Regenerating the Egyptian Countryside: a Model for Interactive Humanistic Heritage

Author(s) Name:
Alaa el-Habashi; and Eman Kandil

University or Company Affiliation:
University of Menoufia, Egypt

Presentation Method. I would like to:

i. present in person (with a written paper)

Abstract (300 words):

The 1950’s nationalization of large agricultural plantations resulted in major modifications in the Egyptian countryside and radical effects on the Egypt’s agriculture. This research discusses the gap resulted between the previously owning families and the remains of their assets after being substantially reduced, and explores the nostalgia some of those families developed witnessing the degradation of the countryside. Communism and socialism spread similar undertakings around the World; a notion that is discussed in the international literature. Conversely, the heritage of the Egyptian countryside is neither studied nor considered in any national agendas.

This paper presents the authors’ role in raising the interests of members of some families to restore the remains of their heritage assets in the Nile Delta, and reveals the obstacles that hinder such campaign. The large number of heirs, not usually in mutual agreement in setting up priorities and in defining values, is one. Another is that those who adopted the campaign expressed nostalgic motivations coated with expelling chagrins, thus
focusing in restoring preferred contexts and defacing others. The paper demonstrates the positive achieved results despite such obstacles. It suggests that if the campaign is freed from the individualistic preferences, and gained State support, its limited and fragmented outcomes can be up-scaled and institutionalized.

The lessons learned from this experience lead to propose technical criteria that would turn this initiative into a model to integrate personal and familial heritage attributes into national plans to incite the support of the State, and to hopefully regenerate the heritage of the Egyptian countryside. One means to start with is to introduce cultural tourism based on the countryside associated folklore and traditional gastronomy, and crafts, which will activate a heritage conservation model that is interactive at various humanistic levels, but at the same time generates a new venue for national income.

- Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

**Alaa el-Habashi**: an Egyptian professor of architecture and heritage conservation, and chairs the Department of Architecture in Menoufia University. He received his MS and Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania. His researches and practices aim to found a preservation framework that respects the specificities of local history and traditions. Throughout the last 25 years practicing in Egypt and in many other Arab countries, he developed architectural and urban conservation approaches appropriated to different historic buildings, urban values and local traditions. He assisted in registering, managing, and/or evaluating sites listed as World Heritage. He consults for ICOMOS to evaluate sites proposed for the inclusion in the WH list. He is a member of the editorial advisory board of the Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development. He established Turath Conservation Group, and founded a Center in Historic Cairo for the Revitalization of Historic Cities.

**Eman Kandil**: an Egyptian Architect who teaches architecture in Delta Higher Institute for Engineering and Technology in Mansoura, Egypt. She received her Bachelor of Architecture Engineering from Menoufia University and she received her M.Sc. degree in Architectural Engineering from Menoufia University, Egypt. The thesis title is “Architecture without Architects: Analytical Study of the Principles of Beauty in Nubian Architecture”. She is enrolled in a Ph.D. program to write about means to preserve Egyptian cultural heritage in relation to cultural tourism focusing. During the last 10 years, she worked in various areas in Egypt in real estate development, and in designing several residential, religious, health and mix uses buildings. She taught architecture in several institutions for engineering and technology in Tanta and Mansoura. Her researches and practices aim to regenerating traditional areas by accentuating their cultural and heritage attributes in the contemporary contexts.