FORGOTTEN PLACES
REASONS WHY PLACES (COMMUNITIES AND BUILDINGS) ARE FORGOTTEN OR ABANDONED AND SOME METHODS FOR REVIVING THEM

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ABSTRACT: *Numerous reasons cause people to abandon the space, the building, or the community where they habitually pursue their various activities. These reasons stem from human behavior, disputes among people, or a lack of experience among individuals. In some cases, the reason is nature's strong resistance to human attempts to alter it and to negative behavior that aims at modifying intrinsic environmental features. Identifying reasons behind the abandonment of places is very important; it helps people to avoid them, and allows for the efficient reuse of such places. This may be achieved through the conception and implementation of new economic or investment policies, through the renovation of an abandoned place and the enhancement of its appearance to use it as a tourist attraction, or even through the permanent destruction of a place, in an appropriate manner that benefits both humans and nature.*

KEYWORDS: Reasons why buildings are abandoned – forgotten places – uninhabited locations – revival

INTRODUCTION

This study deals with the reasons behind abandoning places (spaces, buildings and communities). It attempts to identify, collect and classify these reasons in order to determine methods for dealing with forgotten places while also reducing the risk of abandoning additional places.

Research Objectives:
  a. Identifying the reasons behind abandoning / forgetting various places
  b. Classification of these reasons
  c. Presentation of some methods that could be used to revive abandoned places
  d. Submission of recommendations aimed at reducing the risk of abandoning other places

THEORETICAL APPROACH

Every family home contains a forgotten space, used solely to store (at least temporarily) unneeded objects. This space within the home is abandoned, used only when the need to retrieve an object arises, or when another unwanted item is added to it, to remain there until it is needed once more or is finally disposed of. The reasons why such objects are discarded could be human changes of humor, the arrival of modern items that replace them and make them obsolete or social, economic or physiological changes that render the objects useless. However, rather than recycle these discarded objects, people prefer to store them, thinking that they may need them

again one day, or because of they attach a sentimental value to certain objects. Another reason could be that the transport of unneeded items to the designated elimination spot is too much trouble, or people's belief the income generated by recycling is much lower than the cost of transporting and selling items for recycling purposes. As a result, such objects remain in that forgotten space in the home until someone remembers them, months, years, and sometimes decades later.

Break up of forgotten places by degree of construction
Like the abandoned / forgotten spaces in individual housing units, various types of forgotten places also exist on a greater scale. They can be broken up as follows:
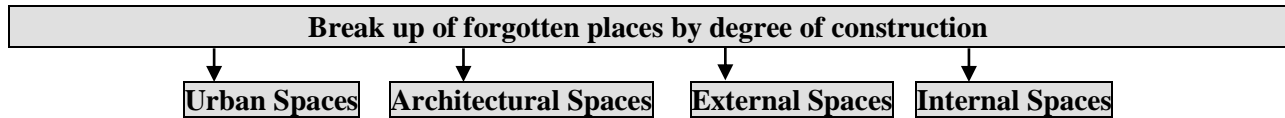
Break up of forgotten places by degree of construction

Urban Spaces	Architectural Spaces	External Spaces	Internal Spaces

Table 1: Break up of forgotten spaces by degree of construction

Reasons why buildings are abandoned or forgotten
This section of the research identifies the reasons behind abandoning architectural spaces and discusses some international and local examples. Subsequent research sections will attempt, upon this basis, to classify the different reasons and to formulate appropriate solutions to the problem.

Social changes:
The science of sociology considers certain basic concepts related to social change as established facts[1]. These concepts are:
1. Social change is an indisputable reality
2. Social change is not a process whose beginning and end are predetermined in advance
3. Sometimes, the social change process is a violent one, accompanied by high social costs; at other times, social change is largely political in nature

Social changes are of different varieties:
1. Changes affecting the parameters of a person's life
2. Changes affecting the individual's behavior
3. Disputes among individuals
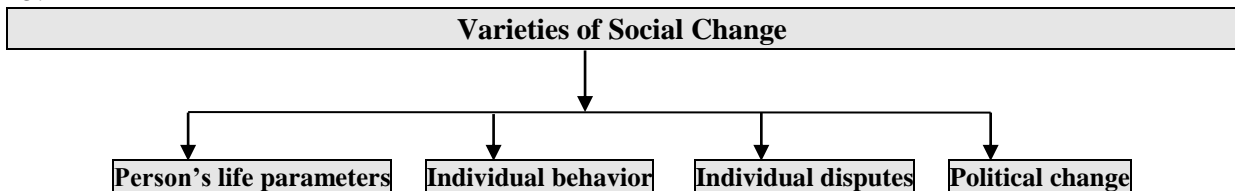4. Political change that brings about changes in the nature of society as a whole
5.

Varieties of Social Change

Person's life parameters	Individual behavior	Individual disputes	Political change

Figure 2: Varieties of Social Change.
Source, Researcher

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[1] Al Khodour, Ibrahim Sulayman, "*Al taghayor al egtema3e bayn al qowa wa al seyassa - derassa fi asbab al3onf al egtema3ee*", *Damascus University Review*, Vol. 22, 2006.

Changes affecting the parameters of a person's life including:
1. Standard of living, savings, individual & family income
2. Changing social conditions that force people to take precautions that influence the parameters of their lives, Example: The head of family's desire to provide a future home for his children or family

The above factors shape an individual's wishes, hopes and future investment plans. To economize, people construct buildings early, with the intention of using, selling, or renting them out at a future time.

> **Consequence**: This social change has produced a category of buildings that remain unused, uncared for and un-maintenance for several decades. With time, such buildings may be in such a derelict condition that they turn into abandoned or forgotten places.
> **Concrete example**: A school in the "Al Oraygaa" district, west of Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia[1]

Figure 1: The Abandoned / Forgotten School
Source, [1] Al Shahry, Mohamed, "*Madrassa mohmala 6 a3wam ... morta3 allosoos wa almotakhalefeen*", www.aleqt.com , 17 January 2012.

> The school falls under the Ministry's jurisdiction. Although construction was completed six years ago, it has not been used and has fallen prey to thieves – a clear case of negligence by the authorities.

Changes in individual behavior:
- Psychological studies and theories underline the important effect of a person's immediate environment on his / her behavior and habits.
- Human behavior comprises the numerous daily activities undertaken by individuals to meet the requirements of life. Behavior is either innate or acquired. While innate behavior does not need to be learned, acquired behavior (such as reading and writing) is learned through an individual's interaction with his / her immediate environment. Since humans are sociable beings by nature, how individuals behave in conducting relations with other members of a group constitutes yet another form of human behavior. This type of behavior is acquired at birth, first when individuals interact with family members, and later through their interaction with the environment outside the home.

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[1] Al Shahry, Mohamed, "*Madrassa mohmala 6 a3wam ... morta3 allosoos wa almotakhalefeen*", www.aleqt.com , 17 January 2012.

- **Elements of the architectural environment that affect human behavior**:
Building designs (architectural environments) are affected by certain human psychological elements and personal characteristics, which in turn influence aspects of behavior, such as behavior related to an individual's personal traits, socio-cultural background and experience, or that is related to the overall makeup of the environment which occupied.
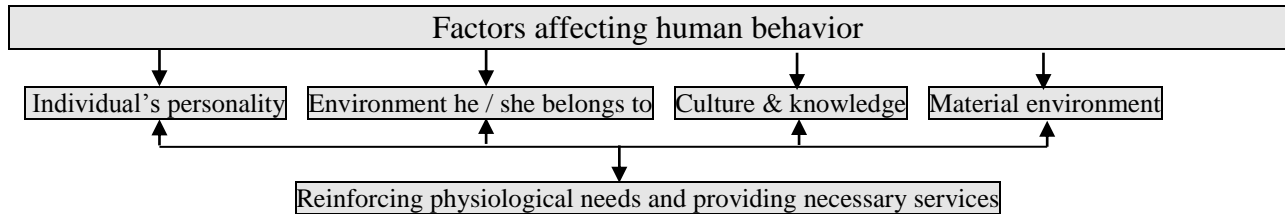

Figure 3: Factors affecting human behavior
Source, Researcher

- Many behaviors result from people's desire to fulfill their physiological needs and to ensure the availability of functional services required for various activities, and these behaviors differ across the globe. However, an examination of some types of behavior that exist in Egypt at present, particularly those that influence the abandonment and neglect of certain buildings, show that they can be attributed to a number of causes, such as:
1. Persons find alternative means to fulfill the function(s) for which buildings were constructed
2. Inadequate culture and knowledge, factors which have become lower on the scale of priorities than wealth and social connections
3. Greed and the desire to increase wealth and profit margins, regardless of the legality of the methods adopted
4. Poor quality of individual performance and production, combined with the absence of genuine regulatory processes
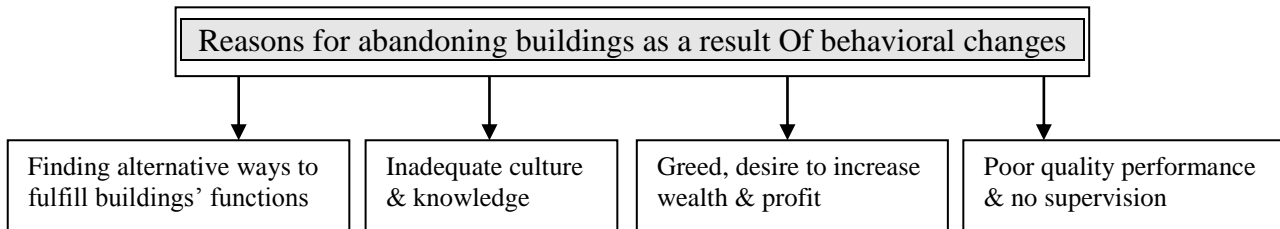

Table 4: Reasons for abandoning buildings as a result of Behavioral changes

- These reasons affect many buildings in what is known as the 'cultural exchange' phenomenon. This phenomenon refers to individuals' choosing of locations and fields of behavior that coincide with their needs and their desire to take part in activities in that field. The cultural exchange

phenomenon thus provides a suitable framework for explaining people's choice of types of behavioral.[123]

Film theft and the effect of this behavior on cinema buildings:
Film theft is threatening cinemas and movie theaters in Egypt. Film producers and movie stars compete with one another for the income generated by Egypt's summer season films, with each group hoping to obtain the greatest number of viewers. Burning stolen films to DVDs threatens to put all players, both inside the country and abroad, at risk of incurring serious losses. No film today is protected against the threat of this widespread phenomenon.

A novel type of behavior has been building up on the streets of Egypt in recent years. **Initially**, movies used to be copied and sold to the public at an affordable price. This meant that a certain class of moviegoers (the least well off) used to wait to see a movie after it had been copied and sold - even if that meant watching a poor quality picture.

- In the **second phase** of this type of behavior, movies were stolen directly following the first showing in cinemas, and superior quality copies were made and sold. This made matters worse; it reduced even further the number of moviegoers because middle class citizens joined the ranks of people who purchase stolen films and don't wait for them to be shown in movie theatres.
- In its **third phase**, this type of behavior has been compounded further; films are purloined before they have been shown in the cinemas. The number of people who buy movies before they have been released has increased, and there has been a sharp drop in the number of moviegoers. Only the wealthier citizens, those who continue to appreciate the movie theatre ambiance and a film's sound effects etc, frequent cinemas today. A large portion of this group understands the inherent dangers of film theft and completely opposes this type of behavior.
- **Example of a forgotten building:** The oldest movie theater in the district of Shubra is the "Cinema Modern" located on Shubra Street (in the neighborhood of Almassara). It was built in the

early 1960s as an assembly hall where President Gamal Abdel Nasser could hold Labor Day celebrations, and was also used as a theater to exhibit the artistic creations of workers. However,

[1] Part Two: *Al osos alnazareya lederassat alensan wa alsolook alensani*

[2] Saad, Abdel Hameed Mohamed, "*derassat fi 3elm alegtema3 althaqafee*", Nahdat Al Sharq, Cairo, 1980.

[3] Wicker, A.W., "An introduction to ecological psychology", Belmont CA: Wads Worth Inc. 1979.

after the conference hall in Nasr City was built, Nasser decided that the building should be put to better use; it became a cinema that was leased from its owner (the General Union of Textile Workers).[1] Figure 2: "Cinema Modern", on Shubra Street (Almassara neighborhood), Cairo

Behavior leading to poor construction, which culminates in the abandonment of buildings that no one, wants to occupy:

This negative type of behavior has had many adverse effects, such as the appearance of numerous recently constructed buildings that are unfit for occupation or use because of poor quality construction and their derelict condition. Contracting companies today strive to win tenders for large government projects by submitting realistic project implementation prices. Once a project gets underway however, the contractors become careless about implementing the original design, and use cheaper, poor quality building materials. As a result, after paying all their savings to obtain a housing unit in such a project, citizens are surprised to discover the inferior quality of construction and poor housing conditions; although they are recent, such buildings have the appearance of derelict decade-old constructions.

This type of behavior led to the abandonment of these communities and the unwillingness to occupy them. The buildings remain abandoned for several years, until a few of the new owners give in and start to repair and maintain the buildings at their private expense (in addition to the amount they previously paid to purchase the apartment or unit). The contracting companies finish their work and the governments sign protocols inaugurating these communities as *'new residential Communities'*. The fate of the community is of no concern; what matters most to these people is to make money and increase their profits, in the almost total absence of controls or regulations.

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[1] Report: "sareqat al aflam tohaded sn3t al cinema fi misr", Al Watan (Culture & Arts Section)
http://www.alwatan.com/graphics/2005/07jul/15.7/dailyhtml/culture.html#4

Example of a forgotten community:
Apartment owners in the 'Youth Housing Project' in the Al Ashrafeya region of Aleppo, Syria unanimously agreed that the residential apartments were completely dilapidated and unfit for human occupation. They also stated that the apartments had been delivered to them after the stipulated date, adding that receiving the units in an unfinished state would have been better than to receive them in their present derelict condition. (Figure 3)[12]

Figure 3: Youth Housing Project Apartments in Al Ashrafeya region, Aleppo

Disputes among individuals:
Wars and disputes among individuals adversely affect people and the environment they live in, including buildings and entire populated areas. The extent of damage that befalls the architectural environment depends on the magnitude of the dispute and the parties involved in it. Disputes over inheritance or disputes that concern housing laws sometimes lead to the abandonment of buildings, which are then forgotten for long periods. In most cases, wars cause serious damage to entire populated areas, leading to the same result - abandonment of the damaged area.

Example of a populated area abandoned because of war:
The city of Agdam in Azerbaijan was once a flourishing city with a population of 150 000 inhabitants. The city fell in 1993 during the Nagorno Karabakh War. Although it had not been a battleground, Agdam fell prey to acts of vandalism after it was occupied by the Armenians. The city's buildings were razed to the ground; the only sound building still standing is the mosque, whose walls are covered with graffiti. Agdam's inhabitants moved to other regions of Azerbaijan, as well as to Iran, leaving behind their city's abandoned buildings, proof of the cruelty of war and disputes among peoples, which only lead to destruction, undermining the principal reason for the creation of man – to build up

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[1] http://www.syria-news.com/readnews.php?sy_seq=129491
Article: "*bayn ehmal mota3ahdi al bena'a wa haram almo'assassat 7elm al shabab yata7awal lekabous*", 02-03-2011
[2] www.syria-news.com "*al sakan alshababi fi 7alab wa ma khafeya kann a3zam*"

Figure 4: The frightening ruins of the city of Agdam, Azerbaijan

Another populated area abandoned because of war:
The small village of Oradour-sur-Glane, in France, is an indescribably frightful place. During World War II, the German army executed 642 of its inhabitants who had taken part in the French resistance movement. The Germans had originally planned to invade an area near the village, but on June 10, 1944, they mistakenly invaded Oradour-sur-Glane. According to a survivor, the men of the village were herded into stables and shot in the legs to ensure that they would suffer a slow and painful death. The women and children who had been locked up in the church were all killed by machinegun fire when they tried to escape. The Germans destroyed the village later, but its ruins still stand today, as a memorial to the dead, and a reminder of the tragic incident.

Figure 5: The ruined village of Oradour-sur-Glane, France

A third populated area abandoned because of war:
This town is called Tyneham, meaning 'the lost village'. During World War II, the British Ministry of Defense took over the town, located on the Isle of Purbeck in the south of England, to use it as a military base. The town's inhabitants were promised that they would retrieve their homes after the war, but this promise was never fulfilled. With the exception of the church and the school, which are some distance away, Tyneham has been a ghost town since the war. Old pupils' desks are still inside the school, and a sign on the church reads, "Please take care of our church and houses.

Figure 6: The ruins of Vneham Town, Isle of Purbeck in the south of England[1]

Political changes that trigger changes in society as a whole:
The policies adopted by a country have a distinct influence on the nature of its society, the behavior of its members and social interactions among individuals generally. From ancient times, all peoples have needed leaders to lay down laws regulating the relationship among individuals, preventing one individual from encroaching upon the rights of others. Usually chosen by common accord, leaders were initially among the wisest, shrewdest and most just of a clan or people. With time, human greed and authority took over, however, and leadership came to be inherited. The person who inherited authority could either prove to be worthy of leading his people, or turn out to be a tyrant who did not treat his people justly. In other cases, a clan would attack another, plundering coveted possessions and leaving what it had no need for.

Present day societies are based on these innate ancient laws, but with a simple difference; the much larger number of people governed by a single authority. As a result, it is very common, when leadership is poor, for some individuals to escape society's control. Given the many services that they are expected to provide, the leaders in power forget about their duty towards these individuals – if they are even aware of their duties in the first place.

Example of policy decisions and changes that have affected architecture:
During British rule, the Kowloon Walled City used to stand just outside of Hong Kong, China. It used to serve as a vanguard for detecting pirates and was occupied by Japan during World War II. After the Japanese surrender, the city was taken over by fugitives from the law. Neither Britain nor China was ready to assume responsibility for the city, which became a lawless place where crime flourished. The city's population grew over the decades. Winding paths were built between the existing buildings and above street level – and piles of garbage blocked all passages. The buildings became taller, making it impossible for the sun's rays to reach the lower levels, and the entire city depended on fluorescent lights. Finally, in 1993, the Chinese and British authorities, who had come to

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[1] Steph, "20 Abandoned Cities, Towns & Places Around the World",
http://weburbanist.com/2008/07/06/20-abandoned-cities-and-towns/

realize the extent of the danger posed by such an unruly, unsanitary and out-of-control city, adopted a joint decision to destroy the city. [1]

Figure 7: Kowloon Walled City, outside of Hong Kong, China, Source

- Analysis: In the above example, the inhabitants had not abandoned the city. Governments who should have, from the beginning, cared for the city and provided for the needs of its inhabitants by implementing appropriate laws and regulations had simply forgotten it. This city should never have been left unattended until it came to resemble mounds of rubbish and trash.

The location or building fulfills its purpose and alternatives are created:
Places (regardless of their degree of development) are sometimes abandoned and forgotten because they have fulfilled the purpose for which they were built. When the need to occupy them ceases to exist, however, no effort is made to restore such places to their original, pre-construction, state; buildings are left standing – abandoned and empty. There are several reasons for this:
1. Ignorance of the value of abandoned materials once they are recycled
2. Unawareness of the danger some abandoned materials pose to the surrounding environment
3. In some cases, destroying buildings or evacuating locations for reuse is not as profitable as expected, due to the high costs involved.

For these reasons, people do not bother with destroying buildings that have served their purpose, abandoning them as they are, to be discovered years later by a passerby.

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[1] "*Ta3araf 3alla 10 modon khaleya tasskonha al'ashba7*" Montadayat Maz Maz,Thursday, 24 May, 2012
http://mz-mz.net/40442/

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          Reasons for not restoring places to their original condition before leaving them for good
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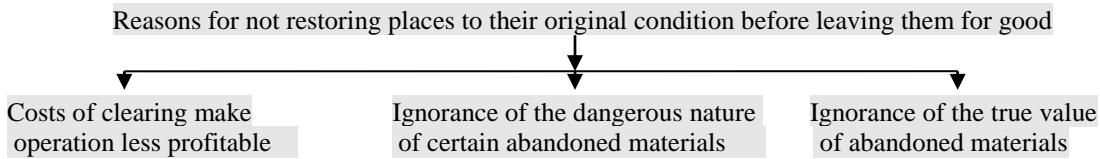
Table 5: Reasons for not restoring places to their original condition before leaving them for good

Example of a place that was abandoned after serving its purpose:
Between the 1920s and early 1940s, Humberstone was a flourishing town in Chile. After the invention of synthetic nitrates, the town, whose prosperity was derived from the mining of nitrate, or sodium nitrate, began to go downhill. Humberstone's inhabitants gradually moved away, and by 1961, the town was completely empty. Since then, sands blowing in from the surrounding desert have invaded the abandoned buildings, covering the furniture and equipment they still house. Humberstone was named a World Heritage Site and is expected to be preserved as a historical monument.[1]

Figure 8: The ruins of Humberstone Town, Chile

Disregard of location design requirements during the various stages of construction:
This issue influences people's decision to abandon a location; if a given location does not meet its users' needs, they will naturally look for another that does.
- On the architectural level, in many cases the needs of inhabitants and design standards are not taken into account and this affects comfort levels inside buildings. Example: Due to poor planning, some residential apartments in Egypt face south-west (the least favorable orientation for residential apartments, since it receives the greatest amount of sunshine thus raising temperature levels considerably).
- On the urban design level, there are many cases of poorly planned communities. In addition, insufficient study of project sites prior to development often leads to the selection of sites that are incompatible with the project.

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[1] Steph, "20 Abandoned Cities, Towns & Places Around the World",
http://weburbanist.com/2008/07/06/20-abandoned-cities-and-towns/

Necessary steps to avoid problems that result from disregarding design requirements:

Prerequisites for designs that successfully fulfill users' needs			
In-depth study of the site & analysis of its pros and cons	Detailed study of users' needs & habits	Based on the study, provision of alternative solutions for meeting needs	Selection of the most favorable alternative (the one that fulfills the most requirements)
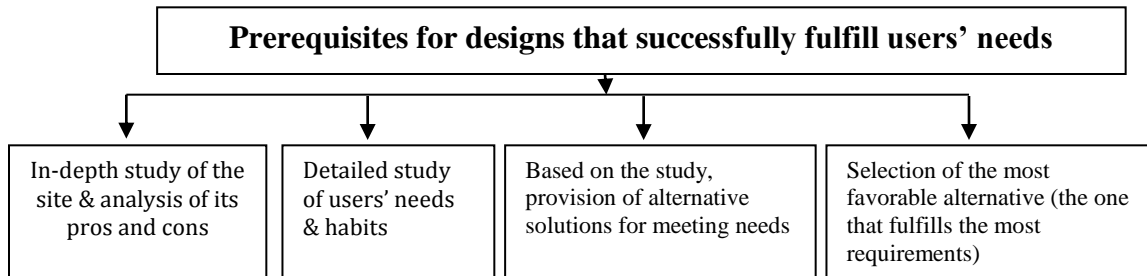
Table 6: Prerequisites for designs that successfully fulfill users' needs

Example of disregarding location design requirements:
- On the urban design level, as the result of poor site selection:

Named after silver miner Henry Cody, the town of Cody was established in the 1890s in an area known as the 'Valley of the Ghosts' in British Columbia during the heyday of silver mining. Although its residents expected it to grow and flourish like neighboring towns, Cody's population count never exceeded 150. Having failed to attract more inhabitants, the town was abandoned in 1910.

This example shows that poor planning and poor site selection lead to the eventual abandonment of a location.[1]

Figure 9: Ruins of Cody Town, British Columbia

Environmental and natural reasons:

Environmental and natural reasons fall into two categories:

1. Reasons associated with natural phenomena (earthquakes, storms, high tides, volcanoes)
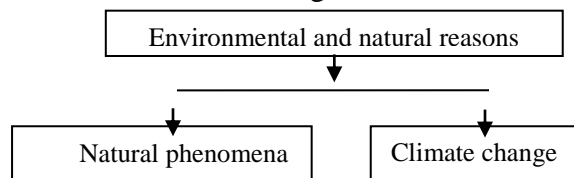2. Reasons associated with climate change

Environmental and natural reasons	
Natural phenomena	Climate change

Table 7: Classification of environmental and natural reasons

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[1] Steph, "20 Abandoned Cities, Towns & Places Around the World",
http://weburbanist.com/2008/07/06/20-abandoned-cities-and-towns/

Reasons associated with natural phenomena:

Across the globe, places have been abandoned because of natural phenomena. Given the magnitude of their effect on Earth, natural phenomena usually lead to the abandonment of entire developed areas. Predicting natural catastrophes used to be difficult in the past. Cities were therefore built, inhabited, and would flourish – only to be destroyed by a natural catastrophe that spread terror and rendered them uninhabitable. The residents of these cities abandoned them, and they became forgotten places.

Types of natural catastrophes:

1. Earthquakes   2. Volcanoes   3. Hurricanes
4. Tsunamis   5. Quicksand   6. Torrential rains

Example of a location abandoned in the wake of a natural catastrophe:

Like so many other Italian medieval towns, Balestrino is a beautiful town located in the hills 70 km south-west of Genoa. At one time owned by the Benedictine abbey of San Pietro dei Monti, the town gradually began to loose its inhabitants after an earthquake hit the region towards the end of the 19th century. Much of the town was damaged, and in 1953, it was abandoned because of the earth's instability. The part of the town that was not affected by the earthquake is presently being restored, and Balestrino should not be an abandoned place for much longer.[1]

Figure 10: The abandoned city of Balestrino, Italyz

Second example of a location abandoned due to a natural catastrophe:

This medieval town located in the province of Matera in southern Italy dates back to the year 1060. Surrounded by hills, it used to grow wheat and corn. However, natural causes such as earthquakes and poor soil where crops would not grow caused residents to abandon the town, today it is a historical site that bears witness to a long ago era

Figure 11: The Town of Craco, Italy

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[1] Steph,"20 Abandoned Cities,Towns & Places Around the World", http://weburbanist.com/2008/07/06/20-abandoned-cities-and-towns/

Third example of a location abandoned in the wake of another kind of natural catastrophe:

Located in southern Namibia, this town has a strange history. When the area was discovered to be rich in diamonds, people and traders moved to it in droves. The town boasted a casino, a hospital, a school and luxurious homes. However, it was abandoned in the 1950s after the market for diamonds plummeted; the city was covered by sand and its once beautiful buildings lie in ruin today. [1]

Figure 12: Kolmanskop, Namibia[2]

Historical sites overlooked by governments:

- The immortality of historical buildings still standing today derives from the fact that, after having been abandoned at one time due to one or another of the reasons mentioned above, these buildings acquire a renewed value as visual historic depictions that satisfy the natural nostalgia of humans for the bygone eras during which they were built.

- Deterioration of historic areas and disintegration of the physical aspects of historic cities: In Egypt, historic sites that symbolize the values of human civilization constitute one of the country's most valuable tourist attractions. However, due to over population, internal migration and social and economic variables (and in the absence of legislation and integrated development schemes aimed at safeguarding the special nature of historic areas) the architectural characteristics of Egyptian cities have deteriorated and the historic sites in these cities have been neglected.[3]

- Historic buildings are not buildings abandoned by individuals and by the public; they are buildings that have been forgotten by governments. Governments do not give these buildings the attention they deserve, nor do they accord them their due in promotional and advertising efforts. Furthermore, the people who live and work in the vicinity of

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[1] Steph, "20 Abandoned Cities, Towns & Places Around the World",
http://weburbanist.com/2008/07/06/20-abandoned-cities-and-towns/

[2] "*Ta3araf 3alla 10 modon khaleya tasskonha al'ashba7*" Montadayat Maz Maz,Thursday, 24 May, 2012
http://mz-mz.net/40442/

[3] Ashraf Mohamed Kamal and Ayman Mohamed Nour Afifi, "*Al tatweer fi al mogtama3at alomraneya algadeeda be misr – na7w madkhal tanmawy motadareg lelkhadamat wa albenya alt7teya*", Cairo University.

these buildings ignore their historical importance, and therefore treat them with utmost carelessness.

- It is worth noting that taking proper care of historic buildings and expending sufficient efforts on promotional and advertizing activities would bring in huge profits that would not only cover building maintenance and labor costs, but would also reap profits for both the State and private individuals.

Figure 13: Qait Bey Façade, showing the infringement on the historic monument

Example of an abandoned and forgotten historic site (outside of Egypt):
Mandu is a city located in the state of Madhya Pradesh, south of Indore. The city, which used to be the capital of one of the northern Indian Muslim states, has been abandoned for over 400 years. To reach the ancient city, one must cross over a wide plateau above the Narmada River. The city houses many wonderful historic sites, such as a royal palace, the mosque and the Nil Kanth Palace (a pilgrimage destination for Hindu worshipers of the goddess Shiva).[1] Today, the city's sole inhabitants are gypsies who live on the plateau.
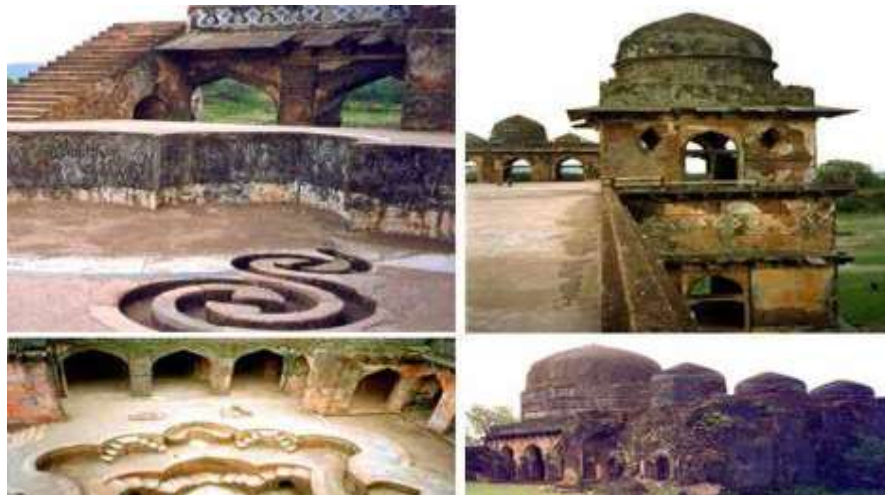

Figure 14: The ancient city of Mandu, India

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[1] Steph, "20 Abandoned Cities, Towns & Places Around the World",
http://weburbanist.com/2008/07/06/20-abandoned-cities-and-towns/

- Bab Al Gharb, an example of closed historic sites in Egypt:
A portal of the Al Jabal Citadel, Bab Al Gharb[1], with its two huge round-fronted towers, overlooks Salah El Din Square. Formerly known by the names of Bab al selsela and Bab al stable, it was restored in the year 1160 AH (1747) by Prince Radwan Katekhda Al Jalfi. The wall in front of it was added in 1868. The portal leads directly to the Ahmed Katekhda Azban Mosque, which dates back to the year 1109 AH (1697).[2]

- Although a medieval portal such as Bab Al Gharb should be one of historic Cairo's prized treasures, the government has kept it closed for decades, forcing visitors to approach the Citadel through the Salah Salem entrance, rather than directly from the city. Imagine being able to go through Mohamed Ali Street, visit the Sultan Hassan Mosque, then simply cross the square, pass through Bab Al Gharb and climb up to the summit of the Citadel; a different way to experience the location, and a wonderful opportunity that is lost to us and to Cairo's touristic and cultural future.

Figure 15: Bab Al Gharb, an example of closed historic sites in Egypt

- Bab al Wazir, an example of neglected historic sites in Egypt:
Bab al Wazir is one of the outer portals on the eastern side of the city wall built by Salah El Din around Cairo. Located between the burned portal and the Al Jabal Fortress, it was inaugurated in the year 842 AH (1341) by the vizier Najm Al Din Mahmoud Bin Sherwin, known as the vizier of Baghdad, when he was vizier to King Al Mansour Abu Bakr Bin Mohammed Bin Qalawun, hence the name of Bab al Wazir. Bab al Wazir Street and the cemetery of Bab al Wazir also derive their names from this ancient portal. The portal, which has been completely neglected, is in very sad shape and no restoration work has yet begun. Completely unaware of its historical significance, people habitually dump their trash before it.

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[1] "*Mashahed al Qahera*" Facebook page, *Bab al wazir*
[2] Interior views of *Bab Al Gharb* and *Bab al Gadeed*, photographs by Atta Gad, *Al Qahera Al Gadeeda*, 2013

Figure 16: Bab al Wazir, one of the portals of Cairo's city wall.

Figure 17: Entrance to Darb al Ahmar district from Bab al Wazir

Approaches for reviving forgotten locations:
This section of the paper reviews some realistic approaches that have been applied to restore life to abandoned and forgotten places as well as to reduce their number.

First approach: demolishment rulings for abandoned residential buildings:
This approach is the obvious first solution for governments to get rid of unused buildings in order to free the land they occupy for new, more profitable projects. Nevertheless, it is not suitable for resolving the problem of buildings abandoned as a result of *all* the reasons discussed above. For instance, while it is a suitable method to apply to poorly construct or badly damaged and neglected buildings, it cannot be used in the case of ancient sites of priceless historic value, which require a different approach.

Example: Abandoned buildings demolition operation, in Al Sharqa Municipality, U.A.E.:

Figure 18: Abandoned buildings demolition operation, Al Sharqa Municipality, U.A.E.

As part of a comprehensive four million Dirham demolition plan targeting empty and abandoned buildings and residential units in Al Sharqa Emirate, Al Sharqa Municipality is organizing an operation to demolish all abandoned houses in the region of Al Batina.

According to Engineer Sultan Abd Allah Al Moalla, Assistant Director General for Governmental Projects and Public Services, the 173 buildings to be demolished are Arab homes that have been abandoned for many years. These buildings give the area a rough, unsophisticated look that is not in keeping with the aesthetic and urbanization revival presently taking place in the Emirate. Moreover, the accumulation of sand and waste

materials, the growth of weeds and the spread of insects and rodents in abandoned buildings are not only a source of irritation for residents of the area; they also constitute a threat to their health and well-being.

Engineer Sultan also pointed out that owners of the abandoned buildings were given 15 days following the announcement of the demolition operation to contact the Municipality's Technical Department. In accordance with Administrative Decision no. 4 for 2003 concerning the mechanisms for dealing with unfit buildings, the Municipality will begin demolition operations at the end of this grace period, and will bear no financial or legal responsibility towards building owners.

Article 4 of this Decision states that if the address or whereabouts of an owner is not found, or if any other reasons impede his notification of the Municipality's warning, notification will be made through available media organs. Article 5 of the Decision further states that should the person concerned not contact the Municipality within the prescribed period, or if he fails to take steps to demolish his building, the Municipality will proceed to demolish it at the expense of the person concerned.

Sultan also said that the Municipality had studied all aspects of the project. He pointed out that, compared to the damages incurred from maintaining these old buildings in their present condition, the demolition decision aims at realizing two principal objectives. The first objective is to rid the streets of the unbecoming sight of these buildings, and the second is to invest in the tied-up land plots that are presently not providing any investment returns to their owners or to the city.[1]

Second approach: maintenance and re-use of old buildings:
While this creative and sophisticated solution necessitates comprehensive study and extensive design prior to implementation, it results in restoring the vivacity of abandoned places, which revert to their original (or even to a superior) condition, and are then exploited in a manner that is in keeping with the evolutions that have taken place in society.

Example: Darb Al Sayagh, Egypt development and re-use project:

1. **Work Team**: Mohammed Mubarak, Kareem Samir, Mo3taz Aziz, Iman Al Lewa' and Waleed Shehata (Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport)
2. **Historical background of the building under development:**
   Houses numbers 5 and 7 in the Darb Al Sayagh area had originally been a single Ottoman-style house, built between 1830 and 1850 in the Darb Al A7mar

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[1] Report: "*Baladeyat Al Sharqa tonazem 7amla lehadm al mabani al mahgoura fi Al batina*" *Al Bayan* website, "*3ebr al emarat*" section, 31 May 2009, http://www.albayan.ae/across-the-uae/1241101618976-2009-05-31-1.439436

neighborhood of Cairo. Shortly before his death, the owner bequeathed the property as a religious endowment (*waqf*).

Many of the house's rooms feature genuine Ottoman architectural elements, particularly the wooden roofs decorated with carved Ottoman designs. Between 1870 and 1880, the house was divided in two and an additional entrance opening unto the street was added. Two additional floors were added at the start of the 20th century, and the house was re-divided to accommodate more families. The house continued to be used as a residential building up to the 1970s. Then, when the top floor was demolished, the two lower floors were used to house a number of leather workshops and storage facilities. Today, due to the lack of maintenance, the building's original architectural elements are in a bad state of repair. For instance, the storage spaces eclipse the wooden rooftops and poor quality shutters have replaced the original wood windows. The ornamentation that surrounded the doors has been badly damaged, and many structural cracks have appeared in the walls.

- The building has deteriorated seriously, and is being used for purposes that are not commensurate with its value or with the beauty of its architectural design. Because of its central location in the neighborhood, the Aga Khan Cultural Foundation has decided to include this house in its comprehension development plan for the Darb Al A7mar neighborhood. [1]
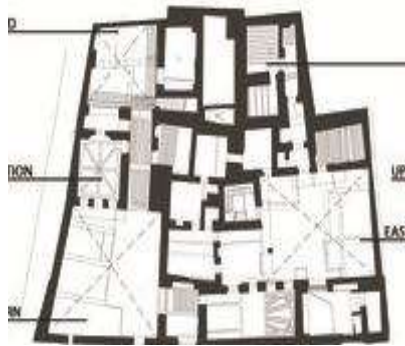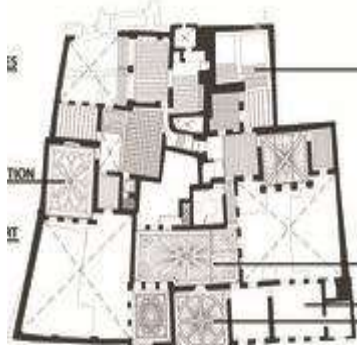

Figure 19: ground floor Plan of the house

Figure 20: first floor Plan of the house

Figure 21: An abandoned house in bad repair, Darb Al Sayagh area

Project

The Aga Khan Foundation's development plans for Darb Al A7mar are based on the conservation of historic buildings by modifying them for alternative uses. Adapting historic buildings for alternative uses is one of the recognized methods used to conserve building heritage. This method does not involve simply changing the purpose for which a building is used to generate enough income for its maintenance; it also aims at improving the social, economic and environmental conditions of the local community. The first step taken by the Foundation was to offer compensation to residents for moving out of the building. This was followed by the removal of extraneous construction and additions to

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[1] "*Mashrou3 tatweer wa e3adat estekhdam manzel bedarb alsayagh*", *Mashahed al Qahera* website, 12/12/2013

the building, to reveal its original architectural elements. The project has stopped at this point, pending the drawing up of renovation plans.

To begin effective implementation of the project, the Foundation started to contact probable contributors (members of the local community, academics and government authorities). As a gesture of cooperation between the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport and the Aga Khan Cultural Foundation in Egypt, M.Sc students of the Academy's Faculty of Architecture (Design & Environmental Design Departments) have presented proposals for alternative uses of the building. The main questions asked were; How to make local residents enter the building to learn about their heritage? How to directly promote economic and cultural advantages while synonymously helping the local community? How to realize all of the objectives mentioned above while inviting people from outside of Al Darb Al A7mar to contribute to the development of the building?

During the research phase, the design team studied life in the vicinity of the building, and noted that over 60 NGOs were working in the Al Darb Al A7mar neighborhood. Over 15 NGOs were active in various social fields. Some organizations were working on providing reasonably priced services (such as housing and healthcare) to local residents, others were productive organizations (manufacturing items such as leather goods, textiles and souvenirs) and some organizations were active in both fields. Meetings with the Boards of many of these NGOs revealed that most organizations were suffering from the absence of suitable workspace. The NGOs were looking for spaces where they could set up workshops, hold meetings, and organize training and study sessions, as well as outlets from which to sell their products. Moreover, the NGOs apparently lacked the ability to promote their activities and products outside of the of old city. Consequently, plans were drawn up to establish a new activity, the "social center". The plans involve transforming the building into several rental units to be leased by NGOs. Equipped spaces, adapted to different types of activity will be offered for rent. Additionally, the "west courtyard" will be refurbished as a local café and rented out[1].

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[1] "*Mashrou3 tatweer wa e3adat estekhdam manzel bedarb alsayagh*", *Mashahed al Qahera* website, 12/12/2013
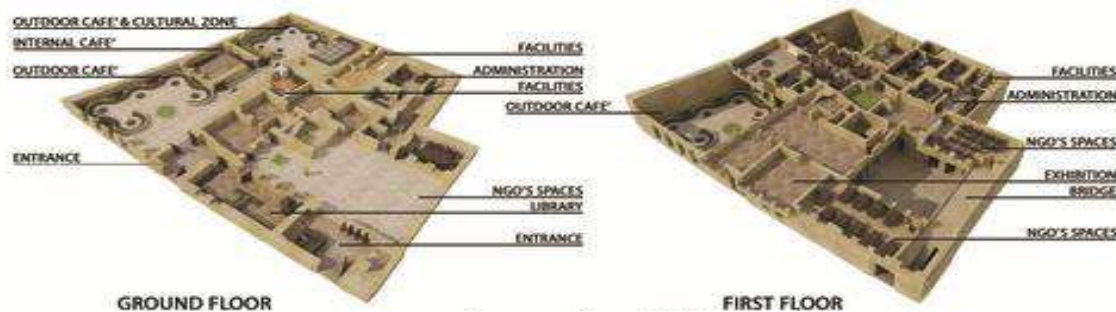
Figure 22: New uses of the building, after re-design

- The environmental benefits derived from re-designing a historic building to fulfill new functions lie in the conservation of energy through "recycling" the building. Re-designing a building in a manner that allows it to be reused, saves the energy, material and labor that is needed for constructing a new building. Thus, the transformation and re-use of this building provides environmental benefits to the city of Cairo. Projects aiming at transforming and re-using historic buildings can also improve environmental conditions in historic neighborhoods. Finally, the higher rental values and enhanced aesthetics resulting from the development of old buildings usually encourage members of the local community to renovate their own derelict buildings, in the hope of improving their living conditions.

Project description, continued:
- Historic buildings sometimes play specific roles in a neighborhood, or in the city as a whole, thereby enhancing the inhabitants' attachment to them, in one way or another. This type of relationship, sometimes called 'pride' or 'identification', consists simply of promoting the individual's 'feelings for a place'. The real value of ancient brick and mortar lies in their relationship with men. The development project for buildings numbers 5 and 7 in Darb Al A7mar aims primarily at highlighting this relationship, to attain sustainable social and economic results. The greatest social and economic rewards of re-using the building as a social center will come from the interaction both between the people and the building and among individuals inside the building. Since buildings are a reflection of their residents, interacting with classical historic buildings gives people the opportunity to learn about their ancestors' lifestyles and to understand the underlying principles behind the styles in which historic buildings were constructed.

- Furthermore, the renting out of spaces for vocational training and lectures means that the building will contribute to enhancing people's attachment to the types of cultural and economic pursuits existing in this historic district of Cairo. In the past, Al Darb Al A7mar was Cairo's leather industry center. This does not mean that this industry must be revived today - but it does point to the necessity of reviving its memory by underscoring the important place it occupied in the lives of previous generations who lived and worked in

this neighborhood. Promoting this kind of relationship between people and the building could lead to an increased awareness of social and economic values, thus helping to maintain intact the identity of coming generations.

- As for economic sustainability, the program calls for the establishment of a private company to manage the project. This company will be in charge of renting out spaces, providing equipment, labor and security services, arranging promotional, maintenance and commercial activities, as well as overall project management (which is not a simple task). The private company will regularly update data concerning NGOs working in the location. This will ensure that it makes correct decisions concerning leasing spaces to NGOs of repute that are capable of meeting the needs of the local community. Competition among NGOs is necessary, because it will raise the rental value of, and ensure the continued demand for, these spaces. The café will also help to attract locals to the building. Because additional promotional efforts are needed, the company will market itself as a provider of space where producers who live outside of historic neighborhoods can exhibit their handicrafts. The company's profits will come from the rents and a percentage of the returns from the sale of exhibited products.[1]

Figure 23: Building façade before and after development, in that order

Figure 24: Virtual depictions of the building after development

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[1] "*Mashrou3 tatweer wa e3adat estekhdam manzel bedarb alsayagh*", *Mashahed al Qahera* website, 12/12/2013

PROJECT SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS:

The truth is that many other historic buildings in old Cairo, besides this one, are either not fully used, or not used at all. These buildings suffer from neglect and are subjected to unofficial infringements. No comprehensive listing of these buildings (they do not count as historic buildings in Egypt) exits. Recent events in Egypt show that partial interventions by those in charge of our historic heritage have met with failure in light of the present unstable conditions. These buildings are incredibly valuable to the architectural development process; their incorporation into detailed urban development plans and addition to space exploitation maps is of the utmost importance. It is of even greater importance for such buildings to be appreciated and supported by the communities that surround them. Continuing to neglect our historic buildings threatens the loss of a great opportunity to improve and enhance a deteriorating architectural environment, and to develop the marginalized and deprived communities inhabited by many Egyptians.[1]

CONCLUSION

Distribution of causes for abandoning and forgetting locations by type of forgotten location:

	Disregard of residents' needs & design standards	Building's function is fulfilled	Social changes	Poor site selection	Natural & environmental causes	Increased pollution	Insufficient promotional tools	Poor construction	Neglect & lack of maintenance	Security & political problems	Historic areas
At the architectural level: buildings	O	O	O		O		O	O	O		O
At project (industrial / touristic) level		O	O		O	O	O				
Architectural communities		O	O	O	O				O	O	O

Table 8: Causes for abandoning and forgetting locations by type of forgotten location

RECOMMENDATIONS:
1. Governments as well as community members must accord additional importance to abandoned and forgotten buildings
2. It is imperative to combat negative social behavior and to raise awareness concerning its adverse effects; the persistence of this type of behavior will have unfavorable effects on additional populated areas
3. The government must exercise its regulatory role to control people's attempts at exploitation and their greed for extra profit at the expense building and urban project quality

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[1] "*Mashrou3 tatweer wa e3adat estekhdam manzel bedarb alsayagh*", *Mashahed al Qahera* website, 12/12/2013

4. Studying the behaviors and needs of building and residential community users is critical; the design of new buildings, or the modification of old ones, must be based on the results of such studies

5. Identification of development partners capable of providing assistance in the upgrading of abandoned buildings and making the best use of their efforts is very important

6. Possibilities for recycling abandoned and forgotten buildings and means for turning them into profit making ventures should be examined

7. In certain cases the decision to demolish abandoned buildings is the right one (buildings that are the source of aesthetic problems, that house criminal elements or that are structurally unsafe)

8. Today it is possible to predict of natural catastrophes before they occur. We should take the necessary measures to deal with the expected effects of such catastrophes, or avoid building populated areas in endangered zones

9. The attention presently accorded to historic buildings should be multiplied; the renovation of these buildings, coupled with the necessary promotional and advertizing, will yield significant returns – enough to cover building maintenance and labor costs, as well as to provide profit for both the State and individuals

Finally, I invite everyone to look closely at the environment that surrounds him or her. Our environment contains many objects (not just buildings) that we have forgotten over time and that no one uses any longer. Let us all think of innovative methods for making use of everything that is around us.

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