Edited by
Lilia Makhloufi

Urban Heritage and Sustainability
in the Age of Globalisation

Any digital material and resources associated with this volume will be available at
https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0412#resources

Cover image: Algiers, Algeria, Architectural and Urban Heritage. Photograph by Lilia Makhloufi (2016). All rights reserved.
Cover design by Jeevanjot Kaur Nagpal

11. The Historic Urban Landscape Approach as a Tool for Port Said Heritage Conservation

Amany Abdelsadeq S. Hussein

Introduction

Cities worldwide have been shaped by their people, through the successive layering of their values, traditions and experiences. The traditional view of heritage limited to historical monuments has changed. Nowadays, urban heritage represents the largest category on the World Heritage List, and many cities around the globe recognise the importance of preserving urban heritage as the core of the city's identity and as a catalyst for development through cultural tourism and commercial activities. However, cities face numerous pressures and challenges in conserving their historic areas. The Historic Urban Landscape approach to heritage conservation, which United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted in 2011, is considered a shift from the traditional emphasis on monument conservation towards a broader recognition of urban contexts, including their social and economic aspects.

In Egypt, the urban heritage of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century has suffered for decades from a lack of maintenance, primarily due to state negligence and the vagueness of laws governing the preservation of built heritage. Moreover, the preservation strategy of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries poses a direct threat to

Egyptian architectural heritage. This strategy is rooted in an approach which isolates buildings from their context without considering the urban system as a whole, eventually leading to the destruction of these historic structures. The city of Port Said is an obvious example of this problem. Despite Egyptian Cabinet decrees in 2009 and 2011 that led to the registration of 644 buildings with unique architectural styles as historic structures, the city is witnessing an increasing trend towards the demolition of these buildings.

This chapter suggests applying the Historic Urban Landscape approach for conserving and managing historic areas in Port Said. The chapter begins by reviewing the history of the city, its urban structure and architectural significance. This is followed by a brief overview of the current socio-economic challenges threatening its urban heritage and the heritage initiatives that have evolved over the past two decades. Finally, the chapter concludes by offering a roadmap for implementing the Historic Urban Landscape approach in Port Said.

Literature Review

Urban heritage, encompassing both tangible and intangible elements, strengthens cities' identities and is considered a key asset for city branding and economic development.[1] The tangible heritage of cities, which includes natural landscapes, monuments and historic urban centres, creates a sense of place, serving as markers of history and nourishing cultural activities like festivals and other practices. Intangible heritage includes social practices handed down from generation to generation, like oral traditions, rituals and performing arts. Intangible heritage is considered the living component of urban heritage as it forms the city's cultural identity and passes local traditions on to new generations.[2]

Urban heritage can contribute to the economic and social development of the urban community. Cultural and creative industries can serve as powerful tools for income generation and employment creation, thus

---

1   UNESCO, *Culture Urban Future: Global Report on Culture for Sustainable Urban Development* (Paris: UNESCO, 2016), p. 19.

2   Eduardo Rojas, 'Urban Heritage for Sustainable Development', in *Culture: Urban Future; Global Report on Culture for Sustainable Urban Development*, ed. by I. G. Bokova (Paris: UNESCO, 2016), pp. 193–99 (p. 193).

contributing to poverty reduction.[3] However, under the pressures of urbanisation, mass tourism and the commercial exploitation of heritage, cities face a variety of challenges. Addressing these challenges requires effective planning and resource management to achieve a balance between tourism promotion and heritage conservation.

The Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, adopted on 10 November 2011 during the 36th session of UNESCO's General Conference, responds to the need to frame urban heritage conservation within the planning and implementation of urban development agendas. This approach considers urban heritage a social and economic asset for urban development and aims to enhance its sustainability by considering local community knowledge, socio-economic factors and environmental concerns.[4]

The major cities in Egypt, namely Cairo, Alexandria and Port Said, boast an unrivalled urban heritage that dates back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Since 1867, these cities have witnessed substantial urban modernisation efforts following trends in the re-planning of industrial European cities. Ismail Pasha, the ruler of Egypt at the time, proposed a transformation from local Islamic urban forms to European-style districts with large, arcaded boulevards, open gardens and French- and Italian-style buildings.[5] Ismail Pasha's successors also adopted this vision of modernisation during the monarchical era. European architects came to work in major Egyptian cities, leaving an indelible architectural legacy in the region.[6] However, the architectural style in Port Said is unique in Egypt, characterised by the remarkable

---

3   UNESCO, *Culture Urban Future*, p. 20.

4   UNESCO, *Records of the General Conference, 36th session, Paris, 25 October—10 November 2011, v. 1: Resolutions* (Paris: UNESCO, 2011), https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000215084.page=52

5   Mohamed El Amrousi, 'Imperial Sanctuaries: Arab Urban Enclaves on the East African Coast', in *Colonial Architecture and Urbanism in Africa—Intertwined and Contested Histories*, ed. by Fassil Demissie (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2012), pp. 67–84.

6   James Moore, '"The Alexandria You Are Losing"? Urban Heritage and Activism in Egypt since the 2011 Revolution', *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology & Heritage Studies*, 5.3–4 (2017), 427–44, https://doi.org/10.5325/jeasmedarcherstu.5.3-4.0427

homogeneity of facades with high wooden verandas, combined with an expansive variety of designs.[7]

The urban heritage of Port Said has been the subject of numerous urban studies. Dalila ElKerdany explained the urban morphology of the European and Arab quarters and discussed the socio-economic factors that threaten its urban heritage.[8] Inken Baller analysed the architectural and urban characteristics that make the city deserving of World Culture Heritage status.[9] Mohamed El-Amrousi studied Port Said as one of the colonial urban laboratories for intertwining European and Islamic architecture.[10] Naglaa Megahed explored the richness of the city's architectural heritage and the various approaches to urban heritage conservation in this context.[11] Céline Frémaux and Mercedes Volait discussed the cosmopolitan features in the architecture and planning of the Suez Canal cities.[12] Sawsan Noweir analysed the evolution of Port Said, highlighting the potential for urban tourism.[13] Claudine Piaton studied the specificities of wooden verandas in Port Said, reminiscent

---

7   *Port-Saïd: Architectures XIXe–XXe siècles*, ed. by M. L. Crosnier-Leconte, G. Ghitani and N. Amin (Cairo: IFAO, 2006).

8   Dalila ElKerdany, 'Port Said: A Cosmopolitan Heritage Under Threat', in *Revitalizing City Districts: Transformation Partnership for Urban Design and Architecture in Historic City Districts*, ed. by Hebatalla Abouelfadl, Dalila ElKerdany and Christoph Wessling (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), pp. 15–33, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-46289-9_2

9   Inken Baller, 'Strategies for the Preservation of the Heritage of the Suez Region and Port Said as World Heritage Site', in *Revitalizing City Districts: Transformation Partnership for Urban Design and Architecture in Historic City Districts*, ed. by Hebatalla Abouelfadl, Dalila ElKerdany and Christoph Wessling (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), pp. 35–51, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-46289-9_3

10   El Amrousi, 'Imperial Sanctuaries'.

11   Naglaa Ali Megahed, 'Heritage-Based Sustainability in Port Said: Classification of Styles and Future Development', *Archnet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research*, 8.1 (2014), 94–107.

12   Céline Frémaux and Mercedes Volait, 'Inventing Space in the Age of Empire: Planning Experiments and Achievements along Suez Canal in Egypt (1859–1956)', *Planning Perspectives*, 24.2 (2009), 255–62, https://doi.org/10.1080/02665430902734350

13   Sawsan Noweir, 'Devenir patrimonial contre développement urbain: l'exemple de Port-Saïd', *Autrepart: Revue de sciences sociales au Sud*, 33 (2005), 109–26, https://doi.org/10.3917/autr.033.0109

of the tropical architecture widespread in European colonies yet unparalleled in height anywhere else in the world.[14]

Proceeding from this body of literature, this chapter proposes a roadmap for applying the Historic Urban Landscape approach as an alternative strategy for conserving urban heritage in Port Said. The chapter analyses the urban and architectural characteristics of the city and discusses the current socio-economic challenges and civil society initiatives to identify potential stakeholders and suitable strategies for conserving Port Said's historic areas.

Port Said: The Cosmopolitan City

Port Said was founded on 25 April 1859 as the main construction camp for accommodating the workers digging the Suez Canal. The city was named after Khedive Muhammad Saīd Pasha, who granted a concession to the French diplomat Ferdinand de Lesseps for the realisation of the canal project. The city was situated as the northern port, along a narrow strip of land separating the Mediterranean from Lake Manzala at the eastern edge of the Nile Delta. Constructed on a bed of earth dredged from the canal's excavation,[15] Port Said was the first Egyptian city to be built from scratch without any pre-existing settlements.[16]

By the late nineteenth century, the Suez Canal had become a vital artery of trade between Europe and Asia, with Port Said serving as a crucial nodal point in transportation networks[17] and the largest coal-bunkering station in the world.[18] The city's port exported cotton and rice from the eastern delta and following the completion of the railway

---

14   Claudine Piaton, 'Port Said—Decaying Wooden Verandas Tell the Story of a City', *Al Rawi: Egypt's Heritage Review*, 3 (2011), 22–29.

15   Lucia Carminati, 'Port Said and Ismailia as Desert Marvels: Delusion and Frustration on the Isthmus of Suez, 1859–1869', *Journal of Urban History*, 46.3 (2020), 622–47 (pp. 627–29).

16   ElKerdany, 'Port Said', p. 15.

17   Valeska Huber, 'Connecting Colonial Seas: The International Colonization of Port Said and The Suez Canal during and after the First World War', *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, 19.1 (2012), 141–61 (pp. 145–46), https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2012.643612

18   Valeska Huber, *Channelling Mobilities—Migration and Globalisation in the Suez Canal Region and Beyond, 1869–1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2012.643612

between Cairo and Ismailia in 1904, Port Said became Egypt's second most important port after Alexandria.

Along with providing opportunities for investment in wholesale import, ship repair and trade, Port Said became a tourist destination for travellers en route between Europe and the colonies in Africa, Asia and Australia. Situated at the canal's entrance, Port Said was the first port of call after leaving Europe, making it a quasi-obligatory stopover for steamers to stock up on coal and provisions during their journeys.[19] With its several hotels and entertainment facilities like the Grand Casino and Eldorado theatre,[20] Port Said was perceived as, in the words of Rudyard Kipling, 'the exact division between east and west'.[21]

This economic prosperity sparked rapid development in Port Said, attracting Egyptian bourgeois families from Cairo and Alexandria, peasants from the nearby Delta villages and Egyptian labourers who remained in the city after excavating the canal.[22] The city also drew European immigrants, mainly from Greece, Italy, Malta, England and France. Europeans comprised eighteen percent of the population in 1917,[23] working mainly in the maritime and mercantile sectors.

The Historic Urban Form of Port Said

In 1861, the Suez Canal Company (SCC) initiated an urban plan that reflected French colonial planning principles and separated the European quarter, encompassing housing and community services

---

19   Valeska Huber, 'Cosmopolitanism on the Move: Port Said around 1900' (20 June 2017), *Global Urban History*, https://globalurbanhistory.com/2017/06/20/cosmopolitanism-on-the-move-port-said-around-1900/

20   Stefanie Anna Maria Wladika, 'Port Said—No Future without the Past: Integrated Rehabilitation Concept for the Urban Heritage' (master's thesis, Ain Shams University and University of Stuttgart, 2015), p. 43, https://iusd.asu.edu.eg/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/3rdInt_Wladika.pdf

21   Quoted in Huber, *Channelling Mobilities*, p. 37.

22   Christine Hegel Cantarella, 'Notable Families and Capitalist Parasites in Egypt's Former Free Zone: Law, Trade, and Uncertainty', in *Anthropology of the Middle East and North Africa—Into the New Millennium*, ed. by Sherine Hafez and Susan Slyomovics (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), pp. 165–84.

23   *The Census of Egypt: Taken in 1917* (Cairo: Ministry of Finance—Statistical and Census Department, 1917).

for European staff, from the Arab village for Egyptian labourers.[24] The European quarter (Ifrang in spoken Arabic) was built along the bank of the canal as the city's facade with its European architecture, while the Arab village was built to the west, far from the canal,[25] and separated by Muhammad Ali Pasha Street.[26]

The master plan of the European quarter followed the hygienic urban planning principles of the time, with its grid pattern of perpendicular streets.[27] The urban grid was oriented parallel to the canal to the east and the coastline of the Mediterranean Sea in the north.[28] This design was intended to allow fresh air and sunlight into the streets to minimise the risk of epidemics, while shading pedestrians from the sun with tree-lined streets.[29]

The European quarter had a cosmopolitan character, with apartment blocks and villas featuring European architectural styles. The structures were surrounded by gardens, monumental churches for each Christian denomination and wide boulevards bearing the names of foreign, Ottoman and monarchical rulers. There were three categories of streets: thirty-metre-wide boulevards with arcades, avenues with widths of twelve to fifteen metres avenues and ten-metre-wide local streets.[30]

The Arab village remained fairly destitute until a great fire destroyed a large portion of it in 1884. Thereafter, a public hygiene project to rebuild

24 ElKerdany, 'Port Said', p. 15; Claudine Piaton, 'European Construction Companies in the Towns along the Suez Canal', in *Building beyond the Mediterranean: Studying the Archives of European Businesses (1860–1970)*, ed. by Claudine Piaton, Ezio Godoli and David Peyceré (Arles: Publications de l'Institut national d'histoire de l'art, 2012), pp. 92–103, https://doi.org/10.4000/books.inha.12729

25 Mostafa Mohielden Lotfy, 'Biographies of Port-Said: Everydayness of State, Dwellers, and Strangers' (master's thesis, The American University in Cairo, 2018), https://fount.aucegypt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2393&context=etds

26 Lucia Carminati, 'Dividing and Ruling a Mediterranean Port-City: The Many Boundaries Within Late 19th century Port Said', in *Controversial Heritage and Divided Memories from the Nineteenth Through the Twentieth Centuries: Multi-Ethnic Cities in the Mediterranean World*, ed. by Marco Folin and Heleni Porfyriou, 2 vols. (New York: Routledge, 2020), II, pp. 30–44 (p. 32).

27 Céline Frémaux, 'Santé et hygiénisme dans les villes du canal de Suez', *Égypte/ Monde arabe,* 3.4 (2007), 75–101, https://doi.org/10.4000/ema.1759

28 Wladika, 'Port Said', p. 57.

29 Frémaux, 'Santé et hygiénisme'.

30 El Amrousi, 'Imperial Sanctuaries', p. 73; ElKerdany, 'Port Said', p. 20; Wladika, 'Port Said', p. 57.

the Arab quarter took place in 1885.[31] The Arab quarter was planned according to a grid pattern for sanitation purposes. The main streets were fifteen metres wide, flanked by arcades, while the secondary streets were ten metres wide with alleys measuring between four and six metres for garbage collection and communal use, specifically by women.[32] The streets bore the names of the governorates from which Egyptian immigrants originated.[33] The building plots were very small (thirty to fifty metres)^2 in order to ensure they remained affordable for Egyptians.[34] While the urban landscape of the Arab quarter lacked gardens or open spaces, Egyptians gathered frequently for social and religious ceremonies. These gatherings gave rise to the distinct musical genre known as Simsimiyya.[35] In 1920, a playground (Al-Masry Club) and a public garden (Saad Zaghloul Garden) were established to the north, on land newly formed from coastal accretion brought about by the western breakwater.

The Historic Architecture of Port Said

The SCC was responsible for planning and determining the architectural styles in canal towns until the canal's inauguration in 1869, when the Egyptian government incorporated them into Egyptian common law. This placed the towns under the government's jurisdiction, subject to

---

31   Claudine Piaton, 'Port Said: Cosmopolitan Urban Rules and Architecture (1858–1930)', in *Revitalizing City Districts: Transformation Partnership for Urban Design and Architecture in Historic City Districts*, ed. by Hebatalla Abouelfadl, Dalila ElKerdany and Christoph Wessling (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), pp. 3–14, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-46289-9

32   Noweir, 'Devenir patrimonial'; Frémaux, 'Santé et hygiénisme'; Wladika, 'Port Said', p. 59.

33   Lotfy, 'Biographies of Port-Said', pp. 27, 28.

34   Piaton, 'Port Said: Cosmopolitan Urban Rules', p. 6.

35   ElKerdany, 'Port Said', p. 18; Lotfy, 'Biographies of Port-Said'; Simsimiyya is a folk music genre originating from the Suez Canal cities characterized by local collective singing accompanied by the simsimiyya instrument. A simsimiyya band typically contains a simsimiyya player and a chorus group, with the accompaniment of other instruments, handclapping and the dance known as the 'bambutiyya'. During this dance, the dancer imitates a bumboat man selling his goods to sailors on ships or the gestures of fisherman. Simsimiyya songs in Port Said are deeply tied to the city's locality and reflect a strong sense of place, with metaphors from the surrounding nature, including the moon, pigeons, nightingales and other elements.

the Tanzim, an Egyptian administration that set planning regulations.[36] Ismail Pasha also mandated the co-management of the new towns by introducing a commission comprised of members of the Egyptian government and members of the Anglo-French SCC.[37] In 1911, a city council was established to take charge of the city's urban administration. The council was composed of eleven elected members and five chosen members; half of the council members were Egyptians, and the other half were Europeans.[38] This collaboration resulted in a well-organised city with high aesthetic standards enforced through strict building rules and specifications. However, the identity of each quarter depended upon the communities who lived there.

The cosmopolitan nature of Port Said was reflected in the variety of different architectural styles employed by European architects, which gave the city a hybrid urban identity. The architecture in the European quarter (Ifrang) followed popular Neo-Classical trends, with the Beaux Arts style imbuing the quarter's architecture with a French character.[39] However, different architectural styles were sometimes used as expressions of patrons' origins;[40] for instance, the Italians utilised the Neo-Venetian Gothic style[41], the Shaftesbury Building was built in an English architectural style and there was also the Rococo Revival.[42] The churches adopted the Neo-Romanesque and Neo-Classical styles.[43] The Moorish revival style was utilised on a grand scale in administrative buildings like the Suez Canal Administration building, with its three

---

36   Piaton, 'Port Said: Cosmopolitan Urban Rules', p. 4, 5; Céline Frémaux, 'Town Planning, Architecture and Migrations in Suez Canal Port Cities: Exchanges and Resistances', in *Port Cities: Dynamic Landscapes and Global Networks*, ed. by Carola Hein (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), pp. 156–73.

37   Piaton, 'Port Said: Cosmopolitan Urban Rules', p. 5; Frémaux and Volait, 'Inventing Space', pp. 259, 260.

38   Piaton, 'Port Said: Cosmopolitan Urban Rules', p. 9.

39   Beaux Arts, the predominant architectural style in mid-nineteenth-century Europe, was adopted by the French in their colonies. This style combined classical details with modern lines and materials like iron and glass.

40   Frémaux, 'Town Planning', p. 159.

41   The Neo-Venetian Gothic style originated in Venice as a revival of medieval Gothic architecture with its ornate patterns and lancet windows.

42   The Rococo Revival incorporated elements of the Rococo style, including curves and floral ornamentation.

43   The Neo-Romanesque style was inspired by the medieval Romanesque architecture, with its high towers and tiled roofs. The Neo-Classical style revived Roman classical architecture, including columns and other elements.

green domes.[44] For the SCC, this style was a means of demonstrating dominance while also appealing to Egyptians by expressing respect for local traditions.[45]

After the reconstruction of the Arab quarter in 1885, the SCC imposed strict codes for building materials and aesthetics that were enforced by the Egyptian authorities. Before any construction could begin, a permit was required from the city commission—or after 1911, from the city council. Such measures helped to maintain the architectural quality of the city.[46] The architecture in the Arab quarter exhibited European influences in its balance and symmetry,[47] while also integrating Islamic motifs, adapted to modern needs.

Port Said developed a special architectural typology generated by the integration of European architectural styles, Islamic ornamentation and the tropical architectural elements from the initial phase of the city's construction.[48] This architectural typology was embodied by the high wooden verandas of residential buildings, as most buildings in Port Said at the time had three to four floors due to the high cost and scarcity of suitable land for construction.[49]

These verandas offered an ecological solution for the hot climate, shading building facades from the sun while allowing air circulation for ventilation.[50] Although verandas were typical of nineteenth-century tropical architecture as they were favoured by Europeans inhabiting the hot climates of overseas colonies, they were typically made mostly of cast iron and rarely more than two storeys high. In contrast, the verandas

---

44   The Moorish revival style drew from Islamic architecture, popularised by Europe's fascination with the Orient in the mid-nineteenth century.
45   ElKerdany, 'Port Said', p. 24.
46   Mohamed El Amrousi, 'Beyond Muslim Space: Jeddah, Muscat, Aden and Port Said' (PhD thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 2001).
47   ElKerdany, 'Port Said', p. 21.
48   El Amrousi, 'Imperial Sanctuaries', p. 71–72; Claudine Piaton, 'Architecture patronale dans l'isthme de Suez (1859–1956)', *Annales islamologiques*, 50 (2016), 11–53, https://doi.org/10.4000/anisl.2112; The city's first constructions, built between 1859 and 1869, had a seaside resort aesthetic with tiled roofs and surrounding wooden verandas to provide shade from the sun. However, these buildings were replaced in the 1880s.
49   Piaton, 'Port Said—Decaying Wooden Verandas'.
50   Baller, 'Strategies for the Preservation', p. 43.

in Port Said, with their wooden construction and exceptional height, are not seen anywhere else in the world (see Figure 11.1).[51]

Fig. 11.1 Four-floor-high wooden verandas in the Ifrang quarter. Author's photograph, 2020, CC BY-NC-ND.

The detailing of verandas was influenced by Islamic ornaments but standardised and prefabricated according to modern standards. This architectural typology is present in both Arab and European quarters, but with variations according to the preferences of the inhabitants. In the European quarter (Ifrang), verandas were spacious with delicate ornaments (see Figure 11.1), while in the Arab quarter, verandas were narrower and partly enclosed with mashrabiya-like lattices that could be raised or lowered according to inhabitants' privacy needs (see Figure 11.2).[52]

---

51 Piaton, 'Port Said—Decaying Wooden Verandas'.
52 Baller, 'Strategies for the Preservation', p. 43; ElKerdany, 'Port Said', p. 21–23.

Fig. 11.2 Partly closed wooden veranda in the Arab quarter. Author's photograph, 2020, CC BY-NC-ND.

The combination of arcades along main streets and wooden verandas on secondary streets fostered a complementary relationship between architecture and street hierarchy. Each street corner presented a different scenario depending on its location: open, rounded, or closed angle arcades; a brick arcade and a wooden veranda; or two wooden verandas. The distinctive appearance of each intersection signalled the transition from one urban level to another, giving each street its own identity and displaying a wealth of architectural expressions.[53] Despite the vast diversity of their ornamentation, thanks to the talented woodworkers from the nearby city of Damietta, these wooden verandas lend Port Said a unique air of homogeneity.[54]

---

53   Noweir, 'Devenir patrimonial'.
54   Piaton, 'Port Said—Decaying Wooden Verandas'.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Port Said experienced growth in all directions. The city gained significant land to the north due to the coastal accretion brought about by the western breakwater. Furthermore, the Arab quarter grew considerably, reclaiming land on Lake Manzala to the south and west but retaining its boundary along Muhammad Ali Street.[55] After the First World War, the SCC needed more workshops and housing for its employees. As a result, Port Fouad, a new quarter on the eastern bank of the canal opposite Port Said,[56] was constructed. Port Fouad was inaugurated in 1926, and its master plan incorporated some attributes of the Garden City with its large boulevards, diagonal streets and vast green areas. Port Fouad is famous for the villas of SCC workers, inspired by workers' houses in the mining village of Dourges in northern France but adapted to the climate of Egypt and decorated by red fired bricks in Neo-Moorish style (see Figure 11.3).[57] Modern architectural styles appeared during this period. While the City Council banned wooden verandas in 1921, the European quarter and Port Fouad became experimental grounds for the Art Deco style.[58] New buildings were constructed of reinforced concrete with rectangular forms, clean lines and unornamented facades.

Fig. 11.3 SCC workers' villas in Port Fouad. Author's photograph, 2020, CC BY-NC-ND.

55   Noweir, 'Devenir patrimonial'.
56   Piaton, 'Port Said: Cosmopolitan Urban Rules', p. 11.
57   Piaton, 'Architecture patronale'.
58   Piaton, 'Port Said: Cosmopolitan Urban Rules', p. 8; Wladika, 'Port Said', p. 61.

Port Said: The Valiant City

After the War of 1956,[59] foreigners, fearing the loss of their investments due to nationalisation policies, sold their properties and businesses to Egyptians and left the city.[60] Consequently, Port Said's cosmopolitan era came to an end as the city transformed into a modern Egyptian city and a model of nationalism. The European quarter officially became the Al-Sharq quarter, and the monarchical street names were renamed after Arab and Nasser regime figures. The local authorities built a new quarter, Al-Manakh, to provide social housing for workers and war survivors, dominated by typical apartment blocks with austere architecture and low-quality construction.[61]

After only ten years, Israel seized the Sinai Peninsula and occupied the eastern bank of the Suez Canal in the Six-Day War of June 1967. Port Said was evacuated in 1969, and its people fled to Cairo and towns in the Nile Delta. Following the war of October 1973, Israeli forces withdrew into Sinai, and Port Saidians began to return home. The city was degraded after five years of abandonment, and the Israelis had destroyed entire residential blocks.[62]

The main political objective in 1975 was to achieve the reconstruction of the canal cities as quickly as possible. In rehabilitating the old quarters of Port Said, the planners sought to preserve the old city's grid plan and the style of the arcaded buildings to maintain the character and continuity of these quarters. To accommodate the growing population, the planners had to expand the city to the southwest, utilising land artificially reclaimed from Lake Manzala to build three new quarters, leaving the Mediterranean coastline free for recreational development.

---

59   The War of 1956, also known as the Suez Crisis or the tripartite aggression on Egypt, followed the decision of President Gamal Abdel-Nasser to nationalise the Anglo-French Suez Canal Company. Britain and France attacked Port Said on 29 October 1956 in an effort to re-occupy the Suez Canal. Under intense pressure from the United States, Soviet Union and United Nations, British and French forces withdrew from Port Said on 22 December 1956 and the Suez Canal came under full Egyptian management.

60   Cantarella, 'Notable Families'.

61   Mohamed Elshahed, 'Revolutionary Modernism? Architecture and the Politics of Transition in Egypt 1936–1967' (PhD thesis, New York University, 2015).

62   Frédérique Bruyas, 'Aménagement de la ville de Port-Saïd, le point de vue de l'architecte', *Egypte monde arabe*, 1.23 (1995), 131–68, https://doi.org/10.4000/ema.969

For financial expediency and efficiency, the new quarters were planned according to the modern neighbourhood unit concept, as the grid pattern and arcaded buildings were deemed too expensive.[63]

Port Said: The Duty-Free City

In 1975, President Sadat designated the entirety of Port Said as the first duty-free zone in Egypt. This was part of the vision of Port Said and the canal towns as centres for Egyptian development and counterweights to Cairo and Alexandria.[64] After this declaration, Port Said experienced a dramatic rise in trade and imports. The city became a hub for Egyptians seeking to buy imported goods. The duty-free status attracted unskilled labour from other governorates, causing the city's population to double in the last quarter of the twentieth century.[65]

The economic boom precipitated by duty-free status accelerated the transformation of the built environment. The Arab quarter became a major textile market where commerce occupied the entire ground level, with arcades and side streets converted into open markets closed to traffic. However, over the course of thirty years, the massive crowds of shoppers and the area's transformation into a market and depository weakened the Arab quarter, hastening its decline.[66]

Duty-free status changed the economic and social climate of Port Said. Although the city thrived, ranking first among Egyptian cities on the Human Development Index, it also attracted activities like smuggling and illegal trade. In 2002, the government declared that nearly all duty-free zone privileges in the city would be gradually phased out, except for those promoting manufacturing. Since 2009, Port Said has been in the grips of an economic depression.[67]

---

63 Ibid.; Michael Welbank and Anthony Edwards, 'Port Said: Planning for Reconstruction and Development', *Third World Planning Review*, 3.2 (1981), 143-60.

64 Bruyas, 'Aménagement de la ville'; Welbank and Edwards, 'Port Said', p. 144.

65 Cantarella, 'Notable Families', p. 183.

66 Noweir, 'Devenir patrimonial'.

67 Cantarella, 'Notable Families'.

Port Said Today

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, Port Said had become a city without a hinterland. It forms a peninsula hemmed by the Mediterranean Sea to the north, the Suez Canal to the east and Lake Manzala to the south and west. The scarcity of available land has led to sky-rocketing land prices and increasing pressure on the historical complexes in the Ifrang and Arab quarters, where real estate investors began demolishing historic structures and replacing them with aesthetically poor high-rise buildings.[68]

Several local associations have made efforts to protect the unique urban heritage of Port Said. In 2002, the Alliance Française, the Port Said-based French Cultural Association, embarked on an advocacy campaign to preserve the city's urban heritage, collaborating with the École de Chaillot to document more than four hundred historic buildings.[69] In 2008, several local cultural organisations launched a public campaign titled 'The Civil Campaign for Protecting Port Said's heritage'. They organised forums and consultations with academics and government officials to advocate for the preservation of the urban heritage of the city. These efforts resulted in the declaration of Cabinet Decree No. 1947 in 2009 and Cabinet Decree No. 1096 in 2011, which recognised 644 buildings in Port Said as historic structures. Of these buildings, 340 (51.8%) were located in the Ifrang quarter (officially Al-Sharq quarter), 139 in Port Fouad (21.5%), 106 in the Arab quarter (16.5%) and 59 in the Al-Manakh quarter (9.2%).[70]

Despite the Cabinet decrees and the various campaigns to preserve Port Said's historic buildings, these structures continue to be demolished. According to a field survey conducted by Stefanie Wladika in 2015, only four years after the Cabinet decrees, twenty-four historic buildings had been razed to the ground. Furthermore, over half of the historic buildings in the Arab quarter and about twenty-five percent of historic buildings in the Ifrang quarter are in poor condition, while the historic

---

68   Noweir, 'Devenir patrimonial'; ElKerdany, 'Port Said'.
69   Jasmin Shata, 'Urban Stress Relief in Heritage Sites as a Sustaining Approach—The Case of Port Said' (master's thesis, Ain Shams University and University of Stuttgart, 2016), pp. 62, 63, https://iusd.asu.edu.eg/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/14-Shata.pdf
70   Megahed, 'Heritage-Based Sustainability', p. 102.

buildings owned by the Suez Canal Authority are well-conserved under its full supervision.[71]

The rapid demolition of historic buildings has led to the loss of architectural treasures and a conspicuous transformation of the built environment in several zones. This is especially true along the canal and main streets, where high-rise buildings have now replaced or concealed the historic wooden structures. The facades of these new buildings are unpleasantly incongruent in dimensions and styles. The densification process has also altered the land use rate and negatively affected the urban fabric and infrastructure of historic quarters. This systematic disfigurement of the city has stemmed from the uniform application of local building codes throughout the city without any distinction between quarters. If this trend continues, Port Said risks permanently losing its unique urban character.

Applying the Historic Urban Landscape Approach in Port Said

The discipline and practice of urban heritage conservation have evolved in recent decades from a monument-centred notion of heritage, in which cities were divided into separate conservation areas, to an alternative approach that looks beyond the preservation of the built environment and embraces a broader notion of heritage.

The Historic Urban Landscape approach promotes functional diversity and social development within cities by recognising regional contexts. This approach aims to enhance the public use of urban spaces and provides tools for managing transformations in the built environment to ensure that any intervention in a historical setting is harmonious with the existing heritage. UNESCO has identified seven steps for cities to implement the Historic Landscape Approach in their urban contexts:[72]

---

71 Wladika, 'Port Said', p. 84.

72 UNESCO, *New Life for Historic Cities: The Historic Urban Landscape Approach Explained* (Paris: UNESCO, 2013), p. 16, https://whc.unesco.org/uploads/activities/documents/activity-727-1.pdf

1. Undertake a Full Assessment of the City's Natural, Cultural and Human Resources

According to the Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape approach, the historic urban landscape includes: the site's topography, geomorphology, hydrology and natural features, its built environment, both historic and contemporary, its infrastructures above and below ground, its open spaces and gardens, its land use patterns and spatial organization, perceptions and visual relationships. It also includes social and cultural practices and values, economic processes and the intangible dimensions of heritage as related to diversity and identity.[73]

The local authorities in Port Said must undertake the full documentation and mapping of natural and cultural urban assets in order to understand the complex layering of the city, identify its values, and present them comprehensively. Documenting the state of urban heritage and its evolution is crucial for developing necessary protective procedures.

2. Use Participatory Planning and Stakeholder Consultations to Decide on Conservation Aims and Actions

The valuation and assessment of urban heritage should not be limited to the decisions of a select few social actors. It is necessary to engage diverse stakeholder groups in these decision-making processes, as the conservation of urban heritage is not only a concern of the cultural elite but has become a concern of a broader range of social actors. This includes all those interested in its economic and social values, such as local government entities, NGOs, heritage users, entrepreneurs, property owners and culture producers.

Participatory planning empowers stakeholders to identify multiple values in their urban areas, incorporating their views to develop visions, goals and action plans for the preservation of their heritage. Stakeholder consultations facilitate dialogue between groups with conflicting interests and encourage learning from local communities.

---

73   UNESCO, *Records of the General Conference*, p. 52.

3. Assess the Vulnerability of Urban Heritage to Socio-economic Pressures

Urban growth in Port Said is proceeding on an unprecedented scale, transforming the city's urban image. The unmanaged urban densification process jeopardises the city's sense of place, the urban fabric's functionality and Port Said's identity. This threat calls for strong urban policies to protect the city's identity and requires the approval and support of all stakeholders.

Moreover, rents in historic residential buildings can be as low as less than half a US dollar per month as a result of a rent-blocking law dating back to the Nasser era.[74] These derisory rental prices for historic residences leave landlords without sufficient income to maintain their properties.[75]

Restricting financial gain from heritage properties can compel owners to abandon these properties, leading to their deterioration and demolition. Urban heritage conservation can only be viable if heritage property owners benefit from the conservation. On the other hand, market-driven processes of heritage regeneration may lead to the displacement of lower-income residents. Urban heritage conservation policies must be socially sensitive and ensure inclusive regeneration practices.

4. Integrate Urban Heritage into a Wider Framework of City Development

It is essential that all stakeholders realise the value of urban heritage and its contribution to the city's socio-economic development. If urban heritage is properly managed, new functions like services and tourism can emerge and contribute to the city's economic diversity.

Urban heritage conservation must be integrated into the urban development process through heritage, environmental and social impact assessments during decision-making processes. Public institutions responsible for urban heritage should be integrated into decision-making and local agenda development and must transition

---

74　Moore, '"The Alexandria You Are Losing"'.
75　ElKerdany, 'Port Said'; Noweir, 'Devenir patrimonial'.

from preserving monumental heritage to sustainably utilising the broad range of urban heritage assets.

5. Prioritise Policies and Actions for Conservation and Development

Official conservation efforts and regulatory frameworks for heritage preservation have been geared towards preserving monuments attributed to Egypt's primary historical eras, namely the Ancient Egyptian, Coptic, and Islamic periods, often at the exclusion of modern urban heritage. Present socio-economic challenges require adopting new policies that recognise this heritage and maintain a balance between economic and cultural values in urban environments.

It is thus incumbent upon the national government to integrate urban heritage conservation into national policy planning and incorporate heritage conservation strategies into development agendas. Existing laws must be amended to explicitly include modern urban heritage as one of Egypt's primary historical values, and regulatory systems should adopt legislative measures for conserving tangible and intangible heritage attributes. Regulations regarding the use of tangible private heritage should reflect local conditions and progress towards flexible frameworks that promote regeneration and the sensible adaptive reuse of heritage for current needs. At the same time, these regulations should ensure that heritage assets are well managed and effectively utilised to avoid the irreparable loss of heritage assets. Furthermore, legal amendments are necessary to encourage private sector and landlord investment in conservation projects. This could include tax exemption schemes and other flexible financing options to foster local investment.

Local authorities cannot enforce these laws without delineating institutional responsibilities, improving the efficiency of urban governance and bolstering capacities for urban heritage conservation. The traditional approach of comprehensive conservation should be reinforced regarding monuments and public spaces of national importance.

6. Establish Appropriate (Public-private) Partnerships and Local Management Frameworks

Urban heritage conservation is not solely the responsibility of the government; it requires a blend of effective public governance, efficient markets and engagement from all social actors. National cultural entities provide the legal and operational frameworks for heritage conservations. The government's task is to build quality infrastructures and public spaces in heritage areas and establish a flexible urban management structure to regulate private investments in these areas.

With the under-developed management institutions in Port Said, ad hoc solutions can be implemented, such as designating urban heritage areas as special districts with special construction regulations supported by national government institutions.

7. Develop Mechanisms for the Coordination of the Various Activities between Different Actors

Urban heritage conservation must shift away from reliance on the government towards mechanisms that coordinate the contributions and perspectives of all local actors. National and local NGOs can participate in developing tools and disseminating best practices for urban heritage conservation, while academic and research centres can develop scientific research on various aspects of urban heritage. Government entities remain instrumental in the development, implementation and assessment of conservation policies. Particularly at the local level, authorities have an important role to play in preparing urban development plans which align with the heritage values of their communities. Development foundations can harmonise their development projects in urban areas with the Historic Urban Landscape approach.

Conclusion

The study of Port Said's architectural and urban features reveals the richness of its architectural heritage and the uniqueness of its urban character, underscoring the city's potential to become a prominent tourist destination in Egypt. However, the current urbanisation trends in the

city are destroying its architectural character rather than strengthening it. The Historic Urban Landscape approach presents an effective solution for conserving the city's urban heritage and leveraging it as an asset for the sustainable development of Port Said. By encouraging private sector and landlord investments in the rehabilitation of historic buildings, it is possible to spur the city's economic development through promoting urban tourism and commercial activities. Additionally, this approach contributes to social development by creating jobs, thus aiding poverty reduction. There are also considerable environmental benefits in reusing historic buildings, which were designed to be climatically suitable, rather than constructing new modern buildings that consume more energy.

According to the Historic Urban Landscape approach, the conservation of the urban heritage in Port Said should be incorporated into a comprehensive development plan at the city level. In this plan, heritage complexes would be designated as 'historic districts' within a larger agglomeration, subject to special construction regulations. In this way, these historic districts can be integrated into current development projects. Local authorities should foster the participatory dimension of the heritage conservation process by collaborating with the local community to explore possible strategies for conserving urban heritage. They must also communicate with the stakeholders behind local initiatives, who can offer valuable expertise and innovative solutions in promoting cultural heritage.

At the national level, it is necessary to reform the legal and regulatory frameworks governing heritage conservation. The existing laws must be amended to recognise modern urban heritage as one of Egypt's primary historical values. Amendments should promote the restoration and adaptive repurposing of heritage as well as encourage private sector investments in conservation projects.

Bibliography

Baller, Inken, 'Strategies for the Preservation of the Heritage of the Suez Region and Port Said as World Heritage Site', in *Revitalizing City Districts: Transformation Partnership for Urban Design and Architecture in Historic City Districts*, ed. by Hebatalla Abouelfadl, Dalila ElKerdany and Christoph Wessling (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), pp. 35–51, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-46289-9_3

Bruyas, Frédérique, 'Aménagement de la ville de Port-Saïd, le point de vue de l'architecte', *Egypte monde arabe*, 1.23 (1995), 131–68, https://doi.org/10.4000/ema.969

Cantarella, Christine H., 'Notable Families and Capitalist Parasites in Egypt's Former Free Zone: Law, Trade, and Uncertainty', in *Anthropology of the Middle East and North Africa—Into the New Millennium*, ed. by Sherine Hafez and Susan Slyomovics (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), pp. 165–84.

Carminati, Lucia, 'Dividing and Ruling a Mediterranean Port-City: The Many Boundaries Within Late 19th century Port Said', in *Controversial Heritage and Divided Memories from the Nineteenth Through the Twentieth Centuries: Multi-Ethnic Cities in the Mediterranean World*, ed. by Marco Folin and Heleni Porfyriou, 2 vols. (New York: Routledge, 2020), II, pp. 30–44.

Carminati, Lucia, 'Port Said and Ismailia as Desert Marvels: Delusion and Frustration on the Isthmus of Suez, 1859–1869', *Journal of Urban History*, 46.3 (2020), 622–47, https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144218821342

Crosnier-Leconte, M., Ghitani, G. and Amin, N., eds., *Port-Saïd: Architectures XIXe–XXe siècles* (Cairo: IFAO, 2006).

El Amrousi, Mohamed, 'Beyond Muslim Space: Jeddah, Muscat, Aden and Port Said' (PhD thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 2001).

El Amrousi, Mohamed, 'Imperial Sanctuaries: Arab Urban Enclaves on the East African Coast', in *Colonial Architecture and Urbanism in Africa—Intertwined and Contested Histories*, ed. by Fassil Demissie (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2012), pp. 67–84.

ElKerdany, Dalila, 'Port Said: A Cosmopolitan Heritage Under Threat', in *Revitalizing City Districts: Transformation Partnership for Urban Design and Architecture in Historic City Districts*, ed. by Hebatalla Abouelfadl, Dalila ElKerdany and Christoph Wessling (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), pp. 15–33, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-46289-9_2

Elshahed, Mohamed, 'Revolutionary Modernism? Architecture and the Politics of Transition in Egypt 1936–1967' (PhD thesis, New York University, 2015).

Frémaux, Céline, 'Santé et hygiénisme dans les villes du canal de Suez', *Égypte/Monde arabe*, 3.4 (2007), 75–101, https://doi.org/10.4000/ema.1759

Frémaux, Céline, 'Town Planning, Architecture and Migrations in Suez Canal Port Cities: Exchanges and Resistances', in *Port Cities: Dynamic Landscapes and Global Networks*, ed. by Carola Hein (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), pp. 156–73.

Frémaux, C. and Volait, M., 'Inventing Space in the Age of Empire: Planning Experiments and Achievements along Suez Canal in Egypt (1859–1956)', *Planning Perspectives*, 24.2 (2009), 255–62, https://doi.org/10.1080/02665430902734350

Huber, Valeska, 'Connecting Colonial Seas: The International Colonization of Port Said and The Suez Canal during and after the First World War', *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, 19.1 (2012), 141–61, https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2012.643612

Huber, Valeska, *Channelling Mobilities—Migration and Globalisation in the Suez Canal Region and Beyond, 1869–1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2012.643612

Huber, Valeska, 'Cosmopolitanism on the Move: Port Said around 1900' (20 June 2017), *Global Urban History*, https://globalurbanhistory.com/2017/06/20/cosmopolitanism-on-the-move-port-said-around-1900/

Lotfy, Mostafa M., 'Biographies of Port-Said: Everydayness of State, Dwellers, and Strangers' (master's thesis, The American University in Cairo, 2018), https://fount.aucegypt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2393&context=etds

Megahed, Naglaa A., 'Heritage-Based Sustainability in Port Said: Classification of Styles and Future Development', *Archnet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research*, 8.1 (2014), 94–107, https://www.archnet.org/publications/9097

Moore, James, '"The Alexandria You Are Losing"? Urban Heritage and Activism in Egypt since the 2011 Revolution', *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology & Heritage Studies*, 5.3–4 (2017), 427–44, https://doi.org/10.5325/jeasmedarcherstu.5.3-4.0427

Noweir, Sawsan, 'Devenir patrimonial contre développement urbain: l'exemple de Port-Saïd', *Autrepart: Revue de sciences sociales au Sud*, 33 (2005), 109–26, https://doi.org/10.3917/autr.033.0109

Piaton, Claudine, 'Port Said—Decaying Wooden Verandas Tell the Story of a City', *Al-Rawi: Egypt's Heritage Review*, 3 (2011), 22–29.

Piaton, Claudine, 'European Construction Companies in the Towns along the Suez Canal', in *Building beyond the Mediterranean: Studying the Archives of European Businesses (1860–1970)*, ed. by Claudine Piaton, Ezio Godoli and David Peyceré (Arles: Publications de l'Institut national d'histoire de l'art, 2012), pp. 92–103, https://doi.org/10.4000/books.inha.12729

Piaton, Claudine, 'Architecture patronale dans l'isthme de Suez (1859-1956)', *Annales islamologiques, 50* (2016), 11–53, https://doi.org/10.4000/anisl.2112

Piaton, Claudine, 'Port Said: Cosmopolitan Urban Rules and Architecture (1858–1930)', in *Revitalizing City Districts: Transformation Partnership for Urban Design and Architecture in Historic City Districts*, ed. by Hebatalla Abouelfadl, Dalila ElKerdany and Christoph Wessling (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), pp. 3–14, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-46289-9_1

Rojas, Eduardo, 'Urban Heritage for Sustainable Development', in *Culture: Urban Future; Global Report on Culture for Sustainable Urban Development*, ed. by I. G. Bokova (Paris: UNESCO, 2016), pp. 193–99.

Shata, Jasmin, 'Urban Stress Relief in Heritage Sites as a Sustaining Approach—The Case of Port Said' (master's thesis, Ain Shams University and University of Stuttgart, 2016), https://iusd.asu.edu.eg/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/14-Shata.pdf

The Census of Egypt: Taken in 1917 (Cairo: Ministry of Finance—Statistical and Census Department, 1917).

UNESCO, *Records of the General Conference, 36th session, Paris, 25 October—10 November 2011, v. 1: Resolutions* (Paris: UNESCO, 2011), https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000215084.page=52

UNESCO, *New Life for Historic Cities: The Historic Urban Landscape Approach Explained* (Paris: UNESCO, 2013), https://whc.unesco.org/uploads/activities/documents/activity-727-1.pdf

UNESCO, *Culture Urban Future: Global Report on Culture for Sustainable Urban Development* (Paris: UNESCO, 2016), https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245999?posInSet=1&queryId=c5c18968-cce2-406c-aa33-a21371d22f90

Welbank, M. and A. Edwards, 'Port Said: Planning for Reconstruction and Development', *Third World Planning Review*, 3: 2 (1981), 143-60, https://doi.org/10.3828/twpr.3.2.a217921vl8352128

Wladika, Stefanie A., 'Port Said—No Future without the Past: Integrated Rehabilitation Concept for the Urban Heritage' (master's thesis, Ain Shams University and University of Stuttgart, 2015), https://iusd.asu.edu.eg/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/3rdInt_Wladika.pdf