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Public perception affecting the significance of urban heritage: A case study of Port Said historic quarters

Wpływ odbioru społecznego na znaczenie miejskiego dziedzictwa: studium przypadku dzielnic historycznych Port Saidu

Introduction

Within the planning of historic settings, contradiction occurs between conserving the past for its authentic value and the demand of development in response to changing local economic and social standards. This debate results from a new perception of historic assets and memories of intangible heritage in relation to sustainable heritage management[1].

Nevertheless, the regeneration process of historic cities faces many challenges, mainly those which are related to demographic changes (population growth, urbanization); structural changes (globalization, growth of trade and relations, economic growth in emerging countries) and environmental changes (climate change, pollution, degradation of natural resources[2].

Port Said's built heritage is characterized by its distinctive architectural types and trends[3]. Due to successive wars, the city has suffered economic losses and uncontrolled demographic changes occurred, coupled with neglect of these important unique historic assets. Port Said's morphology is being obliterated; large numbers of these buildings were replaced by tall residential concrete blocks. In his diaries „world-renowned Egyptian intellectual" Samir Amin, an Egyptian-French Marxian economist, stated that „The problem partially boils down to the lack of general culture among the public. Interest in heritage is at rock bottom"[4].

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the evolution of Port Said's unique urban and architectural morphogenesis, and investigate the community's perception to the city's valuable historic buildings and spaces among the recently imposed urban elements. Thus, the residents' perception of their heritage is the main pillar for its preservation through a bottom-up approach through developing a new vision for the future based on dweller involvement in local heritage conservation strategy.

Research Methodology

This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the influence of Port Said local residents' perception of the city's image on the conservation and, consequently, the rehabilitation process of the city's historic remains. The research involves sociological aspects which reveal inhabitants' interaction with their cultural heritage where public perception and values represent the main indicator for actual decisions taken.

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Research design

The research includes two parts. The first describes the city's historic urban fabric, while the second analyzes its dwellers' vision of its heritage value. Therefore, the researchers performed a historic analysis, site observation, interviews and surveys to gather the required data and examine the hypotheses assumed.

A theoretical study was conducted to determine the factors affecting public perception of the city's heritage that should monitor the qualitative questionnaire.

Therefore the data collection tools were

- Semi-structured interviews conducted with a number of academics, urban planners, heritage conservation researchers involved in the rehabilitation of historic buildings in Port Said and members of NGOs of Port Said Ala Ademo (In English: port said as it was in the past) to extract the indicators informing the questionnaire (Appendix 1).
- Structured interviews (questionnaire) were performed with 120 local residents of Port Said. The survey was divided into four main parts where the first part included the demographic data of 120 Port Said local residents (respondents), while the second part investigated the general knowledge of city dwellers about their heritage. The third part collected ratings of three main sections: public spaces (parks and open spaces, urban plazas and pedestrian areas), the built environment (building types, design elements), and sociocultural events. This section was formulated based on VPS (Visual Preference Survey), a method developed by5, which represents the process that permits the inhabitants to rank various local places, spaces, and land uses, to express their effect on city's urban image (Appendix 2). The city's historic assets were ranked on a scale of (least appealing) to (most appealing), with 0 being neutral. The fourth part deduced the inhabitants' recommendations for enhancing the city's urban image based on social, cultural and environmental foundation.
- In this study; the VPS links between two main components: the first one represented in city assessment based on a fieldwork exploratory phase implemented through observing the urban configuration of the city's historic spaces, and tracing the influence of local residents on such spaces. Both elements were collaborated together determining a detailed urban analysis and a final vision plan, underlining some urban design guidelines that enhance the city's image based on heritage preservation.
- Observation of the current situation of Port Said's urban heritage from different aspects (historic, physical and socio-cultural) and tracing the interaction relation between locals and its heritage value.
- SWOT analysis to determine the external and internal factors that will affect the future image of the city's urban heritage from different perspectives (environmental, social and economic challenges).

Literature review

Idilfitri et al.[6] stated that the definition of the term 'public' means the integration of a group of people with different visions and missions[7]. They added that public engagement in planning strategies is a crucial issue, where it is essential to consider a broad variety of groups, particularly those with a special interest in heritage conservation. The concept of identity discussed in this study reveals its significance in understanding the negative consequences of current urban strategies applied to Port Said's historic fabric, where it lacks the authenticity of identity. Globally, urban identity of historic cities faces continuous deterioration due to the ongoing spread of urban sprawl. The loss of public place-identity and the sense of belonging brings destructive results to cities and their inhabitants. Tavakoli[8] argues that the public understanding of historic value is a significant issue in defining urban identity due to its direct effect on both implementing society's preservation desires and creating a sustainable city image[9]. Nevertheless, public participation in preservation strategies, based on a holistically perceived image, will consequently reinforce the sense of belonging to the land and the environment[10]. Based on previous studies, at a certain point, the perception of heritage becomes intrinsic to inhabitants' culture and they inherit a vision of the city's components where natural aspects may represent the main heritage components, others consider built heritage as the key component of heritage, while others still focus more intangible heritage including cultural events, music and other activities that could be defined as heritage, e.g. fishing[11]. Therefore the indicators of urban identity could be defined based on factors influencing user behavior and perception towards their environment.

Indicators of Urban Identity

This study aims to identify the concept of identity in Port Said historic context based on morphological urban fabric. The criteria of the evaluation of public perception's is based on extracting the physical features characterizing the city's urban environment and differentiates it from others where it should be in a continuous assessment to keep its historic identity simultaneously with inserting contemporary urban designs in a homogeneous manner[12]. Tavakoli[13] has categorized urban identity features characterizing Iranian heritage value into three categories based on their effectiveness in perceiving the city's image in addition to the social and physical environments, where the main aim of this classification is to diagnose the aspects that strongly reveal the city's identity while ignoring insignificant ones, the conservation of spaces with similar features while reducing features that cause visual illusion and confusion of the historic image, creating strong bonds between inhabitants and their cultural heritage through direct associations, and

Fig. 1. Current map showing the different urban patterns of the European and the Arab quarters. Source: researcher.

constructing iconic elements and celebrated architectural symbols of the city's urban fabric[14]. Idilfitri et al.[15] defined public value as directly related to political and historical aspects, they evaluated Malaysian cultural attractions and public perception of historic urban fabric based on certain criteria including Architecture, Artifacts, Crafts, Cultural symbols, Custom, Folklore, Landscape, Language, Local cuisine, Music, Sacred events and Sacred spaces[16]. As for the Egyptian context, Abouhadid et al.[17] argued that the main factors that influence human interaction with the historic urban environment are demographic aspects, including gender and years of education[18], in addition to internal aspects including public awareness, local behavior, Emotional involvement as well as external aspects infrastructure, managerial procedures and legislations implementation. Based on these previous cases, it is obvious that scholars applied seemingly different evaluation criteria in various countries, but these criteria proved to have similar aspects but they affect the public perception of urban heritage differently.

Port Said's Urban Heritage

The story of Port Said started in the nineteenth century when Ferdinand de Lesseps founded the joint-stock Suez Canal Company (SCC) to build and operate a canal that would connect the Red an Mediterranean Seas[19]. Consequently; the SCC was in charge of planning a number of settlements along the route of the future canal; including Port Said. It mainly followed British and French planning concepts and architec-

tural styles which were similar to the character given to French colonies, especially in India and Senegal[20]. However, the city's oldest historic fabric is located in the Arab and the European (Al Afrang) quarters, as illustrated in figure 1 as it will be clarified next.

In 1859, Port Said's first city plan was proposed, following a grid pattern layout of military engineers' camps without external walls. In 1861, the city was established at the mouth of the canal opposite the Mediterranean Sea. The period between 1859 and 1869 is considered to be the golden age of both the SCC and Port Said, where European architectural styles were freely imposed into the city. The most famous architectural type at the time was tropical architecture with timber verandas. This type was commonly used in the French seaside resorts of Norman, Basque Country and the Mediterranean[21].

This study will focus on two main areas that demonstrate the inception and development of the Port Said's historic architectural morphogenesis. These areas are: the Arab Quarter (Al Arabs) and the European Quarter (Al Afrang in Arabic).

Case studies

The Arab Quarter: The Reflection of Exploitation
The inception of the Arab Quarter started in 1859 when it was a squalid area that followed neither the Egyptian government nor the SCC. It was considered as the gathering point of workers that came from all over Egypt, especially Upper Egypt, in the time of the excavation of the Suez Canal. In 1874, after the completion of the Canal's excavation, the SCC stated The
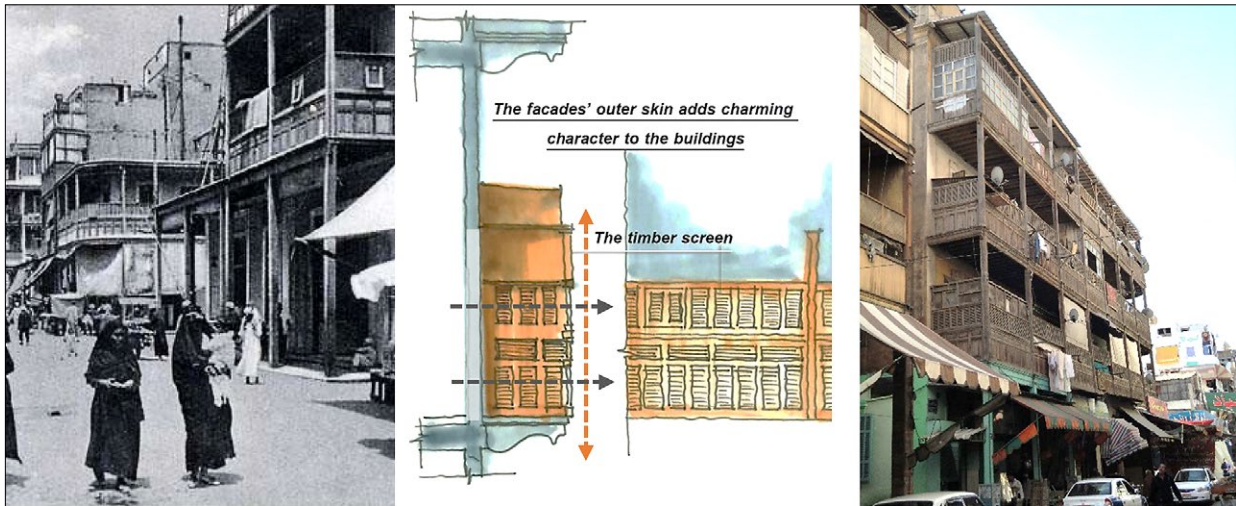
Fig. 2. Left: Main Commercial Street in Al Arabs' quarter in 1940. Source: private archive. Middle: section showing the relation between the timber screen and the inner space of the house. Source: researcher. Right: wooden screens with movable openings (Islamic Mashrabeya) covered the houses main facades in 1938. Source: researcher.

Fig. 3. Left: sketch of National hotel which was built in 1889 with the colonial features of city architecture thenthe period's architecture. Source: researcher. Right: National hotel in 1975 with extruded wooden balconies. Source: private archive.

Fig. 4. Left: The American embassy in Port Said. Source: researcher. Right: The demolition in 2018. Source: researcher.

Arab Quarter to be the natives' neighborhood. The Company proposed an urban plan of the whole area that could not be implemented without the support of local authority[22]. The implementation of the area's urban transformation has been shaped by political decisions and economic concerns and it has cast a shadow on the Quarter's planning, where it has followed strict planning regulations.

Spatial analysis

When studying the Quarter, it is observed that there is a lack of any sort of gathering squares, open spaces or activity areas. This nature led to a great fire in 1884, when the Quarter was destroyed, rebuilt and resoled in the same exceedingly small built areas[23]. The Quarter's streets are narrow and crowded when compared with the European Quarter. The Quarter is comprised

of small building plots within a simple gridiron system designed to separate between ten-meter-wide main roads enclosing four blocks of buildings while the inner secondary arteries have a width of three meters.

Visual and Architectural Analysis
The Arab Quarter's buildings are characterized simple details. The main roads of the Quarter are bordered by wooden arcades with exposed deck boards. Plaster was used as the buildings' finishing material, with no decoration or molding and the balconies were supported by wooden consoles.

The height of the buildings of the Arab Quarter ranges between three to four stories. Similarly to other Islamic residential quarters, it is characterized by mixed uses, where the ground floors were used as open-air street-side shops, while the upper floors comprise residential apartments with access located on the sides of the buildings. The wooden balconies are highly enclosed reflecting the inhabitants' cultural and religious identity. Houses are covered with movable wooden external facades with vertical poles for many purposes. First, they provide additional privacy as they act as screens with small openings that allow the inhabitants to observe the streets without being seen themselves[24]. Second, they serve an aesthetic purpose: the facades' outer skin adds a charming character to the buildings. Finally, they serve an environmental purpose: they protect the inner spaces from the external heat while providing access to light and ventilation (fig. 2).

The European Quarter: The Recruitment of Foreign Architecture
In 1863, the European Quarter (Al Afrang) was gradually founded to host both foreigners and elite Egyptians that used to work for the SCC or in large trade organizations. The quarter was distinguished by its large building plots constructed on gridiron patterned streets with radial main roads that lead to main squares.

Unlike the Arab Quarter, the European Quarter (Al Afrang) was planned to create an appealing, humanistic and welcoming environment which was suitable for socio-cultural and religious activities that became effectively reflected in its inhabitants' lifestyle.

Spatial analysis
The quarter is comprised of a number of large open spaces, public gardens and sporting clubs which were located in large treed avenues with shopping malls and restaurants that extended to the streets' pavements. The urban environment created in the European Quarter was far more inviting and humanistic, accommodating cultural activities and gatherings as well as religious practice.

Visual and Architectural Analysis
In the early era of the European Quarter (in the years 1863–1885) the buildings were three-to-four stories high with wooden verandas covering the south facades for heat protection. The same treatment was applied to the northern elevations for the purpose of symmetry as shown in figure 3[25].

The architectural character of the European Quarter was created due to the reflection of both; the foreign influence presented in the SCC authority that built buildings in different European and colonial architecture vocabulary, facades with wooden verandas, and arcaded facades which were imposed generally to the design of buildings' facades of the biggest Egyptian cities in 1888 by the Egyptian government. This was specifically done in Port Said to replace the wooden verandas, simulating the French quarters in Paris[26]. Nonetheless, there was a great struggle between both design directions that finally led to the presence of buildings with Haussmannian arcaded facades along the main streets and tropical verandas along the streets that had a width of less than fifteen meters until the prohibition of wooden verandas in 1921 by vote of the city council[27]. Thus, the Quarter comprises different architectural styles including Art Deco, Art Nouveau and postmodern architecture beside the colonial style. Generally, the local inhabitants' perception of the city's heritage was negatively affected over the last decade. This is due to losing faith in any real conservation plans in addition to their voices being ignored in the city's revitalization strategies[28]. A large number of historic buildings in both quarters were demolished in the last two years, i.e. The American embassy in Port Said (fig. 4), and replaced by tall residential blocks that changed the city's morphology in a very obvious way.

Field Factors Affecting Port Said's Urban Identity

The concept of urban peculiarity in this paper mainly refers to social, cultural and economic aspects related together in shaping the city's identity. The urban transformation that became globally applied over the past century was previously concerned only with the transformation of the physical setting. Consequently, the environmental and socio-cultural aspects today reveal themselves in a meaningless way that leads to a loss of urban identity. At that point, the relationship between urban transformations and urban identity is a crucial issue that needs to be discussed. Based on the semi-structured interviews with academics of Port Said university that take part in the current conservation plan, in the city's contemporary urban strategy, the peculiarity of identity was overwhelmed by market needs which led to mislaying the city's architectural character. The decisions that have been made, the changes in the city's morphology and the lives of users will lead to a continuous deterioration of the historic city's urban fabric. Thus, protecting the authenticity of the city's morphology and its spatial and architecture features will result in a sustainable image of the city. Designing public areas with compatible residential and urban spaces in a way that enhances the sense of civic pride

Factors Affecting Port Said Urban Features

Social, historical, political, Cultural, religious Factors	Economic factors, Urban infrastructure	Strategic-political Factors	Environmental aspects
• The nature of the city as cosmopolitan one; • The historic differentiation between the Arabs and foreigners; • The successive wars and political events.	• The free zone; • The petroleum fields.	• The current strategic project (Shark El Tafreaa) • Suez Canal.	• Natural sittings, • Location juxtaposing the Mediterranean & Red seas. • The flora and fauna.

Sant Augeuni church — The free zone — New Cultural Projects — Suez canal to mediteranean

The pedestrian Suez Canal touristic walkway — Zohr petroleum field — Shark El Tafreaa project — Larus birds

Fig. 5. Factors affecting Port Said's urban features. Source: researcher.

will improve the city's social image. The concept of protecting the city's identity can be evaluated based on several aspects: the physical, social, economic and environmental status. The orientation of each factor in the city leads to a better recognition of its image. Based on a literature review, field studies and interviews there are main factors that affect the formulation of Port Said's urban fabric as briefed in figure 5.

The SWOT analysis of the city's field visits can be summarized as follows: Internal Factors such as Strengths assets (ex: The frontage of the Mediterranean and Suez canals, definite boundaries, strong architectural heritage and identity and national pride) and Weakness viewpoints (ex: Isolated, no space for expansion, restricted old planning, lack of local interest in heritage, poor security and high humidity). External factors including Opportunities (ex: Great economic potential, integration with plans for Suez Canal expansion, Port and free zone – high potential for the local economy. Additionally, sea water can be used for passive cooling and water resources and rainwa-

ter harvesting. Finally, management threats include bureaucracy, and environmental challenges which are represented by the high erosion of coast line, salt spray in the air and sea breeze cause coastal building erosion, sea water and ground water affect building foundations, High pollution level in Lake Manzala, in addition to Damietta port being a competitor and Global warming is expected to increase the sea level by 30 cm in 2025). In the following part, urban field work analysis is connected with visual perspective, interviews and questionnaires to enhance city image and sustain its identity.

Results Analysis

Based on[29] definition of cultural heritage where it is broadly divided into tangible and intangible heritage that can be identified as intrinsic to the city itself, and the semi-structured interviews took place with academics, researchers and members of NGOs, the historic characteristics that define Port Said's urban identity

were presented and divided into two main categories: tangible and intangible heritage[30] (Appendix 3). These categories were divided into assessment indicators that were used to rank the aspects affecting the urban image by city dwellers as shown in table 1.

The interviews with academics took place at the Arab Academy for science and technology, Port Said branch, and Port Said University while the interviews conducted with researchers took place at Port Said University where they apply their research work. The interviews with members of the NGO Port Said Ala Ademo took place in the city's old bazar and/or at the organization office.

This step was followed by a questionnaire-based survey conducted with 120 citizens from different areas of Port Said, including the Arab Quarter, the European Quarter and Port Fouad Quarter, as they are the main three areas comprising the city's important heritage. The respondents answered the questionnaire by applying the visual preference survey method as presented in table 2.

62% of the respondents were females who showed highly emotional responses to historic identity and the importance of heritage preservation. 50% of the participants were between 18 and 30 years old, most of them were highly educated. This group is the most targeted in next revitalization plans to take place. 10% of the respondents were children whose age ranged between 10 to 17 years old. Unfortunately, this group was the least aware of the importance of heritage value, and this gives a negative indicator concerning the future sustainability of the city's heritage and sense of belonging, as shown in figure 6.

Generally, respondents showed strong support for the protection of the city's urban heritage. Based on the survey, the assessment indicators were categorized as shown in figure 7.

The data from the 120 surveys was combined and assessed to determine the perception of the city's value by its inhabitants. The benefits of using VPS in community-based planning give more reliability in building consensus about visual preference and visual depiction for upcoming implementation of preservation strategies. The first part of the questionnaire tested the public perception to the city's open spaces. As for its squares, El Mansheya square was found to be the most appealing one. This may be due to its visual image near the Suez Canal's coast and the recent preservation attempts by the governorate authority. In spite of its unique location near an important museum, Al Shohadaa square

Cultural Heritage of Port Said City		
Types of cultural heritage	Indicators of cultural heritage	Percentage of importance
Tangible Heritage	Historic squares and open spaces	85%
	Historic buildings	90%
	Monuments	90%
Intangible Heritage	City's local accent (sound scape)	60%
	Socio-cultural events	90%
	Local activities	50%
Three main evaluation sections affecting the city's urban image: public spaces, built environment, and socio-cultural events		

Table 1. Assessment indicators of local perception to Port Said's historic urban fabric. Source: researcher.

Respondent characteristics				
Gender	Males 38%	Females 62%		
Age	10-17 years 10%	18-30 years 50%	31-50 years 20%	>50 years 20%
Belonging settings	European quarter 60 %	Arabs quarter 30 %	Port Fouad quarter 10 %	

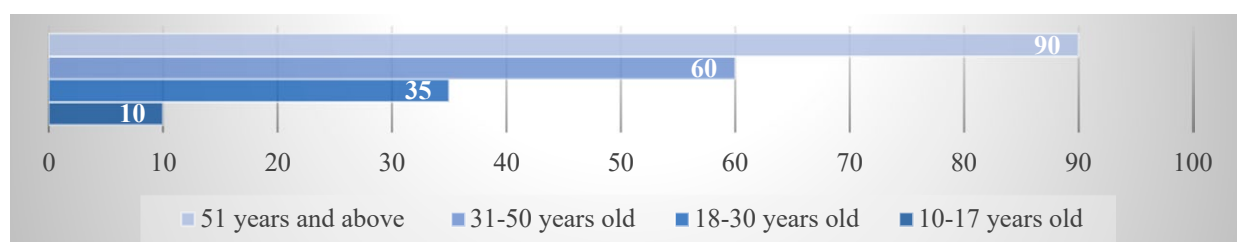Table 2. Survey participant characteristics. Source: researcher.

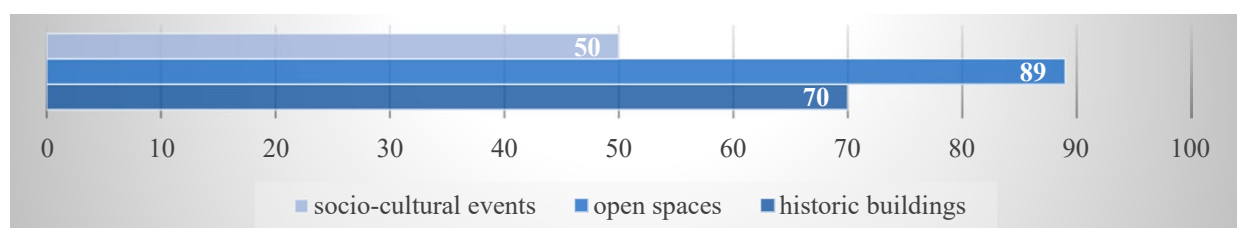Fig. 6. Sense of belonging to urban heritage. Source: researcher.

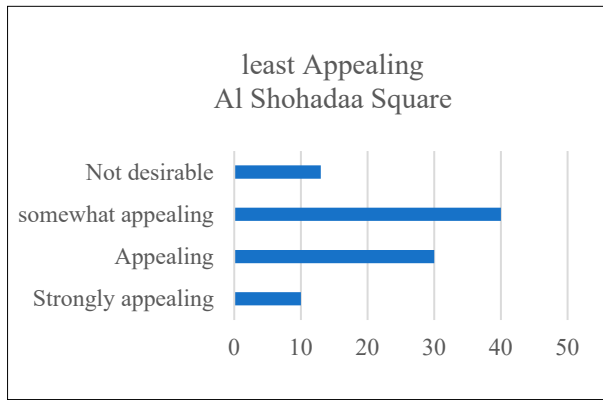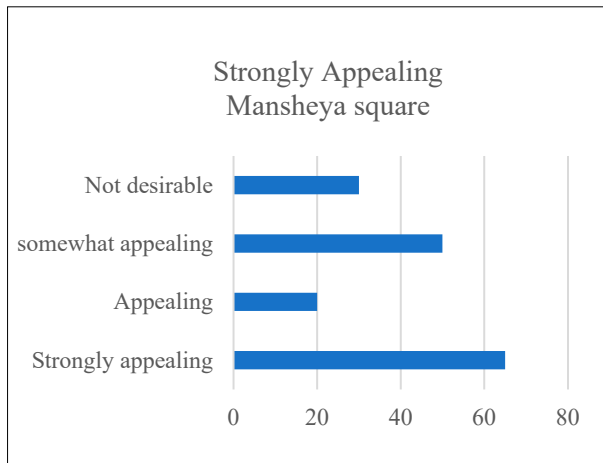Fig. 7. Categories of cultural heritage indicators to public users. Source: researcher.

Fig. 8. Categorization of the city's main squares based on public perception. Source: researcher.
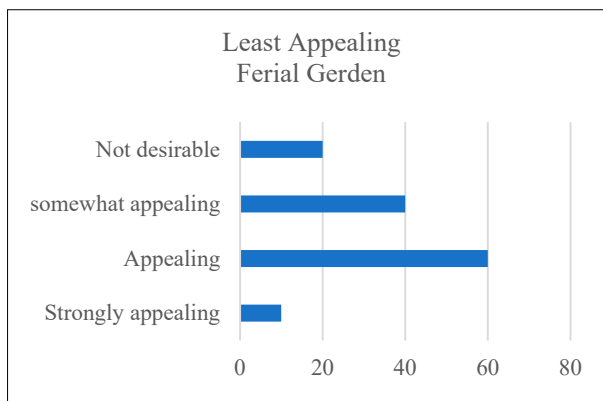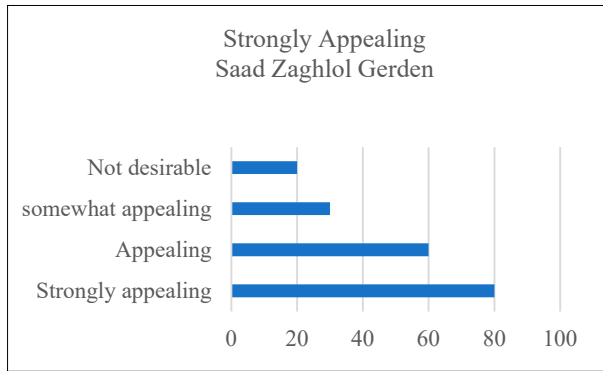

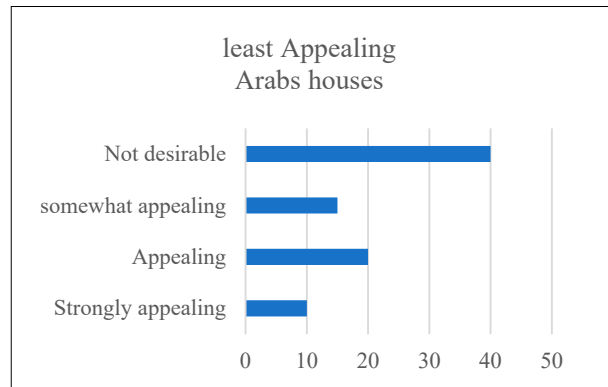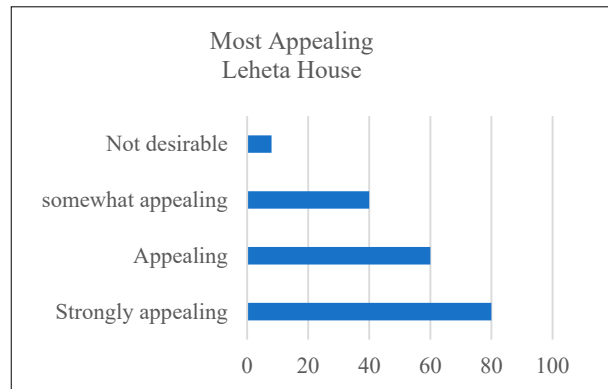Fig. 9. Categorization of public gardens based on public perception. Source: researcher.

Fig. 10. Categorization of the city's residential historic buildings based on public image. Source: researcher.

Fig. 11. Left: the Simon Arzt building, rated the most appealing commercial building based on the survey. Source: researcher. Middle: the Bazar Abbas building. Source: Waled Montasser. Right: the Goethe Institute's Bazar event. Source: researcher.

was the least appealing square. This is due to lack of public services, sitting areas and damaged pedestrian walks, as presented in figure 8.

The city includes a number of historic gardens including the History Garden and the Ferial Garden where the ceremony of the Suez Canal's opening took place in 1869. Its location at the center of the city, its unique greenery and playgrounds for children are highly appreciated by local residents. Yet it was reported to be the least attractive garden as it has been closed for a long time and the public is not allowed to enter it. Saad Zaghlool Garden was rated as the most desirable garden due to its renovation. It also hosts numerous folklore events especially after the removal of its surrounding fences and its opening to the public (fig. 9).

The second section of the survey concerned the perception of iconic buildings. The buildings were categorized based on functions and were ranked based on their perceived image to the public.

As for residential buildings, the Leheta house was perceived as an important icon of the city, while the timber Arab houses in the Arab Quarter were ranked the lowest due to their significant deterioration (fig. 10).

Concerning commercial uses, the Simon Arzt building was reported to be the most appreciated by local inhabitants, with 90% finding it strongly appealing. Most of the participants were aware of the building's history and its current renovation. The Bazar Abbas was highly appreciated as well but residents recommended that it is un an urgent need of intervention aimed at its revitalization (fig. 11). Nevertheless, the
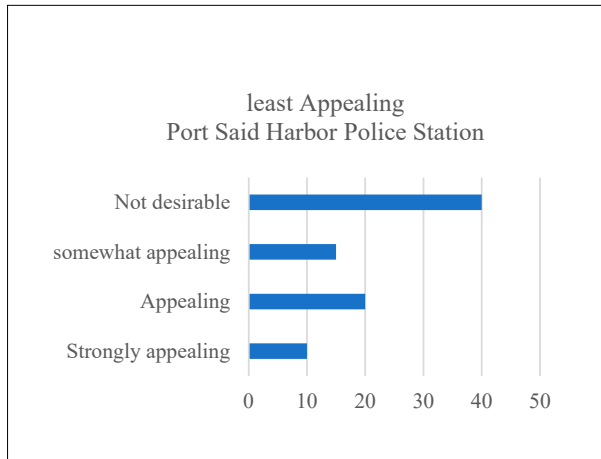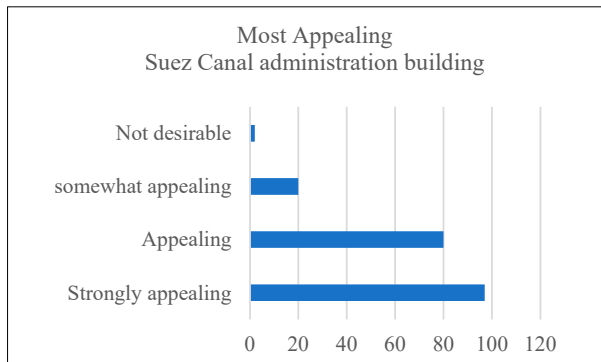
Fig. 12. Categorization of governmental historic buildings. Source: researcher.

Fig. 13. Left: the Port Said Cathedral, the most noticeable religious building for to the city's inhabitants. Source: Mohamed Habash. Middle: the rehabilitated Al-Abbasi Mosque, current situation. Right: the Unique Maroon church. Source: researcher.

Goethe Institute initiated an event in February 2019 for raising public awareness of the bazaar's historic importance where a large number of residents had shared the experience and shown interest.

The Suez Canal administration building was reported to be the most important building for large number of city residents, as 97% of the respondents confirmed that it was directly connected to their perception of the city due to its function, location and historic importance and function related to the Suez Canal, even when compared with other buildings i.e.

the Port Said Harbor Police Station which was built in the early nineteenth century. It was fund to be barely appealing by 70% of the respondents (fig. 12).

The city is rich with religious buildings, as a large number of churches and cathedrals were built in the early period of the city's inception; only two mosques were allowed to be built for Arabs. Despite this, the Port Said cathedral was the most appealing religious building to its inhabitants. As many as 87% of the respondents agreed that the Al-Abbasi Mosque, with its tall minaret and dome which welcomingly embrace worshippers,
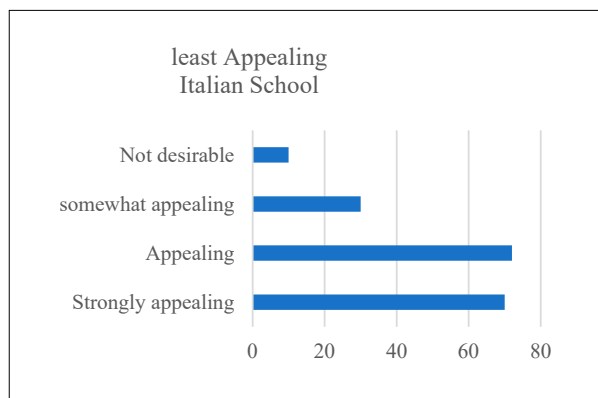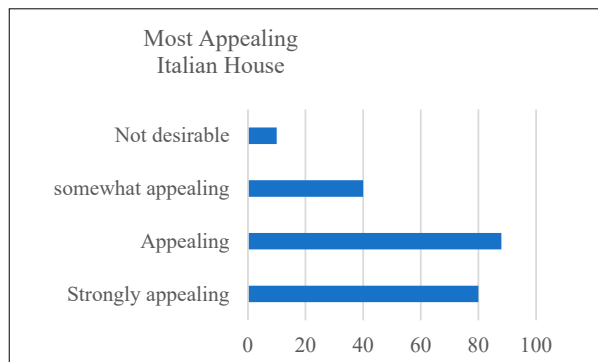
Fig. 14. Rating of the historic cultural buildings. Source: researcher.

became an attractive place after its restoration. Although it is opened only once every year, 80% of the residents found the Maroon church one of the most charming architectural buildings in the city (fig. 13).

The nature of the city as a cosmopolitan center has resulted in a large number of cultural and educational buildings. The Italian house and school are ranked as the two most important cultural buildings. However, the Italian house was noticed to a greater degree by residents due to its unique form. As it is prohibited by the local authorities to take photos of the Italian school, this important building has become totally isolated. Moreover, the Italian house has a very different architectural character than the Gothic one of the school, which is relatively common in the city of Port Said (fig. 14).

The results of the third section of the survey concerning socio-cultural events demonstrated the residents' positive attitude and a high public awareness, as 76% of the respondents were passionate with public events. This public awareness was also made evident by their eagerness to protect their assets such as their reaction against cutting trees in historical areas.

Generally, the majority of respondents agreed that the lowest-rated places are those that include almost deserted streets and lifeless open spaces that lack ground floor activity or visual variety on wall surfaces, or newly-built constructions that do not fit into the local architecture.

Moreover, shortage of parking areas and a lack of landscaping on sidewalks with inadequate width and unattractive fencing were also viewed negatively. As

many as 80% of the participants reported that their favorite transportation method is the ferry, which needs periodical maintenance as ferry boats are frequently used and represent an important part of the city's image. Additionally, the results revealed that Port Said communities embraced initiatives focused on increasing biking and walking, which can bolster personal health, help communities thrive, and protect the environment. The respondents indicated that the city is in need of more urban development, some areas require major urban interventions such as the Bazar Abbas, the old commercial zone in the European square and Sultan Hussein Street, so as to enhance the urban image perception of the city. The following urban image features were identified through VPS sand hould be taken into consideration by urban actors (designers, architects, stakeholders, local authorities) when creating an attractive urban image:

Public Spaces

- To introduce more harmony into the design of public spaces and buildings.
- To improve functionality of sidewalks and alleys.
- To place an emphasis on urban waterfront, open spaces, natural surroundings, active entertainment and recreation and adequate public services rezoning across the entire waterfront.
- To plan to develop and increase the amount of green areas so as to enhance the city's environmental quality even through using new methods of gardening such as green roofs, green buildings

and vertical gardens that would be able to raise the rates of the amount of green spaces per person in Port Said. Maintenance of green spaces gardens and streets should be performed regularly.

- Improvement of vital urban centers simultaneously with the city's fabric to revitalize important heritage buildings.

Built Areas

- Pay closer attention to buildings' height, materials, pattern, details, shade, color and texture, in addition to functional facades while restoring and protecting the distinct architectural and urban pattern of the city so as to enhance city's authentic urban language.
- Providing Port Said with adequate and varied facilities and recreational activities. Adaptive reuse of old historic buildings as hotels or malls and providing accommodation varieties such as hotel apartments, motels, resorts, caravans and camps could attract all types of tourist and visitor.
- Heritage buildings in the promenade area, including the Simon Arzt building, the Hotel National, and the Suez Canal Company building, should be refurbished. Moreover, uses of the area surrounding the Suez Canal building must change, to link the building with the coastline.

Social and Cultural Events

- Improving city squares via activities, cafes, retail and open spaces with creating numerous socio-cultural events so that the city always seem to be new and vibrant.
- Arranging more cultural events, outdoor activities, street art and fairs.
- Spreading the city's culture characterized by special forms of music and public arts.
- International events and regional festivals could be organized that could establish a central piazza (could be in front of the old lighthouse), can create a branded space for such events and activities.

Other Facilities

- Pedestrian activity needs to be supported to avoid crowded traffic; establishing a coastal promenade comprised of open spaces, small shops and kiosks, which should be linked to major locations of Port Said's city center, canal promenade, etc.
- This would create an attractive pedestrian path, leading to the rebirth of the culture of Port Said, and attracting tourists; consequently, the economic base and cultural value of the city will be enhanced.
- The street should be transformed into a major pedestrian axis linking the historical building of the Suez Canal Company (a basic element of the visual image of the city) with the new promenade zone.

However, the current streetscape must be redesigned to express the city's identity and to be in harmony with the architectural heritage of the city.

- The ferry facilities should be redesigned.
- Renovating the passenger port through providing required services for visitors, accelerating the construction of yacht moorings and allowing for more transit time for ships and yachts.
- Creating bicycling lanes, especially near the coast; „image corridors" should be designed across the city connecting transit nodes and attractive areas.
- Developing main roads and highways in terms of width, quality and required road facilities and services.
- Establishing car cables to facilitate pedestrian connection between different areas of Port Said to avoid intensive vehicle use and decrease time lost.
- Facilitating different transportation means by land, sea and/or air locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.
- Developing Port Said airport for international shuttle flights, especially from Europe.

Conclusion

This study has conceptualized the perception of Port Said's urban heritage by its community. This concept is driven by a number of assessment indicators extracted from the image perceived by the community itself in reference to international criteria followed in other countries with the intent to reach the community-based optimum sustainable heritage preservation strategies. These indicators mainly target the aspects proven to affect the inhabitants' understanding of the city's historic urban fabric, which is considered the benchmark for any real revitalization projects. Nevertheless, this study reveals that the special nature of Port Said, rooted in the history of its inception, strategic location and logistical importance, has created a distinctive urban identity which is mainly connected to political events in the subconscious of its inhabitants. The dominance of economic benefits and the disconnection between city residences and governmental bodies in perceiving the city's historic image is the most critical threat to upcoming preservation strategies. However, the findings concluded from this study could be a starting point for informing governmental institutions and decision-makers concerning the current relation between the city's inhabitants and their historic environment. Unlike some other governorates in Egypt, education did not affect Port Said inhabitants' perception of heritage as both the well-educated and less educated showed a high awareness of it. Younger participants demonstrated less interest in heritage preservation, though the research recommends reaching out to this category and raising awareness of the importance of historic identity among its members, as they are considered a critical group for any future revitalization plans.

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Streszczenie

Dziedzictwo kulturowe odgrywa ważną rolę w kształtowaniu współczesnych morfologii urbanistycznych, wzmacniając poczucie przynależności i autentyczność tożsamości kulturowej. O ile istnieje rozwijająca się międzynarodowa agenda dla zachowania materialnego dziedzictwa miast, o tyle lokalne społeczności rzadko mogą odczuć znaczenie dziedzictwa miejskiego we współczesnym społeczeństwie. Jednak sprawa ta jest znacznie bardziej skomplikowana w krajach rozwijających się, gdzie zysk wchodzi w silny konflikt z zachowywaniem dziedzictwa, prowadząc do wyburzeń zabytków. Ze względu na skomplikowane warunki ekonomiczne dziedzictwo stanowi mocną barierę, która wymaga najwyższej uwagi. Port Said, który jest studium przypadku opisywanym w artykule, jest ważnym miastem logistycznym, znanym w świecie ze względu na unikalne miejskie dziedzictwo, które jest zapisem kluczowej epoki w historii Egiptu; dziś to unikalne dziedzictwo jest zagrożone. Niniejsza analiza ma na celu prześledzenie czynników, które kształtują postrzeganie miejskiego dziedzictwa. Badanie wykorzystuje techniki jakościowe i ilościowe w ramach zbierania danych, które posłużyły do zbadania hipotez badawczych i znalezienia dowodów na tworzenie się lokalnego postrzegania dziedzictwa Egiptu. Badanie ustala związek pomiędzy odbiorem społecznym tożsamości miejskiej i jej wpływem na ochronę dziedzictwa.

Abstract

Cultural heritage plays an important role in shaping current urban morphologies, reinforcing public sense of belonging and the authenticity of cultural identity. Although there is a developing international agenda for the preservation of tangible urban heritage, the local community can barely perceive the significance and peculiarity of urban heritage in modern society. However, the matter is considerably more complicated in developing countries, where economic gain strongly opposes heritage conservation, leading to its demolition. Due to the current complicated economic circumstances, heritage represents a strong barrier that demands excessively consideration and negatively affects them. Port Said, the case under study in this paper, is an important logistical city which is famous for its unique urban heritage that records a vital era of Egyptian history and is currently facing a real threat of heritage obliteration. This study aims to investigate the factors that shape public perception of urban heritage, and determine the consequences of this perception on the current historic image of the city. The study employs both qualitative and quantitative techniques in data collection to examine the research hypotheses and find evidence responsible for creating local perception of Egyptian built heritage. The study determines the relationship between public perception of urban identity and its influence on heritage conservation.