and a high level of technical know-how (fig. 98), we can note the same underlying emphasis on



(fig. 98) Crystal-like roof structure of the Riyadh Commercial center.

regional and local contexts, on geometry as a bases for the design and an impelling conceptual philosophy that attempts to relate the project to its cultural context, i.e., the first formal two stages of his design strategy. Nevertheless, the way he uses technology in each case differs to a great extent; where it is economically and technically un-availble , i.e., in Egypt, he utilizes the appropriate materials and the technical know-how available to him from this specific locality. On the other hand, where financial resources are not an issue, he tries to incorporate the latest technologies of the age. In many ways, this does not comply with his second circumstantial two stages of his design strategy.

Indeed, this difference in the kind of technology he incorporates and utilizes

in his designs and how he does that, hides behind it a strong and evident dichotomy; while, in most of his writings, he calls for the revitalization of the *local* creative energies of the *local* communities, and I think he manages to do that very successfully in the Egyptian context, he does not attempt to revive this creative energy of the local building materials and techniques of the Arabian Peninsula. The near high-tech roof structures of both the Mosque and the Commercial Center are, in fact, completely imported technologies, both in their materials and in the expert labor needed to execute them. In short, in these projects Halim only implements the first two points that he himself points to as the stages of his design strategy, i.e., symbol and geometry. The other two stages, in this case, are completely un-addressed. In other words, by importing these technologies he is not "connecting the production process and the society's culture"⁸⁶ as he puts it. This dichotomy is, I think, a clear indication of the larger dichotomy of the Egyptian society of knowing that they are confined to the limited available resources in their context and, at the same time, aspiring for the latest advancements of the age that they live in.

Halim refuses the dismissal of the modern age on the bases of its characterization as *Secular*. Instead, he prefers the use of the term "expropriation of spirituality" from human life. In other words, he does not refuse modernity on the bases of its dependence on science, because he sees

science and reasoning as an important and basic part of all ages. Instead, he refuses the abstraction and reduction of the human being in general, and the architectural product in particular, to a "model" that has to be measurable, exactly repeatable and handled as a commodity.⁸⁷

In architecture, these ideas of measurability, repeatability and commodity were represented in the 1920s and onwards, in his point of view, by the idea of an exact and repeatable *module* and the use of the *Grid*. These devices, in his view, do not provide the needed freedom to express the individuality of each culture. He compares these devices with the *Bae'ka*, that is the corespondent of the module in the pre-industrial revolution age -- and specially in the Islamic regions -- and that also used the grid as its regulating tool. Yet, the difference that he sees and notes between the two is a difference of attitude towards the handling of these two devices; while the module, as an exact reproduced element, is repeated and multiplied and then integrated into a whole, the *Bae'ka*, on the other hand, is produced by a unifying concept and then differentiated into different elements, each responding to its context. The fact that their origin is the same is what creates the feeling of a unified whole. In contrast, in the case of the module, the fact that each element is exactly the same is what unifies the elements into one whole.⁸⁸

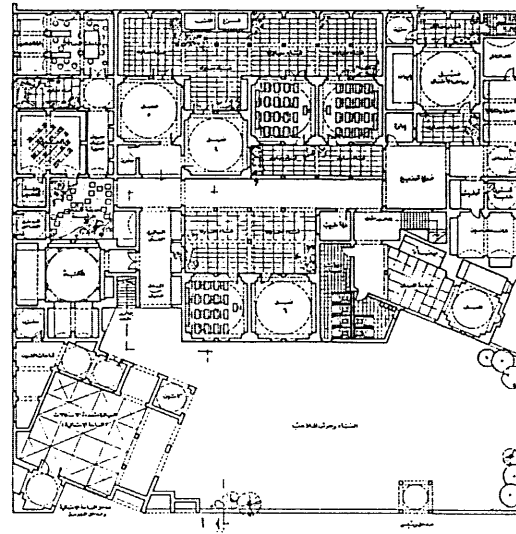
⁸⁶Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "From Granada to the Park of *El-Houd El-Marsoud*; The Position of the Architect on Urban and Architectural issues in the Developing World," Magazine of the Department of Architecture, Cairo University, Egypt, V. no. 6, pp. 61.

⁸⁷Interview with Abdel Halim Sponsored by International Institute for Islamic Thought titled "Architecture For The Human Being," conducted by Prof. Abdel Wahab El-Messeery.

⁸⁸Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "The Module and the *Bae'ka*; Thoughts on the Concepts of International Architecture and Cultural Architecture," Magazine of the

In other words, the module approach is industrial in its philosophy and reproductive and accumulative in its nature, while the Bae'ka approach is based on a belief system or an ideological system that is rooted in the idea of 'the wholeness of the culture and the production systems of a society'⁸⁹ and is regenerative in its nature.⁹⁰

His resistance to standardization and the idea of the model that is applied in different regions despite the many differences between them can also be noted from his approach in handling the School designs for the country-side of Egypt. After the 1992 earthquake that took Egypt completely by surprise and that resulted in the destruction of a large number of public schools all over the country, the government decided to sponsor a project for designing and building a number of schools in the different regions of Egypt. The project was introduced to the architectural scene in the form of a large local competition. The task that was required from each entering architect was to choose a certain region and design a school type for it. While the client -- the government, in this case -- required the design to be repeatable in the original brief, Halim attempted to come up with a conceptual model, instead of an architectural product, that could then be applied in different regions and



(fig. 99) Plan of a school as one example of the result of following the design patterns of Halim.

different sites producing in each case a different design that would be responsive of the characteristics of the chosen site (fig. 99).⁹¹ To achieve this ambitious objective Halim attempted to design a number of "Patterns" of spatial relations that corresponds to the functional, social and psychological needs of a school and that relates to each specific region. These patterns would then be followed by different architects during different times and stages of the actual design process of a specific site.

Department of Architecture, Cairo University, Egypt, V. no. 4, pp. 55.

⁸⁹For more information on this idea refer to Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim's, "The Building Ceremony," Ph.D. dissertation, advised by Christopher Alexander, University of California, Berkeley, 1978.

⁹⁰Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "The Module and the Bae'ka; Thoughts on the Concepts of International Architecture and Cultural Architecture," Magazine of the Department of Architecture, Cairo University, Egypt, V. no. 4, pp. 50 - 56.

Their recommendations and suggested solutions:

Halim and Bakri have, through time, formulated very explicit ideas of how they should deal with the current problems that face the Egyptian society.

⁹¹Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "The Problem of School Designing", Al-Benna'a, V. no. 72, pp. 61.

However, as we have seen above, their approaches towards resolving these problems is different to a great extent because of their totally different origins and attitudes. Both approaches are heavily dependent on each architect's social position and his main desired objective. As before, they agree on the main outlines of so many ideas yet implement them in drastically different ways. The remaining part of this research will discuss their suggested solutions and recommendations in the light of these similarities and differences.

The feeling of the necessity of raising the level of education and the level of critical awareness of the whole society is a major concern today. The importance of this awareness derives from the need for enabling the public as well as the elites or the intellectuals of the society to break the aura of divinity and glory that they see around either Western imported cultures or traditional inherited ones so that they could then see them as they really are; human efforts that are not in any way infallible and that can be taken from or rejected without any sensitivities, biases or complexes.⁹²

Both architects call for adopting such a critical attitude in dealing with either the inherited or the imported. At the same time, they refuse to be stagnant or immobile in their thinking. Halim, on one hand, deals with each project in a

⁹²This call came through in many writings by many people, each having different positions and attitudes towards the cultural problem of Egypt. Two of these writers, as an example, are: Ali, Said Ismail, "Towards a Contemporary Islamic Philosophy and the Museum of History," *El-Hellal*, Sep. 1989, pp. 2 - 27, and A'ead, Shoukri Mohammed, "The West and Us," *Hellal* book 477, *Dar El-Hellal*, Cairo, Egypt, Sep. 1990.

way that emphasizes an in-depth study and understanding of the context and its circumstances to see what can be used from it, what has to be rejected and what has to be up-dated and developed or revived. This is clearly evident in most of his designs in the Egyptian context -- as has been discussed through the various parts of this chapter.

On the other hand, Bakri calls upon everyone to adopt a critical attitude towards every aspect of his life. He says:⁹³ "It has been said that the birth of every philosopher is a result of his hate for a previous philosopher, in most cases, his tutor. By the same token, the birth of the humanity of the human being starts from his criticism of his bigger tutor; the inherited cultural accumulations inside him that form his self-defense system." He criticizes the attitudes of the intellectuals of Egypt as 'having chosen to take the seats of the spectators while they should be up on the stage performing for the public, teaching them and educating them.'⁹⁴ On a different occasion, describing the development of his attitude or architectural style, he states that "in the beginning, art was an expression of truth; then, it was the unity between form and meaning; then, tradition and contemporariness. Now, it is escaping universality to postmodernism and high technology, and afterwards, I do not know. It seems that I live all the trends that control our age, I can not escape its magic. At least, I have never been immobile, I have never escaped into an ideology and I have never fallen a victim of a specific direction."⁹⁵

⁹³Bakri, Gamal, an un-published and un-titled book, pp. 84.

⁹⁴Bakri, Gamal, an un-published and un-titled book, pp. 44.

⁹⁵Bakri, Gamal, an un-published and un-titled book, pp. 15.

From this point, both architects stress the importance of dealing with the existing circumstances of the context they work within. They see the inappropriateness of basing their views, designs and aspirations on an imaginative context and then having to desperately struggle each step of the way to reconcile these aspirations with actual reality.

We can notice a clear development towards the acknowledgment of the current circumstances of the Egyptian context in Bakri's attitudes through the years. He, I think, has learned to deal with the situation at hand depending on what is available and what *can* be both accepted by the clients and the public on one hand, and achieved by the current resources and technical know-how within the Egyptian context. This is noted in both his writings and recent works. In a 1991 essay he states the following:⁹⁶ "[The architect has to obtain] the capacity to analyze and transform his ideas and concepts to be within the limits of the capabilities of the society. No matter how big or beautiful his visions are, the design has to be based on a vocabulary that is capable of filling the gap between the imagination and the dream of the architect on one hand, and the capabilities of the realities on the other."

To give an example of this recent attitude from his work, I cite his description of the underlying factors that influenced his design of a recent touristic village in Dahab, Egypt; he classifies these factors under two main categories. The first consists of the characteristics of the given site, the capabilities of the twentieth century and the rich traditional architectural

vocabulary that exists in Egypt, all of which frees his imagination and gives him more variables to use. The second, on the other hand, consists of financial resources, available technical know-how and the climate, all of which are considered limitations to his desires and dreams.⁹⁷

In a more recent event, Bakri, as an architectural consultant for the development of *Dar El-Kutub Al-Masria* or the Egyptian House of Books, and as a part of a larger committee that is responsible for the development of this old institution and building, he repeatedly stressed the importance of using this project as a way to inject some improvements into the surrounding deteriorating neighborhood. This issue was thus emphasized as an important objective in the international competition that was organized by this committee and sponsored by the government. This, again, shows his recent emphasis on the question of how can his profession contribute in the improvement of the status of his society.

With regard to Halim, he tries to be as sensitive as he can to the characteristics and nature of both the site and the community that surrounds it and its circumstances. This attitude is clearly evident in the way he handled most of his projects in Egypt that were previously discussed. In the Cultural Park for instance, he used the existing trees as the poles for the conceived geometry. He also preserved all existing natural features of the original site, from plants to the existing slopes. With respect to the community, his use of the *building ceremony* clearly indicates his concern for the careful weaving of the

⁹⁶Bakri, Gamal, "Architecture... Design... Forms," *Al-Benna'a*, V. no. 57, Jan. 1991, pp. 58 - 62.

⁹⁷Bakri, Gamal, "What is Behind the Architectural Thought in the Project of a Touristic Village in Dahab, South Sinai," unpublished statement.



(fig. 100)
The palm tree promenade that Halim used to regulate his design.

project into the surrounding community. Furthermore, all the efforts that he made to incorporate the craftsmen into the contracting system, his development of a new system of construction drawings and his involvement in many legal, organizational and administrative issues are a clear indication of this sensitivity towards the existing context and circumstances.

Contrary to the state of disregard towards the architecture of Egypt in the last two hundred years and the verdict of discredibility that most of the Egyptian architects have label it to be, Halim has realized that despite anything that can be said on the modern history of Egypt, positive or negative, it has to be considered as part of the cultural history of Egypt. As a practical example of this realization I only have to cite his acknowledgment of the palm tree promenade that existed on the site of the cultural park, preserving it and even using it to regulate his design (fig. 100). If we consider that this promenade is essentially all that is left from a French designed garden from the time of

Ismail's development process⁹⁸ and that it was completely based on the French model,⁹⁹ we can see how he had no problem incorporating this feature into his design. If he had considered this feature as foreign to the site and the surrounding community he would have attempted to change it, or, at least, he would have not depended upon it as a major organizing element for his conceived geometry.

In spite of all of Halim's sensitivity in dealing with the community and context, and in spite of all the potential positive influences on the communities he attempts to help or serve, it can be argued that when he is speaking about the revitalization of the creative abilities of a *community* and reactivating its solidarity, unity, self-confidence and self-respect, he is, in many ways, romanticizing and idealizing the real situation in that community. It can be argued that these communities are not, and can not, live in the same ways that they used to live in; they can not use the same organizing and regulating systems that were based on personal relations and respect for the wise elderly members of any community that were used in the past. The present days consist of to many newly injected variables that the members of these communities have to deal with and thus

⁹⁸For more details on the time of Ismail's rule and his development process please refer to appendix no. (2).

⁹⁹Abdel Halim I. Abdel Halim, "From *El-Houd El-Marsoud* To Ragestan Square; Notes on Prejudicism in the Conception of the Architectural Profession and the Experience of Building the Children's Cultural Park on The Grounds of El-Houd El-Marsoud Park In El-Sayyeda Zenab," in an un-published book by the name of "Comprehension of Prejudicism," by Prof. Abdel-Wahab El-Meseery.

have to rely on other systems that can handle the new situation.

This point of view is specially strengthened by the facts of a certain incident that happened in Abu Al-Zahab community after the 1991 earthquake; the building that overlooked the Park, and that housed a cinema, was damaged by the earthquake. Due to the increase of the value of its site as a result of the park itself, the owner of the cinema saw the opportunity to take down the building and put up a ten story residential building in its place, as this would obviously turn in great profit. He did not think of asking for the opinion of the surrounding community, nor did he act for the benefit the community as a whole. Halim is still fighting for the protection of his ideal world around the park from the facts of the un-thoughtful and un-enlightened pure economic reasoning.

It is, I think, clear that this argument has lots of practical sense built in to it, and that, in spite of the great effort and success of the Park, we have to take into account this factor in any future similar attempts in order to develop this experiment into a truly repeatable and flexible model for upgrading and development.

One of the major circulating ideas of how to solve the problem of complete subordination and dependency on the Western imported technologies, organizing systems and ideologies is the idea of 'creativity' on all levels and in every field. Many intellectuals are now speaking of the need to discover new relations, new systems and new understandings of the situation that we live in today that would renew our vision and ability of reasonable thinking and scientific discovery in the hope that this would lead to total control over our

present and future.¹⁰⁰ During a recent seminar that had a large number of the most important intellectuals of the Arab World,¹⁰¹ Dr. El-A'alem sketches the relation between creativity and the developing process today as a relation where each element depends on the other; he says:¹⁰² "There could be no development without creativity. However, there could be no creativity in the shadows of backwardness and negative integration in a universal world order. At the same time, we can not come out of this state of backwardness without creativity. This is not a vicious circle; it is a dialectic relationship that takes acts, work and reality, and not only the mind, as its field of operation."

We can see many intellectuals speaking of creativity, analyzing it, describing its nature and its dynamics and giving some examples of it from the Egyptian context and from outside of Egypt in an attempt to relate it to the current problems that are facing the Egyptian society.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰El-A'alem, Mahmoud Ameen, El-Hellal Seminar review, "Towards a New One Hundred Years of Enlightenment and Modernization," *Al-Mosawer* 3547, Sep. 25th 1992, pp. 71.

¹⁰¹This seminar was in the 100th anniversary of the oldest cultural monthly periodical in the Arab World, i.e., El-Hellal magazine. The seminar was intitled "Towards a New One Hundred Years of Enlightenment and Modernization," Sep. 13 - 17, 1992.

¹⁰²El-A'alem, Mahmoud Ameen, El-Hellal Seminar review, "Towards a New One Hundred Years of Enlightenment and Modernization," *Al-Mosawer* 3547, Sep. 25th 1992, pp. 72.

¹⁰³Examples of these writings are: Fathy, M., "Creativity and the Urgent Problems of Egypt," *El-Hellal*, Sep. 1989, pp. 172 - 179., and Okasha, Ossamma Anwar, "My

Both our architects are recognized as being highly innovative in their work. One of the main characteristics cited by the jury of the AKAAs that was awarded to Halim in 1992 was, in fact, the great amount of creativity in both the design stages and the building process that led to the realization of the Park.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, commenting on Bakri's entry in the competition for designing the Headquarters of the Syndicate of Engineers in Alexandria, *A'alam Al-Benna'a* architectural magazine says "[This entry] was considered a breakthrough in the world of architectural competitions that symbolized an architectural trend of creativity and innovation. The architect has succeeded in combining and integrating the contemporary form and technology -- as a symbol of the capabilities of Engineering -- with the environmental needs of the site -- by utilizing the idea of air circulation through the use of inner courtyards and the complete introversion of his design. ... With regard to the general appearance of the building, the designer took into great consideration that the building has to confess the age of its erection and realization."¹⁰⁵ It is interesting to note that in spite of this recognition of his entry, he came out in second place.

Another issue that they agree upon in principle but differ dramatically in their

Attempt with Creativity: Determinism and Freedom," *El-Hellal*, Jan. 1993, pp. 140 - 145.

¹⁰⁴James Steele, "Cultural park for Children, Cairo, Egypt," in "Architecture for a Changing World," Edited by James Steele, The Aga Khan Award for Architecture and Academy Editions, Great Britain, 1992, pp. 104 - 123.

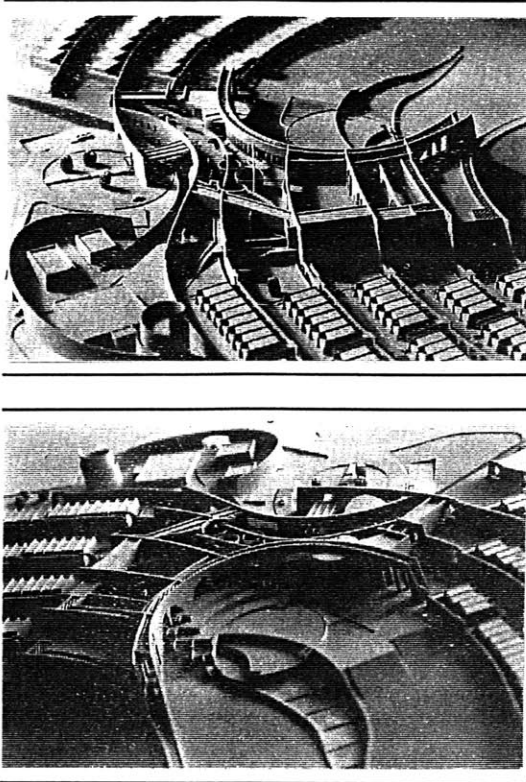
¹⁰⁵"A Competition for the design of the Headquarters of the Engineering Syndicate in Alexandria," *A'alam Al-Benna'a*, V. no. 100, pp. 18 - 24.

attitudes and approaches towards it is the issue of development. Halim's attitude towards development is a reaction to the dependency theories that were previously referred to, in the sense that he emphasizes the importance of the dependence on what we have for developing our situation and achieve a better status and living standards. Bakri's attitude, on the other hand, is still corresponding to the modernization theories. He still considers the Western model as an important guide for any development process that we should implement.

As a result of this difference in attitudes, their work reacts to the context differently. While Bakri's work can be described as 'contextual' in many ways, Halim's work is best described as 'appropriate.' As differentiated by Moneo,¹⁰⁶ the term "Appropriateness may imply ignoring context. ... The concept of appropriateness is more open, giving more leeway to intervention, to dialogue, without dictating a formal direction. Appropriateness means answering, replying, reacting, but does not prescribe in advance what should be done."

A last comment that, I think, has to be made about their approaches in their work is one that concerns their conception of the locality of Egypt. If we take a brief look into the designs of Halim in Egypt, we can clearly see that he handles each locality according to its specific characteristics, circumstances and systems recognizing that he can not deal with Egypt as a whole and that he has to differentiate between the different communities and regions within Egypt itself. Conversely, if we scan through

¹⁰⁶Moneo, R., "Reflecting on Two Concert Halls: Gehry vs. Venturi," *Walter Gropius Lecture*, Harvard GSD, Spring 1990, pp. 29.



(fig. 101) Two views of the model of Dahab Touristic Village, by Bakri.

some of Bakri's work we find him dealing with Egypt as a whole or as one integrated entity and does not acknowledge the difference between the different regions of the country. Thus, he takes all the architectural features of those regions as sources for his design. For Instance, in his design of the touristic village in Dahab in Sinai (fig. 101), he deploys the idea of the stepped landscape from the shores of the Nile, the idea of the Gateways from Medieval Cairo, etc., in a region of Egypt that is not used to such ideas. I think that the intellectuals of Egypt in general and the architects in particular have to recognize that they can not deal with the whole society as one; they can not implement the same solutions for the problems of Egypt in the Delta area as well as upper Egypt, or the oasis of the Western desert as well as the villages of the countryside.

It is important to clarify this personal position a little further; I do not refuse any attempt to integrate or update some of the different styles of the country in both the cases of different regions or different periods of time. Yet, to me, this is only justifiable in very specific cases where the project is actually a representative of the whole society. A good example of this situation is the design of the Alexandria library previously discussed. In Bakri's entry, as was shown previously, we see him attempting to achieve such an integration.

In conclusion, we can see how both architects have made many efforts to address the Egyptian cultural context and its problems. In spite of their grouping under one title, i.e., reconciliators between the *Inherited* and the *Imported*, by both the Egyptian public and the architects, and in spite some success on their part in achieving such a reconciliation, there still exists clear biases in their attitudes towards the two poles of this dilemma. This does not mean that they are still operating on the same levels of complexity and sophistication. On the contrary, in my point of view, Halim and Bakri have taken the discussions and the sophistication of the Egyptian professional architect and the Egyptian intellectuals in general, to a much higher level of understanding of the real nature of the dilemma that the Egyptian society is facing. By tracing the development of this dilemma through the history of modern Egypt,¹⁰⁷ from the either the complete refusal or the complete acceptance and adoption of the imported during the second half of the nineteenth century (fig. 102), to the very

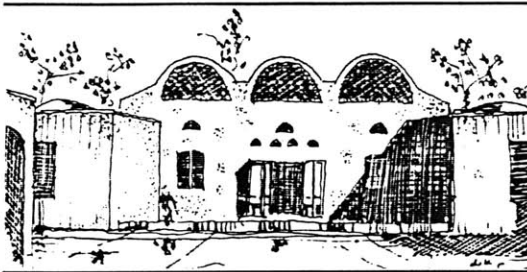
¹⁰⁷For a more detailed version of this development refer to appendix no. (2).



(fig. 102)
19th
century
building,
Cairo.



(fig. 103)
Hileopolis,
Cairo,
Egypt.



(fig. 104) Gourna Village, Upper Egypt, by
Hassan Fathy.

first attempts to integrate both into a neo-Islamic style during the beginning of this century (fig. 103) and finally to un-avoidable and unconscious weaving of each into the other in the works of Hassan Fathy (fig. 104) and Ali Labib Gabr (fig. 105). We can see how our two architects have taken several more steps



(fig. 105) A villa in Cairo by Ali Labib Gabr.

towards, at least, partially resolving this pressing cultural dilemma.

Nevertheless, I have tried to show that they are still working within, more or less, the same parameters and, in spite of narrowing down the great gap between the *inherited* and the *Imported*, they are still standing in different grounds to a great extent.

This difference in attitudes that I have been tracing through their works and writings is, in many ways, also inherent in the nature of the architectural profession all around the world. Such polarities as 'Art versus social reform,' 'Top - Down versus Bottom - Up approaches' and 'Universalism versus Regionalism' are clearly evident in the attitudes of the two architects as well as in the general profession all around the world. On the other hand, the attitude with which they have reacted towards the state of under-development, towards the development and modernization processes and the predominant un-equity problem that the Egyptian society is suffering from are not so universally experienced and thus, we see their differences arising from their backgrounds, their interests and their objectives.

By understanding the origins and the nature of the two architects attitudes, I hope that both of them, as well as other

Egyptian architects, will either further develop these attitudes to reach a better state, or change some or all of their aspects and come up with a new and better solution that will further bridge the gap in the hope of a better life for the Egyptian society.

CONCLUSION

This research has attempted to shed some light on the different attitudes and positions towards the dilemma of the *Inherited* versus the *Imported* that exist on the Egyptian cultural scene and the problems that resulted from it such as the duality problem and the inequity problem that the Egyptian society is still suffering from until this day. It has attempted to achieve this by discussing some of the internal difficulties that are inherent in the dilemmas facing the Egyptian architects as an example of the whole intellectual society of Egypt. It has taken the attitudes, theories and works of two contemporary Egyptian architects as examples of the moderate position that tries to rid itself from any emotional or unrealistic biases towards either end.

In the first chapter, we have identified a number of socio-cultural and political issues as the main challenges that the Egyptian society is facing, issues such as Westernization, the dual nature of the society and the resulting political and economical inequalities that are inflated by the rapid increase in population and urbanization. Then, we went on to make some brief observations on the architectural context both in the field of education and practice while stressing the different attitudes taken by the professional architects in relation to the issue of how they deal with history and thus how they deal with the dilemma of the inherited versus the imported as this is, as I have tried to show, the origin of most the issues discussed in this research.

In the second chapter I reviewed some of the two architects backgrounds, theories and attitudes both

professionally and socio-culturally. In the third and final chapter, with the help of some critical assessment of their works and theories, I have attempted to show how these two architects have raised the level of sophistication and complexity of the discussion of these challenges that they are facing. In other words, a certain level of reconciliation has been achieved. Nevertheless, there still exists clear biases in their attitudes towards the two poles of this dilemma.

Their attempts are, nevertheless, very positive. Their search for a logical and middle ground solution for all the polarities that they live in today can liberate us from the blind acceptance of what has become conventional. These formulas that they have come up with can then be developed even more to suggest other alternatives. All such formulas encourage a richer, more sensitive, more usable, and more responsive urban environments for the Egyptian society. This is particularly important in the Egyptian context because of the fact that most practicing architects in Egypt today do not know how to be active in social and political issues through their profession.

If the relation between architecture and development is of some importance, as we would like to believe, it is imperative for the architects to understand the real causes of the challenges that they are facing. If architects accept society as it is without any critical analysis, then they become part of the problem rather than the solution. Therefore, it is essential for the architects to approach development as a dynamic process that is based on the idea of continuous change. It does not follow one single direction and should never set pre-defined objectives.

In other words, it should be for every specific developed entity during each specific time.

Also, the members of the architectural profession in Egypt, I think, have to understand that the work field of the architect in developing countries is very different than the developed World. However, it seems that they are operating in practice the same way as their colleagues do in these industrialized countries. They are very rarely concerned with the particular problems of survival, marginalisation, unreliable housing, the poor economy, despite the fact that these often represent the majority in urban centers with rapid growth. These professionals have to recognize the primary need for intellectual and pedagogical development more than building or infrastructure; the need for developing the living standards of the whole society by the development of people rather than things.

Indeed, the architectural profession, just like the society, will be called on to change considerably over the next few years. Of course, architecture will not renounce its traditional concerns, but new methods will have to be adopted. For this reason, there exists a pressing need for an open-minded dialogue between the different parties that are concerned with the advancement of the Egyptian society. This is very important for any kind of fruitful outcome, for it is crucial for any achievements to occur to be able to benefit from the other points of views without any biases or sensitivities.

It is also crucial for any positive act to occur to include all practicing parties and authorities so that the discussions do not stay on a theoretical level. Furthermore, we should encourage any usage of an unordinary implementation tool on every level. By this, the architect

could play, with others, an important intermediary role between the population and the responsible authorities so that sufficient levels of development can be achieved.

By understanding the origins and the nature of these two architects attitudes, I hope that the level of understanding of the problems that this society is still experiencing slightly increased so that, then, both of them, as well as other Egyptian architects, will either further develop these attitudes to reach a better solution, or change some or all of their aspects and come up with a new and better solution that will further bridge the gap in the hope of a better life for the Egyptian society.

APPENDIX (1)

BIOGRAPHIES

Architect
Abdel Halim Ibrahim Abdel Halim

<u>Year</u>	<u>Event</u>
1943	Born in a small Egyptian countryside village.
1963	B. Sc. in Architecture, Cairo University, Egypt.
1967	Graduate diploma, Cairo University, Egypt.
1963 - 1968	Worked in the Bureau d'Architecture et Decor, Cairo, where he worked on a number of projects such as the Malayan Student's Housing, Cairo, 1963 - 65, Palestine Hotel, Alexandria, 1965, Textile Union Headquarters, Shobra, Cairo, 1968, Pharmaceutical Laboratories, Cairo, 1965 - 68, Nigeria Palace Hotel, Ado-Ekiti, Western State, Nigeria, 1967 - 68.
1970	M. Arch., University of Oregon, USA. Thesis title was "The Renaissance Fair." It dealt with the regenerating aspects and abilities of the Barn Raising event in the Western American context.
1972	Was the instructor of a team of two students that won the first prize in UNESCO's 11 th International Competition between Schools of Architecture held in Varna, Bulgaria, September, 1972. The competition was entitled "Tiburón Recreational System: A Space for Collective Recreational Activities for a Small Community."
1972 - 1976	Member in the Center for Environmental Structure, Berkeley, headed by Christopher Alexander. During this period he participated in the design of a number of projects under the umbrella of this center. Some of these projects are: People Rebuilding Berkeley, 1974, the Fuertaventura Resort Development, Canary Islands, 1974, the Andalusian Project, Spain, 1975.
1976	Founding member of the 'Community Design Collaborative' Group, Berkeley, California.

- 1976 Headed the Community Design Collaborative Group that presented one of the winning entries in the Manila International competition entitled "Tonda Forshoreland Urban Community," 1976. The main objective of this competition was to design an urban community of 3500 people as an example of urban environments in developing countries.
- 1978 Ph.D. in Architecture, University of California, Berkeley, California, USA, advised by Christopher Alexander. His dissertation was entitled "The Building Ceremony."
- 1978 Founding member of the CARAVAN Group. Members of this group were all students from developing countries studying in the United States.
- 1979 Returned to Egypt, and started teaching in Cairo University.
- 1979 - 1983 Entered different competitions and designed a number of projects in Egypt and other countries.
- 1983 - 1990 Designed and built The Cultural Park for Children in the Old city of Cairo by the name of *El-Houd El-Marsoud*.
- 1990 Won a major competition with Jordanian architect Rassem Badran, and then established a joint venture with his office. Together they started taking on major projects and competitions in Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, among other countries. Some of these projects are; The Development of Gamalia Quarters in Old Cairo, the Development of the Central Area in Old Riyadh, the Space and Science Museum in Riyadh, a study of the Urban Context and the Community Facilities of Al-Darrasah Park Project for The Aga Khan Trust For Culture, Historic Cities Support Program, among others.
- 1992 Won the Aga Khan Award for Architecture for his design of the Children's Cultural Park, Cairo.
- 1985 - 1993 Wrote different articles in different Arabic and English magazines and books, and attended national and international conferences as well as presented papers in some of them.

Architect
Gamal Bakri

<u>Year</u>	<u>Event</u>
1956	B. Sc. in Architecture, Cairo University, Egypt.
1956 - 1962	Worked in the governmental Organization for Rural Housing as a part of his obligatory work that was required from each university graduate at that time.
1962 - 1965	Was transferred upon his request to another governmental organization for Urban Housing.
1965	Began his first private commission which was a re-design of a the house of the general manager of the Urban Housing Organization.
1965	Received a diploma in Urban Planning from Holland.
1967	Returned to Egypt and worked in the governmental organization for the Planning of Cairo. During that period, he participated in the planning of Helwan City in the outskirts of Cairo and the re-planning of the old city.
1975 - 1988	Ended his involvement with the government and started a joint venture with a German office. During that time, he exchanged several architects with that office at different periods of time in order for these architects to experience the 'Western way of doing things.' Also, during this period, he designed a large number of projects and entered many competitions.
1988-1993	Working in his own office by the name of "Consulting Group Gamal Bakri & Associates," and still collaborates with the same German office on certain projects. He is still very active in both entering competitions and designing numerous projects.

APPENDIX (2)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

An important clarification has to be made before we get into this historical overview; the main objective of this part is only to investigate *some* of the cultural features or dynamics of the so-called 'Modern Egypt' that led to the formulation of the contemporary context that this country is living in today. I stress here the word "some" because in no way this review can be considered comprehensive. I only highlight the events that contribute to my main thesis in this research.

The French Expedition 1798 -1801

Despite the major ideological differences between the various groups of historical and cultural researchers that deal with the Egyptian context -- both Egyptians and non-Egyptians, the majority of them refer to the French Expedition as being an event that played a major and pivotal role in the *modernization* process of the Egyptian society. During those years, France, in an attempt to control the vital trading route to the Far East, decided upon sending a military expedition to Egypt headed by Napoleon and accompanied by two hundred scientists, engineers, historians, and *Orientalists* armed with the latest weapons, machines, scientific discoveries and analytical methods and procedures. Their mission was to take over and control this part of the world because of its pivotal roll in the vital trading industry that the economy of most of the Western countries depended upon at that time.

This very strong and direct contact with the French had some great consequences on the Egyptian political, social, cultural and ideological levels that eventually led to major transformations within the Egyptian society.

On the political level the expedition resulted in total separation of Egypt from the Ottoman Empire in addition to the complete change in the nature of the relation between the public and the ruling government from a state of rare contact and the great influence of community relations in regulating and governing the society to a state of complete control of the government over every detail in the life of the society.

On the cultural level, this expedition is considered the major factor in revealing to both Egypt and the Arab World the relative great Western advancement in the areas of politics, administration, science, economy, etc.

On the ideological level, it raised for the first time the issue of the relation between religion and both the state and the new scientific discoveries by introducing the new Western models. This, in turn, led to the dilemma of the inherited mechanisms versus the new imported ones. This dilemma manifested itself under different names and slogans during different periods of the history of Modern Egypt; from, authenticity versus contemporariness, to religion versus rational thought, to religion versus the state, and finally to tradition versus modernity, and resulted

in different competing ideological attitudes such as Islamic revivalism, Pharonic revivalism, Arab nationalism and Westernization -- each of which will be discussed below.

Finally, on the social level, the members of the expedition introduced to the Egyptian high society all the French habits and ways of living.

Despite some acts of demolition either as a result of the bombings of the French canons or for the purpose of opening roads for French security reasons, this period did not lead to any major transformations in the architectural and urban contexts.¹

Mohammed Ali's Rule 1805-1849

Mohammed Ali (fig. 106, 107) was an Albanian officer how was sent to Egypt by the Ottoman Khedive to help the Mamlukes to regain the control over Egypt from the French. In 1805 he was officially appointed by the Ottoman Empire as the Governor of Egypt and within a few years he succeeding in establishing total separation from the Turks. From that point, he started what is called the first modernization process of the Egyptian society on the basis of what he had seen from the French a few years before.

To achieve this, Mohammed Ali totally depended upon what he called the

¹El-Sawee, Ali, "Transformations in Architectural Thought and Expression During The Reign of Khedive Ismail: A Critical Study of the Phenomena of Transformation in Architectural Expression," Masters dissertation, Architectural Department, Cairo University, Egypt, 1988, pp. 85.



(fig. 106) Mohammed Ali in traditional dressing at the beginning of his rule.



(fig. 107) Mohammed Ali in Western dressing near the end of his rule.

"Basic Supports" that depended upon three main principles:²

First, the willingness to fraternize with others and accept what may prove to be beneficial from them and the readiness

²El-Sawee, Ali, "Transformations in Architectural Thought and Expression During The Reign of Khedive Ismail: A Critical Study of the Phenomena of Transformation in Architectural Expression," Masters dissertation, Architectural Department, Cairo University, Egypt, 1988, pp. 92.

to pay the price, within certain limits, because 'no one helps just for the sack of helping.'

Second, the establishment of the Turkish elite class in Egypt, and the continuous raising of their education and expertise so that they hold all or most of the important positions inside the government and within all the governmental institutions. As time past, this class started merging members of Egypt's high society. This led to the state of social duality within the Egyptian society that it is still suffering from until this day.

Third, acquiring all materialistic tools needed for strengthening the government and the military such as the total industrialization of the society with an emphasis on military industries, strengthening the economic base by developing all local resources for production, and finally, achieving all this by following and adopting all available scientific methods.

In order for Mohammed Ali to carry through this idea of basic support he relied upon two integrated methods; to bring to Egypt European experts in different fields that he was interested in, and to send groups of Egyptian students to continue their studies in European countries -- especially France -- so that they can then come back and take high positions in his government and help implement his modernization plan³. From these two methods resulted the foundation of a number of specialized educational institutions in the fields of medicine, engineering, agriculture, etc.,

³The most famous of these students were his grandson, Ismail, who ruled Egypt between 1863 and 1879, and Refa'aa El-Tahtawee, who is considered one of the most important intellectuals of that period that tried to reconcile the two poles, i.e., the inherited and the imported.

all of which initially had European instructors.

This time the imported variable in the equation of the imported versus inherited struggle was not presented by the occupying *other* as it was during the French Expedition, instead, it was sponsored by the rulers of the land and the newly created elite class of the society. Hence, the split of the society strengthened and the resistance of the inherited towards the imported gradually weakened.

With respect to the architectural and urban context, the affects of this struggle started to gradually appear. At first, it started with the widening of many streets of Cairo that had great affects on the characteristics of the urban environment. Then, the changing process continued and the architectural characteristics of the city started to be changed; banning mashrabbiyahs and mastabbahs, etc., on one side, and introducing foreign architectural styles to the buildings of the government and the elite class on the other. By this process the European and Ottoman models for the first time appeared on the architectural scenes of the city and at the same time the local models were discredited. Sophia poole comments on this process with the following remark:⁴

"... at last a proclamation has been issued by the pasha for extensive alteration and repairs throughout the city. The houses are to be whitewashed within and without, those who inhabit ruined houses are to be repaired or sell them, and inhabited dwellings are to be pulled down for the purpose of forming squares and gardens, mashrabeyahs

⁴Sophia poole, "The English Woman in Egypt," Letters from Cairo, written in 1842 - 1844, Philadelphia, Zieber, 1845, pp. 154.

are forbidden and mastabahs are to be removed”

In brief, to conclude the comments concerning this period, we note that the driving force for change was mainly the previous contact with the French but not in the form of confrontation, as was the case before. Instead, this contact took the form of an attempt by Mohammed Ali to take the materialistic portion of the Western advancement, i.e., technology and administrative systems, as an inspiration for the development of Egypt. His main aim was not, however, the improvement of the Egyptian Society as human beings but was rather a tool for the fulfillment of his ambitions of power.⁵

Ismail Pasha 1863 - 1879

There are many controversies concerning this period of Egypt's history and this ruler. This is because of the strange situation that came out from his modernization process. On one side, Egypt at that point had a new modern city -- or at least a portion of the city -- as its capital and the Suez Canal as an important international trading route. Yet this new portion of the city was totally European and the Suez Canal was under the control of England. At the same time, and as a direct result of the large debts that were needed to provide the money required to achieve these enormous projects, the whole country fell into a state of bankruptcy and thus under foreign inspection. Eventually, this led to the actual occupation of Egypt. On the other hand,

⁵A'aoad, Lewis, "The History of Contemporary Egyptian Thought: A Historical Background," part 1, Hellal Books, February 1969, V. no. 215, Dar El-Hellal, pp. 84.

the old city of Cairo was left in a very bad shape with deteriorating buildings and services and, along with the people who lived in it, it was considered to contain all features of unwanted backwardness.

Ismail completed his education in France. During his stay there he established very good relations with Napoleon the Third. Above all, he was completely fascinated by the French way of life and especially their capital, Paris. When he came back and took over the Rule of Egypt he saw the opportunity to change the face of the capital of his country, Cairo. His main objective was to prove to the world -- and to himself -- that Egypt was not a part of the *undeveloped* part of the world, i.e., Africa and the Arab or Islamic World, but, in fact, it is a part of Europe. He used to summarize his view in a well-known phrase that said: "Egypt is a part of Europe, not Africa."⁶

During this period, the form of the contact with the West was not a mere acquaintance and a confrontation with a different ideology and culture, as was the case with the French Expedition, nor was it an adoption of the materialistic aspects of this culture as an inspiration for the development of the country, as was the case with Mohammed Ali. Instead, Ismail went to the extreme position of abandoning all what was inherited and importing all aspects of the Western culture, and specially the French culture, both ideological and materialistic.

⁶El-Sawee, Ali, "Transformations in Architectural Thought and Expression During The Reign of Khedive Ismail: A Critical Study of the Phenomena of Transformation in Architectural Expression," Masters dissertation, Architectural Department, Cairo University, Egypt, 1988, pp. 99.

In consequence, two major ideological and cultural issues arose: the idea of Westernization and the state of Duality that was a direct result of the first.

Westernization:

The idea of Westernization was one of three ideological choices that the Egyptian society, or the Egyptian rulers and elite to be precise, had to choose from as a way to deal with this new and serious situation that they were confronting, i.e., the unbalanced power relations between them and the new Western powers. These three choices were:

First, the choice of immobility and stillness. This approach would have meant the retreat to the inherited and the refusal of everything imported from the West. This choice did not have any influential supporters in the society at that time except for the Sheikh's of Al-Azhar.

Second, the idea of Westernizing the whole society that emphasized that the only way to re-balance the inclined power scale was the complete adoption of Western culture, without any differentiation between technological, administrative, or ideological aspects of that culture. This idea was mainly advocated and adopted by Ismail himself and the elite class around him.

Finally, the attempt to reconcile the two poles of this struggle, i.e., the inherited and the imported, by adopting whatever is appropriate and beneficial from both to achieve the renaissance of the Egyptian society. This approach depended on the adoption of some materialistic aspects of the imported culture and, at the same time, bringing the inherited up to date and freeing it from the negative aspects that hocked upon it over the years.

The idea of Westernization had a great impact on various aspects and levels of the society. I only refer here to those that are related to our main interest:

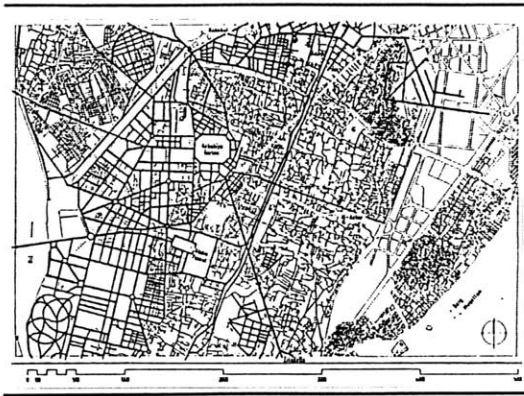
On the Social level: The appearance and wide spreading of different manifestations of the newly imported culture within the elite circles of the society. These manifestations ranged from the French language and European clothing styles and furniture that appeared in the homes of the Egyptian elite, to the appearance of the opera house, night clubs and theaters, etc.

On the educational level: With the end of Ismail's rule, all Western systems of education and schools were fully developed. Yet, it was mainly European instructors that controlled all educational institutions. Therefore, these schools taught the *imported* ideas and technologies.

On the Architectural and Urban level: This idea of Westernization had the greatest impact in altering the face of Cairo. This impact took three forms:⁷

First, the enormously large and ambitious project of the new city of Cairo or, as it was called by Ismail, "Paris of the East." The main objective of this project was to build a modern extension of the capitol of Egypt. Yet, in reality, it was a completely new city (fig. 108) that was an exact copy of Housman's planning project for Paris that he presented to Napoleon the

⁷El-Sawee, Ali, "Transformations in Architectural Thought and Expression During The Reign of Khedive Ismail: A Critical Study of the Phenomena of Transformation in Architectural Expression," Masters dissertation, Architectural Department, Cairo University, Egypt, 1988, pp. 107.



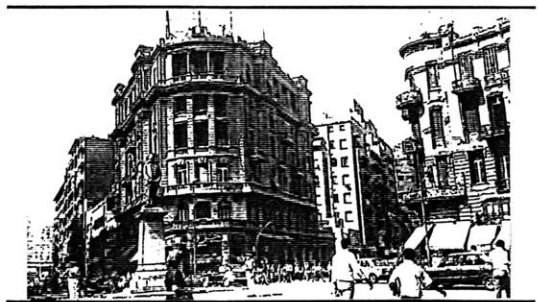
(fig. 108) Map of Cairo showing the traditional fabric of the old city and the Western fabric of the new city of Ismail.

Third. The project was based on the same planning concept. It proposed building the new part outside the old city, to build new wide streets in these new parts connecting the focal points of the whole city and opening new streets through the old city to connect the new city to the focal points of the old. To achieve this, Ismail turned to his friend, Napoleon the Third, for providing assistance. Napoleon responded by sending many French contracting companies, architects and engineers, of which many were the same designers of major projects in Paris itself. Thus, the new city was built totally on French standards.

Ismail asked the French architects and engineers to build him an exact replica of his favorite city, Paris. Thus the new city of Cairo was exactly that (fig. 109, 110); *El-Azbakia* park of Cairo corresponded to *Luxembourg* park of Paris, the *Ormmman* Park to *Pologne* park, *Ismaillia* square -- now known as *El-Tahrir* square -- corresponded to the *L'Etoile* square, the new opera house of Cairo was designed by the same architect that designed the opera house of Paris, etc. He even went to the extent of changing the course of the Nile to have the same relation with the new city of Cairo as the relation between the *Seine* river with Paris.



(fig. 109) The opera house of Ismail's 'Paris of the East.'



(fig. 110) Focal points of the planning of the new city of Cairo at the time of Ismail's rule.

Second, the architectural styles of that period were fragmented among three different sources: Western, for most of the new city (fig. 111, 112), Ottoman, for some of the mosques and sabeels, and the inherited Mamluk style for the rest of the mosques, the tombs, and some important buildings within the old city. Third, the complete domination of European architects over the Egyptian architectural professional market. This, again, resulted in the introduction of the European styles in Cairo.



(fig. 111)
Architecture of Paris in the second half of the nineteenth century.



(fig. 112)
Architecture of Ismail's new city of Cairo.

Duality:

As a direct consequence of the ideology of Westernization that the elite segments of the Egyptian society adopted there raised the issue of the dual nature of that society. While this elite class that was first created by Mohammed Ali re-organized its structure and regulating systems and ideas on the bases of the Western model, the rest of the society that was composed of the peasants, the small scale merchants and the craftsmen -- which represented the great majority of the society -- still lived by the inherited systems and social structures and rules. This situation led to the separation of the society into two distinct segments; what can be described as the 'official' segment represented by the elite, and the popular segment represented by the rest of the society. This point in history is considered by many to be the true beginning of the split in the social and cultural structures of the Egyptian society that it still suffers from until this day.

This phenomenon was manifested in most societal systems and structures in Egypt; in the social structure as previously discussed, in the educational system as the separation between the new Western based schools and Al-Azhar, in the judicial system as the co-existence of both the man-formulated laws and regulations and the Quranic ones, etc. These dualities resulted in many contradictions and dichotomies on many levels, all of which the Egyptian society still faces today.

On the architectural and urban level, the duality issue created, in effect, two separate cities (fig. 108); the old city of Cairo and Ismail's new 'Paris of the East.' This separation reflected a separation in all related aspects of the profession, from the architectural styles, materials and structural systems of the

two cities, to the nature of the professional himself being a craftsman builder in the old city and an educated and trained architect in the new. This state of separation was best described by two visitors of Cairo at that time:⁸

“European Cairo ... is divided from Egyptian Cairo by the long street that goes from the railway station past the big hotels to Abdin palace And it is full of big shops and great houses and fine carriages and well-dressed people, as might be a Western city.... The real Cairo is to the East of this ... and ... is practically what it always was.”

To this end, we can summarize Egypt's encounter with the West that led to the emergence of what is known as Modern Egypt in three major stages, each representing a different cultural and ideological conception of the idea of change: First, the stage of confrontation and resistance with the Western model represented by the French Expedition, 1798 - 1801. Second, the adoption of the materialistic aspects of the Western model, during Mohammed Ali's rule, 1805 - 1849, as an aspiration for accomplishing the renaissance of Egypt with the sole objective of military expansion and establishing what can be described as a regional super power. And finally, the complete adoption of all ideological and materialistic aspects of Western model during Ismail's rule, 1863 - 1879.

⁸Augustus Lamplough and R. Francis, "Cairo and its Environs," Sir Joseph Causton and Sons, London, 1909, pp. xv, from Janet Abu-Loghod's book "Cairo: 1001 Years of the City Victorious," Princeton, N. J., Princeton University press, 1971, pp. 98.

1881 - 1919

Two main issues characterized the period right after the rule of Ismail: first, the continuation of both the previous Westernization ideology and the duality problem resulting from it, and second, the official occupation of Egypt by Great Britain in 1882 as a direct result of Ismail's enormous projects.

As a consequence, this period witnessed the birth of the idea of Nationalism in the Egyptian society to resist both the issues of Westernization and the English occupation.⁹ Members of this nationalist movement at that time adopted either an Islamic or an Egyptian identity. The former group stressed the fact that Egypt is part of a greater Islamic World that is facing a real challenge and that Egypt, as an important corner stone of that world and culture, has to respond to that challenge by reviving its culture and bringing it up to date. As an example of this movement, we can cite the foundation of the nationalist party by Mostafa Kammel, which had a strong Ottoman-Islamic tendency.¹⁰ On the

⁹Some people trace the idea of nationalism to the end of the eighteenth century when there was, at first, a strong feeling of discontent concerning the Ottoman rule in the Egyptian society and led by members of Al-Azhar, and then, during the French Expedition this feeling shifted to resist the French occupation. For more detail see Lewis A'oad, "The History of Contemporary Egyptian Ideologies: A Historical Background," part 1, Hellal Books, February 1969, V. no. 215, Dar El-Hellal, pp. 66 - 94.

¹⁰Abdel Rahman El-Rafe'i, "The history of the Nationalist Movement," from "The Most Important One Hundred Books in One Hundred Years: An Encyclopedia of the

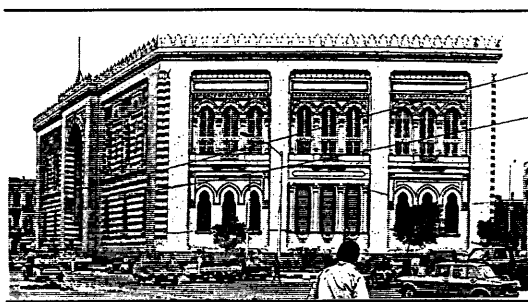
other hand, the latter group attempted to strengthen the idea that Egypt is an entity of its own and that its roots go back much further than the Islamic World, thus being a part of the Islamic World does not negate the fact that it has its own identity. As an example of this movement, we can cite the nationalist movement that led to the 1919 revolution.

In spite of the appearance of these nationalist groups, they were still in a state of immaturity. They were in a stage of getting organized and they were just starting to actually crystallize their ideas and presenting them to the people in order to win their support. For this reason, the nationalist movement did not manifest itself in any significant materialistic way during this period and until the 1919 revolt.

The architects of this period were at first all European. Then, after the foundation of the first architectural department within the school of engineering, 1886, Egyptian architects started to appear on the professional scene. Nevertheless, this appearance was a very shy one. In the first twenty-five years of the school, only seventeen architects graduated.¹¹ These young Egyptian architects, including those who were sent to complete their architectural studies abroad during this period in Paris and Liverpool, were all educated by Western instructors. Therefore, they were very much influenced by what the European architects were doing in Egypt at that time.

Enlightenment Age," part 1, Dar El-Hellal, 1992, pp. 97.

¹¹Sakr, Tarek Mohammed, "Early Twentieth-Century Islamic Architecture in Cairo," The American University in Cairo Press, 1992, pp. 13.

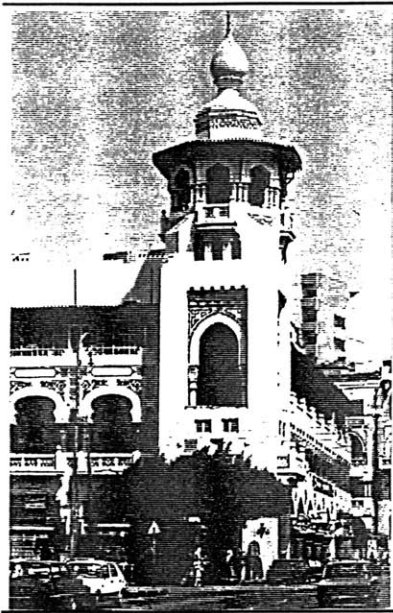


(fig. 113) Dar Al-Kutub Al-Masriah, Cairo, Egypt.

European architects practicing in Egypt during this period were mainly designing in the neo-Classical, neo-Renaissance, neo-Baroque and Gothic Revival styles. They were very familiar with the idea of revivalism in architecture. When they started to practice in Egypt, they saw the opportunity to apply their revivalist attitude on the Islamic architecture of Cairo and thus created what can be called the neo-Islamic style (fig. 113). At the same time, these architects were encouraged by the enthusiastic response from some of the new Westernized elite class who had the desire to have their own homes designed and built in the traditional Islamic style, yet with a modern organization. As a result, they resolved this contradiction by applying traditional decorative elements to the facades of their Western based designs and this became the so-called neo-Islamic style. This new style immediately became one more style that European architects used in the making of Cairene architecture (fig. 114).¹²

This neo-Islamic style was seen by some of the rising nationalist groups as a perfect representation of their thoughts and aspirations. Thus, the young Egyptian architects who were

¹²Sakr, Tarek Mohammed, "Early Twentieth-Century Islamic Architecture in Cairo," The American University in Cairo Press, 1992, pp. 12.



(fig. 114)
Heliopolis
City built
by Western
architects
on the
bases of the
new neo-
Islamic
style.

influenced by these movements quickly adopted this style in their practice. The most important of these architects was Mostafa Pasha Fahmi (1886 - 1972)¹³ who is considered the first academically trained Egyptian architect. His works reflected his great interest in this fairly recent neo-Islamic style and his attempt to develop it.

It is important to note that even though most of the elite class did adopt Western styles for their homes and villas they had altered these styles in many ways to achieve the required standards of social relations that prevailed. As Khaled Asfour points out:¹⁴

“The turn-of-the-century Cairene villa reflects this concept through the

¹³He is the son of Mahmoud Fahmi Al-Mi'mari (1856 - 1925), the first Egyptian engineer to pursue an architectural career, though architecture had been only a part of his engineering education.

¹⁴Asfour, K., “Cairene Traditions inside Palladian Villas,” Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review, vol. IV, no. 11, Spring 1993, pp. 39.

interaction of Palladian and Egyptian ideals (fig.). On the one hand, it shows how Egyptians adopted the symmetric arrangement of the central-hall plan as a way to connote social prestige. On the other, it shows how they retained traditional ideas on family privacy, structure, and guest reception. Together, the two ideals produced a middle outcome, where foreign systems were welcome, but self-identity was not [totally] lost.”

1919 - 1952

In 1919 the Egyptian society revolted against the English occupation. This revolution strengthened the nationalist movements to a great extent. Accordingly, the nationalist movement started to have a great influence on many different aspects of the society. However, this does not mean that the influence of the *imported* decreased. On the contrary, the Egyptian society remained widely influenced by what was happening in the European countries, especially France and England. This can be detected in most of the Egyptian activities, as exemplified in the attitude of Tahha Hussein who was a very famous intellect that had great impact on the intellectual life and direction of the Egyptian society. In his book *The future of culture in Egypt* that was published in 1938, he adopted a very strict opinion on what direction should Egypt's culture should take. He believed that the only way towards progress is to consider Egypt's culture as an inseparable part of Western culture; 'to think as they think and live as they live, to be right as they could be right, even to be wrong as they might be.' Yet, Tahha Hussein did not see this process of Westernization as a

subordination to the West. He states in his book the following:

“To be like the Europeans and to walk through the path that they have been through, for the sake of being their equivalents and their partners in progress and civilization.”¹⁵

In other words, going back to the two phenomenons that we discussed during the rule of Mohammed Ali and his grandson Ismail, i.e., Westernization and Duality, we can see that the first still existed and it was as strong as ever. All there was, was only the strengthening of the opposition without any signs of weakness on its part. The second phenomenon, however, was, in fact, affected during this period. While this duality can be clearly noted on the Egyptian intellectual scene with all its fields -- as it was in the last one hundred years, it did not represent two separate classes that can be defined, as before, into a formal or official class and a popular one. The intellectuals who adopted both trends, i.e., nationalism and Westernization, could not be easily grouped and categorized as either coming from an elitist or a popular background.

These years witnessed the attempt to give a practical expression to the national spirit that widely existed. In 1921, Bank Misr (fig. 115) was founded to invest the savings of Egyptians in national companies in an attempt to build up a strong national economic base for Egypt. It also witnessed a rapid movement of Egyptianization of governmental positions.

¹⁵Zakaria, Fouad, from “The Most Important One Hundred Books in One Hundred Years: An Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment Age,” part 1, Dar El-Hellal, 1992, pp. 199 - 207.



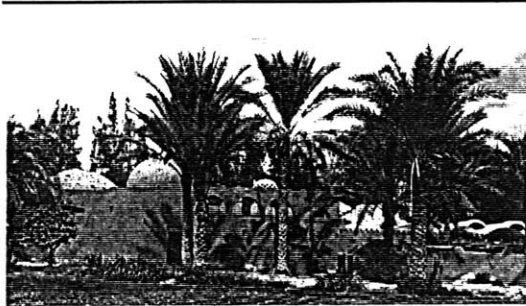
(fig. 115)
Misr Bank,
Cairo,
Egypt.

Similarly, architecture had its share in this process of affirmation of the nationalist movement. The trend of building in the neo-Islamic style continued and even strengthened, especially in public buildings in Cairo.

As I mentioned previously, the nationalist movements did not agree upon the source that they should refer to and advocate. While the Islamic revivalism trend had an obvious choice, both ideologically and architecturally, represented in the idea of going back to religion as the main source for their aspiration and progression process and using the neo-Islamic style to represent their ideas, other Egyptians thought otherwise. Followers of the nationalist movement that led to the 1919 revolt, saw the Islamic references as not sufficient for representing both the Muslims and the Copts of Egypt, thereby, not expressing one of the principle ideas of the 1919 revolution. Therefore, they started looking to ancient Egypt as a mutual reference that would supposedly bring both religious segments of the Egyptian society under one flag. Architecturally speaking, architects of this attitude preferred the revival of the Pharonic style and produced what was called the neo-

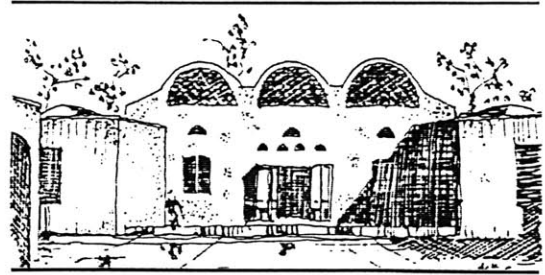


(fig. 116) Mausoleum of Sa'ad Zaghloul, Cairo, Egypt, using the neo-Pheronic style.



(fig. 117) Harraniah Village, Giza, Egypt, by Wissa Wassef.

Pheronic style (fig. 116) instead of the neo-Islamic. They took it to be more prestigious and particular to Egypt as well as being a more convincing style for both Muslims and Copts. Yet, some Copts still didn't see this style as a true representation of them, therefore, they started looking for the roots of what they consider Coptic architecture in upper Egypt where the majority of the Coptic community lived. The most known example of these architects is Wissa Wassef who developed a kind of indigenous architectural style that was based on the mud brick construction systems used in upper Egypt (fig. 117). This style was then picked up by Hassan Fathy, developed and articulated, and presented to the world as an architectural style for the poor segments of society. At the beginning, this style



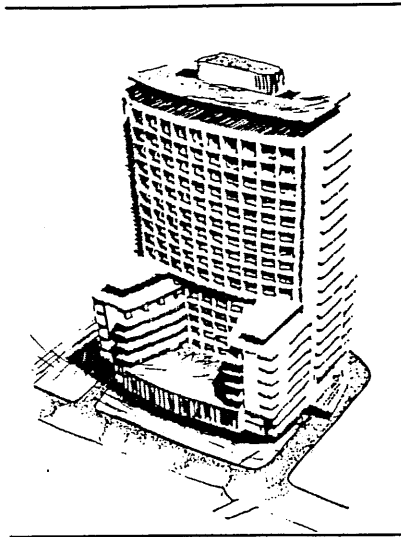
(fig. 118) Gournah Village, by Hassan Fathy.

depended upon appropriate technology, local materials and a community based building process. Then, Fathy started to incorporate what he considered Arab and Islamic design principles in addition to some climatic design principles into his design theories that was very enthusiastically received by Islamic and Egyptian nationalists (fig. 118).

On the other hand, there were always a large group of architects that refused to relate to any traditional style just for the sake of clinging on to a certain identity. In their point of view, it was wrong to build in the twentieth century using the technologies and elements of the past. The architect Sayyed Kura'im, the founder of *Al-Imara* magazine,¹⁶ stated that the construction systems of Islamic architecture were primarily a result of the latest building technology available in each period of time. He believed that if Muslims had built in steel or concrete, they would not have used domes and arches.¹⁷ It is worthy to note that most, if not all, architects that adopted this view were completely Western oriented; Sayyed Kura'im was the first Egyptian architect to receive his Ph.D. in architecture from Switzerland under the

¹⁶This is the first specialized architectural Egyptian magazine.

¹⁷Sakr, Tarek Mohammed, "Early Twentieth-Century Islamic Architecture in Cairo," The American University in Cairo Press, 1992, pp. 16.



(fig. 119)
Sarufeem
residential
complex,
Giza,
Egypt, by
Sayyed
Kura'im.



(fig. 120) Private Villa, Cairo, by Ali Labieb Gabr.

supervision of Saverbough (fig. 119), Ali Labieb Gabr received his Ph.D. from Liverpool in 1923 (fig. 120), Youssef Shafiek was trained under Mies Van der Rohe in the united states and there are many other examples that can be cited to more prove this point. In spite of the logical argument that these architects seem to have, when we look at their architectural products we find this argument disabled in many ways because of the fact that these products are, in reality, a mere extension of the modern architectural theories that were developed in the West. In the best cases, some slight adjustments can be noted to fit the Egyptian context. Nevertheless, they all only responded to the Westernization trend that was still

effectively influencing the whole Egyptian intellectual scene, they did not respond in any way to the particularities of the Egyptian society. Any attempt to develop such a response was totally ignored; "The recognition of Fathy in the Western World, as opposed to the lack of recognition in his native Egypt, is probably the most dramatic example of how Islamic countries ignored the genuine, endogenous contributions to their architecture, and how they excluded such contributions from education."¹⁸

1952 - 1970

In 1952, the continuous rebellion of the Egyptian society against the English occupation finally achieved its goals. In a peaceful revolution led by a military officer by the name of Nasser the royal family was overthrown. The rule of Egypt changed to the hands of the revolution leader. This revolution heavily depended upon the support of the general public of the society, i.e., the poor masses of the workers and peasants in addition to the new middle class that was gaining strength at that time. Accordingly, Nasser's main objective after the success of his uprisal was to establish a new system based on social, political and economical justice, and to eliminate class differences, all of which the Egyptian society painfully suffered from until that day. The new government took the initiative to

¹⁸Özkan, Suha, "An Overview of Architecture Education in Islamic Countries," in "Architecture Education in the Islamic World," Proceedings of seminar Ten in the series: Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World, held in Granada, Spain, April 21 - 25 1986, Concept Media Pte LTD Singapore 1986, pp. 108.

provide equal opportunities for all classes to obtain necessary services. Health, education, housing and cultural activities were the main services sponsored by the government.

The ideological structure of this period took two directions:

First, it adopted the Socialist ideology as a way to achieve equal opportunity and eliminate all class differences. This meant that the government had to work to improve the living standards of the poor majority of the society and assure them an equal opportunity to actively being engaged in all political, social and cultural activities. This, in turn, led to the necessity of the government to take such steps as the re-formulation and re-organization of the parliament of Egypt to give the right of representation to all Egyptians, to change the education system and open it to all members of the society, to sponsor massive housing projects for the low income segments of the society and to sponsor cultural activities by building theaters and what was called the 'Palaces of Culture' and forming bands and acting groups,¹⁹ etc. All of these government acts meant, of course, an endorsement of the middle class of the society and the attempt to increase its percentage in Egypt. Geertz comments on this phenomenon as follows:²⁰

“... After independence, there has been a solidification of what is called ‘the middle class’ of the Egyptian

¹⁹It was the first time during the history of modern Egypt that the government took culture to be both a necessary activity that it should sponsor and as an instrument of change that it can use to help achieve development.

²⁰Geertz, Clifford, “The Interpretation of Cultures,” Basic Books, A Division of Harper Collins Publishers, 1973, pp. 236.

society. In addition, the new independent leadership choose to direct a great deal of its attention towards those segments of the society that suffered most from the un-equal division of wealth and land ownership.”

For this reason, in addition to the erection of a large number of mass housing projects for the poor, a number of completely new neighborhoods were established each to be inhabited by members of a certain profession such as engineers, journalists, etc. These were, of course, the back bone of the Egyptian new middle class.

Second, The idea of Nationalism was further strengthened emphasizing Arab nationalism in particular as the main driving force and as a public mobilizing tool in the hands of the government. Cairo was always portrayed as the capital of the Arab World. This view had a great impact on the future of the city in particular and the whole of Egypt in general. As a response to this idea the government took upon its shoulders the great burden of implementing a complete modernization process. In turn, this modernization process influenced the kinds of architectural and urban projects that were realized during that period of time. Complete new industrial districts were built to house different kinds of industries with workers housing, recreation, etc.

To come back to our two main phenomenons that we have been following through all the main phases of the history of Modern Egypt, i.e., Westernization and duality, we can note the following:

On the issue of Westernization: As can be seen from all what happened during the rule of Nasser, the Western model represented the base line for all of the major changes that happened as a direct



(fig. 121) Public Housing, Helwan, Cairo, Egypt.

consequence of the modernization process undertaken by the socialist government. However, the West in this case was not the same. After the first half of this century with all of its events,²¹ the West was, in effect, two; communist Soviet Union and capitalist Europe and the united states. Egypt, at that point, had to choose. Given all the background circumstances and the situation of the Egyptian society at that time, the choice was obvious. Egypt resided to the model of the eastern power of the world, the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, Egypt was never a Communist country, but instead, a socialist one. There was always an apparent attempt, at least on the surface, to incorporate religion into the whole system in one way or another.

On the architectural and urban levels, all architectural designs, housing programs and urban planning projects were based on the latest Western theories (fig. 121) to

the extent that even the theories of local architects such as Hassan Fathy were completely abandoned and neglected, except for a very small number of projects during the whole twenty-eight

²¹The main events that are of significance to us here are the Russian revolution in 1917 and world war I & II with all their outcomes.

years.²² Almost all of the professional architectural practice and architectural education in all of the architectural schools in Egypt were based solely on Western theories of architecture of the time.

On the issue of Duality: It can be said that this issue was temporarily resolved, at least on the surface, during the rule of the socialist regime for obvious reasons. The disappearance of the elite class versus the popular masses situation because of the socialist attitude and reforms resulted in the emergence of one seemingly united society. In other words, the disappearance of the duality dilemma from the Egyptian society was, in fact, a direct result of the total control of the government over all economical, architectural and urban projects of that time.

In all cases, the modernization process was, in reality, always a tool for reinforcing the power of the central government. As Dalila El-Kerdany notes when commenting on the 'Palaces of Cultures' that were built during the socialist regime:²³

"Because the Palaces of Culture were usually situated in prestigious neighborhoods, they were difficult for ordinary or poor people to use. The structures were also monumental and intimidating to the poor. Their architecture was much influenced by the modern, functional and international

²²Hassan Fathy's most famous project, the Gournia Village in upper Egypt, was built during this period.

²³El-Kerdany, Dalila, "Cultural Facilities and Community Development in Egypt: Politics, Buildings and Settings for Public Culture," Ph.D. dissertation, Architectural Department, Cairo University, Egypt, 1992, pp. 97.

movements, and seldom exhibited or used traditional or folk elements. Thus the buildings themselves contradicted the supposed popular orientation of the cultural programs. In general, the physical placement, form, and style of the Palaces of Culture reinforced the power and importance of the central government."

1970 - 1981

Nasser died in 1970 and Saddat became the president of Egypt. At first, he basically continued on the foot steps of his predecessor, but after the 1973 war with Israel, some glimpse of where he was intending to go began to show; a *modernization* attempt was being launched once again, but this time with a totally different model as its aspiration. Saddat turned his back on the Eastern World power led by the Soviet Union and completely focused his view on the Western World powers led, at that time, by the United States. Of course, this meant the complete dismissal of all socialist ideologies and adopting, instead, a strict capitalist approach to the new process of modernization, a process that was called *el-enfitah* or the openness of Egypt towards the West -- the Western West and not the eastern West, i.e., the United States and not the Soviet Union.

Whereas Nasser's approach to the modernization process differed greatly from Ismail's approach,²⁴ Saddat comes

²⁴The first had a social model that directed the main emphasis of the process towards the masses of the society with a certain intention of improving their living standards, and the second had a capitalistic model that directed all of its attention solely on how the elite class of the society could

very close to this later approach of the 1860s and 1870s. Dr. Saad-Eddin Ibrahim remarks:²⁵

"His vision [meaning Saddat's vision] was similar to that of Khedive Ismail. Saddat wanted to develop Egypt along Western lines with Western economic aid, Western technology and Western experts. If Paris and Rome were the favorite models for Ismail, Los Angeles and Houston were favorite models for Saddat."

As we can see, insofar as the issue of Westernization is concerned, it was still the main ideology that controlled and directed the development process of the Egyptian society. The open markets of Egypt that Saddat created greeted all Western professionals with their products, technologies and methods with more than open arms. The idea of adopting a Western model was a natural and obvious choice. All opposing or different models that could have been seen as other choices and that may have still lingered on from the last two hundred years were strongly oppressed.

Contrary to this continuation of the phenomenon of Westernization, the phenomenon of duality within the Egyptian society re-appeared after having started to disappear under the socialist regime. Hence, the division between the conditions and methods of the society re-occurred in the same form; the official, representing the ruling and elite classes in addition to the growing new *high* middle class, and the popular,

benefit without any regard to the process' impact on the general public.

²⁵Ibrahim, Saad-Eddin, "Cairo: A Sociological Profile," in "The Expanding Metropolis: Coping with the Urban Growth of Cairo," Singapore, Concept Media LTD, 1985, pp. 28.



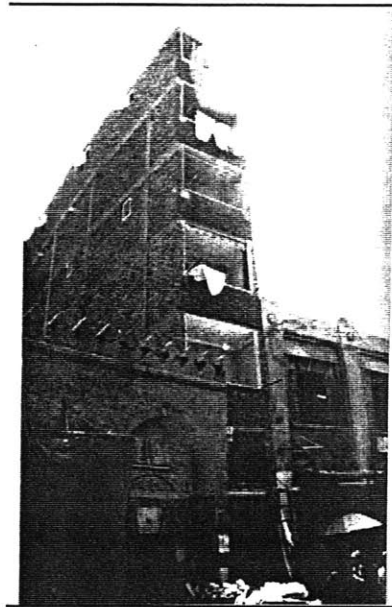
(fig. 122)
Office
building,
Giza,
Egypt.



(fig. 123)
Office
building,
Giza,
Egypt.



(fig. 124)
Office
building,
Cairo,
Egypt.



(fig. 125)
Buildings
erected
outside
any official
or pro-
fessional
super-
vision,
Giza,
Egypt.

representing the rest of the society, from the middle class and down to the poorest people of the society.

Looking at the influences of these two phenomena on architecture and urbanism in Egypt we can observe the strong impact that they have caused. On one hand, all of the architectural profession blindfoldedly was led by Western theories (fig. 122, 123, 124). Architects were mere consumers of the architectural styles and fashions imported from the United States and the European countries. On the other hand, the duality issue manifested itself in the complete split between two distinct environments; one for the high middle class and up, that was designed and executed by professionals, and one for the middle class and down, which was mostly informal settlements realized and built outside the jurisdiction of any professional consultation or governmental control (fig. 125).

To conclude, we note that the development process started with a purely economic approach during the

reign of Mohammed Ali, and mainly stayed unchanged until the raise of the Socialist government, 1952 - 1970. During that time this approach developed into an attempt to integrate these economic changes with social and cultural ones. Nonetheless, it did not further move towards the most recent definitions of the development process that emphasizes community participation and empowerment that is based upon a true democratic political system. Instead, during Saddat's rule, the approach towards the development process returned to stressing the need for a pure economic change.

In architecture, except for the efforts of Wissa Wassef and Hassan Fathy to relate architecture to the society and its circumstances, a formalistic and stylistic concern dominated through the whole two hundred years. Even when the imported architecture was originally developed with great social concerns in the hope of achieving radical social change in Europe, by the time it reached Egypt it was already emptied from those concerns. Everything that did reach Egypt -- either by European or Egyptian architects -- was purely formalistic and looked at and handled as a style.

However, in spite of all the great differences between the various political, cultural and ideological projects or the various attitudes towards the development process that each ruling regime adopted, it has always been the case of a centralized administrated and controlled implementation of any and all of the approaches and solutions suggested or actually realized throughout the two hundred years of the history of Modern Egypt.

It is important to point out that all these changes, with all it's ups and downs, only affected the urban Egyptian society and especially the educated segments of

them while most of the rural communities were almost completely left out of all these struggles and continued to blindly follow what happens in Cairo and the other major city of Egypt. Perhaps it is this disconnection or 'rupture' in the Egyptian society that had the greatest impact on all of the development processes that were attempted and resulted in their failure in various ways and different degrees.

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