

Reviving Sustainable Architecture in Non-Wester Culture

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Abstract : Going for LEED certification is the latest concern in Egyptian practice that only materialized during the last 4 years. Egyptian Consultant Group (ECG) together with Credit Agricole had the vision to design a headquarters (Cairo) that delivers a serious sustainable design. The bank is a strong advocator of “green banking” and supports renewable energy and energy saving projects. Their HQ in Cairo has passed all the hurdles to become the first platinum LEED certificate holder in Egypt. With this design Egyptian practice has finally re-engaged in a serious way with its long-standing traditions in sustainable architecture. Perhaps the closest to our memory is the medieval houses of Cairo. Few centuries later these qualities disappeared with the advent of Modern Movement that focused more on standard modernist image making than real localized quality of living environments. The first person to note this disappearance was Hassan Fathy half a century ago. Despite international applaud for his efforts he had no effect on prevailing local practice that continued senselessly adopting recycled modernist templates. The Egyptian society was not ready to accept any reference to historic architecture. Disciples of Hassan Fathy, few decades later sought, of tackling the lack of interest in green architecture in a different way. Mohamed Awad introduced in his design sustainable ideals inspired from traditional architecture rather than recycling directly historic forms and images. Despite success, this approach did not go far enough to influence the prevailing practice. Since year 2000 Egyptian economy was ebbing and flowing dramatically. This staggering fluctuation coupled by energy crisis has disillusioned architects and clients on the issue of modern image making. No more shining architecture under the sun with high running cost of fossil fuel. They sought of adopting contemporary green measures that offer pleasant living while saving on energy. A revival is on its way but is very slow and timid. The paper will present this problem of reviving sustainable architecture. How this process can be accelerated in order to give stronger impact on current practice will be addressed through the works of Mario Cucinella and Norman Foster.

Keywords : LEED certification, Hasan Fathy, Medieval architecture, Mario Cucinella, Norman Foster

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