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Germany

Urban Space and Politics of Transition in Contemporary Cairo

**A Thesis submitted in the Partial Fulfillment for the Requirement of the Degree
of Master of Science in Integrated Urbanism and Sustainable Design**

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(2014)

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Abstract

At the turn of the twenty-**first century, Cairo's modern spaces are continuously** defined and redefined according to the shifting political powers, economic regimes and social dynamic. In 1974, Henery Lefebvre has urged us to shift our attention from **the 'things in space' to the actual 'production of space';** he argued that every society, hence every mode of production, produces a certain space of its own. This thesis traces the change in the representation and perception of architectural and urban aesthetics in contemporary Cairo throughout the twentieth century through focusing on Heliopolis, a remarkable modern urbanizations that has distinguishing architectural style and eclectic aesthetics. Today, Heliopolis is also having its own community initiative and preservation group; monitoring, defending and preserving its modern heritage; they ought to extend their positive effect on the city of Cairo.

The first part of this research is a historical narrative that profoundly analyses the process of making of the belle epoch aesthetics at the outset of the twentieth century during the era of foreign hegemony. After the 1952 revolution, the aesthetics that was conceived during a **'colonial' era were ignored and perceived** as irrelevant to the national character of a newly independent country; Egypt. The research also explores the socialist governmental endeavors to restructure urban space and the aspects of national aesthetics. Further the research examines the process of distortion of the origin heritage under the liberal and neoliberal states; that have evoked nostalgia and interest in the belle epoch heritage. During that economic liberalization era, new developments were **consuming the city's modern heritage; however,** the perception of belle epoch aesthetics was rediscovered and appreciated. Moreover, the research explores **the most recent acts of reclaiming Cairo's modern heritage by the various** community movements that are currently unfolding in the city post 2011 revolution.

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List of Abbreviations

HOC	Heliopolis Oases Company
MNDH	Madinet Nasr for Housing & Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
AKAA	Aga Khan Award for Architecture
GOPP	General Organisation of Physical Planning
NOUH	The National Organization for Urban Harmony
HHI	Heliopolis Heritage Initiative
CULTNAT	The Center for Documentation of Cultural and Natural Heritage

“here also is a complex city, a blend of old and new, of East and West, which must not be allowed to achieve its new order at the expense of its unique and poignant beauty nor its human warmth”

(Abulughod, 1971, p. v)

1 Space, Contemporary Cairo and Urbanism

2011 saw the 59th anniversary of the 1952 Egyptian revolution. More than half a century has passed since the 23rd July 1952 when a group of army officers **surrounded the Abdine Palace demanding the King's abdication. In the time** span of sixty years, the political regime has changed three times, from a parliamentary monarchy under British mandate, to state socialism with capitalist overtones, to a completely open market economy. At the turn of the twenty-first century, Cairo is a metropolis that is constantly in movement; each movement brings about a certain change, there are therefore no urban spaces have remained as they were originally designed. The urban space is continuously shaped and reshaped according to the circumstances of the social dynamics and of functional and residential mobility, often brought about by urban policies and political regimes (El Kadi 2012). "It is this relation between forces and forms in their various temporalities that we must explore" (El Kadi, 2012, p. 38).

1.1 Transitional Urbanism ?

In 1974, Henri Lefebvre has noted that; what many people look upon as the conclusion of a well-defined period; as the end of capitalism, socialism, or else as the institution of something new and definitive as a system or equilibrium, should really be conceived of solely as a transition (Lefebvre 1974, p.408). Accordingly, this research will study the transformation that happened in the urbanism of Cairo in three transitional phases under the three above mentioned regimes; monarch under foreign domination, socialist state, further liberal and neoliberal states. An analysis of modern Cairo from a political economic perspective gives a greater understanding of the transformation in the physical built environment. Such an understanding is critically important in the case of cities such as Cairo, where long-term quantitative data is not available. **Cairo's** architecture and urbanism have often been trapped in North-South, East-West dualities; which has been time consuming and of little help in creating a better future for its inhabitants. Cairo is a city that is not merely another case study for the application of theories, tools and methods developed elsewhere in order to understand its urbanity. In fact, Cairo is a laboratory of its own, worthy of professional and academic attention to generate new terms, new theories and concepts that may lead to productive responses to its urban conditions (Cluster and the AUC, 2013).

In this research project I will trace the **transformation happening in Cairo's** modern urban developments with regards to the change in political-economic regimes. Throughout three modernization processes brought to Cairo by three different regimes, this thesis aims to explore the continuous shift in the production and perception of architecture and urban aesthetics, through focusing on one of **Cairo's** most remarkable modern urbanizations; Heliopolis. The study begins with historical analyses of the contemporary city at the outset of the twentieth century during monarch under the British mandate; and the circumstances that triggered the planning of Heliopolis, with the focus on the process of making the belle epoch aesthetics. After the birth of independence,

the second part analyzes the transformation that happened under the socialist state, by examining what forms of; use/re-use, adaptation/conversion or appropriation that have took place. Further the research examines the process of distortion of the belle epoch heritage under the liberal and neoliberal state that was accompanied by evoked nostalgia and interest in the modern heritage. Moreover, the research presents the most recent attempts to reclaim the belle epoch heritage by the acts of activism that are unfolding in the city post 2011 revolution. The thesis is presented chronologically, in four acts of: making, coping, consuming and reclaiming.

The following part is discussing the research background at the outset of the twentieth century, by situating Heliopolis in the wider context of a transforming monarchic country; Egypt under foreign domination.

1.2 Histories and Space

"The interval between the decay of the old and the formation and the establishment of the new, constitutes a period of transition, which must always necessarily be one of uncertainty, confusion, error, and wild and fierce fanaticism."

(John Calhoun, in (Harvey, 1990, p. 119))

1.2.1 Prelude to Independence

If it was common for the first half of the nineteenth century to date the Egyptian movement towards modernization; the second half of this century to the beginnings of the twentieth century would rather date the westernization of Egypt, and specially Cairo (Raymond 2001). According to Janet Abulughod (1971), the process of modernization was first brought to Cairo under the rule of Khedive Ismail (1863-1879); while André Raymond (2001), as well as others

such as Afaf Lutfi Sayyid (1984), suggests that modernization¹ was first launched by Muhammad Ali (1805-1848) around the time of the French expedition. Nevertheless Raymond would agree with Abulughod, there was a modernization campaign launched by Ismail to modernize Egypt. According to him, modernization in the second half of the nineteenth century became a necessity for Egypt and Cairo; and that, given the material and cultural state of the world in 1860, modernization could only mean westernization (Raymond, 2001, p. 308).

The history of the urban development of Cairo during the first half of the **twentieth century is strongly linked to Britain's occupation of Egypt and thus to the 'colonial' rule. Britain's occupation of Egypt was primarily intended to be temporary, but developed into a durable arrangement; in 1882 the British had taken administrative control of Egypt, without ever declaring it a formal colony (Dobrowolska & Dobrowolski, 2006, p.45). The 1919 Egyptian revolution paved the way for the end of the direct control of the British on the country²; even though officially it only ended in 1936, the date of a treaty recognizing Egypt's independence and its entry into the League of Nations (Fig.1). Yet because of the agreements signed and, not long after, because of the war, Britain maintained a military presence in Egypt, thus continued to exert power on the political system until the 1952 revolution ended the monarchy. It was only in 1954, when an agreement to evacuate British troops was reached; that Egypt's independence truly came into effect (Raymond, 2001, p.318). During monarchy, under foreign domination, western planning continues to shape the entrepreneurial expansions of Cairo.**

¹ “Since Mohammed Ali’s rule (1805-1849), there have been four big modernization attempts under Khedive Ismail (1863-1879), during the Egypt’s Liberal age (1922-1952), under Nasser (1952-1970) and under Sadat (1970-1981). (Ibrahim, 1985)

² “Until 1914, Egypt is statutorily an Ottoman province, therefore subject to the Sublime Porte, which tribute is paid annually, while being militarily occupied by Britain since 1882. From 1914 to 1922, Egypt is granted the status of a British Protectorate until the unilateral declaration of independence by the British in 1922 under the pressure of a powerful national movement” (M.Volait, 2003)



Figure 1 old Egyptian stamp (1936), showing Anglo-Egyptian Treaty.
Source: Mourad Nowier

1.2.2 Heading East

By the beginning of the 20th century Cairo has witnessed a rapid increase in the population³; two types of transformations have then affected Cairo: densification of the existing districts built in the 19th century; and the development of new districts. The new districts were: Giza, Rhoda and Garden City; the Suburbs: Heliopolis (1905) and Maadi (1907). Perhaps the most remarkable urbanization in the beginning of the 20th century was the founding of the new satellite city; Heliopolis.

Geographically, the River Nile (Fig.2) lies to the west of Cairo and to the east the Muqattam Hills; both acting as natural barriers to its development, while to its northern and southern borders it is surrounded by desert and the valley, thus developing new suburbs was solely limited to these areas especially when areas to the northeast of Cairo had been brought within reach of urban expansion by the new tramlines. Heliopolis was part of the larger plan to redevelop the capital outside the limits of its old city. The site was carefully chosen, around ten kilometers away from the city center in the north-east direction; the location of Heliopolis lies on a plateau above the Nile valley, swept by cool fresh breezes from the north and protected by Muqattam hills from the hot winds that occasionally come from the south (Dobrowolska 2006).

³ Cairo's population reached 654,476 inhabitants in 1907 (further 791,000 in 1917 and 1,312,000 in 1937) from 374,838 in 1882

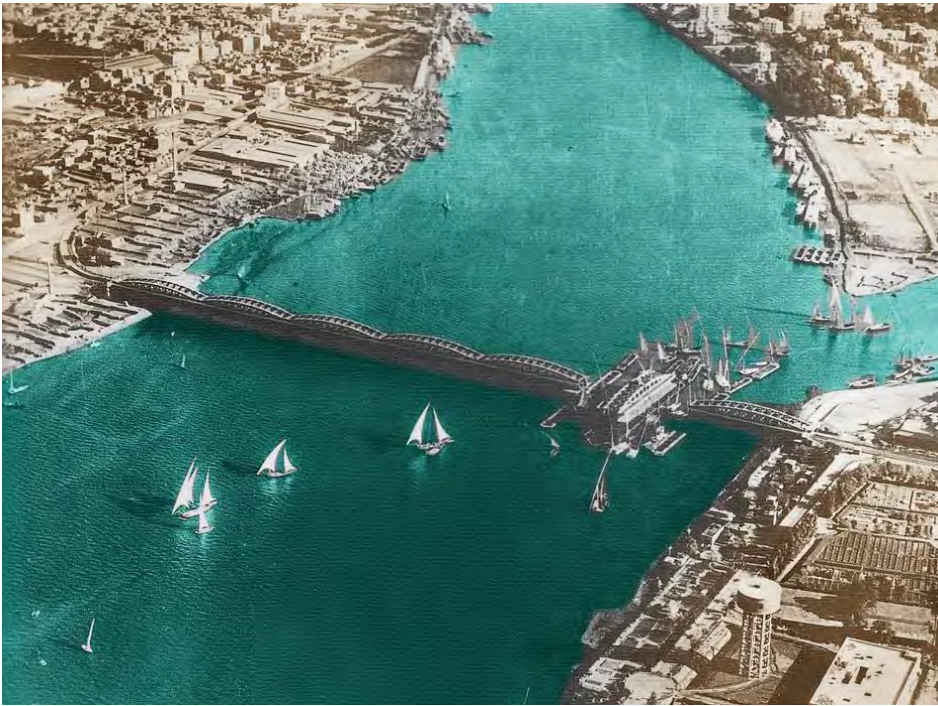


Figure 2 Aerial view of Embabeh Bridge across the Nile connecting between east and west banks, constructed between 1913 and 1924.

Source: adapted after (Van Loo & Bruwier 2010)

1.2.3 City in a City

The new city known locally as ‘Masr el-Gedidah’ -literally ‘New Egypt’- was initially built⁴ out of Cairo. Heliopolis was completely autonomous in infrastructure, water and electricity, and linked to Cairo with tramline; it was a city in a city. Today, Heliopolis has been enveloped within the ever-growing metropolis of Cairo. However, despite rapid development, overpopulation, and increasing traffic, Heliopolis has retained much of its original character and charm, and the **captivating atmosphere of Cairo’s belle epoch**.

The new city was founded in 1905 by the visionary Belgian, Edward Empain. Originally, Heliopolis had three distinctive features; it was built without any assistance from the state; the new town was to be set up from scratch and built

⁴ Ancient Greek: Heliópolis; Heliopolis was the Greek name of the city of **On**, meaning the city of the sun, one of the most ancient sites in Egypt. Heliopolis new site is located next to the ruins of the city of "On" (Dobrowolska & Dobrowolski, 2006, p. 15-36)

in the desert; and finally, it was the expression of one **individual's personal dreams** 'Empain' and not the outcome of a planned project (Ilbert 1985).

1.2.4 Heliopolis Today

"Today, however, we find Heliopolis in the center of our thoughts about urban transformation."
(Ilbert, 1985, p. 37)

Today, this urban creation of the twentieth century has undergone deep transformations. New developments **in Heliopolis are consuming the city's** heritage, which is reflective to the modern history of Egypt. It is difficult to imagine today that Heliopolis was basically a suburb of single-storey dwellings, with verandas giving onto small garden (M.Volait, 2010). However, Heliopolis still holds its unique identity which, even to the visitor who knows nothing of the origins, distinguishes it from any other district in Cairo. Heliopolis has become one of the poles of development in Greater Cairo (Ilbert 1985, p.36) (Fig. 3); currently it consists of two parts; old city (the kernel '**Korba**') established by the Baron Empain, and the new urbanization that came later. In **her remarkable book 'Cairo 1001' (1971), Janet Abulughod** have raised a question "Can a pattern, a form, a rationale be extracted from what appears to the casual observer to be capricious disorder? For order there must be." To uncover some of the orderly patterns in Heliopolis' growth and development, this thesis will focus on the shifting image of aesthetics.



Figure 3 Map showing current location of Heliopolis neighborhood in Cairo

Source: Adapted by Author, base map: google earth, accessed: Jult 2014

1.3 Conceptions of Space

Urban space is central to this research; the continuous shaping and transformation of its aesthetics is regarded as the tangible result and the physical evidence of this study. The next part is discussing the theoretical framework of this research, based on the triad division of space proposed by Lefebvre.

1.3.1 Space Triad

According to Henri Lefebvre (1974), the French philosopher and sociologist; space is assuming an increasingly important role in 'modern' societies. In his **'La production de l'espace' (1986; orig. 1974)**, Lefebvre urges us to shift our **attention from the 'things in space' to the actual 'production of space'**. This will act as the theoretical basis for the conception of space in this research.

Henri Lefebvre was perhaps the first to develop a unitary theory of space; to explore the modes of space production, which have deeply influenced the current urban theory. Followed by the English geographer and social theorist **David Harvey, who later built on Lefebvre's work in exploring the 'urban political-economic' renderings of space** (Harvey 2005). Lefebvre dedicated a great deal of his philosophical writings to understanding the importance of the production of space; he argued that every society, hence every mode of production, produces a certain space of its own. He tried to bridge the gap between space as conceived and represented; and lived spaces. He analyses each historical mode as three-part dialectic between everyday practices and perceptions (spatial practice), representations or theories of space (representations of space) and the spatial imaginary of the time (spaces of representation) (Lefebvre 1974) (Fig. 3). In other words, he seeks to bridge the gap between the realms of theory and practice, between the mental and the social, and between philosophy and reality.

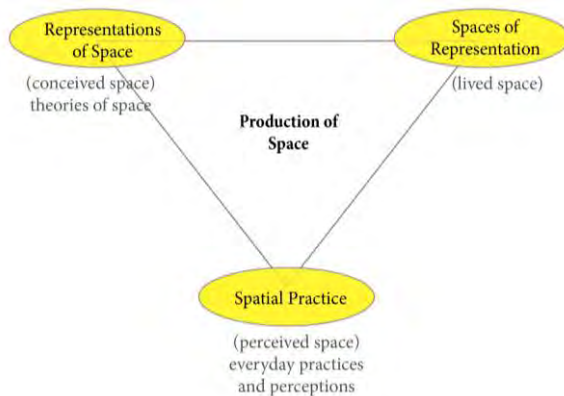


Figure 4 the three-part dialectic of space suggested by Henri Lefebvre.

Source: Adapted by Author.

The discussion in this research refers mainly to Lefebvre's proposed tripartite division of spatialization; perceived, conceived and lived triad (in spatial terms: spatial practice, representations of space, representational spaces). In general, representation can be characterized as a process during which something is expressed through or by means of something else. The 'representation of space' is tied to the modes of production of space and to the 'order' which those modes impose.

This research contributes to the debate of urban space by analyzing the **manifestations of the 'modes of production of space', represented in the political-economic regime. The three modes of production (parliamentary monarchy under foreign domination, to state socialism with capitalist overtones, to a completely open market economy); while the 'spaces of representation', or the lived spaces, is their manifestation on the ground; and the 'perceived' space is represented in the role of the users of space and the everyday practices of the residents, which is emphasized in the second part of the thesis starting the open market regime.**

1.3.2 Tracing Change

According to Harvey, space is one of those words that frequently elicit modification; and that the complications perhaps arise more out of the modifications rather than out of any inherent complexity of the notion of space itself (Harvey 2005). This research traces the transformation happening in Heliopolis neighborhood over the years. It is concerned with the spatial manifestations of the power regimes on the physical built environment, by tracing the representation of urban and architecture aesthetics, through **focusing on the 'order' and 'image' of space respectively.**

Urban design operates at many scales; according to Lefebvre, urban space does not operate solely on the 'micro' level, effecting the arrangement of surfaces in a supermarket, for instance, or in a 'neighborhood' of housing-units; nor does it apply only on the 'macro' level, as though it were responsible merely for the ordering of 'flows' within nations or continents. On the contrary, its effects may be observed on all planes and in all the interconnections between them (Lefebvre 1974, p.412). He claims that in restricting the import of space to a single discipline would be a theoretical error. Accordingly, and to grapple with arguments of this kind, this research will move simultaneously between the macro level (represented in the changes that happen to the neighborhood as a whole; planning, urbanization and expansion); and the micro level (manifested in the change in facades).

1.4 Method and Motivation

"The Cairo of tomorrow will be comprehensible only as an extension and modification of today's metropolis" (Abulughod, 1971, p. 118)

1.4.1 Researching Heliopolis

This project was mainly motivated by; aimless walks, shared memories talks, guided tours, collective memory of the residents, and through being a member in an active heritage group for three years. Throughout my childhood and teenage time, I have been a regular commuter to the neighboring district of Heliopolis for education and leisure. Now as a researcher, I find Heliopolis quite interesting case study; founded under monarch during an era of foreign hegemony followed by a socialist state and later a liberal and neoliberal state, Heliopolis has always been reflective to the political shifts; it has experienced, and is still experiencing, dramatic transformations of its physical built environment that is putting its valuable architecture heritage under risk.

My nostalgic passion to the architectural styles of the modern movement - appeared in Egypt through 40s, 50s till the 70s- have urged me to analyze this era, and thus focus my study on the twentieth century, in order to discover the circumstances that helped shaping these styles. This study is focusing on contemporary Cairo modern urbanization, namely Heliopolis, throughout the twentieth century, which has witnessed the two Egyptian revolutions (1952 & 2011).

In research and academia, the area of greater Cairo and its districts, such as downtown, has been always more addressed by researchers. However, Heliopolis has been also previously researched in academia, especially in the French speaking European universities. The larger part of researches, books and articles addressing Heliopolis are in the French language. The research

here builds on some of these researches⁵; their authors have been interviewed and the dissertations were considered in the literature review. This research is distinguishing itself by solely focusing on the manifestation of the changing regimes on the shifting image of aesthetic production in urban space, and further its perception. Moreover the research is addressing the most recent acts of reclaiming the belle epoch heritage after January 2011.

1.4.2 Research Aim and Questions

This research aims to trace the manifestations of the shifting regimes (Top-down) on the production of aesthetics in urban space (Conceived). In order to trace the continuous shifting image of aesthetics production; this research is questioning the following:

The notion of the recognition of aesthetics that dates back to an era of foreign hegemony (belle epoch), as ‘national heritage’; the continuous shifting perception of the belle epoch aesthetics through different regimes (Perceived); further the research is questioning the role of the community and the ordinary practitioners (bottom-up) in preserving heritage (Lived).

1.4.3 Research methodology

The bigger part of this thesis is a historical analysis of Heliopolis founding and development, within the wider context of the transforming city of Cairo over three different regimes. This part was primarily explored through a materialist reading of history; literature review was the main data for tracing the past, in addition to publications and documents, such as the publications of ‘**Heliopolis Company**’. As well as other printed materials; such as newspapers, magazines,

⁵ Among these researches: “Heliopolis, where is it going?” KULeuven (Mansour 2009); “Héliopolis: La Métamorphose d’une Cité-jardin en un Quartier Urbain” Université Paris (Mahmoud 2007) and “A Framework of Urban Morphological Analysis” Graz University (Rashed 2007)

old stamps and post cards that I have gathered from libraries, bookshops, archives and online publications. Historic maps are also employed as a tool for tracing change in the neighborhood over time; such as tracing the change in plot patters and discovering the set of renaming of streets. With the aim of examining and analyzing their transformations over time, three main maps are employed (1914), (1939) and (1960).

The first part is thus a turning back, a historical narrative that is profoundly analyzed with the aim of tracing the manifestations of political regimes. The second part of the research is discussing the current situation, the status quo of the heritage in Heliopolis in the context of the current transitional period in Cairo after 2011 revolution. Further the research start forward-looking; questioning to where Heliopolis and its valuable heritage might be going in the years to come, with the aim of constructing a vision for the coming near future of Heliopolis and such similar modern urbanizations in Cairo. In this part, the interviews were a main tool, especially for the forecast and the understanding of the current situation; in addition to recent photo tours during the last few months.

For situating Heliopolis within the wider context of the current transitional phase of contemporary Cairo, Egyptian urban experts were interviewed. In May 2014, dr. Galila El Kadi⁶ was consulted, her deliberate discussion was quite useful in exploring the situation of Heliopolis post 2011, as well as analyzing the changes that happened during the economic liberalization era; as well as **discussing her most recent book publication ‘Le Caire, Centre en Mouvement’** (El Kadi 2012) which is a reference in this research. Dr. Dina Shehayeb⁷ was also consulted; her deliberate interesting discussions have helped me how to consider the aspect of residence as the users of space in the research. Interviews with preceding Egyptian academics who have researched Heliopolis in

⁶ Director of research at the IRD (Institut de recherche pour le développement), The author of ‘Architecture for the Dead’ and **‘Le Caire, Centre en Mouvement’** (El Kadi 2012).

⁷ Dina K. Shehayeb is a professor in the Institute of Architecture and Housing, at the Housing and Building National Research Center (HBRC) in Cairo, Egypt.

European universities were also conducted, such as; Randa Mahmoud (Université Paris), Ahmed Mansour (KU Leuven) Rowaida Rashed (Graz University). In addition to interviews with Cairo based initiative groups **interested in heritage; ‘Save Cairo’ and ‘HHI’.**

The research have also faced some challenges, related to deficiency in quantitative data, and the relative concise time available for the research, with reference to the long time-span of the studied period (the twentieth century).

1.5 Research Outline

This chapter has overviewed the history of Egypt at the end of the nineteenth century and situated Heliopolis within the wider context of the transforming city of Cairo. Further it has introduced the theoretical base for the conceptions of space.

In the coming chapters, the research will trace the manifestations of the shifting regimes on the aesthetics production in four processes of; making, coping, consuming and reclaiming. The next chapter situates Heliopolis suburb in a wider context of a monarchic country under the British mandate, with the aim of tracing the origin of belle epoch aesthetic. The third chapter begins with the rise of nationalism in Egypt during **Nasser’s era in the 1950s**, and the governmental endeavors to restructure urban space. The chapter also notices the emergence of the new satellite city of Nasr city, as a symbol to the rise of the National character in form of new developments. The focus of this chapter is on the process of coping with the new socialist mode of production of space and also with the demographic change; in addition the chapter analyzes the changes brought about by the socialist state to Heliopolis built environment.

The fourth chapter is centered on the process of transformation under the liberal and neoliberal states. The chapter aims to highlight the distortion that

happened to the heritage **of Heliopolis during Sadat's and Mubarak's rules;** further, it explores the drafting of legislation to protect this heritage.

The fifth chapter brings in a brief prelude to Cairo post 2011, and question to where Heliopolis might be going the next few years. The chapter also explores the recent acts of community activism in Heliopolis which ought to spread to other modern district in Cairo. The research concludes with emphasis on the transformation of Heliopolis and its present significance within the larger context of a transforming city of Cairo.

2 Making:

From a Satellite City to a District

By the end of nineteenth century and the outset of the twentieth century, modern urban developments in Egypt have received some attentions which regarded them to be not an authentic representation of Egyptian architecture. This chapter will discuss this notion through focusing on Heliopolis, a modern urbanization which was founded as a new satellite city near Cairo. The chapter aims to draw a picture of the process of conceiving the belle epoch aesthetics at the outset of the twentieth century during the era of foreign hegemony.

2.1 Dominated Spaces?

Between 1840 and 1940, the colonial ambitions of two of the great powers, France and England, meant that a number of new towns were found during this era (A. Loo 2010). In Egypt, the competition was clear between these two powers, with the two suburbs built during the early 20th century. Maadi, created by Sir Ernest Cassel (Anglo Saxon); and Heliopolis built by Edward Empain (Franco-Belgian); the same two engineers who had worked on the subways in London and Paris respective (Mansour 2009).

A site which had been planned and built during an era of foreign hegemony; Heliopolis has previously received some attitudes that continue to see its architecture and urban developments to be foreign and reminds of a ‘colonial’ monarchical period. In 1930-1931 an interest was expressed about organizing an International Congress on Town Planning in the Colonies, to be held at Vincennes in France, and to which the founding Company of Heliopolis was invited to attend, the directors of the company expressed serious concerns; would participation in the Congress result in Heliopolis being linked in the final analysis with the colonial towns, as the case in Morocco⁸?. However, and after the consent of Tanzim and a modification in the name of the Congress, it was agreed that Heliopolis should be represented (Ilbert 1985, p.37). Great emphasis was to be placed on all the features which distinguished Heliopolis from anything to be found, for example in Senegal, Morocco or Indochina. Although the urban links were decidedly foreign, they were not colonial.

Many scholars have criticized the notion of linking Heliopolis to colonial towns, such as Robert Ilbert (1985), who argued that; demographically, the general composition of the new town shows that, on the whole, the population represented was typically Egyptian right from the start. At least half of the inhabitants were local including, in 1925, 20 percent Europeans (in particular

⁸ as a result to France’s colonization of Morocco in 1910

Italians and Greeks) and a large number of Levantines⁹ (about 30 per cent) (Ilbert, 1985, p. 39). Although the urban links were decidedly foreign, they were not colonial. The governing feature of colonial town planning had always been **the differentiation of ‘European’ and ‘native’ poles by careful ‘zoning’**, with the two poles complementing each other - usually more of a dream than a reality. But such was not the case in the plans for Heliopolis (Ilbert 1985, p. 37).

Heliopolis is a modern urbanization which could not have been more colonial; initiated by a foreign investor during the British mandate, considered a model with **‘imported’** appearance, built by foreign architects (Belgian, French and British); yet it had been successfully grafted onto the urban structure of Cairo (Ilbert, 1985). Although it **has a ‘foreign flavour’**¹⁰, but its alien characteristics were not viewed as a reflection of imperialist aims in bringing foreign forms (Ilbert, 1985). Empain chose architects well-acquainted with the new European trends to build his city; however, Empain had declared; **“I wish that the architecture will conform to the tradition of this country”** (Dobrowolska 2006, p. 48). Architects have integrated many Arab details and ornament (Fig. 5&6) with the European driven architecture; represented in the plans. The **undoubtedly ‘colonial appearance’** of the new city, was able to set off a process of integration, eventually becoming **“a quarter of Cairo, no less Egyptian than the others.”** (Ilbert, 1985, p. 37)

At some point there was a project funded by the European Union named **“Heliopolis: Where Egypt and Europe Meet”**, one of the results of this project was the **“Heliopolis: Rebirth of the City of the Sun”** book for Agnieszka Dobrowolska. This hypothesis (of hybrid architectural and urban styles) was expressed by an opinion of the renowned Egyptian architect, Hassan Fathi,

⁹ **‘Levantines’ is a term** that is used to refer to Syrians, Lebanese, Palestinians, and Turks.

¹⁰ According to Ilbert, to move to Heliopolis meant, in a way, integration into a new western pattern of living without, however, "going over the border" into an excessively homogeneous, completely foreign quarter. The slightly affected architecture of the town oriental even if in pseudo-taste - projected the image of a "modern" type of town but, nonetheless, "Egyptian" in character (Ilbert, 1985, p. 40).

during a conference¹¹; **“Heliopolis was held up as an example of a ‘happy marriage’ between the West and the East”** (EL Kadi 2005, p. 131). Heliopolis succeeded in becoming an integral part of modern Cairo; it became one of the preferred areas of residence for officials as well as professionals. Many of the inhabitants of Cairo have loved Heliopolis and today take pride in considering themselves Heliopolitans.

“After all, Egypt was not a colony, and more importantly, Heliopolis was not a colonial town.”
(Ilbert, 1985, p. 37)



Figure 5 Building terrace in Korba
Source: ((FCC) 2005)



Figure 6 Islamic motives, Korba
Source: Author, 2014

The following part is addressing the origins of Heliopolis concept and planning.

2.2 Heliopolis Foundations (1906-1930)

Up to 1952, only one attempt had been made to break through the desert barrier, later replicated, which has resulted in the creation in of one of Cairo's most remarkable modern suburbs; Heliopolis. Its initial development was intimately linked to the expansion of the mass transit system in Cairo. Heliopolis was to be a garden satellite town designed in the latest manner of British town planning.

¹¹ Debate on modernity and tradition led during a seminar organized in Cairo by the Aga Khan Award for Architecture (AKAA) within the framework of a series of seminars on Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World. Cairo. November 1984.

2.2.1 Ownership Structure

On the 23th May 1905, a concession was approved by the Egyptian government to grant the Belgian Edouard Empain¹² and Boghos Nubar Pasha¹³ the property of the area of 25 square kilometers¹⁴ in the desert of Abbasiya (Fig. 7&8), around 10 kilometers from the city center (Dobrowolska 2006, p. 45). Eight months later, a company was officially established named in **‘Cairo Electric Railways and Heliopolis Oases Company’ (HOC)**. The company also had to obtain the permission of the British, who had the administrative control of Egypt by that time.

The possibility of extending Cairo outside the fertile zones had been demonstrated by a private, foreign and capitalist enterprise in order to build in the desert a new city called **‘the oasis of Heliopolis’, connected to the city by the electric tram-line** to provide low-cost, comfortable accommodations and at the same time make a substantial profit. Despite the aim of founding a new city, the company did not intend to build an entire city (Van Loo & Bruwier 2010), **rather, it’s intention was to sell fully serviced plots of lands after financing the infra-structure and facilities that would result in added value.** After 1907, the company shifted to invest in construction, and started building in order to sell once the economic crises was stabilized. Constructions prior to 1916 were primarily constructed by the company (M.Volait 2010).

¹² Edouard Empain, a Belgian businessman and engineer to whom the Belgian king awarded the title of Baron a year after the Heliopolis Company was formed. His work was noted in the context of public transportation.

¹³ Boghos Nubar Pasha, a property owner residing Cairo and the son of an Egyptian Minister at that time.

¹⁴ Empain paid 1 pound per Feddan, spending 5 thousand pounds for the land alone.

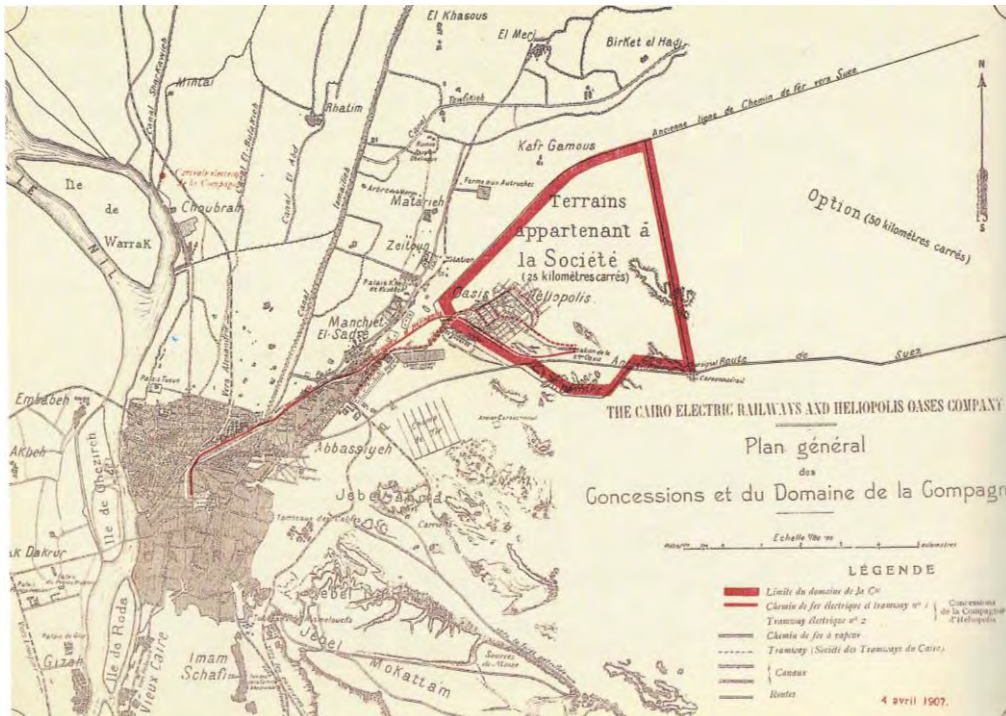


Figure 7 Map showing the concessions granted to the company: 2500 hectares and the train and tram to downtown and Abbassiya.

Source: (Ilbert 1981)

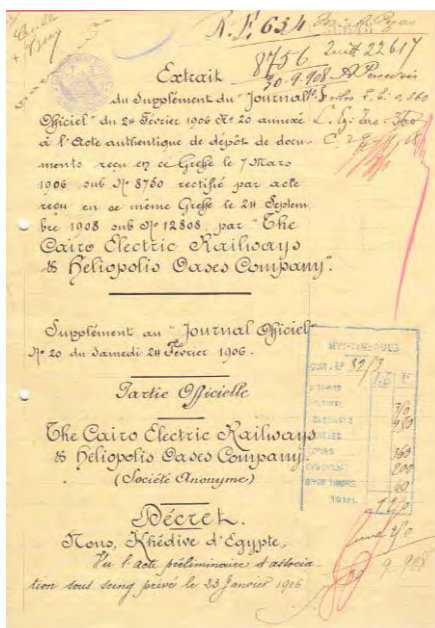


Figure 8 Part of the decree creating the Cairo Electric Railways and Heliopolis Oases Company, signed by Khedive Abbas Hilmi II.

Source: (Dobrowolska 2006)

2.2.1.1 Autonomy

The new city was rendered ‘self-sufficient’ (Ilbert 1985); Heliopolis company was intended to provide the entire infrastructure, and to be totally independent from Cairo (electricity, sewage, water); while the new electric tram-line will link it to the city center. In 1907, the company built two water reservoirs to provide the city with water and a huge power plant in Shubra, which from 1912 provided electricity to Heliopolis at lower prices than that in Cairo at the time. In 1908 the first tramway to downtown was built, followed by another one in 1909, connecting Heliopolis to Abbassiya. While the only service that Heliopolis had to give up some of its autonomy was sewage. After several unsuccessful attempts to provide swage to the city, an arrangement was done with the government to connected Heliopolis to Cairo with a swage line.

2.2.2 Original Vision and Initial Planning

The original **plan of the initial project at 1906, was to establish two ‘oases’** connected by a broad avenue (Fig. 9), the oasis nearest to Cairo was intend to be residential **for Cairo’s high society, as well as foreigners**. The other oasis, more distant from Cairo, was planned for factories and low-income housing (Van Loo & Bruwier 2010). After the difficulties generated by the 1907 financial crisis, all construction work had been concentrated on the first oasis. According to Anne Van Loo (2010), this setting was based on a concrete economic and spatial concept; where the nearest oases to Cairo would feature a grand hotel, palaces **and villas for Cairo’s elite as well as foreigners who would prefer to live away from the capital’s congestion. The other more distant oases, would be separated** by desert, but still connected by railway. The two oases were to be connected by a big avenue and a tramline. Only one-sixth of the total area was allowed for the company to build on, and the rest would be left as open spaces and desert between the oases.

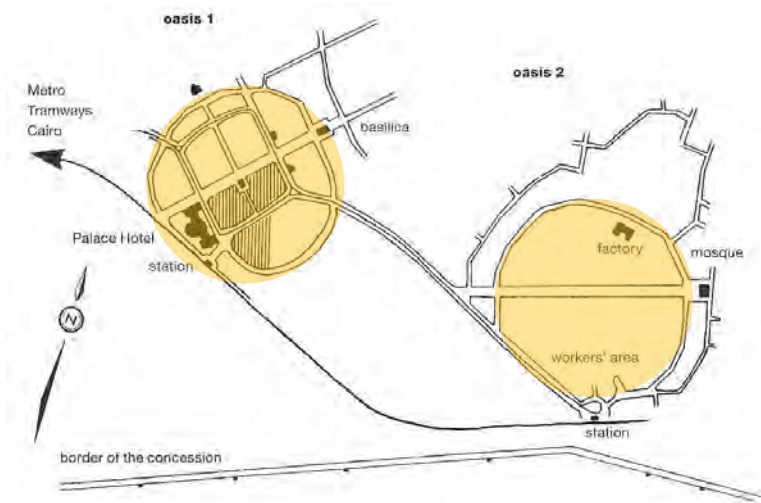


Figure 9 Map showing the initial organizational sketch for two oases in 1906. Source: (Ilbert 1981)

To explore Empain's attempts to control the image of the new city; and to draw a picture of the making of belle epoch aesthetics; the next part will discuss the spatial characteristics of Heliopolis, through focusing on the 'order' of space, which addresses the layout and planning; and the 'image' of space; which addresses facades and ornaments.

2.2.3 Spatial Organization

Heliopolis's autonomy from Cairo was primarily due to the notion of its own centrality that was created by its spatial organization. To understand the significance of Heliopolis planning, one needs to look at what was happening in European modern urban planning at that time. When Heliopolis was planned; the idea of garden city was still hot. In England, Sir Ebenezer Howard, proposed a visionary solution for the densely populated modern cities. He referred to 'garden city'; a community of limited size and low-density housing built in the green countryside, but complete with important services, jobs, and cultural amenities for its inhabitants. Howard's vision remained largely a dream;

nevertheless, he presented his scheme in the book¹⁵ **‘Garden Cities of Tomorrow’ at 1902, and the first model city at Letchworth was begun in 1903** (Dobrowolska 2006). In terms of form and structure, Heliopolis is more of a **‘garden city’ than a ‘parallel’ town. However,** Empain did not intend to create a **garden city along Howard’s lines, yet he was influenced by the concept of the** garden city when he decided to create a satellite town near Cairo, and there are clear similarities between the plans of Heliopolis and Letchworth¹⁶ in England. The ideal town proposed by Howard was to cover 2,400 hectares; Heliopolis, according to its original plan, was to cover 2,500 hectares incorporating industries, wide open green spaces and dwellings of all types, ranging from villas to very small workers dwellings (Ilbert 1985). According to Ilbert (1985), **Baron’s real goal was to demonstrate that the desert** was as profitable and habitable as the banks of the Nile were. Ilbert have illustrated that perhaps this was the reason why Empain turned his attention to what was being built in **Europe at the time, hence his choice of ‘garden cities’.**

The influence **of Haussmann’s Paris** could also be felt in the plan of Heliopolis; with the grand avenues, spacious city squares linked by wide streets or arching boulevards, and a range of landmark buildings carefully placed to impose grand views on the cityscape (Dobrowolska 2006) (Fig. 10&11). According to Ilbert, the **‘imported’ appearance** that Heliopolis model possessed was suggested, for example by the pattern of daily life which seems to evolve from the center of town, close to the cathedral (Fig. 10&11) (Ilbert, 1985, p. 38). Heliopolis main square hosted the Roman Catholic Cathedral (basilica) and had five avenues and streets coming out in a starred form shape, with spacious gardens on each side. The whole urban structure was organized around the palace hotel, the cathedral (basilica), the race course (the hippodrome founded 1910) and an entertainment park (Luna Park). **Empain controlled the city’s structure and**

¹⁵ He presented his scheme in the book **‘Tomorrow: a peaceful Way to Real Reform’** published in 1898, and the Garden Cities Association was formed in 1899. The book was re-published in 1902 as **‘Garden Cities of Tomorrow’**

¹⁶ **Letchworth was designed by Unwin and Parker in 1903 and implementing the ‘Garden City’ theories of Howard**

forms, density and location through various activities. The layout of Heliopolis public spaces was sustained by a solid urban and architectural identity based on strict requirements, proposed by the company, with which builders had to comply to.



Figure 10 Aerial view of Heliopolis from the Baron palace (1930)
Source: (Van Loo & Bruwier 2010)



Figure 11 postcard, showing: Ahram street and basilica (1929)

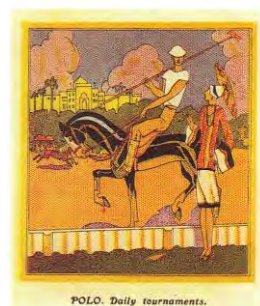


Figure 12 Adv. For polo tournaments in palace hotel. Source: ((FCC) 2005)

Heliopolis was an attraction to the middle class of Cairo since its founding, it was known for the entertainment and leisure areas that it offered. The new city **was promoted as a ‘luxury oasis in the desert’, as a way to attract tenants (Fig. 12&14)**. Entering Heliopolis, coming from Cairo city center, the train will first go through the entertainment area; the hippodrome, the Luna Park, the cinemas and the shopping area, then will further reach the more residential parts. One of the very first buildings that were designed in Heliopolis was the Heliopolis house hotel (Fig.14&15) as well as Heliopolis Company building (Fig.13). According to several historians, the hotel palace was the largest in the Middle East and Africa at that time, with 400 rooms and 50 suites. With the exception of the world wars times, the palace has functioned as hotel until the late 1960s. During the two world wars (WWI and WWII), the palace was temporarily used as a military hospital.



Figure 13 Heliopolis Company's headquarters; photographed from the Heliopolis Palace Hotel (1920s).
Source: (Dobrowolska 2006)



Figure 15 Front Facade of the Heliopolis Palace Hotel (1930)
Source: (Van Loo & Bruwier 2010)



Figure 14 Adv, for the Heliopolis Palace and the hippodrome



Figure 16 Ahram Street in 1930s. source: (Dobrowolska 2006)

2.2.3.1 Hierarchy of Space

The urbanization of the city of Heliopolis is characterized from the outset by hierarchical urban space; this was clear in the initial planning which propose two oases (Fig. 18&19). Although only one oasis was constructed, due to financial issues, still the planning concept has clearly rendered the categorization of urban space. **‘Zoning’** was clear evidence; a quarter with palaces and villas, a quarter with bourgeois apartments and a quarter containing factories and workers dwellings. However, this clear zoning did not result in setting up any perceptible barrier (physical or psychological), which was for example the case in some parts of Cairo (Ilbert 1985, p. 37). This hierarchal zoning was also social; space was used as a division tool to allow the control of the social division. The social distinctions were not only symbolized by the differentiation in the architectural order (from palace to the economical apartment), but also through the spatial order, on the city scale from richer to poorer (Garret 2001). The south and east of Heliopolis (the location of the first **oasis, also called ‘Korba’** district southeast) host elegant villas and affluent classes. In contrast, the north-west (location of second oasis) has accommodated the less affluent classes and workers on the construction and maintenance of the city or in the domestic service of bourgeois population. The other parts are occupied by intermediate classes -particularly officials of the Egyptian government, for which two housing programs were launched by the Company in 1907.

The hierarchical spatial organization of Heliopolis was also visible in the street **network. According to 1939 map, what is referred to as ‘street’** nowadays was classified then into; Avenues, Boulevards, and streets. There were five types of streets designed in the initial plan of Heliopolis: large streets with a garden in the middle; prestigious streets (30 and 40m); Streets separating districts (20 to 25m); Secondary avenues defining a group of small districts (12.5 to 16m) and Circulation streets: dividing the small districts (10 to 11m) (Ilbert 1981).

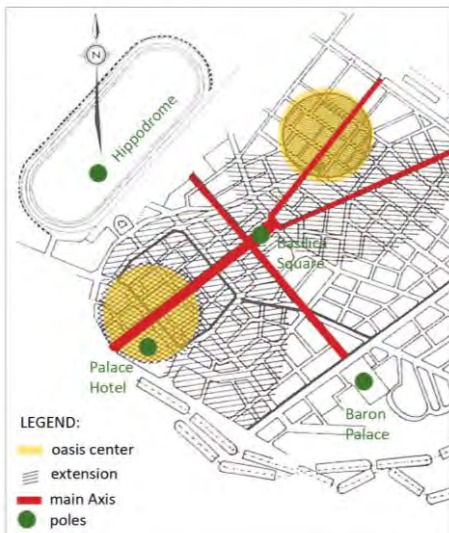


Figure 18 Map showing the main axis and the monumental icons. Source: Adapted by Author after (Ilbert 1981)



Figure 17 Aerial view of Basilica square. Source: (Dobrowolska 2006)

2.2.3.2 Housing Typologies

Hierarchy and prioritization were also clear in the architectural housing typologies; the Oases Company had proposed different types of buildings in Heliopolis. There were **general four categories of lodgings to match the clients'** needs: villas, flats in apartment buildings, '**garden cities**' (small working-class apartment houses) and bungalows. The height of the buildings, the number of storeys and the percentage of ground to be occupied were all strictly regulated by the company (Fig. 17). The width of the roads and the truncated corners at the crossings were calculated on the basis of regulations¹⁷ which took into account (even in 1906) vehicular traffic (Ilbert 1985, p.38) (Fig. 19).

The landscape of Heliopolis was considerably affected by palaces. Heliopolis urban space have accommodated several privately owned, residential villas – that were regarded as distinguished, in types size and ornament, by that time.

¹⁷ The building regulation was not issued until 1940s. The urban sub-department established within the Tanzim department was meant with the construction, mapping projects, and compliance with the rules of alignment. In order to control their new developments, the company, while selling their lots, had incorporated restrictions in their deeds of sale for plots (Mansour 2009).

Among those who owned a representative palace in Heliopolis; Boghso Pasha Nubar, sultan Malak (Prince Hussein); still the most spectacular is the one that used to inhabited by Empain himself; Baron Empain Palace. They also reflect the capitalist concept by then of 'City of leisure and luxury'.

Known as 'Hindu' palace or 'Qasr Al Baron' in Arabic; the Baron palace was built in years 1907 (till 1911) when Alexandre Marcel was asked by the Baron to build him a residency in Heliopolis (Fig. 20&21). The Hindu Palace's exterior, Influenced by a Cambodian Temple, became one of the most famous buildings in Heliopolis. The palace was built in reinforced concrete, a very modern technic at the time; it located in the middle of a large garden, with plants coming from countries from all over the world. It has also functioned like landmark generating interest in Heliopolis.

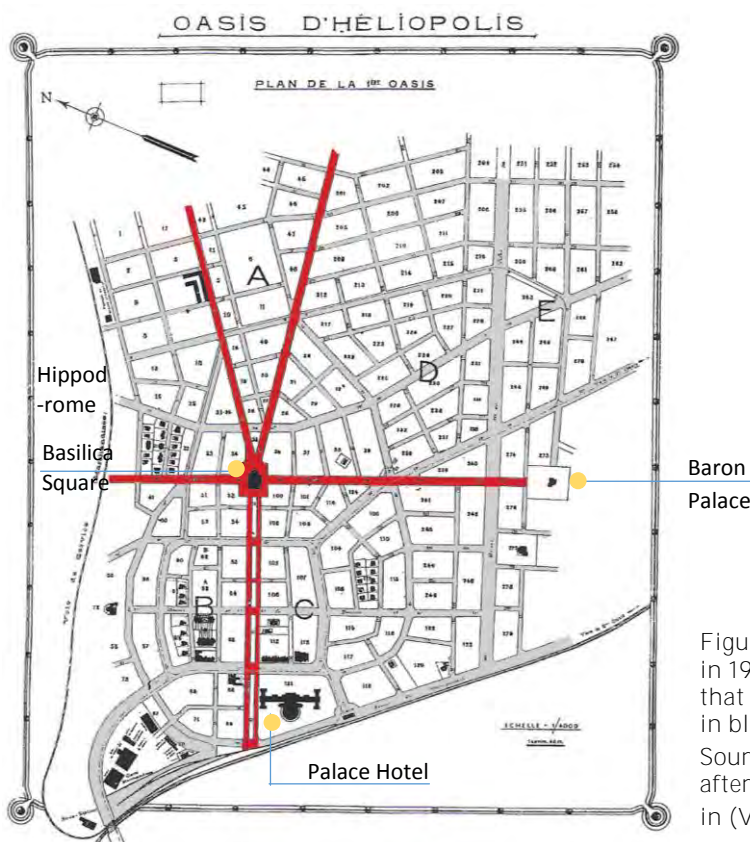


Figure 19 Map of the first oasis in 1907 showing the buildings that were under construction in black.

Source: Adapted by Author after Henry de Saint-Omer in (Van Loo & Bruwier 2010)



Figure 20 Baron Palace worksite (1910)
Source: (Van Loo & Bruwier 2010)

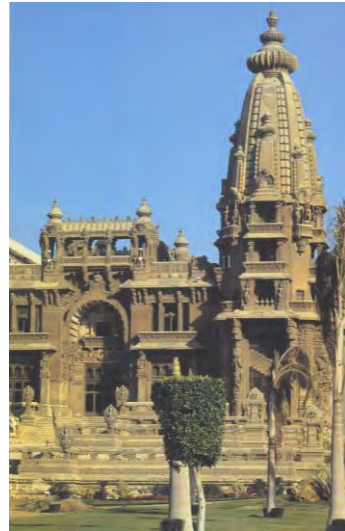


Figure 21 Recent photo for Baron Palace. Source: (Dobrowolska 2006)

The previous part had discussed the urban aesthetics of the origin of Heliopolis oases, which were much influenced by the European planning theories at that time. To explore the architecture aesthetics, the next part is addressing the ‘image’ of space through focusing on façades and architectural styles.

2.2.4 Spatial Imagery

Heliopolis had a European lifestyle, expressed in its avenues, boulevards, gardens and open spaces; however, it clearly had also an Islamic appearance in its facades. During this period **in Cairo's history ‘western’ influences in** architecture become increasingly translated into local language and widely spread in modern urbanizations. Heliopolis has a specific identity closely linked to its architectural typology which is distinguishing it from other Cairene suburbs. It was the careful attention given to architectural and urban aesthetics, which has distinguished Heliopolis, as they were **monitored by the company’s** architects (A. Loo 2010, p.180).

The architectural typologies of the new city were of high aesthetic value, they reflect an interest in eclectic styles, where the European architects have mixed Arab ornaments (Fig. 23-25) with European driven architecture that was reflected in the plans. The unity of the whole derives paradoxically from the play on the different shapes and types of decor; the architects never hesitated to include Arab details- sometimes with startling results (Ilbert 1985, p. 41). Overtime, a number of Egyptian and European specialist helped give Heliopolis its strength and originality. Nevertheless, at the outset, Empain preferred to choose his architects and contractors from among his countrymen and his acquaintances. Among them, Ernest Jaspar (1876-1940), Leon Rolin (1871-1950), Alexander Marcel (1860-1928) and Camille Robida (1880-1938), who have occupied a special place (Van Loo & Bruwier, 2010, p. 115).

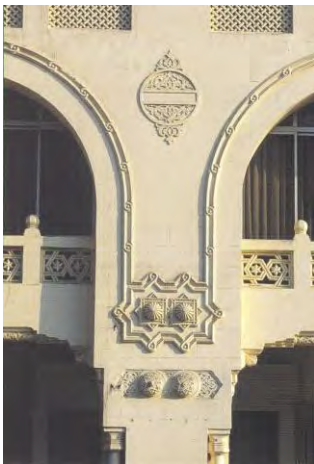


Figure 23 Neo-Mamluk decoration in cement plaster. Source: (Dobrowolska 2006)



Figure 25 Arcade balconies of a residential building Source: (Dobrowolska 2006)



Figure 24 The balcony of a residential building off Ibrahim al-Laqqani street. Source: (Dobrowolska)

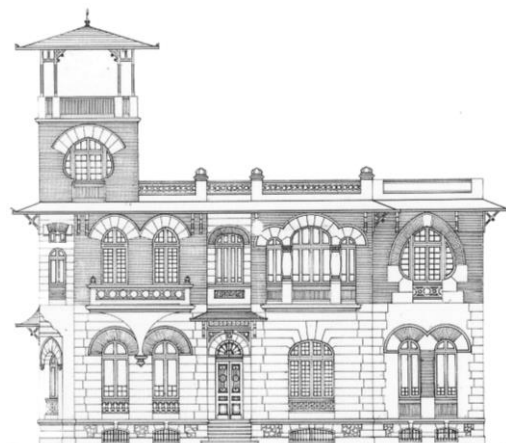


Figure 26 Project for villa in Heliopolis, 1907. Source: (Van Loo & Bruwier 2010)

2.2.4.1 Orientalism

Heliopolis initial visual landmarks of Heliopolis, such as Baron Palace, basilica and some villas, had a high eclectic aesthetic (M.Volait 2010). During the initial period of building the city, an ‘arabisation’ style of décor began to dominate by the company. Most of the initial residences built by the private owners also followed that style. Despite the initial construction specifications created by the company did not clearly indicate it; **the idea seemed to have established ‘de facto’** (M.Volait 2010). There was always pressure brought on individuals to incorporate an ‘Arab’ look to their designs, however there were some exceptions.

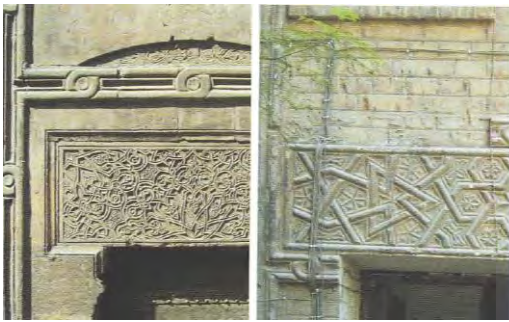


Figure 27 details in historic Cairo, mosque Qagmas al-ishaqui 1481, right; Heliopolis counterpart. Source: (Dobrowolska 2006)



Figure 28 details in historic Cairo, zawia al-hunud 1260, right; Heliopolis counterpart. Source: (Dobrowolska 2006)

In 1930, Ali Labib Gabr, a leading Egyptian architect paid tribute to this this “suburb of Cairo built entirely in this wonderful new style, inspired by the old, that meets modern needs perfectly” (M.Volait 2010); however, the ‘neo-Moorish’¹⁸ architecture style adapted in Heliopolis also had its critics. The added Islamic decorative art details, Fatimid, Mamluk and Ottoman (Fig. 27&28), were rhetorical; they have not always revealed a profound understanding of the traditional architecture in Egypt. Domes and arches were sometimes added for purely ornamental effect and serve no other function. Those who carry that claim such as; Lilliane Karnouk (2005) criticize the orientalist taste of architecture introduced by European colonialist and Orientalists. Although this claim has some truth in it, indeed those added

¹⁸ ‘Moorish’ is considered as another name for Arabic

ornaments, in many cases, contribute to the quality of life of the inhabitants. For example; the monumental arcades introduced by Mr. Jaspar, were always placed on the southern and western sides of the streets, creating a comfortable shady walk in Heliopolis, even on a hot summer day (Dobrowolska 2006) (Fig. 30&31). The climate control in the buildings interiors was also regarded by the designers; constructed before the era of air-conditioning, loggias and arcades were cleverly placed to shelter the apartments from the sun in the summer day, as were the shaded, green areas in front of the windows to contribute to the thermal comfort (Dobrowolska 2006) (Fig. 24&25). At the end of the day **‘arabisation’ was only one aspect of the built landscape of Heliopolis, which** has many more facets, in line with its many builders and varied clientele.

A halt was brought to the constructions in Heliopolis during WWI, afterwards the private housing dominates and the Arabic style gradually lost its relevance (M.Volait 2010).



“One thing remains certain: the original Heliopolis was, and still is, a very powerful architectural statement.”

(Dobrowolska 2006, p. 73)

Figure 29 Building on Ibrahim al-Laqqani street (formerly Boulevard Abbas)

Source: (Dobrowolska 2006)



Figure 31 Boulevard Ismail (now Baghdad street)
Source: (Dobrowolska 2006)



Figure 30 Photo of the colonnaded arcade on Ibrahim al-Lagqani Street.
Source: (Dobrowolska 2006)

2.3 Heliopolis development and Expansion

The years after 1937 were considered to be transitional in the history of Egypt; they have carried the country to its real post-colonial age, marked by the signing of the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaty, as discussed in the previous chapter (which never came into an effect until 1952). Moreover this period has witnessed the demographic evolution of Cairo¹⁹ and thus is marked by fast growth of Heliopolis. After the WWI, private investment took over; by 1937, private housing represented more than 55 percent of the existing housing stock (M.Volait 2010).

2.3.1 Aesthetics of Modernity

By the 1920s the aesthetic representation took a new approach, upscale residential architecture in Heliopolis came in ‘**neo**’ –styles; (neo-Renaissance, neo Louis XIV, neoLouis XVI, etc.) (M.Volait 2010). These included some

¹⁹ The year 1937 marked the beginning of rapid population growth lasting a decade at an annual rate of 4.8 percent

palaces in the late 1920s, further a number of Italian-style villas began to appear. During the 1920s, the craze of Art Deco has also swept in Heliopolis (M.Volait 2010), leaving behind some beautiful examples (Fig.35). The English-trained Egyptian architect Fahim Riad has developed a specialty motifs for this style (Fig.34).

Heliopolis aesthetic styles also included some remarkable modernistic designs. **Egypt's experience with modernist architecture spanned** through the 1930s into the 1960s. During this era, a well-trained local expertise and professional appeared (and second generation Egyptians of Syrian and Lebanese), who have been abroad for architecture post graduate education, then returned to Egypt for practicing modernist design. Among the modernistic designs in Heliopolis, were the remarkable villas designed by Charles Ayrout (Fig 32&33).

The appearance of local architects and emergence of new aesthetical styles, that brought a halt to the belle epoch aesthetics, during **Egypt's Liberal** era (1922-1952); have reflected the rise of nationalistic spirit in Egypt after the 1919 revolution and the 1936 treaty, announcing the emergence of anti-colonial nationalistic tones in architecture.



Figure 32 Villa Mme Valadji in Heliopolis by architect Charles Ayrout 1938-39]. Source: Al Emara, 1940



Figure 33 Villa in Heliopolis by architect Charles Ayrout 1932. Source: Al Emara, 1940



Figure 35 Building for Regine Khour.
architect, Ezra Chamass. 1933-34
Source: Michell Hanna



Figure 34 Art Deco detail,
Architect Fahim Riad.
Heliopolis. source: Author,
2012

2.4 A Venture of Success

Heliopolis was counted by all means as a successful venture; according to Ilbert, Heliopolis has the key to its success: the ability to diagnose a need and to meet a demand which began to be clearly expressed from the 1920 onwards. Eduard Empain understood that a new class was emerging from the nineteenth century that wished to gain access modes of life similar to those of European examples through urban property. Although the model was foreign, it had not been imposed on a population that was not ready to receive it (Ilbert 1985). Heliopolis succeeded in becoming an integral part of modern Cairo, was not only due to its ability to meet a demand and respond to the irreversible mutations of a society, but above all because it was able to impose a way of life while at the same time leaving a wide margin for individual differences (Ilbert 1985).

According to Ilbert, it was the practical considerations and economic factors which governed the success of the enterprise, rather than the aesthetic and architectural aspects. The simplicity and moderate cost of the communication networks with Cairo were strong arguments in favor of developing the north-east instead of the banks of the Nile (Ilbert 1985).

2.5 Reflections

The status of the Egyptian monarchical country under foreign domination at the outset of the twentieth century was clearly reflected in modern urban developments in Cairo. The capital engagements with foreign business enterprises at that time have led to the introduction of new towns; Maadi and Heliopolis, by private capitalistic enterprises, which apparently reflect the domination of France and England at that time. Maadi (1907) was created by Sir Ernest Cassel (Anglo Saxon); and Heliopolis (1905) built by Edward Empain (Franco-Belgian); the same two engineers who had worked on the subways in London and Paris respectively.

Late nineteenth and early twentieth-century buildings and sites in Cairo that date back to an era of foreign hegemony **are now labeled ‘Cairo’s belle epoch’**. They were architecture and urban designs that possesses high aesthetical value, with eclectic styles. European architects introduced urban models with eclectic architectural styles that were commissioned by local elites. This chapter has drawn a picture of the process of making belle epoch aesthetics at the outset of the twentieth century, through focusing on Heliopolis neighborhood.

Heliopolis heritage is at the center of a double debate, one that described as **‘colonial’**, on the other hand it is **regarded as part of Egypt’s national heritage**. The eclectic architecture styles, that integrated Arabic and Islamic detailed by European architects; were desired by this elite and then spread throughout society via the middle classes. This explains why in Egypt, contrary to the other countries of the Arab world, these cities and neighborhoods were rarely **described as ‘colonial’**. **Cairo’s Belle epoch spaces have been identified with** colonizers, but also with agency, presence, and identification of Egyptian elites, middle classes and popular classes, before and after the colonial period (El Kadi & ElKerdany, 2006).

According to Lefebvre, ‘the producers of space’ have always acted in accordance with a representation; during this period, the producers of Heliopolis have acted according to a capitalistic approach of development represented in a private capitalistic enterprise, addressing the foreign society and Egyptian elites by introducing European urban models and cosmopolitan eclectic architectural styles.

“The decision to forge strong links between the new city and history- while controlling both its production and its image- consolidated an identity that is still obvious today- even to the visitor who knows nothing of the origins of this part of Cairo.”

(Van Loo & Bruwier, 2010, p. 114)

3 Coping:

The Rise of Nationalism

During the 1950s, **Cairo's developments were influenced by two main aspects**, the new socialist regime proposed by Nasser after the 1952 revolution, and the demographic growth of Cairo. **Nasser's attempt to modernize Egypt** was manifested through nationalism movement which aims to erase the traces of monarchy and colonialism; this chapter aims to draw a picture of the **nationally-driven reorientations in Cairo's developments, brought about by Nasser's socialist state**; and their impact on perceiving the belle epoch aesthetics.

3.1 Nationalist Reframing

In his book ‘The Philosophy of the Revolution’ (1954), Nasser argued that Arab socialism was a prerequisite for Arab unity and freedom and for surmounting the social and economic legacy of ‘colonialism’. **After the 1952 coup d’état and the 1954 agreement; Egypt’s independence was granted and Egypt became a republic for the first time (Fig. 36).** The new regime led by Gamal Abd el Nasser overthrew King Farouk I. In 1956 the new Constitution of Egypt was drafted and Nasser was nominated for presidency, where he served as Egypt's first native ruler, since the pharaohs, from 1956 until his death in 1970.

Nasser undertook a massive building program to reshape Cairo, its culture, and society. He introduced several socialist measures, including the nationalization of private companies, banks and industries. In the same time he expanded the public sector significantly. The country was organized around state socialism that would affect the urban projects and the expansion of the city.



Figure 36 Photo for old Egyptian stamp (1952), showing the officers revolution.

Source: Mourad Nowier

3.2 Space as a Tool of Power?

The development in Cairo has transformed from ‘colonial’ to anti-colonial nationalism development. Space was employed as a tool, a framework; that allowed the imagining of the real ‘postcolonial’ national Egypt. As part of Cairo, Heliopolis has experienced set of transformations that happens to its urban

spaces within the wider context of Cairo's expansion, rising nationalism and the pan-Arab movement.

3.2.1 Celebrating Victory

Soon after the revolution, President Gamal Abdel Nasser issued a presidential decree to establish 'Madinet Nasr for Housing & Development (MNHD)' in 1959, as a public company. 'Madinet Nasr' or Nasr City²⁰ means 'Victory City', the victory which is related to the 1952 Revolution and evocative of its heroic events. The site was a large desert area between Heliopolis and Cairo (Fig. 38). Before the revolution, this land was one of the main areas housing the British army during the British occupation of Egypt²¹. According to Abulughod (1971), the site of Nasr City -the new satellite planned between 1956 and 1958- was selected because it was in the very barracks of that zone that the Revolution of 1952 was successfully planned for. Whatever the validity of this legend, Nasr City has obviously captured the enthusiasm and support of the new regime.



Figure 37 mass housing at Nasr city. Source: (Abulughod 1971)

²⁰ The planning of the new satellite Nasr city came after the issuing of 1956 Cairo Master Plan)

²¹ The developing the 4.5 million sqm area named Nasr City came with the aim of removing barracks of recently evacuated British troops, connecting Cairo with Heliopolis (Fig.38), developing residential areas with affordable housing and all necessary services (MNHD website)

3.2.2 National character

The inception of Nasr city came at a time of great transformation in Egypt. Fuelled by a desire to modernize after the revolution; the undeveloped lands in Cairo were transformed into high-rise apartment buildings (Fig. 37) and supplied by paved roads, water, sewage and electricity systems. This transformation was the result of a Master Plan proposed by the Cairo municipality in 1956. The new master plan sought to ensure that the expansion of Cairo was executed in an organized and efficient manner that would relieve the overcrowding in the city center and address a national housing shortage, especially for poor and middle classes.

The Victory city became a stage for the new power. It has accommodated several monumental symbols of National character, of opening to the world and of military rule. At the gate of Nasr City some of those symbols that celebrate victory were found; the Egypt Expo and Convention Authority (EECA) were created in 1956. It hosted several international events, like the Cairo International Fair and the Cairo Book Fair. In 1960, MNHD completed construction of Cairo International Stadium²². Nasser also called for pan-Arab unity under his leadership; thus in 1953 the League of Arab Nations created the Pan-Arab Games as means of expressing cultural unity between Arabs²³. In 1961, when Azhar University introduced new areas of study, MNHD erected a Nasr City satellite campus for the university (MNHD Website), one of the oldest and most prestigious centers of learning in the Islamic world. Part of highlighting the role of the state as a patron and provider, the new company gifted lands for the public benefit to be used for the construction of numerous schools, mosques and public gardens.

²² Also known as Nasser Stadium, which is considered a full Olympic City

²³ The Pan Arab Games took place at Cairo twice, in 1965 and later in 2007.

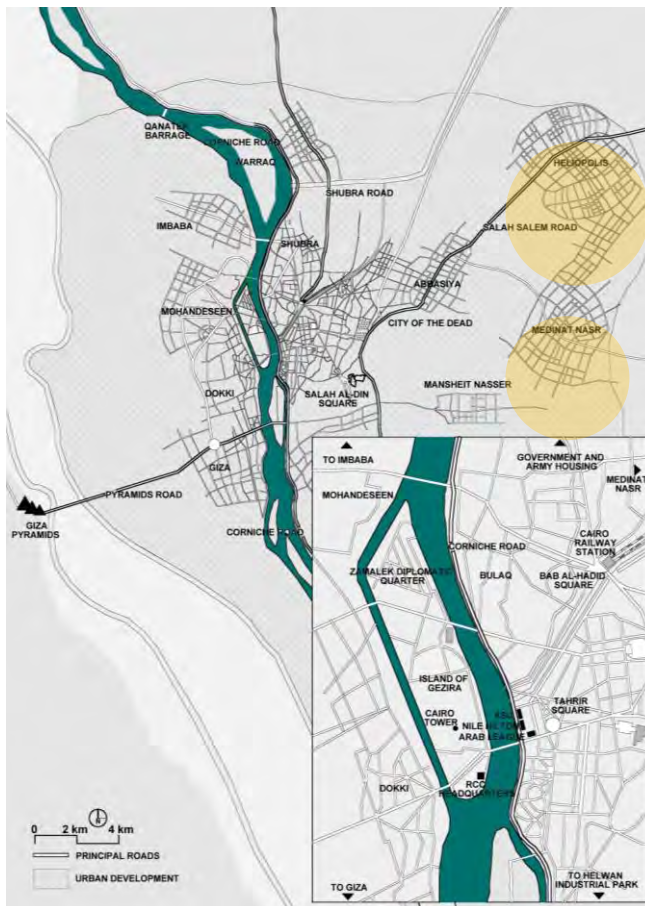


Figure 38 Map for Cairo during Nasser's rule showing the location of Heliopolis and Nasr city
Source: after (Alsayyad 2011)

3.3 Reformist transformations

Heliopolis has always been impacted by political decisions and economic regimes. Since independence time and until nowadays –with the exception of **Sadat's era 1971 till 1981**- Heliopolis has always hosted the seat of power. During the 1950s Nasser dreamt of an administrative capital near the seat of power, that he had moved from the royal palace of Abdine in the center²⁴ to the eastern suburb of Heliopolis. Nasser also had his private residence in Heliopolis. During this era, the area between Heliopolis and Cairo was urbanized (Fig.39); eventually Heliopolis became a part of Cairo (according to 1956 Master Plan).

²⁴ Before the revolution the king's residence was Abdine Palace in downtown

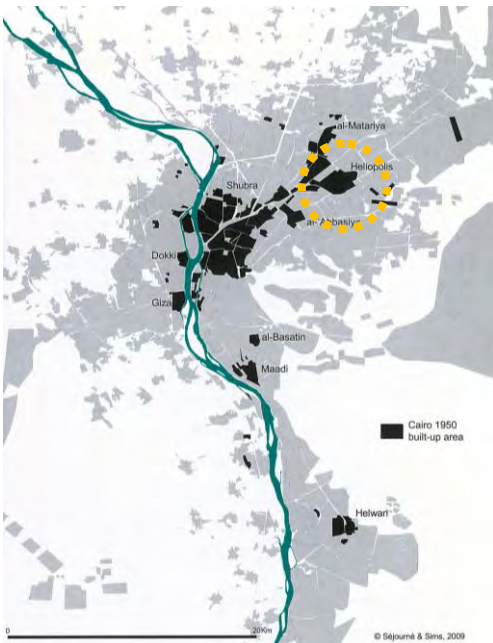


Figure 39 Built-up area of Cairo in 1950 (in black) compared to 2009 (in grey)
Source: after (Sims, 2012)

Between 1956 and 1967 several socialist state measures were introduced by Nasser. The new socialist strategies were characterized by a state intervention and an active social policy resulting in the nationalization of the concessionary **companies (Heliopolis, Ma'adi) as well as of the public utilities (water, transportation)** (Raymond 2001). The following part will discuss the manifestations of the new regime in Heliopolis and the set of transformations that affected its development.

3.3.1 Ownership Restructuring

In 1960 the Heliopolis Oasis Company was nationalized²⁵; which so far had **been under capitalist economic control. In 1964 it became 'Heliopolis Company for Housing and Development'**; since then, Heliopolis witnessed a set of transformations that affected its development.

²⁵ In 1960 president Nasser issued a decree of nationalization of all Belgium assets in Egypt, this included Belgium bank, Cairo transportation and Heliopolis Oasis Company. ((FCC) 2005)

3.3.1.1 The loss of autonomy

Since its founding in 1906, Heliopolis has been an independent satellite city. It was considered an autonomous part from Cairo; it used to have a street named **‘Cairo Avenue’**. **Heliopolis** would not have remained self-sufficient for all those years if it did not have its well-developed infrastructure. The nationalization of the company in 1960 was followed by other set of nationalizing of the infrastructure; transportation (tramline), electricity and water. The Autonomous aspects of Heliopolis were then lost, when it depended on Cairo for services.

The next part will shed light on the role of space in negotiating national identity in conceiving postcolonial Cairo, by addressing the manifestations of the **socialist regime on the ‘order’ and ‘image’ of space**.

3.3.2 Re-structuring Urban Space

3.3.2.1 New Order of Space

The post-revolutionary socialistic development approach of the company has witnessed a shift in the main function of the district to residential, after it was known for leisure and entertainment. With the extraordinary increase of housing demand in the 1960s, came issues that could not be solved within the framework of the older architectural order. Urban space -both horizontal and vertical- was required to accommodate millions of new inhabitants; and modern facilities were required to permit the larger and infinitely more complex metropolis to function and survive (Raymond, 2001).

The 1950s and 1960s have witnessed proliferating functional, modernist designs. Social housing that prevailed in Nasr city began to emerge in Heliopolis as well; where the percentage of residential use increased in comparison to the past situation. The old part of Heliopolis, completed before the revolution, which used to be a complete city with all facilities and different regions (zone 1&2), has become the center of Heliopolis (Korba) while the newly developed parts will have mainly residential function (Fig.40)

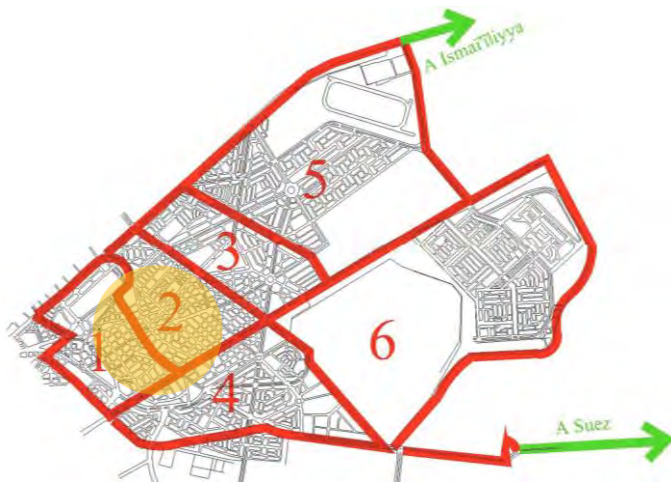


Figure 40 Map showing the new administrative zoning of Heliopolis.

Source: (Mahmoud 2007)

Nasser's policies of centralization and social provision brought deep change to Egyptian society, represented in narrowing the gap between the different socioeconomic levels of Egyptians (Alsayyad 2011, p. 250). This had concrete spatial manifestations in the urban fabric. The new extension of Heliopolis, mainly built after the revolution, could be distinguished from older regions by its highly organized structure, featured in equal plot sizes with modular pattern and sometimes the green squares which are surrounded by residential blocks (Fig.41). Unlike the original core of Heliopolis (zone 1&2), the new developments do not produce hierarchization of space (represented in plot size and housing typologies), nor does it present any monumental icons.

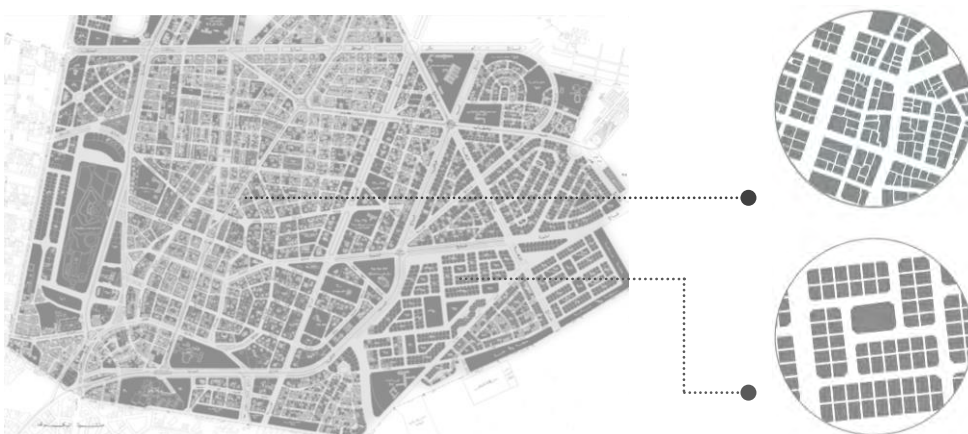


Figure 41 Map for Heliopolis 1960s showing comparing plot pattern in Heliopolis before and after revolution. Source: Author. Base map source: Heliopolis Company Archive



Figure 42 Ariel view of Heliopolis in 1960s.
Source: (Dobrowolska 2006)

3.3.2.2 *Functionalist Aesthetics*

During the 1960s (Fig. 42), aesthetic control was firmly wielded by the state; the architecture aesthetics reflected a socialist mode of production that shaped the character of the built **environment during Nasser's time**. **"Socialism has guided the architecture style that combines both solid massing and efficient standardization to achieve social justice."** (Hammad, in (Alsayyad 2011, p.247)).

Nasser's socialism has offered a considerable chance for local architects to **realize their ideas through Egypt's public housing program**. The 1950s and 1960s witnessed the proliferation of the functional, modernist designs in Egypt. Architecture design has possessed a clear International Style; one that had prevailed in many parts of the world, especially in Europe, during that time. In Heliopolis, as in Cairo, the rise of modernist architecture, have started since the 1940s (Chapter 2); however, it was only with **Nasser's building program that** a truly national architectural culture emerged.

Egypt had an extensive, locally designed and elaborated version of modernist design. Architecture was a framework that allowed the imagining of 'postcolonial' **national** Egypt. To serve its poor and middle classes, the government was closely involved in the housing sector; a shift has then

happened in the building typology, where there were no more villas. During **Nasser's regime, thousands of** four to five story modernist housing typology was built in Cairo for people of all classes. Such buildings were an unmistakable ideological tool of socialism (Alsayyad 2011, p.248). The modernist structures featured similar building masses, in many cases, and expressed monotonous frontage and uniform proportions. Facades possessed clear lines with modular repetitive patterns and no ornamentations (Fig. 43-47).

These modern socialist designs, which prevailed in Nasr city, have made their appearance in Heliopolis after the revolution. Sayed Karim, the consulting architect who of Nasr city, had also some architectural designs in Heliopolis during the 1950s (Fig.43). Great deal of emphasis is placed on socialism as having direct impact on styles, aesthetics, and the process of shaping the built environment. During the 1950s there were multiple aesthetic practices, the most dominant was the International Style that have led to the forgetting of the belle epoch aesthetics.



Figure 43 (down-right) Model for Merryland buildings with its Architect Sayed Kareem (up-left) the building after its realization 1960s.
Source: Adapted by Author after (HC archive)

Nevertheless, **Nasser's regime** has also produced a nationally driven modern aesthetic practice by local architects, could be categorized as international style, which is as well worthy of appreciation and up-keeping (Fig.46).



Figure 45 Merryland Buildings in Heliopolis around 1960. Source: (HC Page)



Figure 44 building at Ahrām street. Author, 2014.



Figure 46 Building 70 Orouba street, Heliopolis.

Source: Michel Hanna

From the preceding analysis of Heliopolis neighborhood; it has been observed that the regimes and the prevailing socio-political circumstances that have caused the physical transformations in Heliopolis are the same ones that have given birth to the planning of Nasr City; both neighbourhoods responded to the socialistic regime. Similarities appeared in plot designs also in facade designs (Fig. 44, 45&47), as well in local architects, who had designs in both neighborhoods.



38 Figure 47 Mass housing facade in Nasr city; Source: (Osama Dawod, 2005)

3.3.3 Eraser of memory

Nasser's economic reform has nationalized private property and individual assets²⁶; which **dispossessed Egypt's elite** (Alsayyad 2011). The assets of former landowners and industrialists were expropriated and managed by the state. Part of **Nasser's attempts** to erase the memory of the monarch and colony was the reuse of the belle epoch buildings as public facilities. Palaces and villas which had been confiscated from the fallen aristocracy in the wake of the 1952 revolution, were allocated for educational use (EL Kadi 2005). In Heliopolis, several government schools were installed in palaces, such as Sultana Malak Palace, now occupied by Heliopolis secondary school for girls, villa Ahmed Bey Makram (Fig.48), and others (Fig.49).

Poorly maintained for several decades, these buildings were damaged by the misuse of the public. Part of the memory of the city, of the nation even, was therefore to be erased (EL Kadi 2005). Aside from their aesthetic value, these palaces and villas were of obvious historical and symbolic value. They were the residences of leading national figures from the world of politics, finance, art and culture that **had played a significant role in Egypt's cultural** renaissance during the 1920s to 1940s (EL Kadi 2005). The reuse of such buildings as public schools was a clear reflection of the socialist agenda upheld by Nasser, which have politicized the belle epoch architecture as irrelevant to the national heritage of Egypt and thus not worthy of maintenance.



Figure 48 Public school installed in Ahmed Bey Makram, designed by Nicolas Gianaglia, 1928
Source: ((FCC) 2005)

²⁶ in excess of ten thousand pounds



Figure 49 (left) Former villa in Ahrām street, (right) after converting it to National Ahrām school. Source: Michel Hanna

The new regime's set of alterations included changing the names of important urban landmarks and arteries in Cairo (Alsayyad 2011). The renaming reflected **Nasser's administration's** attempts to erase the names and histories of the monarch and colonialism. In Heliopolis, the renaming tends to target names of foreigners; General Baron Empain Avenue and Pasteur Street; were renamed to Nazih Khalifa Street and Aleppo Street; as well as names associated with the khedival family. According to Heliopolis map in the 1960s, streets with names of the monarch family was renamed to Arab countries; Mohamed Ali Avenue, Tawfiq Boulevard and Ismail Boulevard were renamed to Beirut, Damascus and Baghdad streets respectively; and Avenue Fouad I renamed to Orouba Street (literally mean Arabism) (Fig.50). As well as renaming Sultan Hussein street to **'Althawra' or the** revolution. The presence of Arab countries names in this set of renaming (Damascus, Aleppo, Beirut, Baghdad and Bahrain); clearly reflect the regime ambition to acquire Arab political status through modernization; the Pan-Arab unity called by Nasser. In addition to African names; Nuns street, now Guinea street; Merit Pasha Street, now Ghana Street.



Figure 50 Photo showing street sign reading: Orouba street, formerly King Fouad I. Source: Michel Hanna, 2011

During Nasser's era, the role of the state as a patron was growing. One of the main transformative actions of the new regime is the emergence of the Merryland public park (1960) at the expenses of the hippodrome (1907). In the late 1950s, the golf course and the hippodrome were relocated to the outer skirts of Heliopolis where new development was in progress; current shams club north-east of Heliopolis. On a part of the hippodrome original location, a park was created; and the street where the Hippodrome used to be was renamed 'Hejaz Street' (**before 'Hippodrome Boulevard'**). The Merryland Park (Fig.51) opened in 1960 is the biggest green space Heliopolis until now. It was designed by Sayid Kareem, the Egyptian architect, famous for many projects in Nasr City and new residential regions in Heliopolis. The park served as a big attraction for all inhabitants of Cairo who used to spend their free time there. Parts of the former hippodrome were developed to host new residential buildings, and the buildings that once stood there were torn down one after the other. The only surviving buildings from the hippodrome now are the 1st class stage and the royal pavilion.

The founding of the public park of Merryland at that time at the expense of the former hippodrome, which was a space for the gathering of the aristocrats and elites; has rendered public the socialist aspects of Nasser's regime; characterized by a state intervention and an active social policy. The public park has contributed in highlighting the role of the state in offering services and regulating access to various resources.



Figure 51 Merryland Park 1960s.

Source: Heliopolis Company archive

3.3.4 Seat of Power

In the 1960s, the abandoned Heliopolis palace hotel, became the headquarters of various government departments (Raafat 2003). This was followed by changing the tramline route, which used to pass in front of the palace, for security reasons ((FCC) 2005) (Fig.52). The result of this deviation was the transformation of once quiet residential boulevards (Al Ahram) into commercial axes with many shops and commercial activities opening, which had not been originally designed.

The original electric tram ways was passing Baghdad Street, commercial activities and tramline were always connected. In 1956 the tramway line was converted for security reasons; the line was converted to Al-Ahram street to avoid passing in front of the Palace Hotel which is now a governmental building (Fig.53). The tram that was one of the main reasons of establishment of Heliopolis, have also impacts on the forms of the city (commercial) and naming. **‘Korba’ district, got its name from ‘la courbe’** meaning the curved line, which the tramway used to follow upon entering Baghdad street (M.Volait 2005, p.35).



Figure 52 Map showing the evolution of the tram-line (in green) : 1916, 1937, 1999 (in red, the former Palace Hotel) Source: ((FCC) 2005)



Figure 53 Heliopolis Palace hotel before converting the tramway.

Source: ((FCC) 2005)

3.4 Reflection

This chapter has discussed the nationally-driven reorientations **in Cairo's** developments brought about by Nasser regime. During the nationalist period **under Nasser's rule, the architecture and urban representations were** characterized by a state intervention. The new socialist strategies have portrayed the role of the state in development as a patron and provider in responding to the housing needs as well as in the necessary infrastructure such as drinking water, sewage, road networks and transport. This had result in the nationalization of the private companies as well as in the necessary infrastructure and managing them by the state. In Heliopolis, the nationalization of the company after the revolution marked the beginning of the transformation.

It has been observed that the regimes and the prevailing socio-political circumstances that have caused the physical transformations in Heliopolis are the same ones that have given birth to the planning of Nasr City; both neighborhoods responded to the socialistic regime. This was visible in the equal land plot sizes, monotonous facades and no ornamentations.

Nasser's administration has perceived the belle epoch aesthetics as irrelevant to the national character of Egypt. His attempts to erase the traces of monarchy and colonialism became visible in; reuse of the belle epoch buildings as public facilities, changing the names of important urban landmarks and arteries in Cairo as well as transformation in use to highlighting the role the state in offering services and regulating access to various resources.

From 1967 till 1973, a halt was brought to **Cairo's** developments that were provided by the government. By that time, all state investments that was directed into public housing construction, was shifted to the military during the wars. After the 1967 defeat, Nasser left the state vulnerable to policy transformation after his death in 1970.

4 Consuming: Distorted Present, Remembered Past

During economic liberalization era, Cairo has witnessed chaotic construction developments that were consuming its modern heritage. The representation of architecture was mostly produced outside the professional confines. Contactors and developers rendered the architectural profession increasingly irrelevant; informality has proliferated in the building practice. This chapter aims to highlight the process of distortion **of Cairo's modern heritage under the liberal and neoliberal states**; further it explores the counter movements that emerged in the community, romanticizing the aesthetics of belle epoch.

4.1 Keeping Cairo Modern

During the 1970s and the 1980s, **the state left the shaping of the capital's image** to the market forces and demographic growth (El Kadi 2012, p. 104). Although the state has withdrawn from the construction of public projects particularly housing (Alsayyad 2011), it devoted considerable means to grandiose urban and regional **developments schemes. Sadat's administration has** brought an unprecedented construction boom to Egypt. The government has financed only a fraction of this activity; its funds were mostly reserved for construction that served those with the lowest income, while the private sector was encouraged to undertake most of the new construction (Alsayyad 2011, p. 259).

4.1.1 Economic Liberalization

Anwar al-Sadat (1970-1981) and Hosni Mubarak (1981-**2011**) **reversed Nasser's** economic and political orientation. In 1974 **the 'Open Door'** economic policy – **also called 'Infitah'** – was introduced by Sadat; which encouraged foreign direct investment and local entrepreneurs, and cut back subsidies on the public sector. The new policy of openness, **brought an end to Nasser's socialism and** introduced liberal ideas (Raymond, 2001, p. 349).

In his 'Search of Identity' (1978) Anwar el-Sadat, although he was always loyal to Nasser, criticized Nasser's socialist policies, arguing that they destroyed Egypt's economy and kept the country isolated from the rest of the world. **Sadat's policies marked the beginning of reorienting Egypt toward the West, in** particular to the United States -reversing Nasser's policies- for assistance in resolving Egypt's conflict with Israel, also for economic support (Ghannam, 2002, p. 29). Not far from Khedive Ismail²⁷, Sadat hoped to Westernize Cairo; yet whereas Ismail looked at Paris and Nasser looked at the USSR, Sadat looked at American cities (Ghannam 2002) (Ibrahim, 1985). **Sadat's reforms were** centered **in the same impetus to modernize Cairo as Nasser's earlier**

²⁷ "Ismail's vision of modernization (1863-1879) was to turn Egypt into a European country and to make Cairo a European city." (Ibrahim, 1985)

restructuring of urban space. However, while Nasser's approach was to make Cairo available to all, including the poor, Sadat's strategy had the effect of driving the poor out of areas marked for development (Alsayyad, 2011, p. 262).

In her 'remaking the Modern', Farha Ghannam (2002) argued that part of Sadat's plan to build a modern Cairo was to relocate its disadvantaged lower classes to the periphery. Indeed during his presidency, 19 new towns and satellite cities were set to rise in the desert, in order to redistribute population and activities over the entire territory and decongest the delta and the valley (El Kadi, 2012, p. 104) (Fig. 54). The new developments were planned under the aegis of the New Urban Communities Authority (El Kadi, 2012, p. 260). Most of the new developments were private-sector initiatives on public land. The government was also involved in these so-called private developments (in line with trends occurring across cities on the management of urban space), designing incentives to attract people to them, (such as rent subsidies, significant salary raises for government employees who chose to live there, and tax exemptions for industry and business) (Alsayyad, 2011, p. 262).

Sadat presented himself as the leader who could bring material resources; "the Hero of Construction, or 'Batal al-Bina' " to create modern realities (Ghannam 2002). His Open Door policies brought an unprecedented construction boom to Egypt; "new luxury high-rise buildings mushroomed all over the city, replacing private villas or rising in areas which had undergone a massive slum clearance such as Bulaq. many first-class hotels were also started, and new highways and overpasses constructed, including the impressive Six of October bridge across the Nile over Gezira Island" (Ibrahim, 1985). "The backing of Sadat's vision came from an alliance of social forces which were bound to benefit it. The new alliance was made up of the old bourgeoisie and landlords (who were not liquidated by Nasser), the nouveaux riches (who made their fortunes in Arab countries or from illegal activities at home), and upper-level civil servants of Nasser's time. Politically and economically it was a very powerful alliance, but numerically it was small." (Ibrahim 1985) However, because of the

assassination of Sadat in 1981, the process of liberalization was continued by his successor, Hosni Mubarak (1981-2011) (Alsayyad, 2011, p. 263).

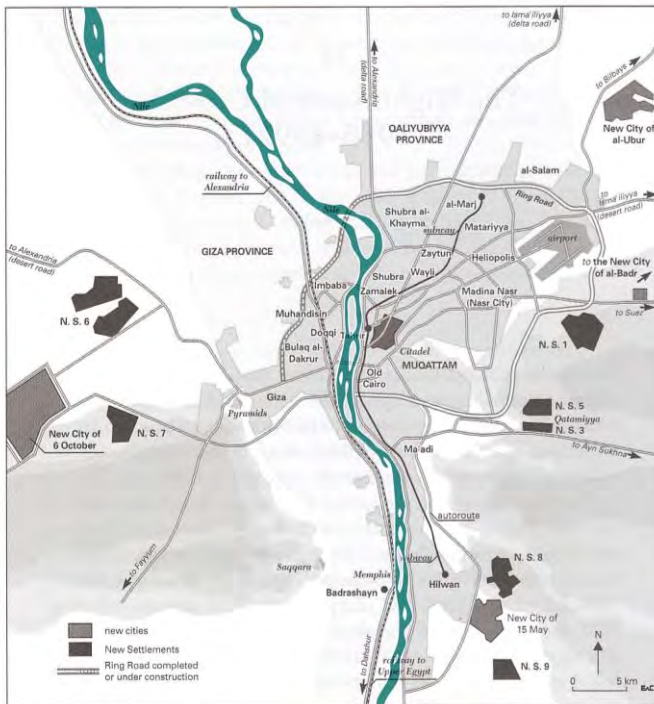


Figure 54 Map of Greater Cairo showing new cities and Settlements (1991) Source: after (Raymond 2001)

4.1.2 Neoliberal Turn

By 1990 the Egyptian economy was in debt crisis. After years of partial reforms the Egyptian economy was no longer able to survive the foreign debt; a reform of the financial policy was necessary. The government was forced to adopt an IMF²⁸ stabilization plan. In 1991 Egypt signed a tripartite management agreement with the IMF and the World Bank (Denis 2006). This Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment program marks the entrance of Egypt into an active phase of reforms, transformations of the economic apparatus, and change in its modes of government (Denis 2006). Privatization was imposed as the privileged instrument of urban reform; In 1996 the government engineered another mini-boom, by announcing an aggressive program of privatization; the

²⁸ (IMF) The International Monetary Fund
50

state-owned enterprises began to be sold on the Cairo stock market (Mitchell 1999).

During that time, Heliopolis Company witnessed its third legal form in the time span of around fifty years (Fig.55), which have been respectively reflective to the shift of the economic regimes. In 1995 the Heliopolis enterprises has joined Cairo stock market, and became an Egyptian joint stock company²⁹. In the same year, Madinet Nasr for Housing & Development (1959) was also offered on the Egyptian Exchange (MNHD Website).

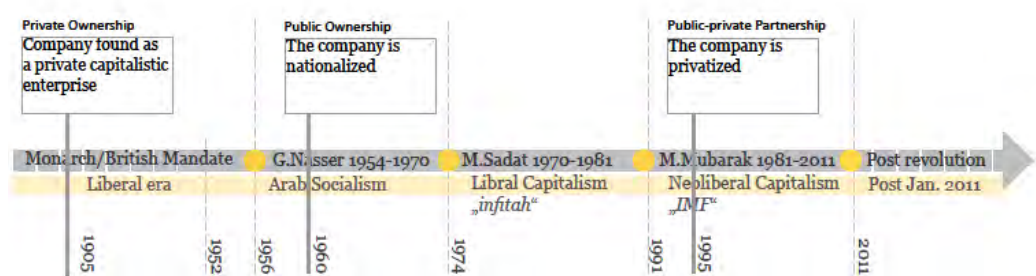


Figure 55 Diagram showing the transformation in the ownership of the company.
Source: Author, 2014

4.2 Transformation

“The transformation of what already exists is the key to the urban development of tomorrow and that it is about how what is given can be perceived, used, changed, or removed.” (Oswalt et al. 2013, p. 374)

It was due to Sadat’s ‘Infatih’ policies that the prices of land sharply increased (Raymond 2001); this period has also witnessed a sharp weakening in the building code. Until 1970, the building heights³⁰ were limited by two to five floors for the majority of residential areas, except for high rise apartment

²⁹ The legal form of the company became: an Egyptian joint stock company subject to the provisions of Law No. 203 of 1991 (HC Website)

³⁰ The building regulation was not issued until 1940s. In order to control their new developments, the companies, while selling their lots, had incorporated restrictions in their deeds of sale for plots. (Mansour 2009).

buildings in main roads as well as governmental buildings. The building code also limited the retreat areas and accordingly the building ratio for each piece of land. With the increase of the population problem in Egypt and the inflation in land prices, the application of the building code started to weaken.

These forces have contributed to the reshaping of Heliopolis neighborhood, they have manifested as a tangible results in the built-environment in the form of physical transformations. During the eighties, the development of Heliopolis neighborhood continues on the plan of the 6 administrative zones found During the 1960s (Chapter 3). The city of Heliopolis consists of six districts: Al-Bustan, Almazah, Al-Muntazah, Al-Nuzha, Al-Matar (the Airport) and Al-Sheraton (Fig. 56). The first three were found from initial development of Heliopolis (1906), as for the last two: Airport exists only since 1961, while Al-Sheraton is planned during 1960s, but urbanization begin only in the late eighties (Mahmoud 2007).

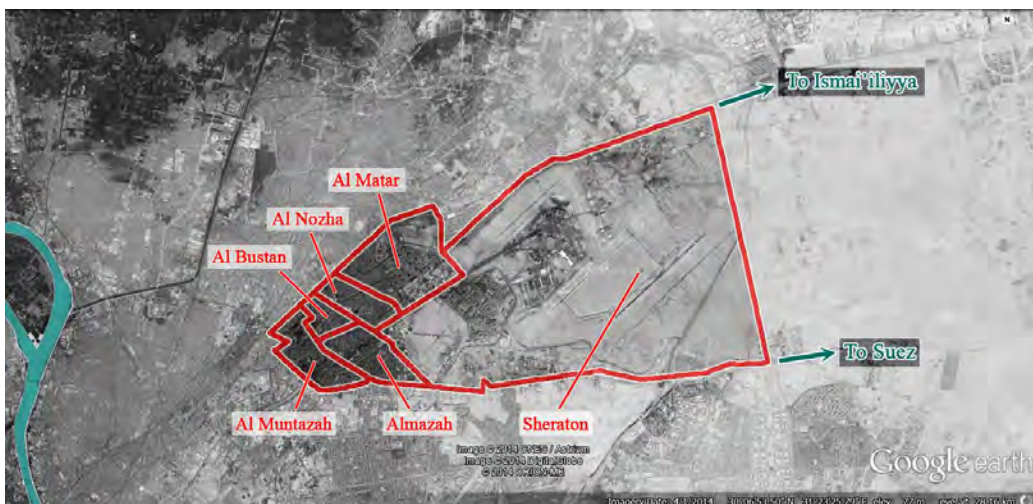


Figure 56 Map showing the six districts of Heliopolis.

Source: adapted after (Mahmoud 2007), base map google earth, 2014



Figure 57 - A 5 storey building, built on aisle between 2 buildings. Source: Michel Hanna (Fig.57).

The plot sizes of the new urbanized areas continue to possess the **equal sizes proposed during Nasser's era**. During the eighties and the nineties, except in the back streets, the front gardens have almost entirely been occupied by building extensions or sprawling shops. Due to the sharp increase of the land prices, almost any non-built space was occupied by constructions, which have led to appearance of in-between mass-additions

4.2.1 Re-imaging Space

Before 1952 revolution, the aesthetic of the private constructions in Heliopolis were precisely **monitored by the company's** architects (A. Loo 2010, p.180). To explore the condition of aesthetics regulation under the liberal and neo-liberal states, the next part is discussing the skyline and the facades encroachments in Heliopolis.

4.2.1.1 Skyline

"We refuse to see authenticity 'asala' through a backward look that glorifies 'tuqadis' the past and rejects renewal 'tajdid'. Not everything in the past is glorious for it has some elements of backwardness 'takhalf'. On the other hand, we refuse to distort our national character in the name of material or behavioral imitation of other societies."

Anwar el-Sadat, The October Paper, 1974

Modern Cairo placed great emphasis on the visual image of urban space. Aiming to imitate Western modernity, Sadat's modernization privileged vision over the other senses (Ghannam 2002). This was manifested clearly in The rise of Cairo skyline during this period with large scale projects such as National Bank of Egypt twin towers, Ramses Hilton hotel and later the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; as part of the continuous process in the second half of the

twentieth century of making a contemporary modern image of the city (Elshahed 2007, p. 19) (Fig.58).



Figure 58 Cairo waterfront; showing: National Bank of Egypt twin towers, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Television and Radio tower, and the Ramses Hilton (left to right) source: (Fouad GM, 2009)

With introducing ‘Infitah’ policy by Sadat, Heliopolis buildings started to witness deterioration; marked by the beginning of the process of extending, elevating (Fig.67) or demolishing the original buildings constructed in Baron Empain time on a large scale. The low-rise single-family houses of architectural value were torn down in order to be replaced by high-rise buildings that generate more revenue, after the sharp increase of the land prices during this era (Fig.61).

The process of demolishing the original buildings with high-rise has affected the original architectural and urban characters of the area. The altered shape of the skyline was thus the major symptom of densification in Heliopolis (Fig. 59&60).



Figure 59 The view from Barn Empain's Palace looking northwest onto Nazih Khalifa Street in 1920s and in 2000s. Source: Adapted by Author after (Dobrowolska 2006)

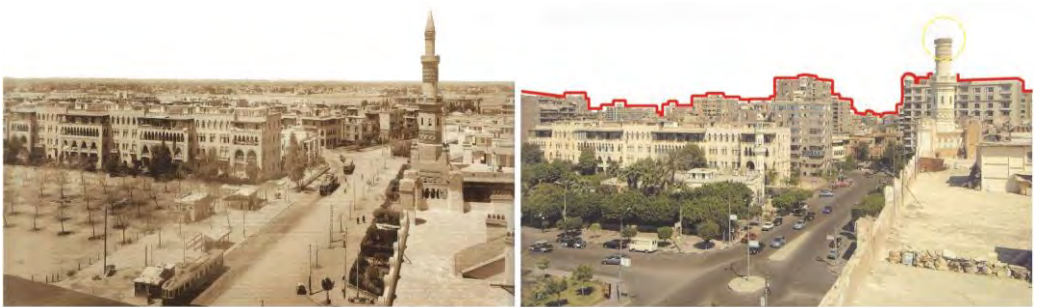


Figure 60 The north-eastern corner of the Basilica Square, in the 1920s and 2000s
Source: Adapted by Author after (Dobrowolska 2006)

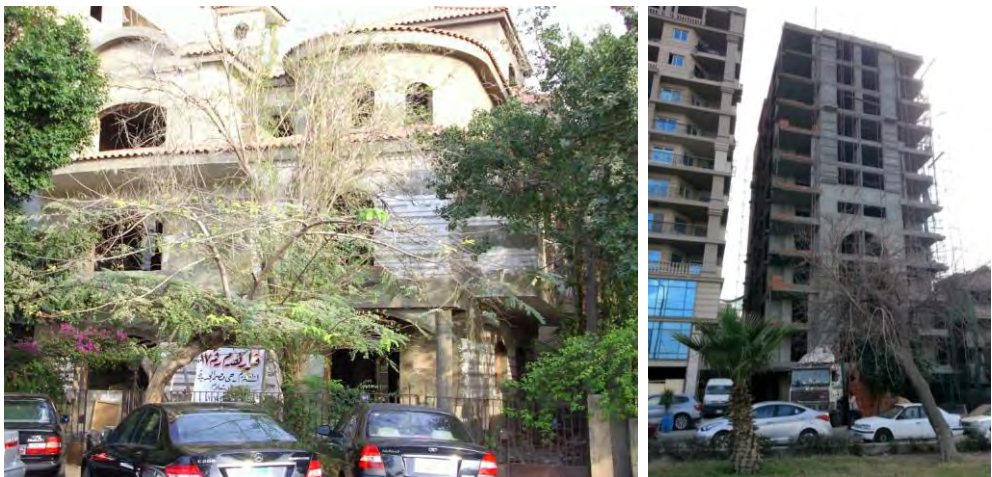


Figure 61 Villa 151 Merghany street, before and after, left to right in the 1920s and 2000s.
Source: Michel Hanna 2010 and 2012

4.2.1.2 *Façades Encroachments*

“In designing a façade and its ornamentation, the architect helps animate the street and contributes to the creation of urban space.” (Lefebvre 1974, p. 315)

Façades (ornamentation of frontages) are central to the process of shaping Cairo's modern heritage. They usually announce the ends and beginnings of eras in the city's history. Reflecting the architecture style and the image of urban space, facades and ornaments are one significant aspect of the physical transformation; when it is related to the manifestations of the economic and political regimes, facades are reflective to every transition that happens in the city.

In Heliopolis, facades were always an important aspect that distinguishes the neighborhood buildings, especially the ones which were originally built in the first half of the twentieth century; where the aesthetics were mostly a combination of elements coming from Islamic and Arabic architecture presented by the Baron Empain (Fig. 64). During ‘**infitah**’ era, facades were the most notable and telling aspect of architectural transformation in Heliopolis landscape. There has been remarkable increase in the change of façades and treatment of frontages in residential blocks, which put the original Heliopolis heritage at risk.

The initial alteration of the original facades in Heliopolis was first initiated after 1967 war³¹; affected by the evacuation of people from the Suez Canal Region, families had to accommodate others in their own apartments, and thus, needed more indoor space. This has taken place in forms of blocking of balconies and terraces, in addition to the rooftop constructions which took place also as a consequence of the increase in population. The buildings expansions have continued **during Sadat’s** era, some other transformations were also noticed, such as; different treatments of window openings on the same façade, AC units,

³¹ 1967 war is a 6 days Arab-Israel war; Arab (Egypt, Syria and Jordan)

advertisements, signs, ornaments, and diverse materials are added without being integrated with the original design (Fig. 65&68).



Figure 62 view of Boulevard Abbas, now Ibrahim al-Laqqani, in 1920s and 2006. Source: (Dobrowolska 2006). Down-right, zoom in showing the store. Source: Author, 2014

The seventies and eighties have witnessed rise in the consumerism culture in Cairo. **Encouraged by Sadat's 'infitah' policies, foreign imports and private investments** were boosted in Egypt. It **was due to these 'openness' policies** that Heliopolis experienced uncontrolled expansions, which in many cases came by modern commercial facades. This process was mainly represented on the ground floor, sometimes on the first three floors, that is mostly occupied by commercial function, especially in the historic part (Korba) which is now the commercial center (Fig.66). The shops have been treated as independent units; possessing colors and materials that are not related to the original façades of masses. The transformation of the ground floor to; stores, shops and display windows not only have distorted the facades of the buildings, but have also affected the residential atmosphere and created a traffic problem, caused by lack of parking areas.



Figure 63 The Basilica on Al-Ahram street reflects in the glass of one of the many storefronts. Photographs by David Degner for INK publishing

The change in Heliopolis facades during the eighties and nineties have given a strong message, **with commercial frontage, shop's display windows** (Fig.63) and advertisements- it have changed the image of the urban space while rendering clear the aspects of the economic liberalization era which was characterized by rise of consumerism and private sector investments. In 1990s, the first shopping center in Heliopolis was found; Hurrya mall.

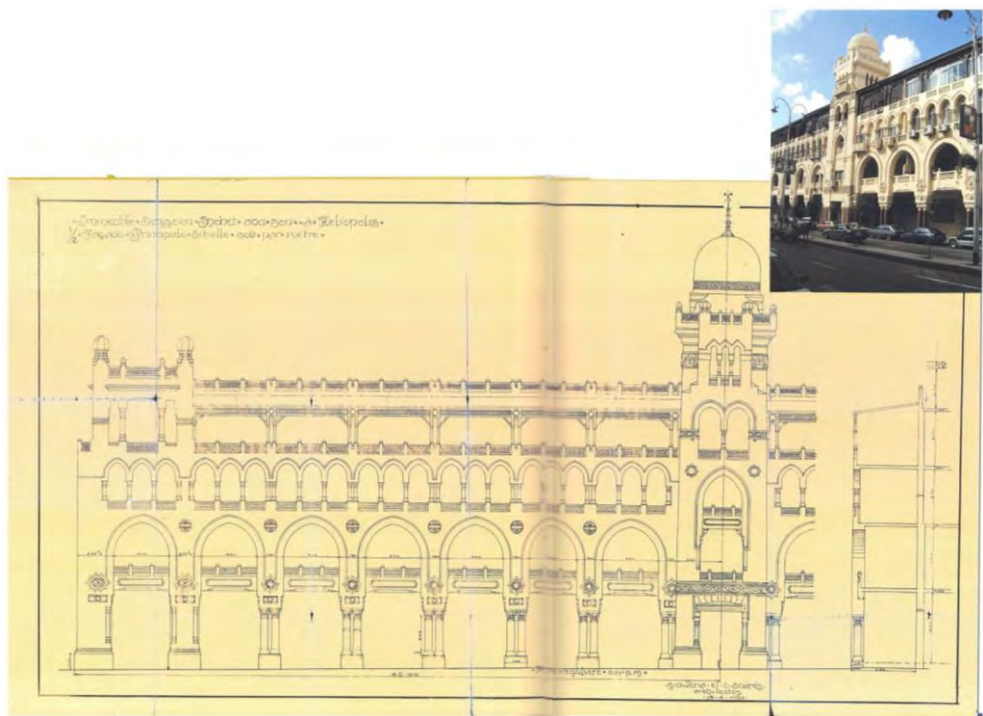


Figure 64 Building 16 Baghdad Street designed in 1924 by G.A.Soria and C.Suares for Sasoon Shohet ans Son. Source: (Dobrowolska 2006)



Figure 65 photo showing façade encroachments. After and before. Source: Michel Hanna



Figure 67 Villa extended, around 1990
Source: (M.Volait 2003)



Figure 66 commercial activities on historic building. Source: Author, 2014.



Figure 68 Photo showing facade encroachments
Source: Ahmed Mansour, 2000s

The post infitah policies have also produced a new architecture typology that emerged with eclectic aesthetics that is echoing, to a large extent, a renewed interest in traditional architecture leading to a revival of traditional forms; known as post-modernism. Postmodern facades are attached to the aesthetics of the belle epoch; they have shown in Heliopolis, as in Cairo, throughout the nineties (Fig.69).



Figure 69 post-modern facades on Thawra Street in Heliopolis.
Source: Author, 2014.

From the preceding analysis, The rise of the sky line of Heliopolis and the replacement of old buildings with high rise have reflected the increase in land prices, **while the changes witnessed in Heliopolis's facades** have rendered clear the aspects of the economic liberalization, indicating Heliopolis as the new economic pole of Cairo. In general, 'liberalization' refers to relaxation of previous government restrictions, which usually appear in realms of social, political or economic policies. In **Cairo's context**; this liberalization concept in the 1970s has often, referred to as deregulation. The beauty of the origin aesthetics of Heliopolis was the result of the fastidious regulations by Empain and the company; while **the distorted image at Sadat's time came from** absence of law enforcement.

4.2.2 'Presidential' Area

In 1972 a new function was assigned to the Heliopolis Palace; it became the headquarters of the Arab United Republic³²; which gave it its current name 'Ittihadiya' (Arabic translation for Union). Further in the 1980s, and after extensive renovation and restoration efforts, the Ittihadiya became one of the Egyptian presidential palaces, when it was declared the headquarters of the new presidential administration of Hosni Mubarak. Today Heliopolis Palace is perhaps one of the more restricted presidential palaces regarding access; the palace and the surrounding area are sealed off most of the time and protected by the army, which causes further traffic jams.

The presence of the seat of power has impact on the development and preservation of Heliopolis. The buildings **in the 'presidential area'** were limited to certain number of stories and strictly followed the regulations, so that they **won't overlook the presidents' dwelling**. The surrounding area also remained clean and safe, streets and green areas were regularly maintained. Moreover, Suzanne Mubarak; the wife of the former president Mubarak and Heliopolis resident since born, was involved in improving the city. She served as the president of the Heliopolis Association; its goal is the preservation and improvement of the city (Azzam 2010). She was involved in building the **children's museum** in Heliopolis, and she initiated the 'Heliopolis festival' at the centenary in 2005, which is still celebrated every year at Baghdad street in Korba; where the streets are closed and the inhabitants celebrate the day in the streets. Suzanne Mubarak was also particularly involved in the state acquisition of the Baron palace (Fig.70), after it was mistakenly sold by the tax authorities to a private individual in the 1950s (Azzam, 2010).

³² the Arab United Republic is the short-lived political union between Egypt, Libya and Syria



Figure 70 The Hindu palace (Baron palace)

Source: Author, 2014

4.3 Heliopolis Preserved?

“Neither the ‘traditional’ nor the ‘modern’, as we have used these terms, is to be thought of as an invariant or unchanging “given”; rather, each lies at opposite ends of a continuum whose locus and range shift with societal changes.”

(Abulughod 1971, p. 219)

Since the late 1980s, a conservatory concern was broadly expressed to the belle epoch architecture, belonging to modern Egypt (1850-1950). Before that, the notion of heritage in Egypt was mainly related to Pharonic heritage or Islamic and Coptic heritage of the medieval city.

Preceding a debate on modernity and tradition led during a seminar organized in Cairo by (AKAA) in 1984³³; the recommendations of the conference included the preservation and placement of Heliopolis on the World List (EL Kadi 2005). Although this conference was not followed by any operative measures, it has produced echoes in the community and the academic realm that was followed by the emergence of preservation groups and heritage initiatives (El Kadi, ElKerdany, 2006). These initiatives, though very limited in time and space, reflected a growing interest in a modern heritage and minor forms of architecture, which had not been taken into account as Egyptian national heritage before.

According to Volait (2013), the emergence of the term ‘Belle Epoch’ in 1989, has resulted in a new narrative context and induced a new concern of persevering that heritage. Following the earthquake that struck Egypt in 1992³⁴, **Cairo’s** interest in the once forgotten belle epoch architecture was rapidly accelerated. This interest in the modern heritage particularly proliferated after the 1992 earthquake, when some classified historical monuments were considerably damaged it (EL Kadi 2005). In Heliopolis, seventy individuals died in collapse of a high rise in upscale where a landlady had violated the building codes (Kuppinger 2006, p. 329). The earthquake have accentuated by the call for preserving the heritage and evoked public nostalgia for the aesthetic created by a modernity which originated elsewhere.

At the beginning of the 1980s, the Egyptian Minister of Culture’s decided to attribute new cultural and leisure uses to palaces and villas dating from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, following their restoration (EL Kadi 2005). At the legislative level; up until 1983, Egyptian legislation on antiquity only took into account buildings built before the end of **Khedive Ismail’s reign (1879)**. The first legislative action was ushered in by the 1983 law (no. 117) on antiquities in

³³ (AKAA) Aga Khan Award for Architecture; within the framework of a series of seminars on Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World, Cairo, November 1984

³⁴ In 1992, an earthquake measuring 5.6 on the Richter scale hit Cairo.

Egypt, currently in effect, provides waivers for buildings built at a later date (EL Kadi 2005). Between 1993 and 1998 six decrees were issued to control the demolition of these assets. The two initial decrees prohibited the demolition or transformation of buildings of great historical or architectural value. The third **decree (No. 238 dated 1996) extended this measure to 'certain buildings of a remarkable architectural style'** (EL Kadi 2005). The new legislations were reflected in Heliopolis; two buildings were protected for several years: the Hindu Villa Baron Empain (by order of the Minister of Culture dated 30 June 1987, reinforced by the Prime Minister's Decree No 1297 of 6 August 1993) and 'Heliopolis Palace Hotel - renamed Arabism Palace (Qasr al-Oruba) - by the Prime Minister's Decree No. 112 of 17 January 1997 (M.Volait 2003).

In addition to the legislation decrees, there have been a listing efforts lately noticed by several institutions. In 2006: The Center for Documentation of Cultural and Natural Heritage CULTNAT signed a cooperation agreement with the Heliopolis Company for Housing and Development for the digitization of the Company archive on April 14th, 2006 (Documentation of architectural drawings, maps, photographs and documents in a database to facilitate the management of the archive) (CULTNAT Website).



Figure 72 Attempts for beatification in Heliopolis tried to adapt to the heritage, around 2005.
Source: Author 2014



Figure 71 AC Screens
Source: Author 2014

4.4 Reflections

“Space has nothing innocent about it: it answers to particular tactics and strategies; it is, quite simply, the space of the dominant mode of production”

(Lefebvre, 1974, p. 360)

During the economic liberalization era, the capitalist mode of production for developments in Heliopolis was consuming the heritage that was conceived during **the Empain time and ignored under Nasser’s regime**. However, this era has also witnessed a counter movement; one that appreciates the aesthetics created by the modernity of the twentieth century. This chapter has explored the transformation happening in Cairo and Heliopolis under the liberal and neoliberal states. The first part has analyzed the process of distortion of the modern heritage, through examining the skyline and facades of Heliopolis. During this era; the users of space, or what Farha Ghannam (2002) referred to as **‘the ordinary practitioners of the city’** assumed a prominent role in reshaping **the urban space. The manifestations of the ‘bottom-up’** reshaping to the built environment have taken shape in the form of the additions in façades and treatment of frontages, to accommodate more indoor space. The second part of this chapter has noticed the drafting of legislation to protect this heritage and the evoked nostalgia towards the aesthetics of belle epoch, expressed in the proliferation of postmodernism architecture, and calls for preservation the heritage.

Since Nasser time, Heliopolis has emerged as Cairo’s administrative center (A. Loo 2010, p.166); in response to the economic liberalization, Heliopolis has also become an economic pole of Cairo (together with Mohandeseen, Nasr city and downtown). This era have proliferation of commercial activities, the first **commercial center ‘mall’ also appear in Heliopolis in the 1990s; ‘Horreya mall’**. Additionally Newly constructed high-rise hotels were found on Salah Salem road **‘Orouba’**, on the way to the airport.

5 Reclaiming: Learning from Heliopolis

It has been more than three years since 2011 Revolution. In the context of **Cairo's rapidly shifting urban and political landscapes over the past three years** much has changed and more is yet expected to change (Sims, 2012). In this chapter, the first part summarizes major events of post 2011 that will illustrate further transformations of Heliopolis neighborhood. The focus is on two counter movements: one is the proliferation of the informal causing further destruction of the heritage; and an opposing one of reclaiming the heritage that was distorted during the economic liberalization era. The chapter emphasizes on the various civil society initiatives that took place in Cairo after the revolution and **the emerging role of planners'** in Heliopolis to revive the once forgotten heritage. The second part of this chapter is a forward-looking in an attempt to build on what has happened to Heliopolis, and try to draw an image of the near future development of Heliopolis and where it might be going, based on what is happening today.

5.1 Prelude to post 2011 Cairo

“A revolution that does not produce a new space has not realized its full potential; indeed it has failed in that it has not changed life itself, but has merely changed ideological superstructures, institutions or political apparatuses. A social transformation, to be truly revolutionary in character, must manifest a creative capacity in its effects on daily life, on language and on space.”

(Lefebvre, 1974, p. 54)

Since January 2011, Egypt is witnessing political instability. This transitional phase is characterized by chaos which has affected the physical built environment, especially in Cairo. The rate of the informal is proliferating in many levels; construction sector, open spaces and waste management, among others. In the construction sector reflect deterioration; illegal and informal structures have been proliferating, fast paced demolitions of heritage buildings (Fig. 73&74), and construction of illegal extra stories in addition to façade encroachments. There has been an exponential increase in the rate of informal altogether since 2011. But there has also been another phenomena unfolding in Egypt after revolution; the Egyptians have rediscovered the value of public spaces and streets; they have reclaimed the right to their own neighborhoods and cities. Mobilization of civil society was increasingly active post 2011.



Figure 74 Building 5 Rashid St., Heliopolis. during demolition, 2012. Source: Treasures of Egypt at Risk (2014)



Figure 73 Crushed with bulldozer, 2011. al-Kirdany St., Heliopolis. Source: Treasures of Egypt at Risk (2014)

5.1.1 Moment of Transition

“We are in a moment of revolution, and the revolution has not yet produced any new theories or specific demands regarding the management of our cities. However, it has given birth to.. movements.”

(Khaled Fahmy, 2013, p. 19)

One of the significant movements that the 2011 revolution has brought about was the general movement of the local community. The community movement phenomenon is currently unfolding in the city of Cairo, at many different levels, represented in; proliferation of NGOs, civil societies movements, and grass root initiatives. This phenomenon is primarily driven by the interest which its inhabitants felt in reclaiming their public spaces during the revolution. In the urban planning realm, the revolution in Cairo has opened the door for an alternative mode of practice comprised of urban activists committed to working with local inhabitants to upgrade their communities (Cluster and the AUC, 2013). These kinds of practices might be considered as a prelude to an adequate dialogue between the Egyptian people and their governing institutions, which was missing before.

Many of these groups are specifically concerned with architectural heritage, old and new. These groups, formal and informal, are calling for preservation of the heritage all around Egypt; among them: the Egyptian Foundation for heritage Rescue, Save Cairo (historic Cairo), Save Alexandria, Save Mansoura, Potsaid Heritage Initiative (official organization), Save Assiut, Save Minia and Save Suez. Transformations post 2011 took a new dimension after the noticed appearance of the active communal initiatives. New modes of urban practice have emerged redefining the role architects and urban designers, ranging from public awareness, networking and coalition building, as well as specific interventions through working with local communities and stakeholders on their own terms.



Figure 75 Informality: car park on footpath. Ahram street, Heliopolis.
Source: Author, 2014



Figure 76 Informality: street vendors at Ahram street, Heliopolis.
Source: Author, 2014

5.1.2 Contested Space?

In Heliopolis, there has always been a strong feeling of community belonging between the residence and their neighborhood, **since Empain's time**. After 2011, there were two clear counter movements in Heliopolis, as were in Cairo; the **proliferation of the 'informal'** (Fig. 75&76), due to the absence of the law enforcement resulting from the chaos of the transitional phase after the revolution, that is deeply affecting the heritage of Heliopolis, represented in **façade's** encroachments and illegal increase of heights. This period have also witnessed fast demolitions of old buildings, which had legal permits, for buildings that were not listed or in some cases delisted and then demolished; which revealed incompetence or lack of interest from the government to protect its heritage. However, there was also a counter movement brought about; one of resistance, of reclaiming; expressed in the above mentioned activation of the community.

Heliopolis has been increasingly active in terms of community movements, especially post 2011. There has been a particular initiative concerned with the **heritage of Heliopolis that emerged after 2011 revolution. The 'Heliopolis Heritage Initiative' (HHI) is mainly interested in the** urban built environment of Heliopolis and its surroundings; green areas and public space; traffic and transportation; in addition to waste management. Other minor groups also

showed after the revolution in Heliopolis, reporting heritage violations. In addition the emergence of Egyptian non-profit organizations platforms that seeks to strengthen the sense of community between practitioners, academics and students of architecture and urbanism; such as ‘Megawra’ (The Built Environment Collective) and ‘**Rasheed 22**’, the co-working space. The activities of the HHI group ranges from; silent protests (Fig.78 till 81), guided community tours (Fig. 77) and events for introducing to the community.

Although the role of such groups is not yet quite obvious on the physical built environment, with the exception of minor cases where some illegal encroachments were removed after being reported by those groups³⁵; they hold a critically important role in this transitional moment, comprised in their roles as disturbers in the community; making the society aware by casting light on of the valuable treasures they have; on the other hand they hold a significant role in exerting pressure on governmental institutions to enforce the law and protect the heritage. Eventually, such groups will have an active role in reshaping, reclaiming the urban space and the modern heritage.

In 2013, a coalition comprised of different groups interested in heritage submitted to the constitutional assembly (2013) an amendment to protect the build heritage of the so called ‘modern’ era till the contemporary, and not only ancient Egyptian, Islamic or Coptic heritage. For the first time in the Egyptian constitution, there is an article listing all these eras, after lobbying for these amendments from the coalition (HHI 2014).



Figure 77 walking tour in Heliopolis, led by HHI in December 2013.

Source: (HHI, 2014)

³⁵ In June 2014, one initiative in Heliopolis ‘Heliopolis Heritage Initiative (HHI)’ has succeeded in removing a billboard encroachment from a heritage building in Korba, after reporting it (HHI, 2014)

These series of initiatives are particularly revealing of a sociocultural change linked to the desire for change and for reviving the heritage. They are currently generating a catalytic effect in the community that eventually guide to a better built environment. On the institutional level, NOUH (National Organization for Urban Harmony) has recently called all Egyptians to report about any heritage building that has recently been exposed to any destruction or deterioration all over the governorates; declaring that they will quickly work on its restoration through a campaign they recently launched to protect the Egyptian Urbanism (NOUH website).

Heliopolis is a contested space, in the middle of a multi-faceted conflict between competing interests; between the governmental institutions and private interests; between contractors, developers on the one hand and the residents and the advocates of modern heritage on the other.



Figure 78 HHI silent protest in Heliopolis 4.2013
Source: (HHI 2014)



Figure 79 HHI silent protest in 4.2013
Source: (HHI 2014)



Figure 81 the heritage building before demolition 4.2013. Source: (HHI 2014)



Figure 80 HHI protest in front of building before demolition 4.2013.



Figure 82 Demolition process of 5 Rashid street Heliopolis, March, 2012
Source: Treasures of Egypt at Risk (2014)

The following part is discussing the situation of Heliopolis today, and further establishes a forward-looking; to where Heliopolis might be going in the near future.

5.2 Afterwards

Today, the Heliopolis Company is still managing a little more than a twenty buildings in the historic core of the city, nevertheless it appear largely refocusing its activities on the development of new extensions, on the eastern desert plateau. **Plans for a 'new Heliopolis'** (or Heliopolis al-Gadida) on 2,500 hectares along the Ismailiyya road and close to the new al-Chourouq city, are recently launched by the company to market for new housing project (M.Volait, 2003). The new developments are expanding in the direction of Cairo-Suez road.

The presence of seat of power in Heliopolis is still affecting the surrounding area. Today, the **‘Merghany’** tramline that was converted from its original routes fifty years ago for security reasons (discussed in chapter 3), is totally being removed today for the same reasons (Fig. 83&84). The tramline was the main reason for the establishment of Heliopolis neighborhood, without founding the first tramline at 1908, linking the new desert oasis to Cairo, **Heliopolis wouldn’t** have been found. The removal of the tramline was justified by ambiguous security reasons, related to the existence of the tramline near the presidential **palace ‘ittihadiya’, the previous Heliopolis Palace Hotel**. While the presence of the seat of power is still affecting its landscape widely; today, critics are aroused around the newly suggested proposal³⁶ that entails creating a new capital city for Egypt, which would be established east of Cairo, on the Suez-Cairo-Ain Sokhna road. The project, which was proposed by the Housing Minister, stipulates moving parliament, the presidential palace **‘ittihadiya’**, ministries, governmental authorities and houses for the employees to the new city. The continuous shift of the center according to the ruling class, leave the place after it distorted and altered by many political decisions affecting the built environment; (such as the case with the decision of converting the tramline in the 1950s and later removing it completely in 2014 from Heliopolis, for security reasons related to the presence of seat of power), to go to a new place and start the same process that is resulting from the lack of a culture of maintenance and preservation, and that leads to a large extent to the deterioration of the built environment.



Figure 84 removal of tramline, 2014. Author

Figure 83 tram stop in front of Basilica, 2007. Source: (Van Loo & Bruwier 2010)

³⁶ proposal by Prime Minister Ibrahim Mehleb's Cabinet (2014)(President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi)



Figure 86 – Photo showing blocks featured in Merghany street, in front of Itahadeyya palace, after the revolution and 2012 events.
Source: author. 2014

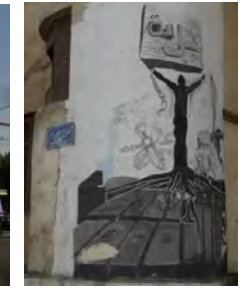


Figure 85 wall graffiti on building in Heliopolis.
Source: author. 2014

The question of to where Heliopolis might be going the coming years is indeed very much dependent on the tensions that currently exist between the active groups, concerned with heritage, and all their opponents; contractors, developers and sometime governmental institutions with their lack of interest in protecting the heritage. In order for the newly emerging initiatives and the recently issued decrees to become effective, the next part is reflecting on the last part and further suggesting some recommendations for the heritage safeguarding process to be effective.

5.3 Recommendations and Reflection

In this chapter, I have brought attention to the shifting attitudes of the civil society towards the pre-revolutionary modern city. Today Heliopolis is a neighborhood with its own heritage initiative; monitoring, defending and preserving the buildings of Heliopolis, they further ought to extend their positive effect on the city of Cairo and further spread throughout Egypt.

In order for such urban initiatives approaches to succeed and become more effective, they ought to gather their efforts and seek to form a collation or manage a sort of network between each other; further they must align with state government frameworks. **Equally important is the role of Egypt's cultural**

institutions to; recognize, support and incubate local community and private-sector driven initiatives to protect the Egyptian modern heritage.

There have been noticed efforts the last years in listing buildings and issuing decrees (Chapter 4); however, there should be subsequently supplement measures to safeguard these listed buildings and their surroundings. Most of the decrees are considered with the external situation of the buildings, but nothing is done to safeguard it as a whole. Creating a whole framework to manage; buildings re-use, urban settings, traffic, socio-economic potential in addition to the architectural heritage and their surrounding environment within an overall urban management, are all issues need to be addressed. Moreover, enhanced coordination between the different actors is still required for more effective results.

Necessary funds needs to restore buildings and rehabilitate public space, ought to be provided by private sectors; in addition to governmental incentives, in form of; tax exemptions, supporting technical issues or less complicated paper work.

6 Conclusion

“To the student of modern urbanism, however, Cairo presents primarily problems and an enormous challenge. Here admittedly is a city with pressing problems of land use chaos and inefficiencies, of human and vehicular congestion, of social disorder and poverty, striving vigorously to create a utopia. But here also is a complex city, a blend of old and new, of East and West, which must not be allowed to achieve its new order at the expense of its unique and poignant beauty nor its human warmth. The problem is one of balancing conservation and progress.”

(Abulughod, 1971, p. v)

In **Cairo's modern history**, a great deal of emphasis is placed on key political events as having direct impact on aesthetics and thus the process of shaping the physical built environment. Throughout the twentieth century, the conception and perception of architectural and urban aesthetics were always defined and redefined by the shifting economic regimes and political decisions. In this research project I have chronologically presented the transformation happening in the aesthetic production and perception of modern urban space, with regards to the shifting economic political regimes in contemporary Cairo.

In this thesis project, I have presented the significance of Cairo's modern urbanization at the outset of the 20th century; through focusing on one of the most remarkable districts, Heliopolis. I have brought the attention to the value of its aesthetics; starting from the eclectic aesthetics of the origin that were exquisitely integrated into the local architecture **in what was called 'arabisation' or 'neo-Moorish' architecture style**. Further modern and post-modern styles; with the aim of tracing the continuous shifting image of aesthetics during the 20th century.

The first part of this research has explored the process of conceiving belle epoch aesthetics under monarch during the era of foreign mandate. After the rise of the national character and the 1952 revolution, the aesthetics that dates back to an era of foreign hegemony was perceived as irrelevant to the national character of a newly independent country; Egypt. **Part of Nasser's attempts to** erase the memory of the monarch and colony came in the form of allocating public facilities in the belle epoch palaces; renaming of streets with names of royal family or foreign personnel; and transformation in the usage, such as, founding park for the public, **'Merryland'**, at the expenses of the hippodrome, which was the recreation area of the royal family **and Cairo's elite**. During this era, the state was the main patron and provider in responding to the housing needs as well as in the necessary infrastructure and public services. Further the research has shown the process of distortion of the origin heritage under the liberal and neoliberal states; which has evoked nostalgia and interest in the modern

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heritage. This was followed by drafting legislations to protect Cairo's modern buildings, starting 1983. Moreover, the research has presented the most recent attempts to reclaim the modern heritage by the recent acts of community activism that are unfolding in the city post 2011 revolution.

In response to the three questions posed at the beginning of this research; the following part is divided into three parts; 'Tradition and modernity'; is summarizing the respond to the first question, by analyzing the reasons of perceiving architecture that was produced by modernity that originated elsewhere, **as 'national' heritage** (discussed in chapter 2). The second part 'Politics and Power' is summarizing the respond to the second question; the shifting perception of the belle epoch aesthetics (discussed in chapters 2, 3&4). In respond to the third question; the last part '**Safeguarding 'New' Heritage**' is summarizing the role of the community in preserving that heritage (bottom-up) (chapter 4&5).

6.1 Tradition and Modernity

It may seem unpredictable **that a 'proudly nationalistic Arab state'** like Egypt takes interest and dedicates effort to preserve architecture and urban aesthetics that dates back to an era of foreign hegemony (El Kadi&ElKerdany 2006). Under the monarch country during the British mandate, the production of aesthetics has received some attentions which regarded them as an example of '**colonial' urbanism** (A. Loo 2010, p.164). In this research I have discussed the recent notion of recognizing architectural and urban aesthetics that dates back to an era of foreign domination, **as a 'national heritage' through focusing on** the case of Heliopolis in Cairo.

Cairo's modern heritage is at the center of a double debate; one that describes its architecture as; not an 'authentic' representation of Egyptian architecture, **on the other hand it's regarded as part of Egypt's national heritage**. At the outset of the twentieth century, producers of space have preferred to

commission European architects (Belgian, French and British) who introduced European design concepts adapted in decorative vocabulary and architectural styles that are inspired by Islamic and Arabic tradition and architectural styles, **desired by the country's** elites and residing foreigners, and further spread throughout society via the middle classes. This process has produced localized spaces that create a unique **form of 'cultural syncretism'** (A. Loo 2010, p. 165). This explains why in Egypt, contrary to the other countries of the Arab world, **these cities and neighborhoods were rarely described as 'colonial'**.

Although the urban links were decidedly foreign, they were not colonial. The governing feature of colonial town planning had always been the differentiation of **'European' and 'native' poles by careful 'zoning'**, with the two poles complementing each other; this was not the case in the plans for Heliopolis (Ilbert 1985). These highly eclectic aesthetics were representing an identity that is still obvious today, even to the visitor who knows nothing of the origins, and distinguishes Heliopolis from any other district in Cairo. Heliopolis succeeded in becoming an integral part of modern Cairo; it became one of the preferred areas of residence for officials as well as professionals. Many of the inhabitants of Cairo have loved Heliopolis and take pride in considering themselves Heliopolitans. **This undoubtedly 'colonial appearance'** of the new city, was able **to set off a process of integration, eventually becoming "a quarter of Cairo, no less Egyptian than the others"** (Ilbert, 1985, p. 37).

Cairo's Belle epoch spaces have been identified with 'colonizers', but also with agency, presence, and identification of Egyptian elites, middle classes and classes, before and after the colonial period (El Kadi & ElKerdany, 2006). Heliopolis gave many residents of Cairo access to modern conveniences, in modern **'Arabic' style** of architecture that is inspired by local traditions, in the same time meets the modern needs.

6.2 Politics and Power

The research has traced the shift that happened in the representation and perception of architecture and urban aesthetics, which was found at the outset of the twentieth century during the era of British mandate later, was forgotten by the rise of nationalism and further consumed under liberal and neoliberal states, and recently reclaimed after 2011.

The first part (chapter 2) has explored the process of making the belle epoch aesthetics, and how it was closely integrated in the fabric of Cairo and successfully grafted onto the Egyptian culture and tradition. By the rise of nationalism and the 1952 revolution, **the aesthetics of the ‘colonial’ era were** ignored and perceived as irrelevant to the national character of a recently independent country as Egypt. In the second part (chapter 3) explored the attempts to erase the traces of monarchy and colonialism **by Nasser’s** administration, that came through: the reuse of Palaces and villas from belle epoch as public schools; changing the names of important landmarks and streets in Cairo carrying the names and histories of the monarch and colonialism; and further relocating recreational symbols of the monarch such as the hippodrome, and founding a public park at its location, which has contributed in highlighting the role of the state in offering services and regulating access to various resources.

The third part (chapter 4) has discussed the process of consuming the belle epoch heritage during economic liberalization era. However, the neoliberal state has also witnessed a counter movement that appreciates the aesthetics created by modernity during the British mandate. The nostalgia and interest in the modern heritage, have particularly proliferated after the 1992 earthquake, when some classified historical monuments were considerably damaged (EL Kadi 2005). This interest was also expressed on the legislative level, when six decrees were issued between 1993 and 1998, that prohibited the demolition or transformation of buildings of great historical or architectural value and further **extended to ‘certain buildings of a remarkable architectural style’**.

6.3 Safeguarding a 'New' Heritage?

The notion of heritage in Egypt was commonly related to Pharonic heritage or Islamic and Coptic heritage of the medieval city. Since the late 1980s, a conservatory concern was broadly expressed to the belle epoch architecture, belonging to modern Egypt (1850-1950). The thesis has discussed the articulation of the recent acts of interest in the modern heritage that were evoked by the nostalgia for belle epoch aesthetics by the late 1980s (Chapter 4&5).

In 2011, the revolution in Cairo has opened the door for an alternative mode of practice comprised of planners and activists committed to working with local inhabitants to upgrade their communities. This series of initiatives, which acts as a catalytic effect in the community, is particularly revealing of a sociocultural change linked to the desire for **the reclaiming and appropriating Cairo's built environment**. The research has explored the recent attempts of listing and legislations. However, the cultural institutions did not succeed yet to recognize **and protect Egypt's modernist heritage**.

Heliopolis is a modern district that is reflective to the contemporary history of Egypt; that should be preserved and maintained as part of the Egyptian national heritage of equal importance to the Islamic, Medieval, and Coptic heritage. Today, Heliopolis is a neighborhood that has its own heritage initiatives; which are defending, preserving and conserving its architecture; however, they still need to align their efforts with state government frameworks, and further extend their positive effect on the city of Cairo. Equally important is **the role of Egypt's heritage and cultural institutions to recognize and protect Egypt's modernist heritage**. The activation of such groups will also eventually find a solution for the research challenges in the case of cities such as Cairo, where long-term quantitative data is not always available. Teams of researchers and volunteers are currently conducting surveys, documenting buildings and archiving photos; this will eventually turn into a well-documented archives of **Cairo's modern heritage**.

Egypt never had a UNESCO World Heritage site³⁷ from the twentieth century, may be it never will; yet **it's now up to Egyptian planners, researchers, activists and communities to safeguard a heritage which can, according to Galila El Kadi (2005), Research Director at (IRD)³⁸, contribute to “the construction of an identity common to all the peoples of the Mediterranean basin.”**

³⁷ The historic center of Cairo was thus inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1980 (after extending the notion of heritage to the rehabilitation of urban fabric that span pre-history up until 1879)

³⁸ (IRD) Research Institute for Development

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إقرار

هذه الرسالة مقدمة في جامعة عين شمس وجامعة شوتجارت للحصول على درجة العمران المتكامل والتصميم المستدام. إن العمل الذي تحويه هذه الرسالة قد تم إنجازه بمعرفة الباحث سنة ...

هذا ويقر الباحث أن العمل المقدم هو خلاصة بحثه الشخصي وأنه قد اتبع الأسلوب العلمي السليم في الإشارة إلى المواد المؤخذه من المراجع العلمية كل في مكانه في مختلف أجزاء الرسالة..

وهذا إقرار مني بذلك،،،

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