(REVIEW ARTICLE)

The role of local community engagement in managing and safeguarding the Urban Heritage of Heliopolis in Cairo, Egypt

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Abstract

In heritage areas, involving residents is crucial for practical preservation and development, given the vital link between heritage, communities, and well-being. This study focuses on Heliopolis, an Egyptian urban heritage site from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, marked by a blend of European "Garden City" planning and Arabic Islamic identity. Despite historical neglect, a shift in attitude towards Heliopolis began in the 1990s, leading to protective measures by organizations like the National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH) and the Heliopolis Heritage Initiative (HHI). The research delves into NOUH's and HHI's roles, community engagement, and stakeholder perspectives regarding heritage preservation. Methodologically, the study employs qualitative analysis and interviews. NOUH, supported by laws like Law No. 119 of 2008 and Law No. 114 of 2006, safeguards modern heritage nationwide. HHI, established in 2011, focuses on Heliopolis's cultural revival through community involvement, countering investor challenges, and emphasizing citizen contributions. Efforts underscore the necessity of community engagement for sustainable heritage preservation, addressing barriers like financial constraints and a lack of awareness through enhanced collaboration and tailored initiatives. The partnership between NOUH, HHI, and the community reflects positive strides in proactive heritage preservation practices and an increasing appreciation for Egypt's modern urban heritage.

Keywords: Urban Heritage; Community engagement; Heliopolis; Heliopolis Heritage initiative

1. Introduction

In heritage areas characterized as living communities, it is crucial to engage the local communities to ensure the effectiveness of heritage preservation and development. The bond between heritage, local communities, and their welfare is undeniable, as cultural heritage is generated by and for the people. Therefore, local communities are responsible for looking after their heritage sites as true custodians (Göttler & Ripp, 2017). Theoretical models of community involvement have emphasized the importance of employing community skills for long-term heritage preservation and co-management, benefiting both the community and the heritage (Court & Wijesuriya, 2015).

In Egypt, the accumulated heritage layers date back thousands of years, resulting in a vast treasure of priceless monuments. A significant historical event further shaped this rich cultural heritage - digging the Suez Canal in 1869, which transformed Egypt into an international transportation hub. Since then, there has been a persistent tendency to modernize Egypt by adopting European urban architectural styles. This led to the emergence of valuable modern neighborhoods in different Egyptian towns, such as El Maadi (1905), Heliopolis (1906), Garden City (1906), and Koubbeh Gardens (1908) (Gouda, 2015).

These neighborhoods have become part of Egypt's urban heritage and must be preserved intelligently, aligning with sustainable development and societal needs. Heliopolis City, in particular, exemplifies this trend of modernization and

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the adoption of European architectural styles (Ahmad, 2020). The city's unique architectural style blends European planning models, such as the Garden City concept, with an Arabic Islamic identity. The architectural styles in Heliopolis include Neo-Islamic, Neo-Classical, Neo-Byzantine, Romanesque, Gothic, English country, Indian, and Art Deco. This diversity of architectural influences reflects the rich cultural heritage of Heliopolis and its transformation into a modern yet culturally rooted urban center (Gouda, 2015).

Despite the uniqueness of Heliopolis's modern heritage, it has faced long-standing periods of neglect and disregard. However, in the 1990s, the attitude towards Heliopolis and Egyptian modern heritage began to change, particularly after a wave of destructive actions against distinctive villas. These aggressive encroachments prompted the Egyptian government to implement measures in 1996 to prevent the destruction of modern Egyptian heritage across the country (El Aref, 2014). These measures were supported by the establishment of the National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH), a governmental organization established by presidential resolution no. 37 for the year 2001. It is affiliated with the Ministry of Culture (Gharib, 2009). Additionally, a local community initiative called the Heliopolis Heritage Initiative (HHI) has emerged to protect and preserve the Egyptian local heritage of Heliopolis (Hassan & Ibrahim, 2021).

Research Objectives

- Explore the role of the National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH) in Preserving the Egyptian urban heritage.
- Investigate the initiatives and activities undertaken by the Heliopolis Heritage Initiative (HHI) to protect and preserve Heliopolis' urban heritage.
- Examine the perceptions and efforts of the Heliopolis Municipal Authority, the Heliopolis Heritage Initiative (HHI), and the National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH) regarding engaging the local community in preserving Heliopolis' heritage.

2. Research Methodology

This study utilizes a qualitative approach based on the following:

2.1. Secondary Data

This research analyzed current literature by examining peer-reviewed academic articles, books, and chapters published from 2000 to 2024. The aim was to provide an updated perspective on the status of Egyptian urban heritage since its formal recognition. The literature review utilized Web of Science and Google Scholar databases, using key search terms including "Heliopolis," "community involvement," "Egyptian urban heritage preservation," and "grassroots initiatives."

2.2. Semi-Structured One-to-One Interviews

In this study, four open-ended interviews were conducted with two key members of the Heliopolis Heritage Initiative (HHI): Choukri Asmar (the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of HHI) and Ahmed Mansour (Key member of HHI). Another interview was conducted with NOUH expert Dr. Hapy Hosny (Head of the Technical Office of NOUH). The final interview was conducted with Engineer Ibrahim Saber (Head of Heliopolis District Unit). The purpose of these interviews was to gain insights into the strategies and collaborative efforts of critical actors involved in Heliopolis heritage preservation, namely NOUH (National Organization for Urban Harmony), HHI (Heliopolis Heritage Initiative), and the Heliopolis District Unit. The interviews aimed to understand their initiatives, their approach to preserving Heliopolis's urban heritage, and their perception of the involvement of the local community in the management of Heliopolis's heritage. Similar pre-determined questions were asked to all the interviewees. The interviews lasted around two hours and were recorded utilizing audio technology for subsequent analysis. The interviews were carried out face-to-face and in the Arabic language during December 2018.

2.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis involves systematically organizing gathered information to derive meaningful conclusions regarding the investigated subjects. Before analysis, the collected data was adequately arranged and briefly summarized. Specifically, content analysis was utilized to analyze the open-ended questionnaire.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Definitions of "community", "community involvement" and "urban heritage"

The term "community" can have different interpretations depending on the context. One interpretation refers to the geographical and territorial concept, while another focuses on the social connections between individuals, regardless of their specific location (Brown & Hay-Edie, 2014).

It is important to note that "community involvement" and "community participation" have the same meaning, as there is no significant difference between these expressions in the English language (Ismail, 2013). According to the new Oxford English Dictionary (2018), "involvement" is defined as "The fact or condition of being involved with or participating in something," while "participation" is defined as "The action of taking part in something."

"Urban heritage" refers to tangible features such as urban ensembles and buildings that were constructed in the past and still hold significant value. Urban heritage serves as evidence of human expansion throughout different historical periods and reflects how people have shaped and been influenced by their surroundings (Göttler & Ripp, 2017).

Considering the explanations mentioned above, community involvement in urban heritage management can be comprehensively understood as follows: It is the collective process of engaging active individuals who reside within a specific area with public authorities, institutions, and organizations interested in urban heritage. This engagement is carried out through activities to preserve cultural heritage (Göttler & Ripp, 2017). It involves enhancing the capacity of the local community to participate and collaborate as stakeholders. Additionally, it empowers the local community to have a voice in decisions and actions related to managing urban heritage (Ismail, 2013).

Community involvement in urban heritage management aims to create interaction between heritage and communities, ensuring that communities benefit from the wise use of urban heritage. In other words, it seeks to establish economic, cultural, and social links between communities and their urban heritage. These "interactive communities" are responsible for utilizing, preserving, and promoting urban heritage (Deacon & Smeets, 2013).

3.2. Theoretical models of measuring community involvement types

Numerous models have been developed to explain and measure citizen participation. In 1969, Arnstein's ladder of participation introduced a significant sociological framework. It categorizes citizen participation into eight levels arranged in a ladder model. These levels can be grouped into three main degrees: non-participation (Manipulation and Therapy), tokenism (Information, Consultation, and Placement), and citizen power (Partnership, Delegated Power, and Citizen Control) (Hurlbert & Gupta, 2015).

Table 1 Arnstein's ladder of community participation

Arnstein's ladder of community participation
Non-participation
Manipulation: The lowest level where the public is manipulated into thinking they participate in decision-making. Therapy: Focuses on changing citizens themselves.
Tokenism
Informing: Providing essential information to enable public participation Consultation: Inviting public input without obligation to consider their opinions. Placation: Granting limited influence by placing individuals on boards or committees, potentially representing a small number of voices.
Citizen Power
Partnership: Sharing or redistributing power as a step towards citizen control. Delegated Power: The public has veto rights and dominant authority over decisions. Citizen Control: The highest level where citizens have full authority and responsibility for decisions and plans.

In 1995, Pretty introduced seven levels of citizen participation: manipulative participation, passive participation, participation by consultation, participation for material incentives, functional participation, interactive participation, and self-mobilization (Hung, Sirakaya-Turk, & Ingram, 2011). Arnstein's ladder of participation influenced these levels. However, Pretty's levels focus on clarifying the extent of citizen' willingness to shape their involvement. While both models consider the highest levels as citizen control, Arnstein's final stage, citizen control, goes beyond self-mobilization. Citizen control involves developing autonomous initiatives in collaboration with external institutions to provide support in terms of financial resources or technical advice (Ismail, 2013).

In 1999, Tosun combined the models of Arnstein and Pretty, resulting in three types of community involvement in the tourism field: coercive participation, induced participation, and spontaneous participation. Coercive participation represents the lowest level of engagement, where residents are not involved in the decision-making process but are limited to implementing regulations. Induced participation shares similarities with tokenism in Arnstein's model, where public input is considered after plans have already been made. Spontaneous participation, similar to citizen power in Arnstein's model and self-mobilization in Pretty's model, represents the highest level. In this stage, residents are self-motivated and possess the power to make decisions (Hung, Sirakaya-Turk, & Ingram, 2011).

Figure 1 Chan's ladder participation in heritage management (Chan, 2016)

In 2016, Chan modified Arnstein's participation ladder for heritage management. Chan's model provides a structured framework that helps governments and stakeholders understand the various levels of citizen participation. The first level is "Education" or "Promotion," where specialists and governments aim to educate the public about heritage. Moving up, we have the level of "Protection" or "Conservation," where the public recognizes that the government protects their heritage. In these two levels, public participation is limited as information flows primarily in one direction from the government or specialists to the public (Chan, 2016).

As we ascend the ladder, public participation takes the form of tokenism. At the "Informing" level, citizens are informed about plans and actions; at the "Consultation" level, they can express their opinions and share their voices. At the "Advisory" level, citizens can participate more actively (Chan, 2016).

Moving towards the upper levels, the public gains more power. In the "Partnership" level, power is shared between citizens and power holders in a co-management system. At the "Grassroots-led negotiation" level, the public takes independent initiatives and launches preservation campaigns. Finally, in the highest level of "Self-management," citizens have veto rights over heritage management plans or decisions (Chan, 2016).

3.3. Challenges facing community involvement in urban heritage management

3.3.1. Structural barriers to community involvement in urban heritage management

Structural barriers are mostly related to power structures and economic systems. Despite the community's ownership of heritage assets, governments maintain complete authority over involving the local community in decisions and actions (Tosun, 2000). The negative attitude of some officials towards local community members also creates tension. Another barrier is the poor communication channels between authorities and the local community due to the need for more communication skills among relevant officials who need training to build effective relationships (Ismail, 2013). Structural barriers also include the perception that engagement activities are costly, requiring time, money, and well-trained professionals, especially for sensitive heritage conservation projects (Chili & Ngxongo, 2017).

3.3.2. Operational barriers to community involvement in urban heritage management

The political environment in developing countries is based on a traditional bureaucracy system that controls legislative and operational procedures. This bureaucratic system decreases the coordination and harmony between the involved authorities, creating conflicts and overlapping responsibilities and decisions (Tosun, 2000). This leads to distrust and hinders involvement efforts. Additionally, government-appointed community committees do not truthfully represent the local community's opinions (Ismail, 2013).

3.3.3. Cultural barriers to community involvement in heritage management

The local community can be the most influential group restraining the engagement process. Lack of community awareness and limited knowledge about participation are the strongest barriers (Ismail, 2013). Other factors like modern family lifestyles and socio-demographic characteristics (education, age, income, etc.) affect people's attitudes toward participation. Those with longer residency, higher education, and income levels are more willing to participate. Previous negative experiences with voluntary activities also deter participation. People may avoid participation if they perceive more costs than benefits (Ismail, 2013).
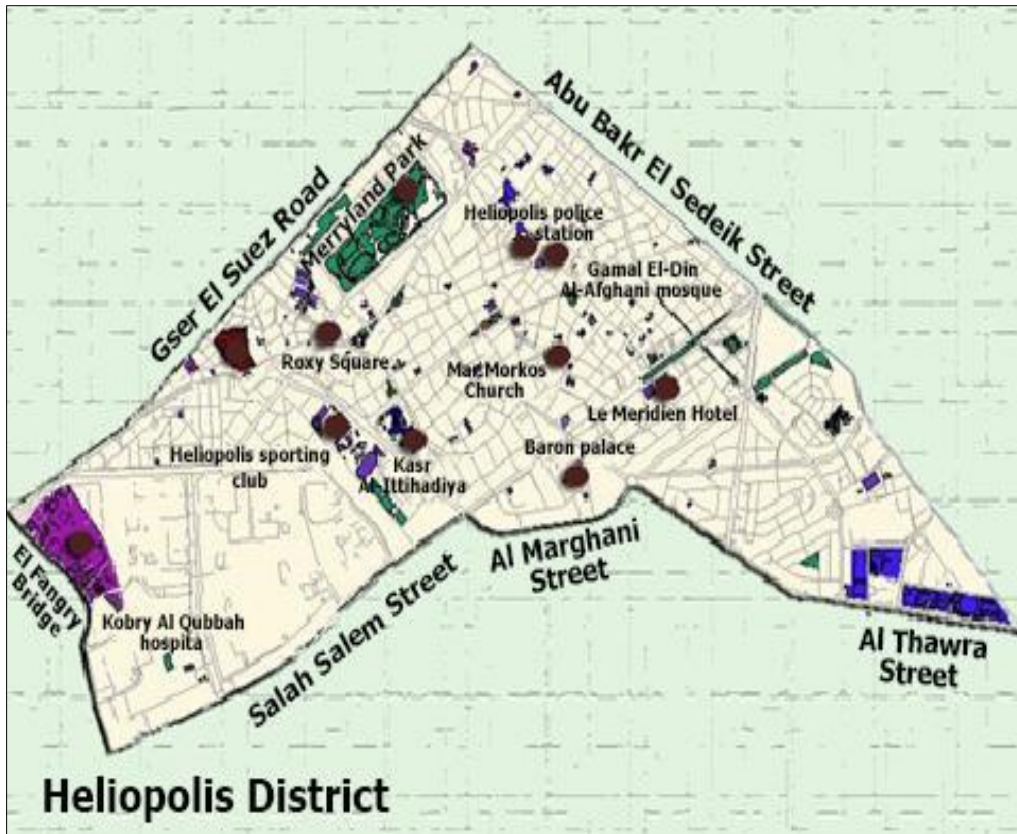
4. Heliopolis Neighborhood

4.1. The Emergence of the Heliopolis City

Heliopolis neighborhood is located in greater Cairo, Egypt. It consists of four sub-districts: Shyakhat Al Bustan, Al Montazah, Almaza, and Mansheyat Al Bakry. The current total area of Heliopolis covers 9.1641.20 km2. The current local name of Heliopolis in Arabic is "Misr Algadida," which means literary New Egypt (Gouda, 2015). The defined boundaries of the Heliopolis neighborhood, according to the Cairo Governorate in 2013, are as follows: to the north is Abu Bakr El Sedeik Street, to the south is Al Fangry Bridge, to the east are Al Thawra Street, Al Marghani Street, and a portion of Salah Salem Street, and to the west is Gser El Suez Road.

Heliopolis City emerged as a daring idea of two railway experts: Edouard Empain, the wealthy Belgian engineer, industrialist, and one of the founders of Paris Metro, who had been authorized to manage Cairo's tram lines in 1894, and his partner Boghos Nubar Pasha, the son of the Egyptian Prime Minister Nubar Pasha. He completed his studies in Paris and was the director of the Egyptian National Railway Company twice between 1876-1879 and 1891-1998 (Abdel-Aaty, 2017).

A massive land of 2500 hectares was granted to Baron Empain and his partner as a concession by the Egyptian government to build the new city of Heliopolis and connect it with Cairo through networks of trams. In 1906, "The Cairo Electric Railway and Heliopolis Oases Company" (HOC) was founded for this purpose (Dobrowolski & Dobrowolska, 2006). The contract between HOC and the Egyptian government provided the development of the initial 2500 hectares with the possibility of extension to 5000 hectares for 5,952 Egyptian pounds. The concession also stipulated full authority for the newly established company to plan, build, and operate Heliopolis under the regulations of the Egyptian government. HOC provided all the required infrastructure, such as the new city's water supply network, sanitary system, and electricity (Volait, 2008).

Source: https://schritte.files.wordpress.com/2009/02/d985d8b5d8b1d8a7d984d8acd8afd98ad8afd8a9.jpg

Figure 2 Heliopolis map

Heliopolis's design was based on erecting iconic buildings or landmarks in the middle, with radial wide streets coming from these main squares. The city was divided into zones: the industrial area in the north, recreational facilities in the south, luxurious villas and palaces near the desert in the southeast, and spacious rental apartments in the center. The working-class dwellings were constructed to the north (Alhowaily, 2016).

4.2. Heliopolis current major landmarks

Heliopolis is home to numerous historical buildings that have stood the test of time. These buildings serve as a testament to the success of Heliopolis' founders in establishing a unique city worthy of its ancient name. The following table indicates some of the current major landmarks in the Heliopolis neighborhood (Abdel-Aaty, 2017).

Table 2 Current major landmarks in the Heliopolis neighborhood (Abdel-Aaty, 2017)

Type of heritage site	Name of heritage site	Year of construction	Photo
Heliopolis Palaces	Sultana Malak palace	1910	Source: https://www.facebook.com/MoezLedinAllah/photos/pcb.325486017630080/325485964296752/?type=3&theater

	Heliopolis palace hotel – currently Kasr Al-Ittihadiya	1910	 Source: http://www.egy.com/P/heliopolis/heliopolispalacehotel-2.JPG
	Baron palace	1911	 Source: https://hisour.com/heliopolis-style-29119/
Heliopolis' religious landmarks	Gamal El-Din Al-Afghani Mosque	1910	 Source: https://fastly.4sqi.net/img/general/width960/34533907_aI4NNuVvJskCtcE20yJBoZ_s09UJ5Yoyh-e3YaMUvhc.jpg
	Cathedral of Virgin lady – Basilique church	1913	 Source: http://www.alalam.ir/news
	Maronite patriarchate	1932	 Source: http://www.sanduqeldunia.com/media/101806

	Vitali Madjar Synagogue	1928	 Source: http://www.sanduqeldunia.com/media/104711
Educational landmarks	Collège Du Sacré Coeur	1911	 Credit: Michael Rizkalla
Heliopolis museums	Gamal Abdel Nasser Museum	2016	 Source: https://egyptianstreets.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/6.jpg
Recreational landmarks	Heliopolis sporting club	1911	 Source: https://zahma.cairolive.com/wp content/uploads/2017/08/hiliopolis.jpg
	Merryland Park	1960	 Source: https://goo.gl/images/8yvPzJ

4.3. Heliopolis cultural significance and values

Heliopolis embodies several outstanding cultural values per the Bura Charter's definition of cultural significance.

- Historic Value: Heliopolis has a rich history, from its name to its 118-year legacy. It reflects influential epochs in modern Egyptian history, including the colonial period and the ideologies of different presidents.
- Architectural Value: Heliopolis's unique architectural style blends European planning (Garden City) with an Arabic-Islamic identity. It features a mix of styles, including Neo-Islamic, Neo-Classic, Art Deco, and more (Gouda, 2015).
- Aesthetic Value: Heliopolis's harmonious blend of architectural styles creates a high aesthetic quality. Its Islamic decorative elements and masterpieces, such as the Baraon Palace and Basilique Church, add to its appeal.
- Social Value: Heliopolis was historically known as a diverse and cosmopolitan community, characterized by a mix of different ethnicities, social classes, and religious beliefs, which fostered a sense of tolerance and acceptance. Although the level of diversity has decreased over time, the shared memories and experiences of the Heliopolis residents continue to create a strong sense of unity and connection among them (Dobrowolski & Dobrowolska, 2006).

4.4. The Decline of Heliopolis: From Isolated City to Cairo Neighborhood

Heliopolis underwent a significant transformation in the 1950s, shifting from being an isolated city to becoming a neighborhood within Cairo, primarily due to the urbanization of the surrounding desert area (Gouda, 2015). In 1960, the Heliopolis Electric Railway and Heliopolis Oases Company (HOC) was nationalized and renamed the "Heliopolis Company for Housing and Development," now under government control. This change had a profound impact on the city's quality standards, regulations, and maintenance, resulting in a decline in both the company's performance and the visual appeal of Heliopolis (Shetawy & Dief-Allah, 2013). To address the growing housing needs, the nationalized company implemented a policy in 1972 that allowed for the construction of additional floors and increased building heights (Gouda, 2015). Unfortunately, this led to many structures disregarding the original architectural regulations of Baron Empain, resulting in the loss of Heliopolis's distinctive character. The neighborhood also faced challenges such as traffic congestion and parking crises, which turned Heliopolis into a congested suburb (Shetawy & Dief-Allah, 2013). The following table shows the urban transformation in Heliopolis based on the study by the Urban Planning and Design Department of Ain Shams University between 2015 and 2016.

Table 3 Urban transformation in Heliopolis.

| Period | Urban transformation in Heliopolis | | | | | |
	Architectural Style	Height	Façade	Skyline	Materials	Color
Monarchy Era (1905-1952)	Neo-Islamic style, Art Deco and other distinctive styles The majority of the buildings have three parts: Horizontal part Minaret Building axis	Maximum 20 m or five floors	Decorated façade with arch or arcade shape windows	Harmonic skyline	Stones, brick and wood for buildings and facades	Beige and Red
Nasser Era (1952-1970)	Mix between Art Deco style And plain architectural style	Few buildings exceeded only one floor	Plain Façade	Harmonic skyline	Concrete and Bricks	Beige
Sadat Era (1970-1981)	No defined architectural style	7 to 8 floors	Plain façade with rectangular windows	Distortion skyline	Concrete and Bricks	No defined or specific color

| Mubarak Era (1981-2011) | No defined style as some buildings are modern and other so simple have no architectural style | Increasing of floors' number and the appearance of towers | Plain Façade and few Modern style façade | Distortion skyline | Concrete and bricks for buildings

 Glass for facades | No defined or specific color |
| Post 25th of January revolution (2011-current time) | No defined Style | 15 floors or more which means 50 m or more | Plain façade | Distortion skyline | Concrete and bricks for buildings

 Glass for facades | No defined Color |

5. Evolution of Preservation Efforts for Egypt's Urban Heritage

For a long time, Egypt did not recognize the value of its urban heritage from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and there were no protective laws in place. In the 1970s, the architectural legacy of the modern era was not considered significant, as preservation efforts focused primarily on Pharaonic, Coptic, and Islamic heritage. In the 1980s, there was some progress in protecting antiquities, with the introduction of a new law (Law No. 117 of 1983) replacing the previous Antiquities Law (No. 215 of 1952). Additionally, a military decree (No. 2 of 1988) was issued to halt the destruction of distinctive architectural villas (Alhowaily, 2016).

However, the attitude towards modern Egyptian heritage changed significantly in the 1990s, following a series of demolitions of unique villas. These destructive actions prompted the Egyptian authorities to take measures in 1996 to protect modern Egyptian heritage. In 1997, the General Organization for Physical Planning (GOPP), a governmental organization responsible for urban planning, launched a research project called "Preservation of Greater Cairo's Architectural and Urban Cultural Heritage." This project identified ten urban neighborhoods, including Heliopolis, Ain Shams, Abbasiya, Downtown, Helwan, Garden City, Magra El-bouyon (Aqueduct), Maadi, El-Roda, Zamalek, and Giza, as having historic character and architectural quality. The project aimed to develop preservation plans, define administrative boundaries, and propose recommendations for protective laws. This project and the military declaration No. 2 of 1988 became catalysts for developing stricter protective laws for safeguarding unique assets from the late 19th and early 20th centuries (El Aref, 2014).

However, in 2000, former President Mubarak canceled all military decrees passed under the emergency law, including the crucial Decree No. 2 of 1988. This action posed a significant threat to the distinctive architectural buildings, leading to the urgent need to establish the National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH) in 2001 and enact two major laws: Law No. 144 of 2006 and Law No. 119 of 2008 (Gharib, 2009).

The National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH), headquartered in Saladin Citadel in Cairo since 2004, aims to enhance and implement aesthetic values in the external facades of buildings, archaeological and urban spaces, and the visual fabric of cities, villages, and all metropolitan areas in Egypt, including new urban communities (NOUH official website, n.d.). NOUH has an expert council of professionals from various backgrounds (Gharib, 2009).

5.1. Protective Laws for Modern Heritage Preservation in Egypt

In Egypt, protective laws have been established to safeguard modern heritage assets. Two key laws related to organizing and preserving modern heritage are Law No. 119 of 2008 and Law No. 114 of 2006 (Alhowaily, 2016).

5.1.1. Law No. 119 of 2008: The Building Law

Law No. 119 of 2008, commonly known as the Building Law, was published in the Official Gazette on May 11, 2008. It consists of 114 articles divided into five parts. The relevant articles in this law focus on the responsibilities entrusted to the National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH).

Key provisions under Law No. 119 of 2008:

- Development of general policy, executive plans, and programs for urban harmony in collaboration with relevant bodies (Art. 29).
- Provision of opinions on draft laws concerning urban harmony and conducting detailed studies in this field (Art. 29).

- Coordination with relevant bodies to ensure the implementation of regulatory restrictions (Art. 29).
- Preparation and oversight of urban harmony projects to enhance distinctive areas (Art. 30).
- Formulation of standards for protecting heritage areas and assets (Art. 32).
- Establishment of guidelines for the design of billboards and signs on the facades of heritage buildings (Art. 36).
- Identification of areas and buildings of significant architectural value that require preservation (Art. 80).
- Compilation of lists of buildings with distinguished architectural values throughout Egypt and establishment of guidelines for their preservation (Art. 81).
- Collaboration with competent bodies, NGOs, private companies, or individuals to undertake projects or studies related to urban harmony (Art. 87).

5.1.2. Law No. 114 of 2006: Preservation of Cultural Heritage

Law No. 114 of 2006, announced in the Official Bulletin No. 248 on November 4, 2006, focuses on regulating the demolition of buildings not at risk of collapse and preserving cultural heritage. This law comprises 16 articles, and its key provisions include:

- Prohibition of authorizing the demolition or adding extensions to buildings with exceptional architecture associated with national history, historical figures, or recognized tourist attractions (Art. 2).
- Requirement for each governorate to establish one or more permanent committees to inventory distinctive buildings within its jurisdiction (Art. 4).
- Imposition of penalties, including a 15-year ban on construction over their lands, arrest, and fines, for individuals who violate the law and destroy their properties (Art. 12).
- These protective laws aim to ensure the preservation and conservation of Egypt's modern heritage assets, valuing urban harmony and the cultural significance of distinctive buildings.

5.2. Preservation and Conservation Efforts by the National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH)

Cairo	# of distinctive Buildings
Southern Zone	
Masr El-Qadeema	162
El-Khaleefa we El-Moqatam	60
Al-Sayeda Zeinab	252
Maadi	233
Helwan	93
Total	800
Northern Zone	
El-Zaytoon	61
Hadayeq El-Qoba	48
El-Sahel	28
Rood El-Farag	85
Shobra	82
Boolaq	63
Total	367
Western Zone	
El-Mosky	37
Bab El-Shareya	20
Abdeen	494
Wassat (el-darb el-ahmar & Gamaleya)	121
Gharb (Qasr El-Nil)	491
El-Waily	237
Total	1400
Eastern Zone	
Heliopolis	732
Ain Shams	5
El-Nozha	4
El-Marg	3
El-Matareya	9
Total	21
Cairo total	**2588**

Source: Gouda (2015)

Figure 3 Number of heritage buildings in Cairo neighbourhoods

The first step taken by the National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH) was the release of inventory lists featuring notable architectural buildings in different cities across Egypt. The table provided below depicts the number of distinguished buildings in each neighborhood of Cairo (Gouda, 2015). Notably, Heliopolis stands out as the neighborhood with the highest concentration of distinctive buildings among all of Cairo's neighborhoods.

These registered assets are categorized based on their significance as values A, B, or C. This classification determines the permissible intervention measures:

- Value A: Preservation without any exterior or interior changes.
- Value B: Flexibility for interior alterations without affecting the exterior.
- Value C: High level of flexibility, allowing interior structure demolition while retaining the outer facade (NOUH, 2010).

However, by law 117 of 2008 (art. 33), any construction, adjustment, addition of extra floors, or restoration of a distinctive building requires permission from authorized bodies. NOUH has published five guides on its official website, explaining the standards for urban harmony principles outlined in law no. 119 of 2008 (NOUH official website, n.d):

- Principles and standards of urban harmony for heritage areas and buildings.
- Principles and standards of urban harmony for advertisements and banners.
- Principles and standards of urban harmony for city centers.
- Principles and standards of urban harmony for green areas and open spaces.
- Principles and standards of urban harmony for quality control.

The National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH) has played a vital role in preserving and protecting distinctive urban heritage while promoting urban harmony. They have provided a comprehensive definition of a "heritage building" and established selection criteria, including historical, architectural, urban, social, or local traditional value (Gharib, 2009).

In their commitment to heritage preservation, NOUH has undertaken significant projects across Egypt. Examples of these projects include the restoration and enhancement of the Clock Square and Opera area in Damanhour, the aqueduct project in Cairo, rooftop cultivation initiatives, the improvement of Shebin's Corniche, and the preservation efforts in Historic Cairo (NOUH official website, n.d).

One of NOUH's most renowned projects is the Khedival Cairo project, which focuses on enhancing the facades of famous downtown squares. This project has garnered significant recognition (Gouda, 2015). Additionally, NOUH actively opposes illegal encroachments that threaten heritage sites. They have prevented the construction of a multi-story parking structure in Ramses Square to preserve the image of the valuable train station. They have also halted developing a modern commercial project before Salah El Din Citadel. Furthermore, NOUH is taking action to remove hanging signboards from listed heritage buildings in Tahrir Square. They have also supported the Heliopolis Heritage Initiative in their efforts to prevent the demolition of the Swiss chalet in Heliopolis despite its eventual destruction (NOUH official website, n.d).

NOUH's endeavors demonstrate their commitment to preserving Egypt's urban heritage and fostering urban harmony by actively protecting and promoting significant historical and architectural sites (Farid & AbdelHady, 2018).

5.3. The role of Heliopolis Heritage initiative in preserving Heliopolis cultural heritage:

The preservation of the unique architectural heritage of Heliopolis, Cairo, and Alexandria has been a focal point for various social media campaigns and civil society initiatives in recent years. Over the past decade, numerous websites, online pages, and associations have been created to rally public support for conserving historic villas and palaces in these cities (Choukri Asmar, pers. comm., December 12, 2018). The most active civil society efforts include Save Alex, Zamlik Guardians, Save Cairo, The Past Days of Port Said, and the Heliopolis Heritage Initiative (HHI).

The Heliopolis Heritage Initiative was established in 2011 after the Egyptian revolution, under the leadership of politician Amr Hamzawy, who represented the Heliopolis neighborhood in parliament—comprising a large group of volunteers who grew up and spent their formative years in Heliopolis, the HHI aimed to transition from a grassroots initiative to a formally registered non-governmental organization (NGO) to amplify its influence at the local and official levels. The HHI's primary mission is to "Revive and Protect the Quality of Life in Heliopolis" through six key pillars (Choukri Asmar, pers. comm., December 12, 2018):

- Facilitating cooperation between the local community, civil society, and public/private sectors
- Safeguarding and reviving the cultural heritage of Heliopolis
- Enhancing the open spaces and public gardens
- Addressing traffic challenges and improving public transportation
- Raising local awareness
- Tackling waste management issues

The Heliopolis Heritage Initiative (HHI) has undertaken a range of successful initiatives since its establishment to preserve the architectural and cultural heritage of Heliopolis. These initiatives have included organizing protests against the demolition of heritage sites and the removal of the Heliopolis tram, as well as actively protesting the construction of a bridge that threatened the historical significance of the Basilica building (Ahmed Mansour, pers. comm., December 10, 2018).

Moreover, the HHI has presented alternative proposals, such as plans for underground parking, cycling tracks, and traffic management solutions, which were supported by various authorities. The organization has also engaged in initiatives to decorate public spaces for seasonal celebrations, arrange heritage tours and workshops, and host annual photography competitions to document and raise awareness about the area's architectural and cultural legacy (Choukri Asmar, pers. comm., December 12, 2018).

These efforts have helped to solidify the HHI's position as a key advocate for Heliopolis' heritage, while also fostering greater cooperation between civil society, local communities, and governmental entities like the National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH) in preserving Egypt's recent architectural heritage (Ahmed Mansour, pers. comm., December 10, 2018).

5.4. Community Engagement in Heliopolis' Heritage Management

The interviews with the Head of the Heliopolis Heritage Initiative (HHI), the Expert from the National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH), and the Head of the Heliopolis District revealed the essential roles that both civil society and citizens can play in the management of Heliopolis' heritage, as highlighted below:

The importance of community involvement in Heliopolis heritage management and preservation:

- The government sector emphasizes the importance of cooperation with civil society and citizens, as the government alone cannot accomplish everything.
- The National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH) highlights the significance of community involvement in ensuring the sustainability of heritage for future generations.
- The Heliopolis Heritage Initiative (HHI) stresses the importance of citizen contributions in countering greedy investors and preserving heritage. Community involvement is one of HHI's six pillars.

Opportunities for community engagement include:

- Reporting encroachments on heritage
- Promoting Heliopolis heritage
- Documenting heritage
- Supporting civil society through resistance against encroachments
- Enhancing the aesthetics of the area through activities like decorating squares and painting graffiti

Limitations to community involvement:

- Financial constraints
- Bureaucracy
- Miscommunication
- Poor collaboration between authorities and NGOs
- Lack of awareness about heritage among Heliopolis residents
- Financial interests of heritage property owners
- Demanding lifestyle of Egyptian families

Suggestions to overcome the limitations:

- Creation of a committee to address bureaucratic issues and ensure coordination between authorities and civil society
- Provision of financial resources to support heritage conservation and finding sponsors for community projects
- Studying community needs and desires
- Organizing activities effectively
- Compensating heritage property owners fairly
- Making modifications to heritage building laws

Regarding community involvement in decision-making and planning processes, the interviewees agreed that community participation at the municipal level is currently inactive in Egypt, with a centralized decision-making process where official authorities hold all the power. They emphasized the need for HHI to maintain good relations with official parties and form alliances with other heritage NGOs to amplify their voice.

Activities implemented by NOUH and HHI to involve the community include guided and bike tours, photographic competitions, sketching activities, annual decorations of El Kourba square, seminars on heritage topics, and facilitation of young artists' involvement in graffiti and waste management initiatives.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the preservation efforts for Egypt's urban heritage, which mainly focused on Heliopolis, have shown remarkable advancement. The historical neglect of modern-era heritage has given way to a newfound recognition and implementation of protective measures. Establishing the National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH) and introducing pivotal protective legislations like Law No. 119 of 2008 and Law No. 114 of 2006 have been instrumental in safeguarding Egypt's modern heritage assets.

The NOUH has actively engaged in enhancing and enforcing aesthetic values within structures, archaeological sites, urban landscapes, and the visual character of cities and villages throughout Egypt. Concurrently, the grassroots Heliopolis Heritage Initiative (HHI) has emerged as a dedicated movement aimed at conserving and safeguarding the cultural legacy of Heliopolis. Through a spectrum of initiatives and outreach programs, the HHI has effectively involved the local community, fostering awareness regarding the significance of heritage preservation.

These combined efforts underscore a promising trajectory in preserving and promoting Egypt's urban heritage, exemplified by the collaborative endeavors of governmental entities, civil society, and community-driven initiatives. The strides made in safeguarding Heliopolis' heritage reflect a shift towards proactive preservation practices and highlight the growing appreciation for the cultural richness and historical significance embedded within Egypt's modern heritage landscapes.

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