

RE-HUMANISATION OF THE ARAB CITIES THE CASE OF ALEXANDRIA, EGYPT

*Elhamy, Mohamed Atef*¹

Abstract

Urban revolution is bringing about a qualitative transform which can be linked to globalization of economy and of technologies. This in turn makes transformations to the “human face” of city. The traditional Islamic city, with its humanisation features, has a cultural, social, political, economic and ecological logic in terms of physical fabric, layout, and uses. This can provide a lesson for modern planning and design practices. Time has come to re-create the conditions that will restore to the metropolises of today their role as centers of cultural influence and democracy. Fight against intolerance, poverty, injustice, social and cultural exclusion, affirmation of solidarity as a fundamental value of democracy and human rights, promotion of a culture of peace and education for citizenship are just few of the challenges still to be taken up along the road to the humanisation city. Consequently, decline of concept and form in contemporary urban planning around the Arab world is discussed through studying the impact of modern Western urbanization on the urban forms in recent decades. Onslaught has affected modern Arab cities that have become culturally, environmentally, and socially inhuman as they lack to strategies and solutions to meet challenges of reducing or repairing damages brought forth.

This study discussed the human principles shaping traditional Islamic city, forces that affect modern Arab cities and inhuman aspects of these cities. Furthermore, a case study of human face of Alexandria, the second capital of Egypt, was presented. The study aims at answering questions such as: “What is the meaning of “humanising the city”, and what are its requirements?”, “Do planning and urban design in our cities respond to human needs?”, “Could principles of traditional Islamic cities be adapted to meet modern functionality and living standards maintaining its high congruence with our natural, religious and socio-cultural environment?”, etc.

This study uses a combination of design research methods that combine quantitative and qualitative approaches by including both qualitative and quantitative data.

The study concludes that absence of any correlation between humanisation principles and morphological characteristics of the modern Arab cities is the main reason of social, ecological and identity crisis of the urban communities. Some principles of traditional Islamic cities could be adapted to meet modern cities. It is still very relevant and viable to today's urban requirement of our society. Moreover, there is an urgent need to apply these principles in a modern context to bring our cities back to its humanisation feature.

KEY WORDS:

Humanization, Arab cities, Islamic city.

¹ Associate Prof, Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime transport, Alexandria, Egypt