Historic Parks in the Face of Change: The Merryland Park, Cairo, Egypt

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Abstract: *Tracing the evolution in the conceptual frameworks of Conservation theory, the domains of conservation have dramatically changed since Athens Charter 1931. It has become more diverse and inclusive. Starting with the concepts of historic, artistic and archaeological monuments, the domains expand to include, among many other, historic gardens. Moreover, contemporary trends of Conservation theory also expand to include new dimensions as cultural, social, economic, spiritual, sentimental and symbolic values. This has resulted in the emergence of culturalisation of heritage trend and the consequent introduction of new concepts as cultural landscape, urban environmental structures and intangible heritage. Historic parks and Gardens contribute to the setting of historic buildings and are valued as 'works of art'. They are also valued for their horticultural interest and association with a notable person or event. It amplifies, in many cases, community identity and belonging.*

In the face of economic, social and political change; Egypt is struggling as any other developing country to attain the balance between development and urban transformation on one hand, and holding on to its local values, and heritage on the other hand. Within the Egyptian context, recognizing, conserving and protecting historic parks face more challenges than those faced by built heritage. The concept of conservation has not practically shifted to embrace its local cultural landscapes; while still concentrating on individual historic buildings and monuments.

This paper aims to explore and document the development process of Merryland Park, Heliopolis, Cairo, Egypt with specific reference to the conflict between urban development, tourism and heritage conservation.

Keywords: Heliopolis, Historic Parks, Landscape heritage, Merry land Park

1. INTRODUCTION

The scope of heritage and the categorization of conservation have dramatically changed since the Athens Charter 1931, to become more diverse and inclusive. Starting with the concepts of historic, artistic and archaeological monuments, the category expanded to include sites and surroundings, groups of buildings, movable heritage and collections, urban or rural settings and settlements, historic villages and their surroundings, underwater findings, historic towns and gardens, natural and man-made settings and whole urban or natural areas. With the shift within the scope of heritage, new concepts of cultural landscape, urban environmental structures and intangible heritage had to be embraced (Zancheti and Jokilehto 1997).

Following the expansion of conservation objectives, values related to cultural heritage has become more complex and dynamic. Values have expanded from historic and artistic categories to include cultural, social, economic, spiritual, sentimental and symbolic values among others. Institutions and practitioners tend to refer to the charters in official documents, reports and projects as to follow their recommendations, instead of having them as paradigms to be discussed and criticized. In a certain way, this diminishes the pace of change in theory and practice (Pereira, 2007). International conservation charters should be understood as documents that summarize past and present contributions, bringing to light aspects that may have not been previously questioned and providing suggestions for future practice and theoretical thinking. They should not, however, be considered documents to be blindly followed.

Consequently, heritage conservation practice got caught in an extremely complicated body of theory and affiliated charters while completely ignoring the development of a workable framework and/or practical methodology. Practitioners suddenly discovered the lack of a practical approach in dealing with heritage but rather than un-common and un-unified projects-tailored frameworks. Such context puts heritage conservation practice in wider complicated conflicts with urban and cultural tourism development and policies (Pereira, 2007).

This has been even worse in the case of Egypt. In the face of economic, social and political change; Egypt is struggling as any other developing country to attain the balance between development and urban transformation on one hand, and holding on to its local values, and heritage on the other hand. Within the Egyptian context, recognizing, conserving and protecting historic parks face more challenges than those faced by the built heritage. The concept of conservation has not practically shifted to embrace its local cultural landscapes; while still concentrating on individual historic buildings and monuments (Fahmi, 2011).

Egyptian historic urban areas, like Heliopolis, have continuously struggled to attain the balance between urban change and development, local tourism and preserving its local values and heritage. Furthermore, its open spaces, squares, parks and gardens (e.g. Merryland Park) have been more vulnerable to face this up-beat change. The development of Merryland Park, Heliopolis, Egypt, is considered a vivid case of such context presented in this paper.

2. CULTURAL HERITAGE AND URBAN CHANGE

Cultural heritage can be regarded as any existing element that is a part of the traditions, lifestyles, knowledge, and ideas of a group of people. Of these, 'built heritage' implies monuments and works of architecture that are of historical and artistic importance. The physical and social transformation of any city has been always coupled with shifts in its demography and economy. This transformation, at the cusp of the forces of globalization, is happening in a more widespread and rapid manner, moving too fast to allow adaptation and therefore encouraging a

direct grafting of an alien built environment into an ill-fitting context. Built and landscape heritage connects an individual to the past and conveys a sense of rootedness and identity. It has always been a function of our lifestyle and traditions, and its decay and loss implies a similar disconnect with ideas and practices which were our own (Ouf, 2001).

It could have been very easy to simplify our scope of cultural heritage conservation and strictly consider it as only the preservation of inherited man-made artefacts. For decades, the field of cultural heritage conservation has been object-oriented and its scope has mainly been limited to single buildings (Pereira, 2007). However, being a part of any urban fabric within our consciously evolving and towns and cities, cultural heritage management had to shift to a broader and complex scope. In a context in which local inhabitants are trying to find a suitable framework for changing social, cultural, and economic demands and needs, continuous pressure arises on the local urban heritage; a new layer of "historic legacy, authenticity and identity" had to be added to on-going changing urban forms. The concept of heritage has dramatically expanded to include urban culture and life styles of individuals in addition to the use and practices within urban spaces (Mitra, 2009).

Adding more layers to the concept of heritage conservation, attaining the balance between 'Continuity and Change' has been much harder. Scholars have continuously emphasized on re-positioning the scope of cultural heritage through the analysis of the well-known '*preservation and change conflict'*. Nasser (2003, p.267) picks on the scope of cultural heritage as follows:

> '*A conflict between the preservation of the character of existing historic towns and "change" has formed the central argument for conservation. More recently, heritage has superseded conservation, where marketing of heritage as a product according to the demands of the consumer, mainly tourists, has resulted in the commercialisation of heritage over conservation values. Today, the symbiosis of both tourism and heritage places has become a major objective in the management and planning of historic areas"*

Managing change within our cities has always been one of the most challenging political, intellectual and social challenging issues. International cultural bodies, such as the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the international centre for study of preservation and restoration of cultural property (ICCROM), the international Commission on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and others could have easily fixed and focused its efforts on producing clear guidelines for the protection and restoration and management of built heritage and monuments. Broadening the definition of 'heritage', the guidelines, recommendations of these international bodies had been essential in order to be strongly embedded within the planning and management process of cities. New definitions and sub-categorization of 'what we need to protect and hand to our future generations' had to be recognized, adding more pressure on the urban development process(Steinberg, 1996).

2.1 Cultural landscape

As any landscape shaped by its human activities shaping around its visual elements can be referred to as 'cultural landscape'. The role of nature and culture has been re-defined in a Cultural Landscape as follows:

> "The cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a culture group. Culture is the agent, the natural area the medium, the cultural landscape" (Anschuetz *et al* 2001 cited in Khanna, 2006)

Meanwhile, the concept of cultural landscape had to embrace a dynamic understanding of its history in order to connect the past, present and future of its grounds. Agha Sanmani *et al* (2012) stress on the dynamic vision of cultural landscape in their words:

> "Cultural landscape consists of dialectic between the natural physical setting, the human modifications of the setting, and the meanings of the resultant landscape to insiders and outsiders. Continuous interaction takes place between these three elements over time" *(ibid, 2012)*

Consequently, a new paradigm had developed to address the conservation of historic cultural landscapes in order to reinforce the balance between developing and sustaining the urban landscape. Furthermore the inclusion of Cultural Landscapes on the World Heritage List was the result of the new anthropological dimension acknowledged in the definition of cultural heritage of 'outstanding universal value' (Titchen and Rossler 1995). Cultural landscapes have been classified in the context of world heritage. Based upon these concepts; the World Heritage Convention 1995 included Cultural Landscapes on the World Heritage List under mainly three categories, as discussed in the Operational Guidelines for the Convention. The first category of Cultural Landscapes is the 'clearly defined landscape', which is designed and created intentionally by humans. The gardens and parkland landscapes, in this section, are often associated with religious or other monumental structures of this category are the Garden Tomb of Humayun (India), the Shalimar Gardens in Lahore (Pakistan) and Studley Royal (UK)." are clear example of this category (Khanna, 2006)

Furthermore, a second category was introduced that clearly respected the 'social, economic, administrative or religious imperative of any organically evolved landscapes' (Cleere, 1995). This category focuses mainly on the on-going evolutionary process of the landscape, where material evidence of that process still remains. This category has been referred to as 'relict or fossil landscapes'. A sub-category of this type of landscape presents the 'continuing landscapes' that represent the 'on-going evolutionary process of a social and economic function in the contemporary society closely associated with a traditional way of life. The Rice Terraces of the Philippines fits with this example of 'continuing landscapes'. Furthermore, a third category of 'associative' cultural landscapes emphasizes the powerful religious, artistic or cultural dimensions of the natural element instead of depending on only material, which in many cases may be absent of insignificant. This category can be applied on sacred mountains or even ancient religious settlements located on outstanding landscapes (Khanna, 2006).

2.2 Tourism and Cultural Heritage

Integrating the cultural heritage in the development process of human urban activities, tourism industry introduces itself as a main promoter of any local cultural heritage. Heritage tourism, a sub-category of tourism, refers to tourism within the boundaries of cultural Heritage Sites including World Heritage Sites (WHS). This term expands to combine cultural and eco-tourism was a clear heritage conservation theme. Furthermore, as heritage widened its scope to accommodate tangible and intangible entities of local cultures and identities, the concept of heritage tourism has experienced a major shift in definition and practice.

Although heritage tourism activities is considered a main source of funding and protecting heritage, its strategies and outcome activities are feared to be a main threat, specially where conflict of aims arises between the protection of the local identity and tourism development (Shetawy and El-Khateeb 2009).The level of exploitation of any cultural heritage site has always been considered the main area of conflict. Conservation strategies seek to sustain the level of exploitation, while tourism aims towards to maximum exploitation through the number of visiting trips and associated activities (UNESCO, 2002). Manipulation of history and the fear of loss of authenticity and self-identity in order to meet the requirements of the demanding tourism market has also been a real concern.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As a first step in the exploration, analysis and documentation of the current context of this unique culture heritage, the authors divided the study into six distinct groups: Government officials (i.e. Ministry of culture, ministry of tourism, Cairo Governorate, Local Government), surrounding residents, owners and workers of tourism activities, users of various ages and gender; academic and professionals, and finally NGOs (i.e. Heliopolis Services Development Society). The fieldwork was carried during a period of 2 months. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect primary qualitative data to a sample selected through different sampling techniques (see Table 1). Semi-structured interviews were judged more appropriate than structured interviews due to security and other resource limitations (i.e. time, funding, safety and security context), as well as the type of data required.

Table 1: Study population, methods and sampling techniques

Study Population		Methods	Sampling technique
Government Officials	Ministry of Culture Ministry of Tourism Cairo Governorate Local Public Council	Semi-structured interviews	Purposeful then snow-balling
Residents	Surrounding residents of the Park	Semi-structured interviews Direct observation Group discussions	Purposeful Stratified random sampling then snow-balling
Workers and owners of tourism activities	Restaurants, Cafés, Cafeterias, vendors	Semi-structured interviews Direct observation Group discussions	Stratified random sampling then snow-balling
NGOs	Heliopolis Services Development Society	Semi-structured interviews	Purposeful then snowballing
Academic and Practitioners	Academic and practitioners	Semi-structured interviews	Purposeful then snowballing
Users	Males (various age groups) Females (various age groups)	Semi-structured interviews Direct observation Group discussion	Stratified random sampling then snowballing

Briefly, a total of 47 interviewees of all groups were interviewed. This was in addition to direct observation and group discussions over a total period of 2 months (April-May 2013). The

researchers have also made use of several secondary data sources, mainly documentation and archival records, while seeking to triangulate data to confirm the validity and reliability of both primary and secondary data collected.

4. THE MERRYLAND PARK: THE PAST AND PRESENT

Through the modern waves of expansion of Cairo, new models of urban development were created, adding to its urban fabric unique entities that were not familiar to the well-known and familiar Islamic neighbourhoods. In an attempt to imitate the European lifestyle and encouraged by the increase in the number of foreigners, entities such as parks, outdoor spaces and squares recreational areas open to the public were introduced, adding new dimensions to the social pattern of locals (Rabbat,2004) . Merryland Park of Heliopolis presented one of the very vivid examples of such new style developments at the time.

According to Roger Owen (1972) who analysed the waves of urban expansion of Cairo, originated during 'Khedive Ismail's attempt to make Paris by the Nile'. The second wave of expansion started around the 1890's as a direct result of the 'growth in the number of foreigners, both residents and tourists, and the great enlargement of government activity'. In the midst of the height of its economic boom (1897- 1907), the project of a new suburb, 12 kilometres far from the centre of Cairo was initiated in 1905 , as seen in figure (1). Heliopolis, or the city of the Sun, was to be the name for a new neighbourhood created in the northern east of the old city of Cairo. A unique creation by the Belgian Empian Baron of an 'oasis within the desert' that revolves around creating garden cities, while celebrating an architecture that marries oriental and European styles. (Hussien, 2005)
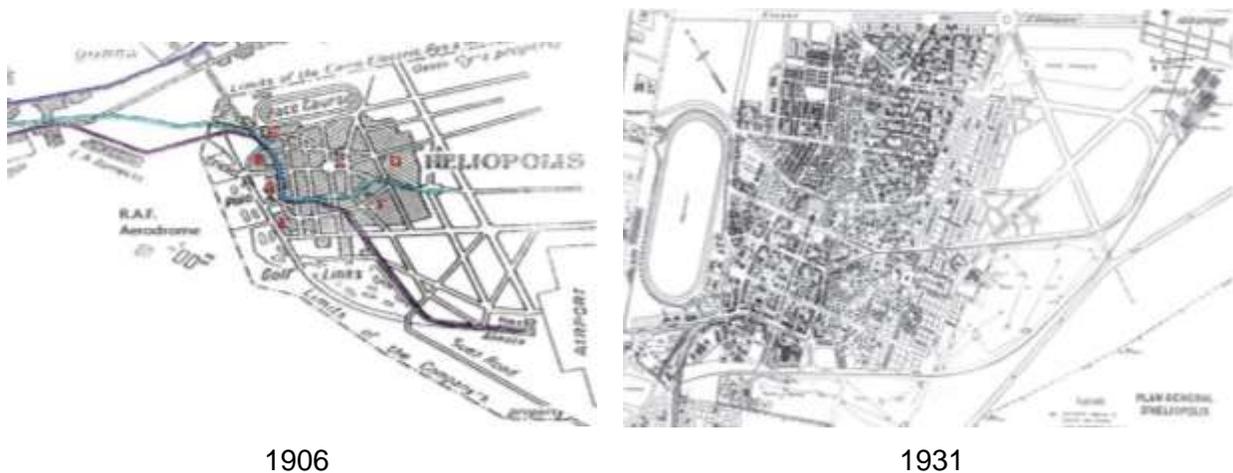

1906   1931

Figure 1: Heliopolis Plans (Herzog, 2010)

The project was faced by two main challenges; first, to promote the suburb as a better and unique alternative for accommodation and relocation, and second to reduce its desert-look. The Heliopolis Oasis Company (HOC) had to be established in order to bring the place to life and to address such challenges. The suburb was to be linked to the heart of the city by an electric tramway. Competitive renting and purchasing prices were introduced with efficient systems to facilitate the construction and re-selling processes. In an attempt to attract a cosmopolitan client, new social and recreational entities had to be embraced within the suburb construction plan**.** Heliopolis, as referred to by the memories of its old residents as 'a reminiscence of a

romanticized hideout from the chaos of Cairo's old qua**rter**s, presented a European life-style in a magical oriental context. (Hussien, 2005)

Many of the old residents pinpointed the double success of Heliopolis; on the urban and social levels as quoted;

> "Heliopolis used to be a beautiful and intelligent suburb with wide streets at a time and manifested an outstanding architectural style and urban form [...] it is a suburb that was originally planned to be a luxurious oasis, and that turned out to be a mixed social classes one [...] A cosmopolitan suburb where people of different national origins, ethnicity, religions and language lived together in a peaceful and joyful way" (Fieldwork 2013)

Horse Race Course

Luna Park   Palace Hotel (i.e. *Etihadya* Palace)

Figure 2: Heliopolis Main recreational Urban Landmarks (Egy, 2013)

As seen in figure (2), the suburb embraced the entertainment and recreational dimension in its new urban settings, manifesting 'a significant point of attraction, but a reason for the uniqueness of the city' as an academic pointed out. The Heliopolis Palace Hotel offered 'giant elevators, billiard rooms, Turkish baths and afforded a distant view of the pyramids'. The funfair, named Luna Park, was considered to be the biggest in the Middle East and Africa at that time, attracted visitors from the heart of Cairo. A variety of cinemas offered its residents and visitors a wide

selection from open cheap summer cinemas (i.e. Normandy open-air cinema), to deluxe cinemas (i.e. Heliopolis Palace hotel cinema). Later on, private open air clubs with regulated membership was introduced to the recreational entities of the suburb. Moreover, the hippodrome or the race course, which is recently the Merryland Park, was the meeting point for race goers every Sunday (El-Ghitany, 2005).

From a pure national capitalism perspective, the suburb was criticised to be haunted by the colonial character, not open to the indigenous population, creating a voluntarily maintained segregation. The suburb was mainly dominated by foreigners emphasised by its foreign outlook.
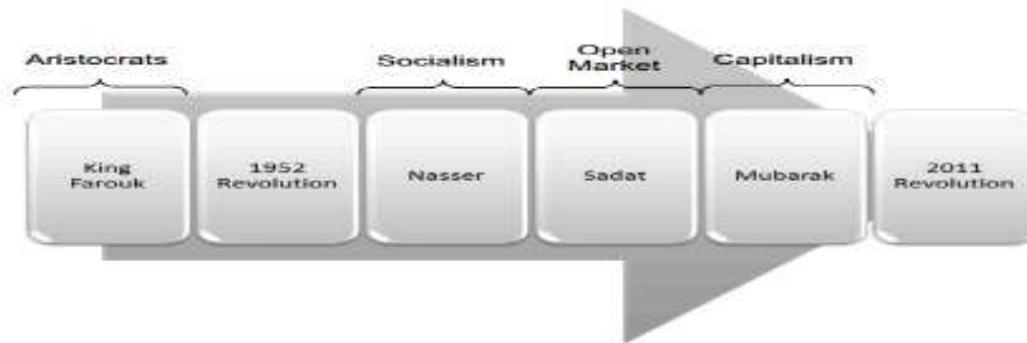

Figure 3: The Political Time Line of Egypt (Gabr, 2010 cited in Ayyad and Gabr, 2012)

Furthermore, its activities also reflected this concern. Excluding classes form certain activities was a symbol of inequality within the society. As for example, while the race course was exclusive to a certain upper social class, people from everywhere used to come and watch it from outside, as they could not afford the price of the tickets (Hussein, 2005).

Throughout time, the Heliopolis suburb has been affected by the political, social and economical changes in the Egyptian context, seen in figure (3). Uses of buildings and activities within its different urban spaces had to re-adapt to these changes. As for example, during the Second World War, the Heliopolis Palace Hotel was to be transferred gradually into to a military hospital (Herzog, 2010).

Moreover, the pre-revolution era (after 1952) came with very high-beat waves of change within the suburb's context. Heliopolis Oasis Company (FOC) as many Foreign companies, was to be nationalized and renamed 'Heliopolis Company for Housing and Development'. Most of the foreign population left the country, and new Egyptian residents from different social classes arrived. New urban development ideologies adopted from Russian socialist models were to be applied within the undeveloped areas (i.e. housing blocks) offering high density residential blocks contradicting the original Empians vision. The pre-1950's not only represented major historic dividing years in the political and economic context of Egyptians, for heliopolitans it reflected a dramatic change in the way their urban spaces were to be managed and administrated. Scholars have tried to document the changes within this pure colonized suburb throughout the dramatic transfer of the political Egyptian context (El-Akkad, 2011). Local residents and visitors describe these changes in their words as follows:

> "As years passed, the White Tram disappeared, the British had left, and internal migration had increased, bringing into the suburb new social classes with different and unrelated attitudes to our beloved suburb. Three

> new tramway lines now called the 'Metro'. During the years, continuous assault has occurred to the gardens and the sidewalks to make way for small commodity stands 'kiosks' or parking lots for the increasing number of cars. The ground floors of the distinguished, old, spacious buildings have been transformed into all kinds of shops"

Following the bold ideologies of nationalization, the nationalized Heliopolis Company based its policies throughout the 1960s on attracting national investment through decreasing the land prices. Activities revolved around economic buildings to serve the masses contributed to the change in the general outlook of Heliopolis. As a result, the empty plots of land, open spaces served widely to achieve the company's clear policies (e.g. the construction of an entire residential area on area that used to be Heliopolis's Golf course- Almazah) (Herzog, 2010).

Figure 4: Location Merryland Park in Heliopolis Suburb (Herzog, 2010; Egy, 2013)

Fortunately, the open space of the horse race court was saved from this housing construction invasion. However, the once famous horse race court was to be closed by Nasser's government. Based on the common view of nationalist, its closure was based on the concept that 'it does not coincide with our traditions... it is gambling'. As a result, the race course was to be turned into a public park in the early 1960s, seen in figure (4). Designed by the architect, Sayed Ibrahim, the Merryland Park, was to be one of the main open public spaces to entertain residents and visitors. The building that was once King Farouk's villa where he used to stay and view the races was turned in the park's Granada casino that stands in front of the park's main gates. (El-Ghitany, 2005)

The beginning of these drastic changes of the initial functions of the area can be considered the main trigger for more transformations on one hand, and the start of gradually erasing the area's unique identity. The following era of 'open-door policy (*Infitah)* during the 1970s and 1980s, the boom in real-estate and the foreign capital that flooded the country, directly added new transformations to the urban fabric, while omitted more from the original identities of its places and spaces (Ayyad and Gabr, 2012)

By the eighties, Heliopolis Company's main scope was to raise the margin of its profit from selling land and mainly housing units. Heliopolis was to face the reality of its company. Deterioration along the years has been the main point that many of the old residents and visitors have pointed out, as one resident state:

> "It is heartbreaking to watch our beloved and well- planned city of Heliopolis has all disappearing under the ongoing slaughter by unqualified developers whose only concern is a quick financial return"

Engaging with Sadat's new development polices, especially after the October War, 1972; most of the public open spaces like   the Merryland Park were to be promoted as attractive, modern touristic outing sites. Profit from entry tickets, entertainment & recreational activities were considered major revenue. While, this might seem that physically the area that was historically know as the race course area has been from the ongoing transformations surrounding it, but commercializing the park as a touristic entity, while ignoring the history and original identity of the place was of great concern to historians and conservation groups.

As a public park, the Merryland managed to gain collective memory for its visitors. Its trees, lush greenery and ponds create a unique and memorable experience.

> "During the 60's and 70's, Cairenes came to enjoy the sun amidst its lush vegetation, paddled in the artificial lake and sipped tea and lemonade at the 'casino ..... children played on the artificial lake, fed the ducks, went for boat-rides, bought balloons at the gate and cried when it was time to leave"'(El-Ghitany, 2005)

Heliopolis , like all Egyptian urban areas have had to face the direct effect of successive ideologies, conflicting policies of the changing political, economic and social Egyptian context. Its company that at one point was with high municipal powers, by the 1980's with the introduction of new laws (i.e. law 3, year 1982), had to hand some of its authorities to the Ministry of Housing and Cairo Governorate. The company's function has been limited throughout time to dividing land and selling, where it has no longer any executive authority in its area (Herzog, 2010)

As Hosni Mubarak comes in to power in 1981 and moves into the suburb, Heliopolis Palace Hotel changes its function once more, to serve as the president's office. As the power literally transfers to the area, recognizing Heliopolis and its various entities (i.e. buildings and spaces) as a part of local heritage was highly sounded. High class commercial activities, many foreign labels and banks were attracted to relocate in the historic part of Heliopolis, next to the main symbol of power and the essence of history of its old urban environment.

Furthermore, law 117, introduced in 1983, emphasised the role of the Council of Antiques (CSA), as the main institution responsible for the heritage preservation, and protection of historic buildings and sites of Heliopolis. CSA had to be consulted first prior to the demolition of any old building in the area. More awareness to the area's heritage and its incorporation into the urban heritage was achieved especially after an international conference organised by the Aga Khan foundation on Cairo (1984) pinpointed the situation of the 19th and early 20th century heritage (El-Kadi, 2000).

However, the market-led attitude towards development, followed by major economic structural reforms aiming to foster the expansion of the private sector to promote investment and growth had obviously added more layers of challenges in the face of any practical steps towards the recognition of the old Heliopolis rich history and heritage. As a mid-way solution to resolve the conflict between continuity and change, the development of urban voids of this suburb was considered as the only compromise. Privatization of different sites and encouraging the establishment of high class economic activities in the suburb were the main tools to promote

Heliopolis as a well-preserved urban heritage site offering a high quality of life to locals, and visitors. While a blind eye attitude was given to the attitude towards the open spaces that complement and enrich the urban fabric of any urban heritage.

Unfortunately, the Merry land park, with its rich history, after serving as the main attraction point of local tourism and recreation for many of its local residents, it began to gradually deteriorate and went through an accelerated ageing process. By the end of the 1980s, private membership clubs was the substitute for high and middle class local residents to full fill their free-time, sports and recreational needs (i.e. Heliopolis Sporting Club, El- Shams Club, Al- Ghaba Club, Al-Nasr Club...etc). Lower class residents and visitors were left with a poorly managed public park and neglected and deteriorated facilities. One local resident summed up the parks deterioration sarcastically in his words:

> "If you like wild dogs, mosquitoes and drug dealers, Merryland is the place to go[...]The once 'merry' walkways were anything but pleasant, the trees showed signs of neglect, the lush greenery grew wild and dusty, and the ponds filled with weeds. The benches now crumbled and cracked" (Fieldwork 2013)

In 1998, Privatization of the park was inevitable. 'Merryland New Generation' project, a project co-owned by one of Mubarak's sons was introduced in the late 1990s to turn the neglected park into an exclusive green spot competing with the surround facilities. Positive as it seems in regenerating a neglected urban site, it totally disrespected the fact that it is a main heritage site. Bypassing laws and regulations to regulate any heritage areas, a large area of the park was aggressively transformed to a high- class exclusive recreational beverage and food outlets, blocking the broad cliental to enter major parts of the park. The privatization of Merryland Park was considered as 'a very negative example of changes taking place in Heliopolis' (Herzog, 2010)

The old casino was renovated to accommodate several international and national chain restaurants. More cafes and restaurants were added around the old casino. Furthermore, a Dolphin show stadium & aquarium with a capacity of 1000 seats as a part of a children's amusement area was introduced. This was followed by privatizing more areas of the park to locate additional cafes and restaurants (i.e. TGI Fridays, located at a different section than the old casino area). Getting access to these private areas was a privilege unattained by many middle-class families that find spending a day at the 'New generation requires an independent budget. This has been summarized by one of surrounding residents as follows:

> 'Merryland used to be our favourite picnic area, but most restaurants served expensive dishes and even cafes had a minimum charge of 20 LE. We could not afford to pay LE100 every time for dinner. Then we had to pay the games and dolphin show fees. Not many people could afford this kind of outing on a regular basis"   (Fieldwork, 2013)

Next to the fenced 'New Generation' zone, low- income families spread their sheets on the ground of the public zone of the park with their home-made picnic baskets. Consequently, some improvements were to be observed in this set-aside area; promenades were being paved, seats and benches and fences mended, statues restores and a new lighting system installed. Small kiosks and cafeterias were to provide food and drinks at affordable prices. (El-Ghitany, 2005)

1960s-1970s

1990s- early 2000s

Present Time

Figure 5: Merryland Park Through Time (from early 1960s till Present)

By 2010, which could be considered too late for any actions to rescue any previous identity of this historic park, and after realizing the negative effects of the up-beat development on the park and its surrounding environment, a new re-development plan of Merryland was to be thought of. Cairo Governorate and Heliopolis Company had to work on a new vision for the park to limit the physical and social segregation the previous development imposed on the park. It also aimed at decreasing the problems of traffic congestion and noise. The new plan proposed reviving the old 60's identity the park through its old Casino, and artificial lakes, and decreasing the built-up area of the park to a limited 10% of the parks total area. The project went on to propose a staged cultural park on an area of 3.7 feddan, a revival of the run-down botanical park and plants' nursery (6.5 feddan), and the development of the restaurant and kids areas. Moreover, recognizing the traffic congestion the previous activities created on the main streets, the new development plans offered underground parking solutions that could accommodate around 200 instead of only 70 cars. (Akhbarway, 2011)

Paradoxically, the demolition of many of the unlicensed buildings and activities in the park had started even before this revival plan was approved and licences for new construction obtained. However, the 2011 Egyptian revolution and the period of political, institutional and economic unrest that followed, gave no chance for any revival plans to start. The listed historic park has been left with ruins and traces of a once-aggressive development and a neglected cultural landscape. Figure (5) shows some photos of the Merryland Park through time from the early 1960s till present.

The case study of Merryland Park is a clear example of the widening gap between the views and concerns of the different bodies devoted to the protection and preservation of urban heritage and sites on one hand and the practical actions executed by the institutions aiming at addressing the change within its local environment on the other hand. Bodies related to heritage such as the Ministry of Culture (MOC) and its council of Antiquities (SCA) and the national organization of urban harmony have been supported with successive laws in order to maintain the urban heritage. Law 119 introduced in 2008 presented the guidelines and regulations to deal with listed areas, not just buildings. Furthermore, law 114 introduced in 2006 gave the upper hand for these bodies to intervene and supervise any actions when it comes to listed parks, gardens and natural landscape. Looking at the date of these laws, it can noted that these laws came into action 'very late' to be able to rescue any of the left cultural environment.

 While, on the other hand, institutions concerned with local development of Heliopolis suburb (i.e. Cairo Governorate, Heliopolis Company for housing and development) have acted with a blind eye towards the unique historic value and original identity of the park. Successive development plans of the park have boldly developed the place into a recreational outing area and vital economic revenue. Throughout the process of preparation for this paper, documents, and newspaper articles have rarely mentioned that the park is a listed heritage site. Reading the history of the suburb and the changes that occurred to the main sites, especially the Merryland Park, pinpoints the derailment of the development process from the ideal sensitive process of management within heritage areas. Delay in the wide recognition of the site as 'listed', passive actions towards negative development within the whole area, are many of the reasons that lead to the recent critical situation of the Park's cultural landscape.

Documenting the recent status of the park; a disappeared lake, neglected green areas, ruins and traces of demolished buildings, and a project that hasn't started, the Merryland park is way too far to be recognized as a listed cultural landscape. Unfortunately, as the development process and management actions of Merryland Park ignored the authenticity and identity of its site, this takes back the entire Egyptian heritage management process to an initial naive

conservation scope. The reality is that the process has been confined to the preservation of listed buildings and monuments, while leaving its surrounding environment, sites and spaces vulnerable to face the never ending needs of change and development. Moreover, with great efforts in the 1970s to gain the international community's recognition and support through the inscribing a number of its monuments and sites on the World Heritage List (WHL), the Egyptian authorities haven't been sustained by any efforts to promote any of its various historic parks (El-Kadi, 2001).

5. CONCLUSION

It has been a major milestone in the heritage conservation discourse when adding the conservation of complete zones and areas within and around cities to the heritage conservation efforts. This has led to forming a collective front all over the World to conserve heritage landscape within cities. Landscape heritage like Giza plateau of Egypt, Parthenon of Athens and Trafalgar square of London are considered to be of great heritage value that has vivid marks in the lives and memories of city residents. One of the most valuable heritage areas in Cairo, Egypt is the urban area of Heliopolis. Promoted by Baron Empain as one of the first Cairo suburbs, Heliopolis area has a distinctive architecture as well as urban style. It was not only the architecture and urban form of the area that captured the heart and mind of Cairens but rather the special entertainment and outdoor activities and public services. One of such entertainment activities was the horse race course.

By the early 1960s, horse racing was relocated and the inner court of the race ring was transformed to a magnificent piece of landscape, Merryland, in the heart of the city suburb at the time. The aim was to provide affordable elegant entertainment and local tourism activities to all social classes. For the following twenty years, Merryland was the centre of entertainment activities not only in Heliopolis area but rather in Greater Cairo Region as a whole. Two generations were raised having the visits to Merryland as part of their lives and regular weekend activities.

Major change and deterioration Merryland has started to experience since the early 1980s when some investment activities were promoted by the government at the time. The aim was to produce more and more revenue for the state and continued to be the aim till this very date. Such activities (i.e. expansion of tourism activities and later on knocking down all building on site apart from the old casino paving the way for a new development) had major impact on the memories and part of identities of Heliopolis residents. After was being considered a major source of joy and happiness it turned to be a subject that cause more and more stress and sadness. It can be fairly said that Merryland was caught in the middle of a classic conflict between urban development, tourism and heritage conservation and the looser of this conflict by was eventually heritage conservation by far.

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