# State of the Art Conservation & Gentrification Methodology
# An Assessment of Renovation Projects of Downtown Cairo 2023

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## ABSTRACT

Gentrification, as a new domain for research and analysis, is a theoretical process which has debatable impacts. Many researchers may study gentrification process within international cities; however, there are few attempts to identify gentrification indicators. The main goal of the paper is to clarify and identify what is happening in Downtown Cairo nowadays; and to address the complex issue of the gentrification of existing buildings towards their conversion to a modern contemporary use. It focuses as well on the current and former applications in the local Egyptian case on the basis of its particularity. In order to attain this goal, the paper examines the relevance of the gentrification indicators developed by Phillip Clay in 1979, Peter Moskowitz in 2017, and others trying to implement it on Downtown Cairo, in order to recognize the ongoing gentrification procedure, then to consider the possible precautions to control gentrification development, and avert its negative impact while using its positive ones to upgrade the gentrified urban zones. This paper starts by introducing the history of the term gentrification, its advantages and disadvantages; then it also reviews different theoretical approaches outlining its stages. Next, the paper inspects the Egyptian legislations related to conservation, followed by analysis of the Downtown Cairo's case study firstly through the Egyptian Government's project to develop Khedivial Cairo, secondly through the private sector initiatives. This paper ends with an indicator tool which could be applied in Downtown Cairo and heritage zones areas to anticipate in which stage it is gentrified.

**KEYWORDS:** Urban Heritage, Downtown Cairo, Gentrification, Conservation

**مناهج الحفاظ والارتقاء الاجتماعي – تقييم مشروعات التحسين، منطقة وسط المدينة، القاهرة ٢٠٢٣**

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**ملخص البحث**

إن التحسين، يعتبر مجال جديد للبحث والتحليل، وهو عملية نظرية لها تأثيرات نقاش جدالية. قد تم دراسة العديد من الابحاث لعملية التحسين داخل المدن العالمية؛ ومع ذلك، هناك محاولات قليلة لتحديد مؤشرات التحسين. الهدف الرئيسي من هذا البحث هو توضيح والتعرف على ما يحدث في منطقة وسط المدينة في الوقت الحاضر؛ ومعالجة القضية المعقدة المتمثلة في تحسين المباني القائمة وتحويلها إلى استخدام حديث معاصر. ويركز أيضًا على التطبيقات الحالية والسابقة في الحالة المصرية المحلية انطلاقًا من خصوصيتها. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف، تشير الورقة البحثية الى مدى أهمية مؤشرات التحسين التي وضعها فيليب كلاي عام 1979، وبيتر موسكوفيتش عام 2017، وآخرين يحاولون تنفيذها في وسط القاهرة، من أجل التعرف على إجراء التحسين المستمر، ثم النظر في الاحتياطات الممكنة للسيطرة على تنمية التحسين، وتجنب آثارها السلبية مع استخدام الإيجابيات للارتقاء الاجتماعي في المناطق الحضرية المرموقة. يبدأ هذا البحث بالتعريف بتاريخ مصطلح التحسين، مزاياه وعيوبه؛ ثم يستعرض أيضًا مناهج الحفاظ النظرية المختلفة التي تحدد مراحله. ثم تتناول الورقة التشريعات المصرية المتعلقة بالترميم، يليها تحليل دراسة حالة وسط مدينة القاهرة، أولاً من خلال مشروعات الحكومة المصرية لتطوير القاهرة الخديوية، وثانيًا من خلال مبادرات القطاع الخاص. وتنتهي هذه الورقة بتحديد أداة مؤشريه يمكن تطبيقها في مناطق وسط القاهرة والمناطق التراثية لتوقع المرحلة التي سيتم فيها الارتقاء بها.

**الكلمات الدالة:** التراث العمراني، وسط البلد، التحسين، الحفاظ.

## INTRODUCTION

The main goal of the paper is to clarify, identify and establish definitions of what is happening in Downtown Cairo nowadays; and to address the complex issue of the adaptive reuse and gentrification of existing buildings towards their conversion to a modern contemporary use. It focuses as well on the current and former applications in the local Egyptian case on the basis of its particularity.

Therefore, it tracks the shift from the newly theoretical approach of conservation, to reach a realistic application for the adaptive reuse of heritage buildings, all while revealing the potentials and the problematic of the process, and the impact of uncontrolled gentrification on the built environment. The paper also addresses the issue of what Lees (1996) called "Geography of Gentrification", which makes a crucial necessity to realize the dilemma of how gentrification promotes and expands within cities. Moreover, this paper explores the implementation of the gentrification indicators evolved by Clay (1979) four-stage besides the two stages added by Moskowitz (2017), as well as kennedy & Leonard (2001) trying to apply it on Downtown Cairo in order to explore the operational process of gentrification. The research approaches these different issues to illustrate the unique Egyptian character, problems and potentials in comparing to the international ones.

## METHODOLOGY

Gentrification as a new scope for research and analysis; however, there is a lot to be explored and examined. Many researchers consider it as a theoretical framework and process which has influences and consequences, positive and negative ones, and can also been reversely processed: de-gentrification. While many researchs may study gentrification process within different international cities; however, there are few attempts to categorize and identify gentrification indicators.

This paper also outlines several approaches that academic researchers have recently defined for gentrification analysis and assessment. Differences in such variables and norms can lead to very different findings and outcomes observed in gentrified versus non-gentrified districts. This comprehensive review illustrates the scope of data and methods used to explore gentrification and its effects.

the gentrification indicators are examined by reviewing methodical stages and different classification; in order to overlap and join the case study of of Downtown Cairo with the gentrification indicators to reach the main goal of the paper, which is to reveal how gentrification is processing, then to predict future gentrification sites in order to consider the appropriate precautions for gentrification development control and to avoid its negative impacts while using its positive ones to upgrade the gentrified zones.

## 1. HISTORY OF THE TERM: GENTRIFICATION

Several researches aim to approach the identification and classification of urban and architectural conservation and its categories. Apparently the term 'conservation' has been used in a very ambiguous way; due to having many term equivalents as adaptive reuse, preservation, revitalization, … etc., and more sub-categories as restoration, refurbishment, rehabilitation, … etc. The blurry margins between those different

terminologies are not often used in place, yet used in a misconceived way as well, which is often determined by the author's view. Recently, a new trendy term 'gentrification' – originally confined to western cities and referring to a changing process in urban neighbourhood character – is globally and publicly propagandized. Although being a famous worldwide concept, it is still an ambiguous, yet highly debatable concept even more than the term was first originated half a century later.

Originating during the early 1960's in London, the gentrification term has been released in an essay on the urban dynamics, when the sociologist city planner Ruth Glass reported the displacement of the low-income neighborhood by the process of middle/upper-income groups buying properties in such areas, and refurbishing them; and to depict the influx of a new 'gentry' of rich people into poor districts (Kennedy & Leonard, 2001). She stated that once the gentrification process starts in a similar district, it goes on quickly until all or most of the residents are displaced, and the entire urban social character of the district is changed. Glass pointed out that the changes in such neighborhoods' character was rapid, and gentrification is expanding to other nearby districts (Glass, 1964).

After Glass' term, many other researchers have tried to identify comprehensibly gentrification. Rachel Kleit, a professor of city and regional planning, states that it as "the process of a neighborhood upgrading". She explained that by some means there are new comers moving in, new markets introducing, and consequently there's new demand for extra services and more housing in that area (Hamnett, 2003). She also deduces that gentrification is replacing the working class by the invasion of the middle class, besides the revamping of residential houses (Kleit, 2016).

Moreover, gentrification term is mostly used critically, expressing the displacement of low-income communities by rich ones (Benjamin, 2003). The term is also used to depict the arrival of cash-rich stratum in an existing urban district, resulting in the increase in property values and rents, and the alteration in the district's cultural character. Smith's adds that gentrification has broadened to turn into a new form of neo-liberal urban strategy (Atkinson & Bridge, 2005). Also, gentrification is the process of more higher-income level residents moving into historically less affluent neighborhoods, and to relocate low-income communities from their place to clear the way for newcomers. Thus, urban, economic, socio-cultural changes arise while urban districts are exposed to gentrification (Mazzola, 2003). Accordingly, early definitions around gentrification were focused on the rehabilitation of existent properties, and the residential housing market. However, these definitions help to understand its effects and symptoms.

## 1.1 Gentrification Impacts: Advantages and Disadvantages

As previously discussed, gentrification has become a quite controversial issue in urban areas where the process has been applied, however, it has both its advantages and disadvantages (Atkinson, 2002). While some politicians, urban planners, real estate investors and the middle class society consider its effects purely advantageous, and perceive it as an amelioration process for urban decay; others argue that it often results in substandard social consequences, such as racial displacement and loss of cultural diversity; as the gentrication process is predominantly criticized for the displacement of poor residents, who experience a breakdown of their social networks by wealthy newcomers (Slater, 2002).

Regarding the positive impacts, gentrification prevents the unceasing decline of the district, consequently stabilising it. The change in holding from renting to owners playing a part in the stabilisation of the city, noticeable increase of the property value, reducing the rates of vacant housing and unoccupied apartments in the area; thus, an increase in local government revenues and financial resources occurs, and which can be profitable to areas of a city that seek them significantly. The increase and encouragement of social mix and further development in the gentrified area (Ley, 2003); then, reduces suburban sprawl (Markley, 2018). Further benefits include reduction in transportation distance to central business district workplaces, and increased access to employment opportunities. There is a common agreement between researchers and specialists that the good aspect of gentrification results in the improvement of the districts metropolitan life, public facilities, decreasing the possibility of later demolition, and provides a practicable procedure for deteriorated districts. Furthermore, gentrification improves the deteriorating areas within the urban core revitalization, and promotes the historic preservation by the use of historical and architectural significance buildings. In fact, the improvement of the physical condition of the building, such as the façade and interior space is a concrete benefit of gentrification (Pimonsathean, 2002).

Conversely, as the gentrification process develops, drawbacks include increases in rent and property prices in the neighborhood, and subsequently tax bills, which cause the involuntary displacement of low-income residents (Chapple & Zuk, 2016). As a result, a pressure on housing demand occurs on surrounding areas, when the displaced community try to relocate. The rarity and eventually the absence of affordable houses and apartments in the area, the local services types change, besides the lack of social diversity occurs; from the socially diverse to wealthy districts (Atkinson & Bridge, 2005). Moreover, the installation of the new class leads more to the culture-ideology of consumerism, and the preference of a salient intermixture of a postmodern fusion of classical and contemporary architectural forms and details, expressed in gentrified properties design. Therefore, the physical and architectural character as well as the unique social fabric of the neighborhood noticeably changes, which is the most critical point of gentrification; as it is swiftly attracting also a sufficiently large number, causing as sort of sudden urban mutation.

Whether gentrification should be constricted, or whether be prevented, supported or controlled is therefore a topical debate (Bernt & Holm, 2009). Consequently, to identify gentrification advantages and to get the better of its disadvantages, there is a need to a general framework.

## 1.2 The Stages of Gentrification: Gentrification Indicators

Since 1980's, gentrification is regarded as an unmethodical process within the academic discipline. Later on, since 2000's, it is rather perceived as a concerted, well defined and planned process. Neil Smith points out that currently gentrification is not yet a random process existing in different zones haphazardly; yet is a generalized one. It is relatively a considered and systematic process procedure, which could be based on an economic or political decision. Since the 1990's, gentrification was developed to work as a global urban strategy; but the term can not be applicable or relevant

everywhere comparably, due to socio-culture differences; and it can also process reversely: degentrification.

In 1979, Phillip Clay, professor of urban studies at MIT, after studying the private reinvestment in the core of U.S. cities, identified the fundamentals for how to give thought to gentrification process, and categorized it into four consecutive stages. Moreover, Clay's model – with added stages from new researches – has been used for the past 40 years to classify and explain the undergoing process of a district within its developmental change (Clay, 1979) (Lees, et al., 2007). Gentrification four stages detected by Clay are: pioneering, expanding, adolescent and maturing gentrification.

- **Pioneering Stage** in which slightly more well-off newcomers residents (individual renovators) move into substandard district, and upgrade area houses. There is no much media/public regard; yet it's not only persons looking for investment by renovating houses who move in.

- **Expanding Stage** in which number of upgraded homes becomes noticeable, so more middle class newcomers moves in, and fast displacement starts. Real estate investors attempt to capitalize on the area's propagation cultured character; yet, national media begins to be more attentive.

- **Adolescent Stage** in which public & private bigger investors put money into district. Peter Moskowitz, author of 'How to Kill a City' states that companies are the real and only agent with enough capital to gentrify at this stage (Moskowitz, 2017). The massive capital funding from many parties is an indicator that the district is well into the gentrification process.

- **Maturing Stage** in which real estate development surpass and shift to upper class life style, and upgrade to luxurious apartments by large-scale developers. It's not about homes it's about profitable investment.

During the 1980's, the previous theoretical model of Clay was then a constructive interpretation of gentrification approach. By the late 1980's, his model just isn't enough due to time span and different socio-economic, and political changes, as the term was stretched, and new forms popped up (Bernt & Holm, 2009). Such new stages of gentrification include rural, new-build, and super gentrification (Davidson & Lees, 2004; Butler & Lees, 2006). By the 1990's, more research concluded that gentrification was a proper process linked to powerful public policy; since it was globally evolved to become an urban strategy. Ever since, cities have continued to expand, researchers also elaborated for additional stages: stage five and stage zero: Global Investors, and City Government (Moskowitz, 2017), as shown in Figure (1).

- **Global Investors Stage** in which foreign investors develop neighborhoods to be affordable only for the 'global elite'. Districts cease to be a standard life places – with work, dwelling, school and community spaces – and turn into deluxe commodities.

- **City Governments Stage** justifies why money and shifting demographics change a district. According to Moskowitz a series of massive economics developments are initiated by public sectors and state investment such as large historical buildings or flipped houses and luxurious apartments. Politicians become involved with gentrification policy as a way to fund and put money back into the cities they run.
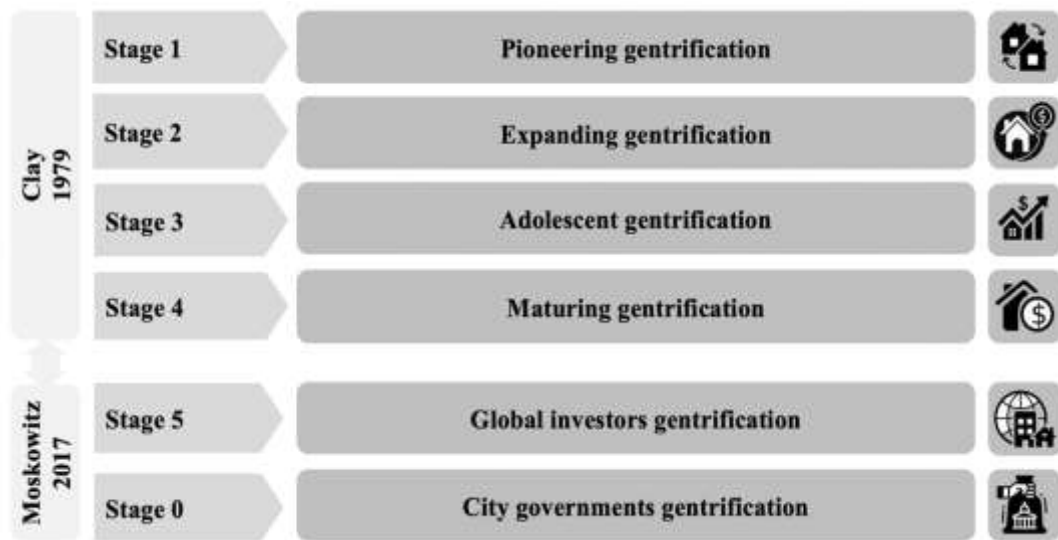
Figure (1): Clay and Moskowitz collective stages of gentrification
Source: Author, 2023

Furthermore, gentrification multiple indicators are diverse, Kennedy & Leonard's set three main conditions which all must be met to fulfil and achieve gentrification: first, displacement of original lower income residents; second, urban and socio-economic upgrading of the neighborhood, particularly of housing stock; and third, change in district urban and architectural character (Kennedy & Leonard, 2001).

In 2001, the Urban Institute of Columbia Policy Forum study and research in Columbian districts. As a consequence, they designate five main indicators of gentrification, listed as follows: low-cost neighborhoods adjacent to exorbitant areas, low-cost zones with adequate metro accessibility, low-cost districts with historic architecture, low-cost quarters with large housing units, and finally low-cost areas with recent value (Turner & Snow, 2001).

Furthermore, using indicators from the Canadian census Walks and Maaranen presented a gentrification and upgrading study and analysis in Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver cities. The study was divided into stages over the 1961 till 2001, to detect the gentrification aspect and upgrading processes, as six indicators were detected such as: changes in neighborhood income, changes in social class and status, changes in the Location Quotient (LQ) of artists, average monthly rents, and a dwelling values (Walks & Maaranen, 2008).

While studying gentrification and its effects, criteria and methodological variations used to assess neighborhood changes can lead to inconsistencies (Barton, 2016). According to many researchers, the values and condition changes of the housing stock with regards to demand and supply from wealthy community can only determine a gentrifying neighborhood (Hammel & Wyly, 1996; Freeman, 2005; Keels et al., 2013). Yet, other analyses consider shifts in the socio-economic characteristics of householders as indicators of gentrification. However, others look more holistically at signs of change within the community socio-cultural aspect that renovate the district by gentrification (Bostic & Martin, 2003; Ellen & Ding, 2016).

By reviewing, comparing and evaluating the previous different indicators, this paper determined that the ones of Clay's four-stage besides the two stages added by Moskowitz, as well as kennedy & Leonard indicators could be applied and perceived for the case study of Cairo's Downtown. However, on account of the individuality and the need for a comprehensive approach in the case studies used by Turner & Snow; and Walks & Maaranen, the issue that emphasizes the research viewpoint: what can be appropriate like in Montréal and Toronto, must not by default be applied to other cities due to socio-cultural differences (Carpenter & Lees, 1995). At that, the indicator considering the quality valuable architecture can be seen in the monumental and heritage zones with unique architectural styles. Yet, the indicator of the loss in value in districts is also represented in deteriorated and bad condition buildings; and both are key indicators for gentrification.

## 2. LEGISLATIONS RELATED TO CONSERVATION IN THE EGYPTIAN CONTEXT

In fact, one of the major elements that led to the reappropriation of Downtown Cairo, and the redefinition of its regeneration strategy was the 1992 Cairo earthquake, which called attention to the modern era urban heritage conservation leading to outline the legal framework ensuring its protection (El Kerdany & El Kadi, 2005). Moreover, on the urban development control level, according to the Egyptian Court of Cassation in March 2020, monuments and urban and architectural heritage in Egypt are literally protected under three laws and their executive regulations as shown in Figure (2) (Fahmy, 2013).
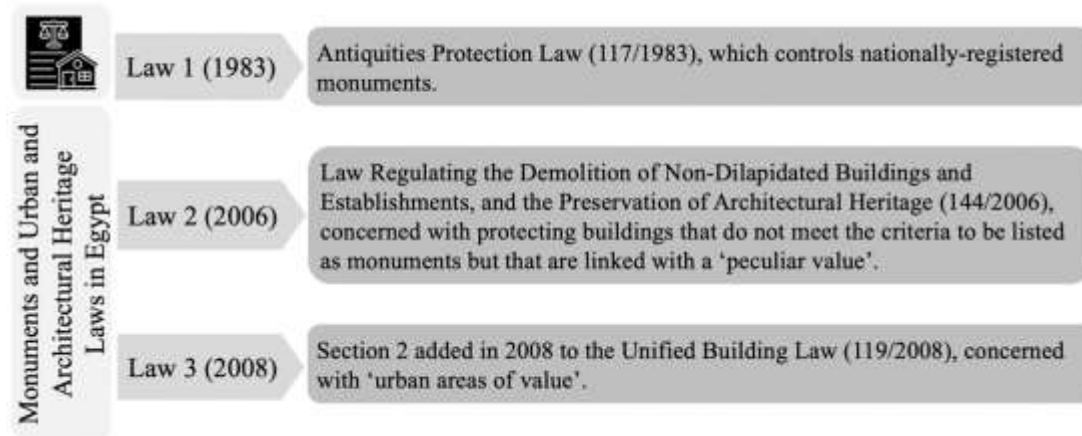


Figure (2): Monuments and urban and architectural heritage Laws in Egypt
Source: Author, 2023

According to this section, the National Organization for Urban Harmony NOUH is responsible in dealing with areas of characteristic values and in the delimitation of their protection boundaries. NOUH also proposes legislations and development guidelines to maintain character in these areas. Furthermore, NOUH tries to ensure the maintenance work for Downtown, in cooperation with home owners, shops and the 'third sector', forming board committees to review heritage buildings, and to take legal actions against violators, and to prevent transform apartments to warehouses, or any inappropriate activities.

For Historic Cairo (although not for all other areas of value), areas are classified in three categories: A, B or C, and an overlap zone between historic and Khedival Cairo (AlSadaty, 2021). These category zones have common general regulations and guidelines concerning character, urban tissue, modification and restoration of buildings, but different regulations are applied for new buildings; mainly with regard to the permitted heights, and percentages and proportions of fenestration. These regulations are customized to the character of each area of value.

## 3. EGYPTIAN CAIRO'S DOWNTOWN CASE STUDY

Probably, it is only on the cultural level that Egypt could be considered as capital of the Arab world, through the diversity and richness of its activities, production in the fields of literature, arts and audio-visual, and above all, its archaeological, urban, and architectural heritage which is recently highlighted (El Kadi, 2012).

In this section, the paper will display the the case study analysis using two methods to explore it in order to find out the current status, primarily by surveying the efforts of some stakeholders including public and private sectors and who are interested in the study area of Downtown Cairo. Next, the case study analysis will be linked and correlated with the gentrification indicators discussed in the previous section.

### 3.1 The Development of Khedivial Cairo – Egyptian Government 's project to 'face-lift' Khedivial Cairo

Cairo's Downtown case is a public heritage project, which aims for socio-cultural development. It forms a core of attraction for national, international, private and public fund raising. Therefore, coinciding with the imminent transfer of the ministries to the new administrative capital NAC, the government started a plan to develop, conserve and modernize the Khediveal downtown, and to make optimal use of the assets of ministries and major public companies. In March 2013, the Egyptian government called to prepare a master plan to develop the historical Khedivial Cairo, to generate a new life into the area, almost like the Khedive Ismail's 1863 project which attempted to create the "Paris of the East" by remodelling the downtown area. Cairo Governorate called to form a ministerial committee, which was tasked to restore its urban and architectural aspects, and to develop, promote, and restore the district newly in its historic and valuable heritage prominence.

Actually, Cairo's downtown, which is considered as an open museum, since its establishment for more than 150 years, includes nearly 500 listed buildings with unique architectural styles, and a popular and a significant hub for variety of small retail boutiques, bakery, bookshops, coffeeshops, antique shops, beauty salons, social clubs, fast-food, … etc. This developmental project attempts to have cultural, economic, touristic and social dimensions and returns; by conserving its historic and unique heritage architectural style. Collaborating with NOUH, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, and a number of Egyptian institutions, Cairo governorate started by repainting around 300 buildings façades and storefronts in downtown using one unified light beige color for building façades and shop signs, and dark brown one for storefronts; similar to the restoration carried out at *al-Tahrir* Square's buildings and shops (Al-Kady, 2020). Such efforts have maintained the historical characteristics of the district. While many of the façades are being repainted; so far, the renovations are

limited to the exteriors paint, while the interiors are being left to decay. Thus, if not restoring now, it will be hard to refurbish them later on (Figure 3).



Figure (3): Governmental efforts to paint and unify the building façades and storefronts.
Source: Kamaly, 2015; Egypt's Projects Map, 2023

By reviewing the urban and architectural development carried out by NOUH, they were mainly on *Qasr al-Nil* Street, *al-Shawarby* Street, *al-Bursa* Street, and the Opera Square. On the urban and street level are such as removing the encroachments on the sidewalks, removing occupancy of random kiosks and banning street vendors. Traffic in some internal streets is also converted into pedestrians, providing safe paths for disabled, developing street aesthetic lighting, and uplifting the landscape of existing gardens (Attia, et al., 2017) (Figure 4).



Figure (4): NOUH Squares and streets urban and architectural development.
Source: NOUH, 2023; Author, 2023

On the buildings architectural level, it was preserving the distinctive architectural façades of buildings by removing all damages by using appropriate restoration materials, unifying organizing and renovating the design of shop signage and storefronts to their original shape by the use of documentary old photos to blend with the district character, and by removing flashy ads and banners (Figures: 5 & 6).

The use of Neo-classic style, as one of the architectural styles present in Khedive Cairo, while imparting a spirit of modernity and reliance on environmentally friendly materials. Moreover, the development project proposes to renovate the original façade of the Royal Opera House, while retaining the administrative building and multi-storey parking without prejudice to its main function as a garage serving this crowded area. The project also includes work on reviving *al-Azbakiya* Garden, and restoring the Opera Square, its surrounding area, and the Grand Continental Cairo Hotel building, overlooking the Opera Square and *al-Azbakiya* Garden, and turn it into an international hotel chain.

Figure (5): Urban and street problems: encroachments on the sidewalks, stores façades, random kiosks, street vendors, and traffic.
Source: Nabil & Tarek, 2014; Author, 2023



Figure (6): Converted streets into pedestrians, unifying and renovating storefronts
Source: Author, 2023; NOUH, 2023

Apparently, the government scheme to develop Downtown Cairo has many beneficial aspects, as it shows the government's obvious interest and concern. This is also of great support o shop owners, visitors, and residents, as it creates an ambience of classic architectural character aesthetic; which attracts people traffic. Nevertheless, shopkeepers expressed varied responses regarding the government's efforts to restore and unify the shops façades (Al-kady, 2020). In fact, the government does not consider the opinions of shop owners regarding such restorations, some of them preferred to keep the signs of their shops, particularly the old ones, and those with coloured brand identity; as such unification action leads to disfigure and lose their character. Then, it will be tricky to differentiate between the fronts of different stores types; as clients and customers will pass a long time to reach the desired retail store. So, the incipient development quality of the project show signs of inadequacy.

### 3.2 The Private Sector Initiatives: *Al-Ismaelia* for Real Estate Investment

As previously mentioned, a lot of the renovations are executed on the Governate side on behalf of the "Strategic Development Plan for Greater Cairo Region 2050"; yet, on the private sector level, there's also *al-Ismaelia* for Real Estate Investment, founded in 2008, and who is trying to profit from the revitalization of Downtown Cairo through conserving its architectural and urban unique character. The Beltone Private Equity (BPE Partners), the holding head company of *al-Ismaelia* is buying privately-owned buildings in Downtown Cairo, and refurbishing them inside out, besides reviving the area as a whole to remodel it into a connected city and a cosmopolitan magnet. *Al-Ismaelia* try to revive the Downtown historiy by using experts and consultants to restore buildings to its original, and developing an urban scheme for the area. The company

currently owns around 20 buildings of residential and commercial types, and aiming to boost more interest in their acquired properties (Figures: 7 & 8).



Figure (7): Samples of *al-Ismaelia* privately-owned renovated Downtown buildings.
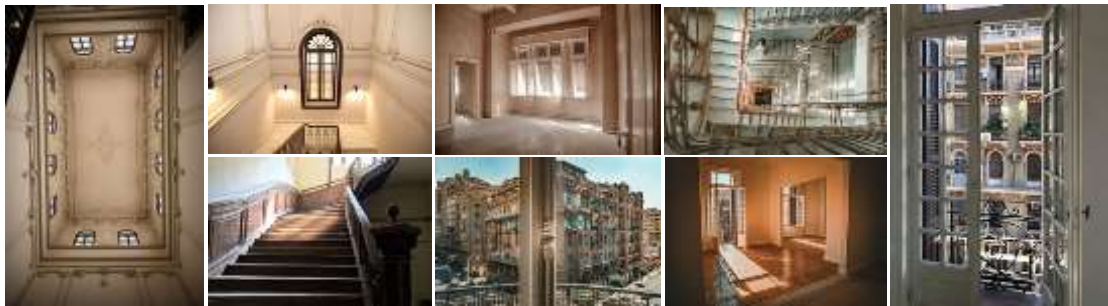Source: Al-Ismaelia, 2023.



Figure (8): Samples of *al-Ismaelia* interior spaces refurbishment.
Source: Source: Al-Ismaelia, 2023.

The International Institute for Urban Development (I2UD); an offshoot from the Harvard School of Architecture and Urban Planning; basically assisted *al-Ismaelia* Company with the main plan, which went through different phases such as studing downtown, and proposing a master plan for the district as a whole; then creating a subordinate plan for its own buildings. *Al-Ismaelia* completed the first phase in late 2010, and wanted to cooperate with the government before renovations in early 2011; yet, the revolution started, and unfortunately downtown hasn't been a priority for any of the governments ever since up till 2020's.

Moreover, Cairo Downtown has been the hub for al-Ismaelia socio-cultural and public art movement during the past ten years: it launched Cairo Downtown Walking Tours (D-TOUR) in 2015. Since, Downtown's culture and class diversity creates a good model of harmony; recently, people visit the district seeking for something unique from the mainstream culture. As cultural art events and activities are impartial as they move the social and economic stagnation, the objective of the company is how to attract a positive multitude and traffic of people to Downtown, and retrieve residents from the social levels that had move out Downtown Cairo over time.
to restore its vibrancy, bringing Downtown to life, expanding profitable activities

For instance, D-CAF (Downtown Contemporary Arts Festival) is considered an opportunity mean to display shows of international cultures, besides a tool to attract people to Cairo's Downtown.

In 2016, *al-Ismaelia* company collaborating with D-CAF renovated buildings to host and organize independent art events; to become a hub for the creative cognoscenti – filmmakers and artists – using them as featured backdrop in their artworks. Hereafter, *al-Ismaelia* started renting out spaces for artistic purposes: *Dakhli West El Balad* (Kamaly, 2015). They provide equally temporary spaces on short-term time for music-video clip shoots, workshops and showcases. They've also completely restored the iconic Cinema Radio, and working on characteristic pedestrian walkways as the Kodak Passageway (Ashour & Braker, 2020), the renovation of the old French Consulate, and the launch of its latest project *Consoleya* (Figures: 9-11).



Figure (9): Cinema Radio and Townhouse Art Centre renovation and adaptive reuse.
Source: Source: Al-Ismaelia, 2023.



Figure (10): Renovation and adaptive reuse of the old French Consulate: *Consoleya*
Source: Source: Al-Ismaelia, 2023.

In 2018, *al-Ismaelia* Company, for the development and revitalization of the heritage Downtown Cairo's buildings, won the International Centre for the Preservation of Architectural Heritage Award in Italy. However, the company archetype reveals many critical debatable points among real estate investors, urban planners, artists and public-opinion. Besides, there have been critical issues commentary concerning the company model between society and the mass media, accusing it of attempting to 'gentrify' Downtown Cairo.

Figure (11): Kodak Passageway as a unique pedestrian, artistic, and cultural spot.
Source: Al-Ismaelia, 2023; Jan Braker Architect, 2018

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Several researches aim to identify and classify urban and architectural conservation. Yet, the term has been used in a very ambiguous way; due to having many term equivalents with blurry margins, and used in a misconceived way as well, which is often determined by the author's viewpoint. Recently, gentrification is globally and publicly propagandized as a famous worldwide concept; still, it is a vague, highly controversial concept, confined to western cities, and referring to a changing process in urban and architectural neighbourhood character.

Positively, gentrification increases social mix, property value, and government revenues and financial resources, reduces the rates of vacant housing and unoccupied apartments in the area, and reduces urban sprawl, which increase the government revenues and financial resources, and reduces urban sprawl. There is a common agreement between researchers and specialists that the good aspect of gentrification results in the improvement of the districts metropolitan life, public facilities, and provides feasible solutions for deteriorated districts within the urban core, and the improvement of the physical condition of the buildings with historical or architectural significance, including their façades and interior spaces, reducing future demolition. Negatively, it enables the loss of social diversity, increases the demand on housing units, and changes critically the character of the neighborhood; as as sort of sudden urban mutation.

Whether gentrification should be constricted, or whether be prevented, supported or controlled is therefore a topical debate. Consequently, to identify gentrification advantages and to get the better of its disadvantages, there is a need to a general framework. Briefly, gentrification process aims to ameliorate urban life of the district, which could be developed and controled by the government or investors or even higher class community than the already existing one. The gentrified buildings become of interest in the public eye, when both the gentrifiers and the district have the qualification, ability and motivating force to be gentrified synchronously; all of that occur disregarding gentrification negative consequences.

Moreover, the gentrification process differs when being applied, as there are more constraints for its process, both on the architectural and urban heritage scope. There are still indispensable approaches; as buildings' listing and assessment, along with the proper choice of the adapted new use, which actually had received a great deal of research interest in analysis and categorization, based on the economic and social

impact of the adaptive reuse within the heritage zone. The qualities to be conserved vary widely in scale; they encompass the historic urban character of the area, as well as the detailed materials and elements expressing it. ICOMOS Washington Charter in 1987 recommended for the consideration of the exterior and interior appearance of the buildings as defined by scale, style, construction, materials, color and decoration.

By reviewing the four-stages gentrification indicators of Clay: pioneering, expanding, adolescent and maturing gentrification; besides the two stages added by Moskowitz: global investors, and city Government stages, the paper finds out that Downtown Cairo could be apparently going into the adolescent stage. This third stage in which investment of capital from many parties – public & private investors – putting money into district, which is an indicator that the district is well into the gentrification process. Regarding kennedy & Leonard three main indicators and conditions which all must be met: displacement of original lower income residents; upgrading the district housing stock; and change in district urban and architectural character; they could also be clearly perceived and applied for the case study of Cairo's Downtown.

Additionally, The crisis of centrality is now directing urban policies towards a requalification of the Downtown Cairo, which started at the beginning of the 1950's, during which the Downtown Cairo was de-gentrified. It was the consequence of the accumulation of several complex and interrelated political factors. First came the 'Cairo Fire' in January 1952 that ravaged the business centre, and marked the beginning of its decline; then came the departure of foreigners and part of the Egyptian aristocracy in three successive waves: Palestine War 1948; Suez Crisis 1956-1957; confiscation of properties of the royal family and elites/upper-class; and public sector nationalization 1961, which relieved a large housing stock in downtown. This stock was redistributed among members of the ruling class, their relatives, state clients and public sector companies. Then, the downtown's flair began to decline, its economic activity and stores no longer attract clients, and its magnificent iconic buildings have also been transformed into educational or administrative types and, for lack of maintenance, have presented an increasingly dilapidated appearance.

While, Downtown has been obsolete and largely left to deteriorate; nevertheless, the unrepeatable area has been in the process of revampment to revitalize it to its previous eminence. The public and private sectors attempts to develop and modernize the area, try to preserve the history and identity of its unique architectural styles and character. However, although such efforts and conservation legislations and regulations, in the Egyptian context, as monuments and urban and architectural heritage; could it be considered as an archetype for an Egyptian real estate development?

The dilemma is the lack of urban monitoring from the government, beside the state institutions mediocrity to manage the development control of the heritage zones of value. Conclusively, the private sector should work hand in hand with the government to achieve these objectives. Downtown Cairo and its timeline of history needs extensive studies to address the investors, artists, and all other stakeholders who are taking part in its gentrification, and how can they ensure it sustaining as a hub for the entire city. Furthermore, it is crucial to appoint the relevant applicable process in order to develop the heritage areas; to specify the contributions of the government, individual investors, communities, and any private sectors to execute and achieve a comprehensive developmental vision for it. Moreover, to constitute a mediating public art council,

including the downtown real estate investors and art spaces, to support the sustainability of these spaces, to develop with funds and extra spaces, as well as to encourage collaboration organization and synchronisation of public and artistic events and activities. Finally, by establishing a squad of trustees and interest for Downtown Cairo, conserving the area from a holistic urban, environmental, economic, and socio-cultural perspectives; therefore, the government will be involved along with reliable businesses, civil society, and artists. Such development to happen and last, requires tangible collaboration and well constructed agreement.

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