



Architecture of Justice A CONTEMPORARY SETTING FOR A COURTHOUSE

1- Aims of the Studio

The studio revolves around a proposed general theme which addresses a number of fundamental issues of local/global nature with the aim of promoting students' awareness and understanding of these issues. It examines the broad meaning of sustainable and contextual design. It aims to develop students' tools and knowledge in terms of observation, critical analysis and design skills of integrating knowledge gained throughout previous years. It explores how to infer from the project's objectives and its context guidelines which instruct the design in terms of space, form, structure, order, character and tectonics. It also provides the opportunity for students to develop appropriate conceptual and theoretical agendas and to challenge preconceptions related to the notion of building typology.

2- Theme of the Project

Our society is now passing through a process of democratic and economic change which requires reviewing, upgrading and optimizing the administrative and institutional performance of governmental buildings to cope with these changes. Architecture can participate in this process by providing buildings which not only enclose activities efficiently but also enhance and promote public awareness of the underlying ideals, principles and meanings these buildings convey. We at this studio are proposing to seize this opportunity by creatively reviewing the program and the design of courts of law, courthouses.

Law buildings – in general – are the ultimate expression of the governing institution in terms of authority and discipline. Courts of law represent the spatial and symbolic manifestation of the judicial system that leads to justice and hence to social solidarity, citizenship and dignity. Historically, the supreme court of law in Egypt was initially built in 1920 during the early twentieth century national movement. The building was spatially and formally conceived according to the mainstream westernized paradigm. Since then the judicial system has witnessed a number of shifts during Naser's Socialism, Sadat's Capitalism and Mubarak's illusive Democracy. Existing courts have many shortcomings;

Functionally:

- They are short of satisfying the minimal spatial, environmental and service requirements.
- The latest developments in scientific knowledge (social and criminal research) and information technology are not taken into consideration.
- Absence of community facilities and social participation at all levels.

Formally:

- Old courthouses mimic western styles
- Contemporary courthouses do not convey the transcendent meanings associated with "justice".
- They also do not convey any cultural identity.

In short, the conceptual vision of this project is that it should represent the architectural aspiration and excellence of Egyptian courts of law that enhance justice functionally, socially and symbolically in a vast

changing local/global world and that promote public awareness and participation. The studio proposes number of sites reflecting different socio/cultural and urban contexts. Students are encouraged to propose other sites that may enhance the project's objectives.

3- Preliminary Components of the Project

A- COURTS COMPLEX

- **Main entrance piazza**
- **Main Hall.** (Main court of law) – Entrances for public, press, judges, convicts, deliberation room and services.
- **8-12 smaller courts.** With variable sizes, 40% criminal, 60% civil
- Separate waiting halls for public and witnesses – separate entrances for public, judges, press and convicts.
- **Information centre and conference hall.**
- **8-12 Judge suits.** (Each contains Judge's office, deliberation room, secretarial staff and toilet).
- **8-12 Deputies suits.**
- **8-12 Lawyers suits.**
- **Open shelves library- microfilm – archives – computer – research and laboratories**
- **Cafeteria and toilets**
- **20 prison cells at basement.**

B- COMMUNITY ORIENTED CENTER:

- Components according to design concept but may include: family courts – meeting rooms – classes – criminal and social research centre – public law library, ...etc.

C- BUILDING ADMINISTRATION AND SERVICES

- Office spaces for director and employees - photocopying – bookstore, clinic –parking - toilets

4- Investigated Issues

Investigating the following issues should help in developing your concepts and guiding ideas;

- **A Contemporary Courthouse;** What are the underlying concepts and trends? How are these translated into the project's program, space configuration, design approach, form and tectonics?
- **Sustainability and Contextuality;** What constitutes a sustainable courthouse? How the building relates to site, urban context, regional character, open spaces and landscape?
- **Climatic Considerations;** How the building responds to climatic factors in terms of orientation, sun , wind and illumination? What environmental strategy are you going to adopt?