

**URBAN REGENERATION AS AN APPROACH OF SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT OF HERITAGE AND RETAINING TRADITION –
FUWA, A NILE PORT CITY AS A CASE STUDY.**

Manar Ahmed AlGammal,

Ph.D. with honors – Politecnico di Milano, Italy,

Assistant Professor – Architecture Department – October 6 University, Egypt.

Email: manarelgammal@gmail.com, manaralgammal.eng@o6u.edu.eg

ABSTRACT:

The philosophy of nations across the globe is to value and take pride on what is local. But in some areas of Egypt, you may find local community see what is local as of lower worth and value. A percentage of the new generations that is not few are not proud of their local urban heritage. According to Paul Oliver’s conception of tradition and focusing on the concept of “Handing Down” to provide a crucial key to understanding traditional architecture and built environments where it explains the actual process of transmission from one generation to another.

The research aims to demonstrate the concept of tradition and heritage and how heritage conservation movement evolved. It tackles two cities as case studies, the leading city is Bologna in Italy and then discussing a potential city, Fuwa in Egypt, which can follow the steps of the European project. Paul Oliver’s debate initiates many questions, such as, what happened to the “Handing Down” process of tradition or in other words, heritage in the community of Fuwa. Also, the research discusses how urban regeneration as a strategy can be a tool of reviving tradition and heritage.

Key words: *Conservation, Urban Regeneration, Urban heritage, Tradition, Sustainable development.*

1.INTRODUCTION:

Egypt is a “mosaic of civilizations” (Manar Al Gammal, 2020), its’ distinguished location had provided it with great assets and established a multicultural land which witnessed various civilizations. Since the cradle of humanity, Egypt is known to be the connecting route between the oldest three continents, Africa, Asia and Europe. History, culture and geography (including the Nile and two important seas - Red Sea and Mediterranean had interacted to give us unique Egyptian cultural heritage.

The scholar Gamal Hamdan in his book “The personality of Egypt: emphasizes the fact that Egypt and each of its governorates has its own personality and character, where he illustrates how difficult to summarize the regional print of any location, particularly if is a unique regional print and character such as Egypt (Hamdan, 1984).

Gamal Hamdan discusses the fact that each location has its own architecture, urban character and tissue beside different social and economical perspectives. To start studying heritage territories, we should analyze the above mentioned features (Hamdan, 1984) and define the most suitable conservation strategy to deal with such territories especially with the on going development projects. It is a dilemma how to balance between the conservation strategies and development processes, in order to achieve sustainability and the revival of the dynamic role of heritage.

2.RESEARCH PROBLEM:

Recently in Egypt, many of Nile port cities, especially Fuwa, facing a serious problem where their urban heritage and historical city core is coming into demolition. Various factors behind such phenomena, a difference may have happened in the behavior and culture of the local residents. The community in such traditional environments and urban heritage see traditional architecture and urban fabric of lower value, this leads to the oblivion of our national identity. Though nowadays, the concept and perceptions across the globe is to be proud of what is local and value it, but unfortunately in some regions in Egypt, we may find local residents view of what is national and local of lower value and worth. Not few of the uprising generations are not interested in the value of their national urban wealth and heritage.

3.RESEARCH OBJECTIVE:

Based on Paul Oliver's perception of tradition and emphasizing the concept of "Handing Down" to establish a crucial perspective of understanding traditional architecture and built environment, as it discusses the actual transmission process from one generation to another. Such demonstration impose many questions, such as, what occurred to the process of "Handing Down" tradition in other terms, heritage in the society of Fuwa. Putting into consideration the recent ongoing vision of sustainable development in Egypt and all over the globe, the main question is,

"How urban regeneration as a conservation strategy can be a tool of handing down tradition or in other terms sustaining tradition including tangible and intangible heritage through generations."

The research aims to investigate tradition and heritage in one of the oldest port-cities of the Nile which is Fuwa in a view of place identity. Also, how to use urban regeneration, as a tool of achieving both urban conservation and sustainable development initiatives in a trial of reviving tradition and heritage.

4.LITERATURE REVIEW:

4.1.WHAT IS TRADITION AND HERITAGE?

A demonstration of tradition and built environment demands a study of the relation between people's identity and the culture and form of places they formulate. The sum of "Family, ethnicity, religion, language and history" can be defined as identity – composition elements, "handing down" process is refers usually to "Tradition". Tradition is established on "valuing constraint", and in a the world of technology of variable choices, the debate between traditional and modern in architecture and urbanism is constant and unavoidable. Many researchers has discussed, the dialogue between traditional architecture and urbanism verses the modern one is problematic (AlSayyad, 2001).

Heritage as a field of study is a multi and interdisciplinary field of study, in which architects, archaeologists, sociologists, geographers and anthropologists along with specialists from other fields meet and intertwine. Usually, most disciplines study heritage from merely an academic point of view, though monuments, antiquities, heritage territories and traditions have a dynamic role in sustainable development practices including its three main pillars: Social, economic, environmental aspects.

“Heritage” as a term denotes to monuments, historical cities, collections of antiquities, historical archives and records, folklore narrations and musical traditions, inherited crafts and handcrafts, historical landscapes, and places of great symbolic value to a society, a nation or of universal value worldwide (Hassan, Trafford, & Yossef, 2008).

Based on Nezar Al Sayyad view of tradition and heritage in his book “Consuming Tradition, Manufacturing Heritage”, he demonstrates heritage definitions and ideas from a different point of view from the institutionalized definition. The word “heritage” is driven from the French word “eritage”, which means “property that is transferred by inheritance through generations”. It is a complicated terminology which cannot be summarized, particularly considering its wide cultural perspectives. Every country has articulated its own strategies, policies and regime to conserve and protect its national heritage, but still face the issue of how heritage can be threatened by development processes (AlSayyad, 2001). Internationally, the conservation of heritage is presented in various charters and conventions, stated by associations and institutions such as ICOMOS and UNESCO.

Heritage including cultural and natural heritage, tangible and intangible heritage, has become well known since the foundation of United Nations World Heritage Centre in 1972. And though the UNESCO focuses on “World Heritage Sites” which has an outstanding value and significance for all nations and humanity, it is crucial to update the classifications used by them to define such sites and to apply such criteria on the national heritage record and conservation efforts. (AlGammal, 2007).

Jean-Louis, General Secretary of ICOMOS in 2002, proposed to broaden the definition of heritage sites, changing them from “monuments and sites” to “cultural heritage, adding as well street network, urban fabric and landscapes to traditional built structures (Hassan, Trafford, & Yossef, 2008).

The interpretation of the term “monument” in heritage denotes to “memorial”, also with keeping its original interpretation which comes from the verb “monere” that means “to remind” or to “to alert”. The classification of the UNESCO includes this aspect of “monuments” which states that “the monument should be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs,

with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance” (Hassan, Trafford, & Yossef, 2008).

4.2. WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF TRADITION ON NATIONAL IDENTITY AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT?

The process of building construction has been traditionally a crucial aspect in any nation- building. Architecture and the construction of buildings help on forming “national consciousness”. The definition of “National Identity” is complicated and difficult, the term “nation” is driven from the Latin word “natus” which means in English “I am born”.

The concept of “Nationalism”, denotes today to patriotism and loyalty to nation. Traditional built environment and form can be a tangible symbol of national identity as studied by specific community groups at particular time intervals and not necessarily by the whole nation. There were many decisions with an irreversible effect which influenced the outcome of built environment during the period of colonialism in developing countries. For instance in North Africa and Arab countries region, new codes regarding buildings settled on western standards, caused the termination of “traditional courtyard house” and instead too place new buildings of western family dwellings form which are inappropriate to hot climate. Due to cultural change in the society, local residents started to choose such western model though their needs were more fulfilled in traditional indigenous model specially in a society demands privacy. Unfortunately, even traditional construction methods which were efficient to the climate and surrounding environment were replaced by new construction systems in the name of modernity (AlSayyad, 2001).

4.3.HOW HERITAGE CONSERVATION EVOLVED AND DEFINED?

In his book “Introduction to Urban Conservation” Ayman Abdel Tawab explains the fact that there were various phases in “The conservation movement” (Manar Al Gammal, 2020). He stated that the movement initiated at the end of the eighteenth century – beginning of the nineteenth century, as this was a “Key period” (Tawab, 2013). The important inscriptions of John Ruskin and William Morris were the milestones of the conservation movement, where the debate about the essentials of conservation of ancient buildings started in England. John Ruskin established his approach, it was known as “conservative repair” or “preservation”, where he

demanded “maintenance, conservation and protection” and was against destroying the originality of historic and ancient buildings (Zeayter & Mansour, 2017).

In the phase between the first world war and the second, the approach of “Scientific restoration” began in Italy and 1931 international convention was initiated in Athens to state policies of modern conservation. Scientific restoration was considered integrated approach in conservation by Gustavo Giovannoni. His perspective of “improving urban fabric” to integrate conservation and modern needs through excluding heavy car movement from inside the historic areas, concentrating on the refinement of their hygiene and social aspects beside the conservation of ancient buildings (Zeayter & Mansour, 2017).

The movement of conservation became global after the second world war phase, United nations for education, science and culture (UNESCO), was founded to initiate interaction and peace among nations. Culture was the milestone of the conservation initiatives by the UNESCO, where it established a “value” system upon which heritage is conserved (Tawab, 2013). Even before the foundation of UNESCO, there were international organizations and institutions which played a crucial role in heritage conservation movement, such as ICOMOS, the International Council of Monuments and Sites and ICCROM, the International Center for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (Manar Al Gammal, 2020). All of these organizations formulated charters and conventions addressing heritage conservation issues.

As mentioned before the conservation movement became globally after the second world war phase, it began with the UNESCO initiative in the sixties, when the Egyptian authorities desired to build the Aswan High Dam, which demanded the existence of tremendous artificial lake that was known afterwards as the Lake of Naser. This lake was established to minimize the destructive effects of the annual flood of the Nile and to help on preserving water instead of being wasted. This to happen, will cause the immersion of Abu Simbel temples in water. Therefore, the Egyptian authorities demanded help from the UNESCO to save the temples and various Nubian villages from such destiny and as an outcome the temples were the first heritage territory preserved by the UNESCO.

Afterwards in 1972, the UNESCO set a convention which defined cultural and natural heritage considering some sites of an outstanding universal value and the need to keep heritage as a wealth of nations to future generations (AlGammal, 2007).

UNESCO divided cultural and natural heritage into different classifications, the following are the classifications as stated in the 1972 convention:

“Monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;

Groups of buildings: groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science.

Sites: works of man or the combined works of nature of man and areas including archeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological points of view” (Ahmad, 2006) (AlGammal, 2007). In 2011, the UNESCO added to heritage definitions, “Historic Landscapes”.

4.4.HOW TO MAINTAIN A BALANCE BETWEEN DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND HERITAGE CONSERVATION?

Cities’ norms of change has become a factor which plays a crucial role in heritage conservation. Creating policies and strategies to manage heritage quarters and built environments is a fundamental need. Heritage buildings and territories are tangible evidences of different values such as social, cultural, natural and economic ones. There are various factors which organize heritage territories, besides achieve balance in urban management and change. Associations and organizations have the upper hand in controlling heritage territories through different intervention techniques, which change based on the location and place of the territory. Traditional conservation methods deals often with restoration of significant buildings and lately it included also old cities cores and urban fabric. Here we find conservation methods face development requirements.

The existing heritage quarters with in cities contexts should be conserved and given the opportunity to be part of city’s vitality and dynamics. However, a “Sole” conservation operation will not save heritage and support it, as it evolves into a “museum phenomenon” (Manar Al Gammal, 2020) limiting any development potentials. Besides, Tourism as an approach proven over long intervals of time to be inefficient especially when it comes to urban development plans, even though it was

applied as a method to boost economy. Historic quarters used as museums disregarded local trade and depended on tourism. Tourism is a “Mono-Function” approach, which causes at the end the deficiency of the process of development, which has a nature of being “Multifunctional” and “Integrative”. And to succeed in having a sustainable development approach, tourism must be considered as a “Complementary Activity” and not an approach upon which national economy depends on. (UNESCO, 2008)

Heritage conservation expands interfering with built environment, through city changes which demands a balance between conservation strategies and development plans – needs. When it comes to heritage quarters and territories a good choice of appropriate policy is required. Merging different policies into one strategy to adapt and deal suitably with the nature of the heritage quarter is an excellent method to face changes which threatens them, besides helps on conserving and reviving the existing heritage (Townshend, 2018). Urban regeneration is an approach which achieves a balance between conservation efforts and development plans, as seen in the urban regeneration projects held at the European cities. Britain was the first country to apply such a strategy, as stated by professor Tim Townshend at the University of Newcastle – architecture department.

4.5. EUROPEAN CASESTUDY, URBAN REGENERATION OF BOLOGNA-ITALY

In recent years, Europe has adopted urban regeneration or urban revitalization as a strategy which applies sustainability and reforms urban futures through the most recent variables and changes in society, technology and economics. One among the distinguished examples in Europe, is the “ROCK project (Regeneration and Optimisation of Cultural heritage in creative and Knowledge cities)”, and the Italian case study Bologna (Zona-U Creativa Cultural Sostenibile, 2019).

The ROCK project has highlighted the importance of historic city cores and how cultural heritage can be a driving force behind regeneration, investment and sustainable development. It implemented a queue of role model aspects in three territories in Lisbon, Skopje and Bologna, to support the transformation of old city cores turning them from deteriorated, poverty and social conflicts into innovative sustainable territories. Through the ROCK project, environmental sustainability has been the prime thread through urban regeneration processes which are linked to minimizing society’s impact on environment either through innovative adaptive

reuse of heritage or through approaches which enhance well-being involving local residents in “co-designing” ideas or solutions deal positively with climate change. (ACTIONS, 2019). In the last four years, the ten “role model” cities in ROCK project developed creative solutions and ideas which highlight how cultural heritage can be a catalyst of sustainability in urban contexts and urban futures. Its objective is to include cultural heritage in wider development and economic operations, like social economy and knowledge enhancement involving the highest percentage of citizens. In Bologna, “Zona-U” was created and based on three main aspects “Knowledge”-“Participation”-“Transformation”, each aspect includes activities which achieves cultural creativity and urban revitalization. (H2020 ROCK, 2023).

4.6. EGYPTIAN CASE STUDY: FUWA AS A POTENTIAL CITY:

The urban formula and the composition of the Egyptian city went through various periods of change which has influenced the features of its heritage quarters and territories. This change caused the decay of the context of these quarters. There must be an intervention to deal with the threats our heritage face, which maintains the city’s built environment with unique character and use heritage as an asset and a driving force behind development. Considering Egypt’s fast urbanization, informal settlements formation and urban transformation, it is important to establish a method which merges conservation and development plans into one integrative sustainable process instead of perceiving them as two opposing ones (Manar Al Gammal, 2020).

In Egypt, most of the Nile port cities, especially Fuwa, at present, share a serious deterioration of their urban heritage and city old core. Many reasons could be contributing to this. A change in the culture and behavior of local community may have occurred. Fuwa’s unique location between the Nile river and the Mediterranean sea made it a strategic place for ancient civilizations to be born. It is known as a destination for Sufi individuals as it was known with 365 Sufi sheikhs makams (mausoleums)

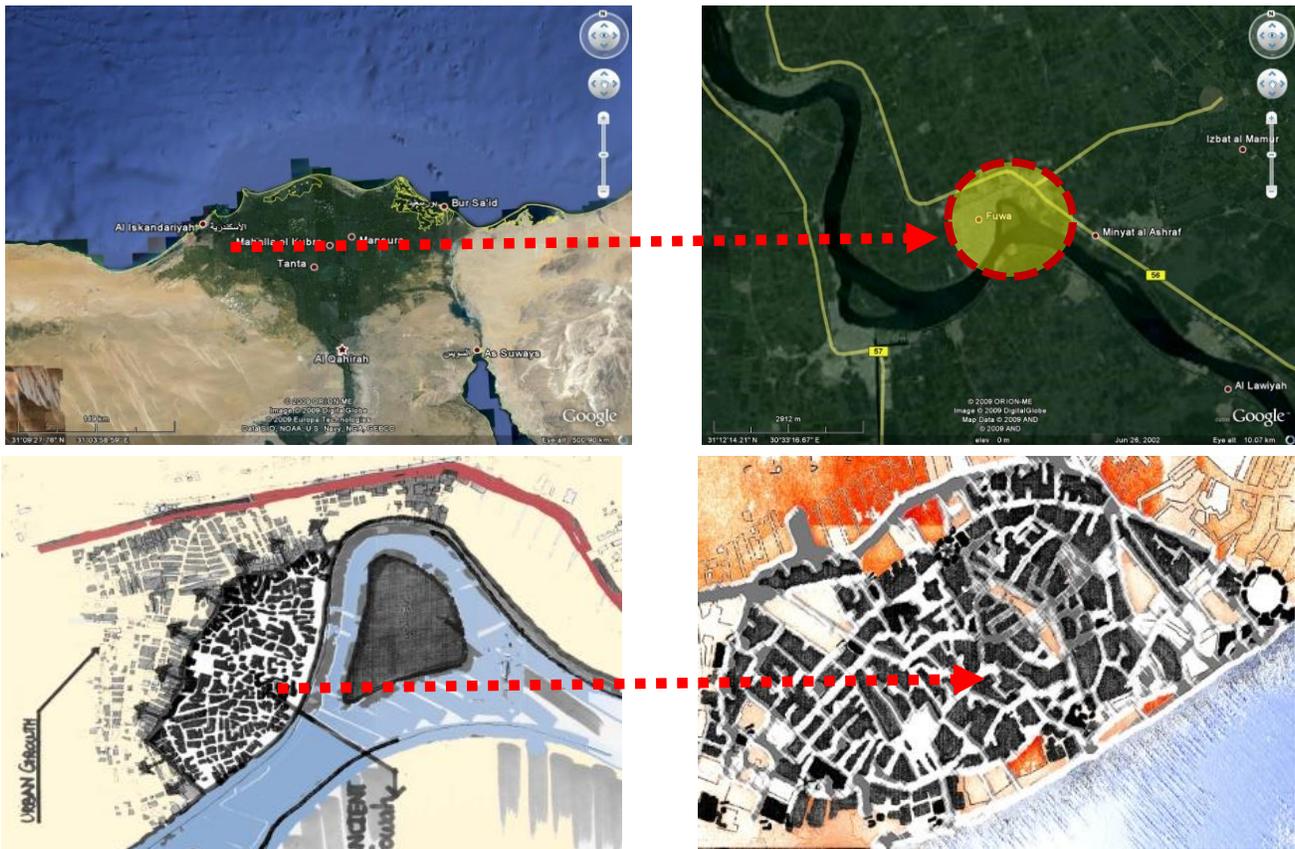


Figure 1 & 2: The location of Fuwa on the Nile river in Egypt ... **Source:** Google Earth

Figure 3 & 4: A Close up on Fuwa's urban context and an emphasis on the old city core which represents high percentage of the existing heritage ... **Source:** Maps – Faculty of urban planning, Cairo University.

Ancient Egyptian civilization Fuwa was known as “Meltis”, one of the greatest Nile ports. In Greek civilization, Fuwa was known as “Boby” which means the “place of all foreigners” due to the city’s location being near to the sea. It was known back then as the second harbor after Alexandria’s harbor. “Meltis” or “Boby” was known as “Fuwa” during the Islamic civilization and one of the Islamic empire capitals.

TRADITIONAL HANDCRAFTS IN FUWA, Based On Description De L'Egypte Book.

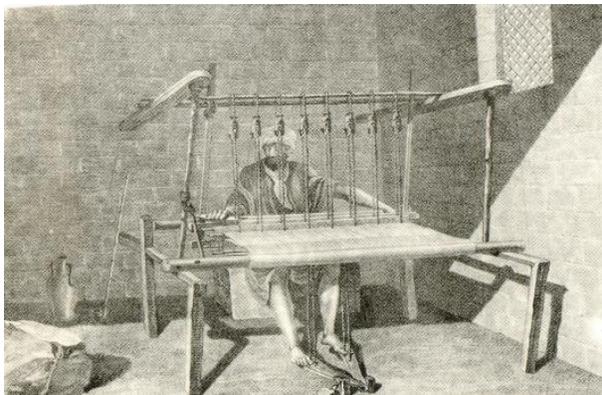
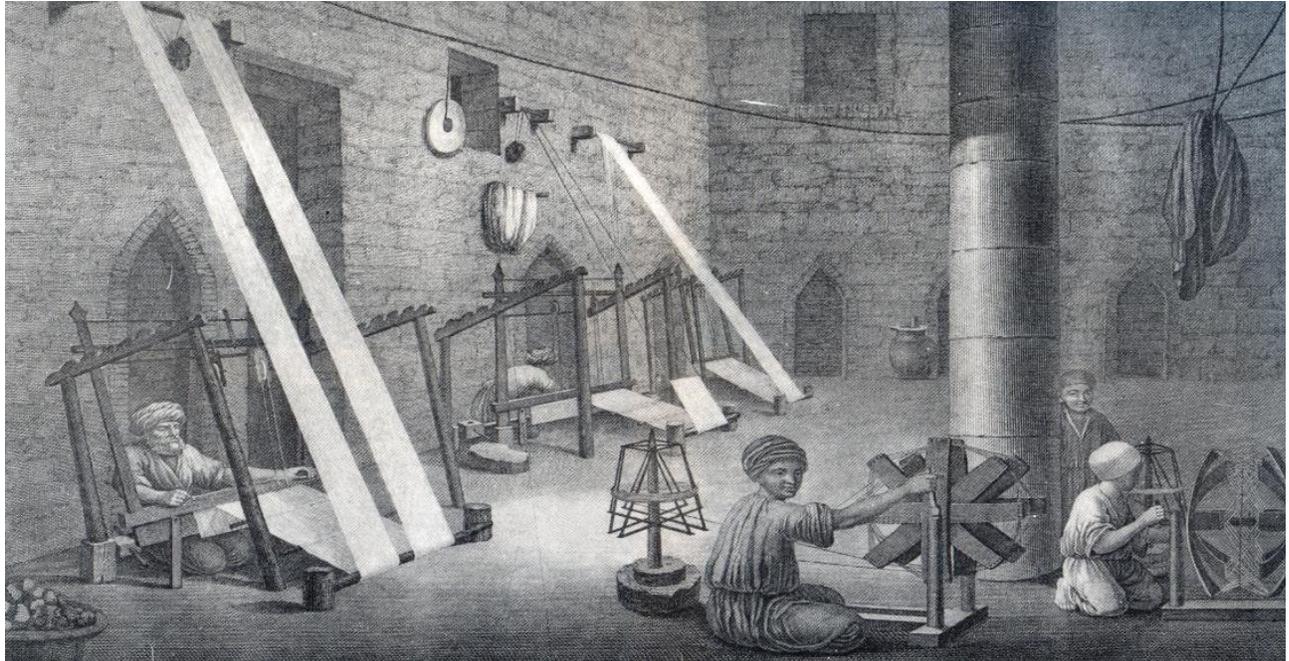


Figure 5: Different picture demonstrating the old handcrafts and small industries of Fuwa ...

Source: Description de l'Egypte

Fuwa is rich with many buildings which dates to the Arab conquest period in Egypt. Most of the mosques were built by the ruler Amr Ibn El Aass, the first ruler of the Islamic era in Egypt.

EXAMPLES ON FUWA'S EXISTING HERITAGE & TRADITIONAL BUILDING

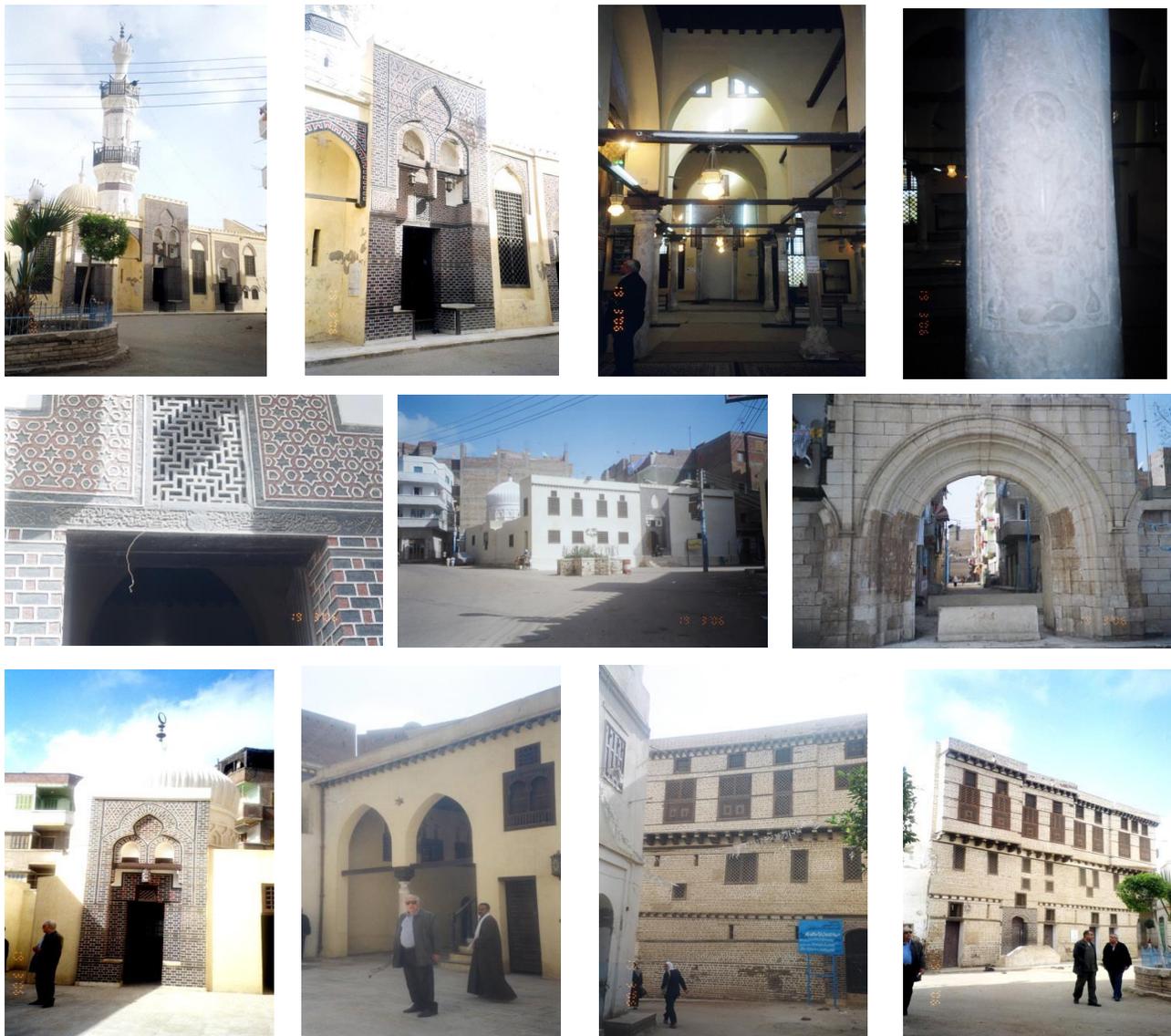
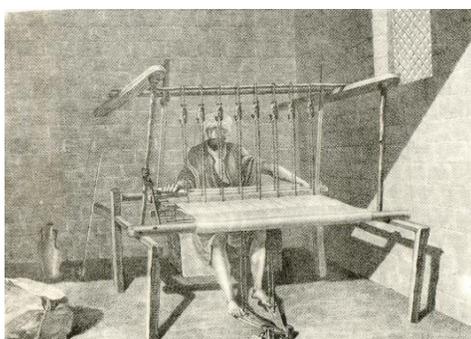


Figure 6: Some of the existing heritage buildings in Fuwa's old city core. Most of them are from the Islamic ruling era in Egypt (640 AD – 1914 AD). It is observed from the pictures the Mediterranean style (colored bricks) used in construction and in adding an aesthetic value. ...

There are other mosques were built in Fatimid period, beside Wikalas and Tikias which were built in the Mamluk and Ottoman period. As can be seen through the pictures, this heritage represents part of the cumulative culture in Fuwa. Most of these mosques were a place for the rituals of a well known Islamic sect called “Al Tasaouf”, which means suffism. Unfortunately with the urban growth and spread on informal housing and settlements, this heritage is about to demolish. Though it can be used as a driving force of sustainable development through urban regeneration, and to enhance the present image of the city.

FUWA’S TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE HERITAGE WHERE TO?



The Process of
“Handing Down”
Traditions and
Handcrafts through
Generations



Figure 7: Textile and handmade rugs manufacture process that had been inherited for hundreds of years from one generation to another in Fuwa. This intangible heritage is also a representation of the cumulative culture and identity of Fuwa’s community. It can be an asset that can be used in city branding and investments beside tourism ... **Source:** Picture taken by the researcher.

As mentioned before Fuwa was known by the manufacture of Textiles (handmade carpets and rugs) and it is the only remaining industry from the old industries through

different civilizations. The old process of manufacturing handmade carpets and rugs is still practiced by some of the residents, and had been part of their culture for ages. Textile handcraft presents the other aspect of cumulative culture in Fuwa and can be used as another asset of city branding and image. The cumulative culture in Fuwa represents and documents our history and local identity. This was reflected on the urban tissue and character of old core of the city. It is observed from the pictures above, most of the mosques' facades are Mediterranean style which denotes the effect of the foreign civilizations on Fuwa cumulative culture.

Unfortunately, unlike the richness of Fuwa's heritage and cumulative culture, the present urban character in some of its regions gives the sense of being the character of slum areas and informal settlements as it can be seen in the below pictures. It is "no one place", in other terms the urban context and city image lost its identity as a result of the local community present culture.

FUWA'S TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE HERITAGE WHERE TO?

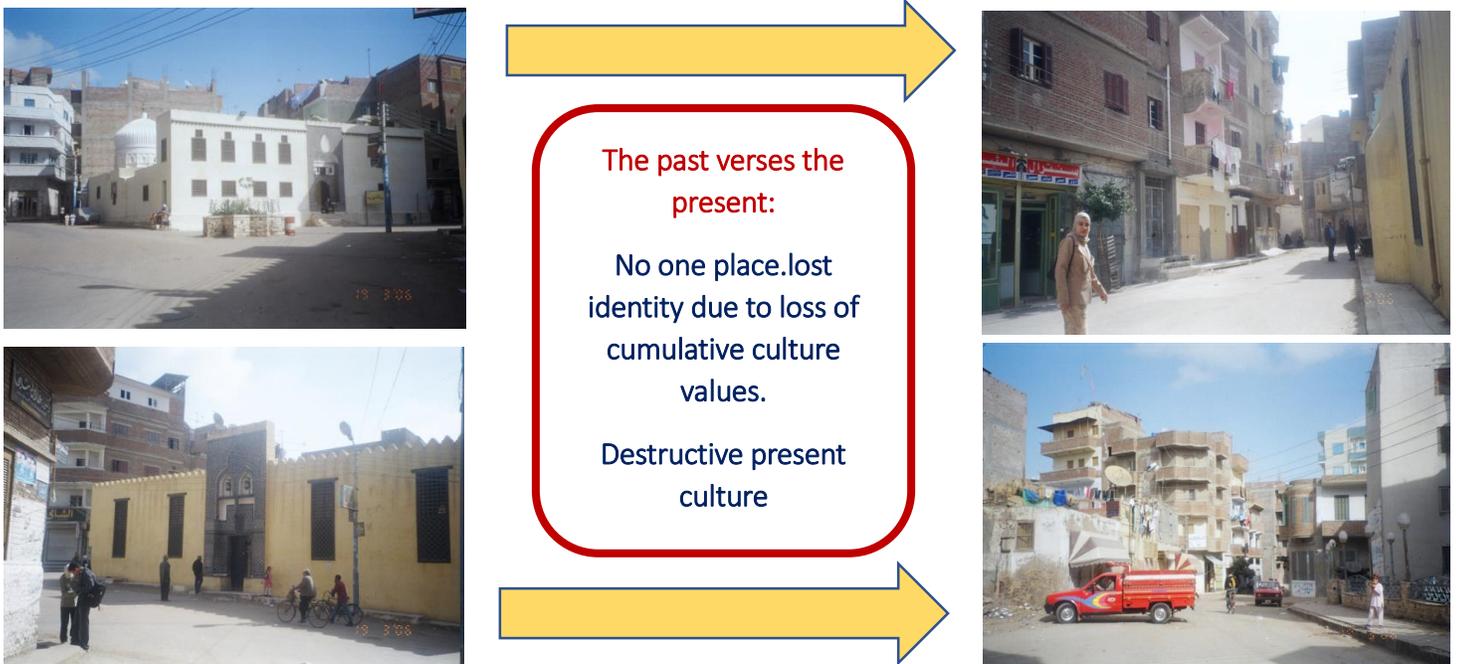


Figure 8: These buildings are the physical representation of the present culture of Fuwa's community. They are part of the city present image. Unfortunately there are no aesthetic values nor a sense of belonging, place and buildings lost their identity turning into informal settlement ... **Source:** Picture taken by the researcher.

Most of the young generations in Fuwa's community look down to handcrafts, which lead to the oblivion of most of inherited handcrafts such as pottery manufacture, furniture manufacture and agriculture due to the lack of community awareness towards their sacred values. And though most of the historical buildings were renewed through restoration done by the government and the ministry of culture, but they are closed, abundant and not used in any upgrading activities. Unfortunately, modern factories are taking place of the textile handcraft. However, since the lack of economic support and marketing causes the oblivion of inherited handicrafts, therefore urban regeneration can be a tool to maintain such sacred crafts and to maintain the cumulative culture of Fuwa presented in its old core and buildings.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Retaining tradition and heritage is a must to preserve our identity and national wealth
2. Urban regeneration is a strategy which merges conservation and development efforts into one integrative approach towards sustainable urban futures.
3. The ongoing modernization movement and technologies is causing the loss of heritage in Fuwa especially the tangible one, which is part of our national identity.
4. Europe adopted urban regeneration strategies and applied them to several historic cities' cores turning them into sustainable cities, giving successful examples of transformation.
5. In the Italian case study, Bologna, the three aspects on which the ROCK project focused were "Knowledge" - "Participation" - "Transformation" and maintaining creative solutions for climate change.
6. The urban regeneration project in Bologna, proposed educational, cultural and technological activities to lift and revive the social and economic status of the city to be sustainable and this can be implemented to the Egyptian city, Fuwa.
7. There is a crucial need of making a national record of heritage in Fuwa as it is of outstanding history and how it was a Sufi traditional city.
8. Decision makers should consider Fuwa as an outstanding international heritage, especially it presents not only part of our national handcrafts (especially handmade rugs) but also it is a destination for Sufi rituals and individuals.

9. An official documentation movement and an initiative of regenerating Fuwa's architecture and urban heritage through the ministry of antiquities, conservation specialists and local community is urgently needed.

Bibliography

- ACTIONS*. (2019, July). Retrieved from Regeneration and Optimisation of Cultural Heritage in creative and Knowledge cities: <https://rockproject.eu/actions>
- Ahmad, Y. (2006). The Scope and Definitions of Heritage from Tangible to Intangible. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 292 - 300.
- AlGammal, M. A. (2007). *Evaluation of cultural heritage Benefits to Urban-Socio-Economic Development And Sustainability*. Catania, Italy: Scuola Superiore Di Catania - Universita Studi Catania.
- AlSayyad, N. (2001). *Consuming Tradition, Manufacturing Heritage*. Routledge.
- H2020 ROCK*. (2023). Retrieved from Heritage Research Hub: <https://www.heritageresearch-hub.eu/project/h2020-rock-project/>
- Hamdan, G. (1984). *The Presonality of Egypt: A Study on the Genius of Place*. Cairo: Dar Al Hilal.
- Hassan, F., Trafford, A. d., & Yossef, M. (2008). *Cultural Heritage and Development in the Arab World*. Alexandria: Bibliotheca Alexandrina Cataloging-in-Publication Data.
- Manar Al Gammal. (2020). *Monitoring Heritage & Urban Change Along the Red Sea Suez and Quseir as a Case Study*. Milano: Politecnico di Milano.
- Tawab, A. A. (2013). *Introduction to Urban Conservation*. Lap Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Townshend, T. (2018). Professor in Architecture Department - New Castle University. (M. AlGammal, Interviewer)
- UNESCO. (2008). *Historic Districts for All: A Social and Human Approach for Sustainable Revitalization*.
- Zeayter, H., & Mansour, A. M. (2017). Heritage Conservation Ideologies analysis - Historic Urban Landscape appraoch for a Mediterranean historic city case study. *HBRC Journal*, 345 - 356.
- Zona-U Creativa Cultural Sostenibile*. (2019, Feb). Retrieved from BOLOGNA.ROCKPROJECT.EU: <https://bologna.rockproject.eu/il-progetto-rock-a-bologna/>