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## City Architectural Heritage Revival: The Need of a New Applied Approach

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### Abstract

Egypt is a nation of 4000 years of civilization, which was known for its ancient architecture that occupied the highest rank of importance, but how long will our neglected heritage sites survive in our recent era? This is a rising debate.

This paper is based on a hypothesis whether the conservation of the neglected or isolated heritage sites, particularly in the inhabited areas, can bind the citizens to their past. For this reason, the research provides scenes of many applied conservation practices in other countries. The study calls for developing a new applied approach of conservation that takes the interaction between citizens and the city heritage zones into consideration.

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### 1. Introduction

Ancient architecture is enriched with the most important events and beliefs. It was a record of the daily life. It has been always the heritage of the community and the mirror that reflects people's culture and its evolution. It is an authentic translation of the nature of society, its customs and traditions, at all levels of economic, political, psychological, social and historical dimensions. Unfortunately, our architectural heritage sites are suffering lately. How long will this weird situation last, especially in that transition period which witnessed the demolition of several

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valuable heritage buildings in many historical cities? Alexandria, for example, includes many monuments of the ancient Egyptian civilization; Ptolemaic, Greek and Romanian. By reflecting on these civilizations and making a quick urban tour in those countries, we will find out that the preservation of heritage depends not only on the principle of restoration, but also on the consolidation and merging in the daily life of citizens, which allow interaction to create a kind of sensual experience, starting from the visual sense to the re-use of the monument in some cases, through bodies, movement, and the five senses. But it is seen lately that Alexandria is losing its unique historical image as a cosmopolitan city, and so are many other countries, like Cairo and Port Saeed. As our cities are not just a single linear history and include a multiple layers of histories, the violation committed against the city's memory might result in erasing some historical layers which narrate and embody the real history of the city.

Egypt has lost much of its significant architectural heritage, and it is necessary that the concerned professionals stop this bleeding. According to the Law no. 117 of 1983 on the protection of monuments which states, "«Monument» is any real wealth or portable of historic, scientific, artistic or literary value." Notwithstanding the laws, the crime series committed against Egypt's history still in progress, represented in the demolition of buildings and archaeological buildings. It is stated that 90% of the archaeological houses and buildings became victims for the irresponsible government officials who are used to taking the easier decision to demolish or neglect these buildings rather than to bear an official responsibility.

Furthermore, the preservation approach used in many cases in Egypt, where the government builds concrete walls surrounding the monuments for protection, isolates the present from the past and breaks the bond between citizens and their history.

Moreover, many monuments have not been discovered yet. For instance, it has been stated that Alexandria includes a lot of sunken monuments which have been badly exploited by some citizens, or even sold to foreign entities. One of the funniest situations when a monument was discovered by accident at a construction site, the contractor preferred not to announce the incident and keep it secret, maybe to keep it for himself and sell it later, or not to interrupt the course of construction by the government.

For all the above mentioned reasons, the research provides scenes of many applied conservation practices in other countries, to explore various means from different cultures, like Greece, Italy, and Germany, and to examine whether these experiences would be useful for Egypt circumstances. The study calls for developing a new applied approach of conservation instead of the old ones, taking into consideration the interaction between citizens and the city heritage zones, in order to positively influence the city diverse aspects of life, political, economic, environmental, social cultural,...etc, and to enhance the citizens daily life, through creating connection between their past and present contexts, and to plan for a better quality of life in the future.

### Terminologies

- A Restoration: the act or process of returning something to its earlier good condition or position.
- B Renovation: to repair and improve something, esp. a building.
- C Reuse: to use something again.
- D Rehabilitation: to return someone or something to a good or healthy condition, state or way of living.
- E Commercialization: to commercialize the monument preservation (to make use of it for profit)

## 2. Objective

Developing a new applied approach of conservation in Egypt, instead of the old ones, taking into consideration of the interaction between citizens and the city heritage zones.

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