

Documentation and Preservation of Cairo Cultural Heritage and its relation to urban tourism through the use of New Technologies

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Abstract: Urban tourism is a type of tourism, known and practiced for a long time in various countries around the world but rarely in Egypt. This kind of tourism generally rebounds after economic and political crises the thing that allows countries to take the opportunity to reactivate their economies.

View the current economic difficulties in Egypt, solutions affecting the daily lives of Egyptians had to be found while protecting the cultural heritage patrimony of Cairo. In other words, it is about encouraging tourists to visit the city by organizing special touristic programs for the city. This cannot be achieved without the documentation of the patrimony; it must include the events that took place in the chosen area as well as people who lived there.

But this kind of tourism cannot be developed through normal touristic process of travel agencies as it is not applicable to mass tourism. On the contrary, it can only be achieved through individual electronic programs whereby tourists would have access to mobile applications supplied by GIS maps where all or part of the information is already uploaded. New technologies will then play a double role of preserving cultural heritage and regenerating economy which leads to sustainable development of the chosen area.

This article aims to show how urban tourism in Egypt can be generated while using the new technologies for documenting and preserving the national patrimony. The article discusses the undeveloped area of Historical Cairo that risks, nowadays, to be moved off the list of the International Patrimony List of the UNESCO if not documented and developed.

Keywords: Cairo, Khedive Ismail, Cultural Heritage, New Technologies, Tourism

General View of Cairo city History

Cairo¹ city was first founded during the 10th century by the governors of what was called the Fatimid dynasty.² They founded the Cairo buildings on the sides of one main street called up till now by the name of the Fatimid conqueror of Egypt, Al Moez street. (Fig. 1) It's the main and the oldest street in historic Cairo.

¹ They were called so in the name of Fatma, the daughter of Prophet Mohamed. Their first appearance was in Morocco and Tunisia, then the fourth governor of this family, El Moez lidin ellingah decided to conquer Egypt. He sent his army general Gawhar al Siqilli to be in charge of this mission. Gawhar conquered Egypt and decided to build a new capital for the new ruling family. It was then Cairo or Al Qahira which means the victorious. From that time, Cairo remained the capital of Egypt.

² DEVONSHIRE, R. L. (1982) *L'Egypte musulmane et les fondateurs de ses monuments*. Cairo: Livres de France, p. 29-32.



Fig. 1 – A modern photo of El Moez Street. (Copyrights of Nermin SHOUKRY).

Then the constructions continued up till the arrival of Mohamed Ali pacha who got the throne in Egypt at 1805.³ Mohamed Ali founded the Allawide family/Dynasty that ended by King Farouq. (Fig. 2).

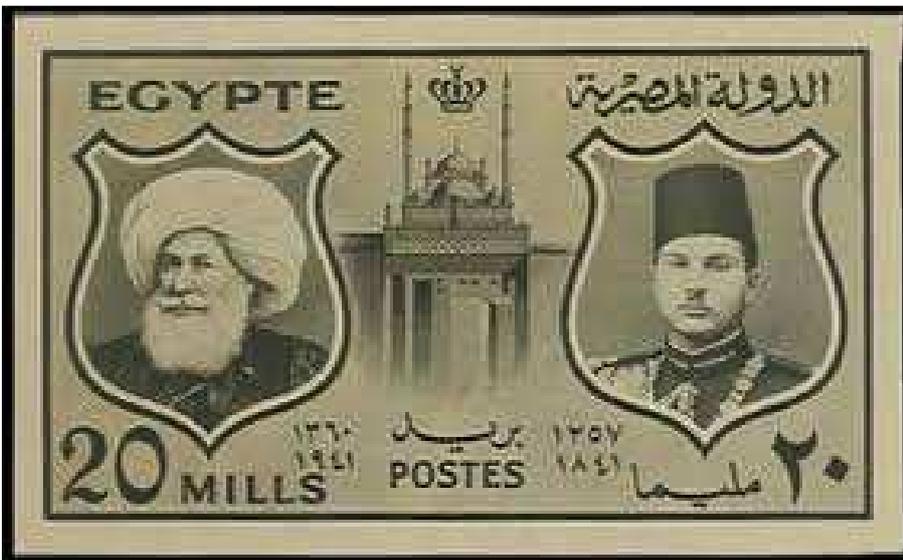


Fig. 2 – An old Egyptian currency showing on the left Mohamed Ali pacha and on the right King Farouq.

³ Originally from Kavala in Macedonia, Mohamed Ali was born in the year 1769-1770. He followed the steps of his father in becoming a soldier. He also worked as a merchant in tobacco trade. When the Ottoman Empire decided to conquer Egypt, the Kavala contingent joined the ottoman forces where they sail to Egypt and arrived in 1801 and where Mohamed Ali was the second man in command. He soon became the commander of the contingent and in 4 years he used all the opportunities to become the new ruler of Egypt. Following, MARSOT, A. L. (1994) *Egypt in the reign of Muhammad Ali*. 4th Ed. London: Cambridge University Press, p. 24-43.

Mohamed Ali pacha died in the year 1848⁴ but he left a lot of monuments and buildings bearing his name and even one of the most well-known street in Cairo which is the Mohamed Ali street. The Mohamed Ali's street⁵ (Fig. 3) represents the hinge between the two parts of Cairo city, The Historic Cairo and the Khedivial Cairo.

Historic Cairo

Due to its unique urban characteristics, Historic Cairo was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1979⁶ but nowadays and due to the great damages caused to its buildings and streets whether because of the terror attempts, the post revolution damages or because of the demolition of some historic buildings, the Historic Cairo risks to be removed out of the World Heritage List. As for Mohamed Ali's street, with the time, the poor street suffered a lot. The activities of the street changed nowadays to become mainly commercial activities while the old ones had almost disappeared. (Fig. 4).

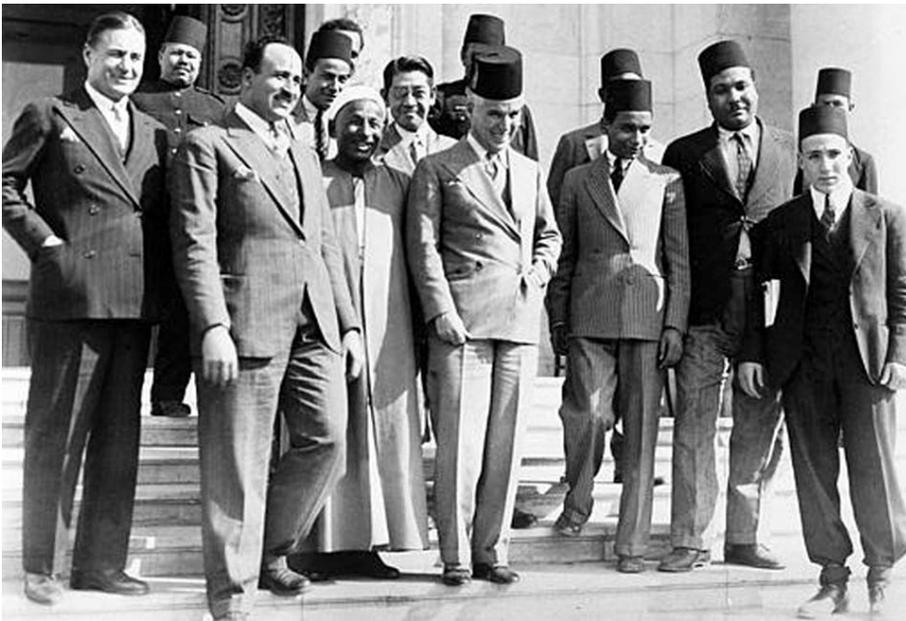


Fig. 3 – Great Actor Charlie Chaplin with famous Egyptian Actor Soliman Naguib in Mohamed Ali Street.

⁴ FAHMY, K. (1997) *All the Pasha's Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army and the Making of Modern Egypt*. 1st Ed. London: Cambridge University Press.

⁵ Mohamed Ali's street was built during the second half of the nineteenth century. By the first half of the twentieth century, it became known as the music and dance epicenter. It was the street where most of the musicians, artists and dancers live. Following, ROUSHDY, N. (2010), "Baladi as performance: Gender and Dance in Modern Egypt", *Surfacing* 3(1), p. 83-84.

⁶ AL MURRI, T. (2014), "Muhammad Ali street Project", *UNESCO. World Heritage Center. Special Projects Unit. URHC Final report*. Cairo.



Fig. 4 – Mohamed Ali street nowadays with commercial activities all around.

Khedivial Cairo

The Khedivial Cairo, (Fig. 5) located in downtown area, was once the symbol of Egypt's Belle époque. It was founded by the Khedive Ismail pasha, ruler of Egypt in the second half of the nineteenth century. Parallel to the inauguration of the Suez Canal Project in 1869, Ismail pacha wanted to build a part of the capital that it would bear his name. As he was fond of the French architecture, he wanted the architecture of the buildings to be similar to the European and especially the French architecture. An example of his buildings' characteristics can be found in the comparison between the Jeanne d'Arc St. in Paris and Fouad Pacha St. in Khedivial Cairo. (Fig. 6).

Khedivial Cairo Map

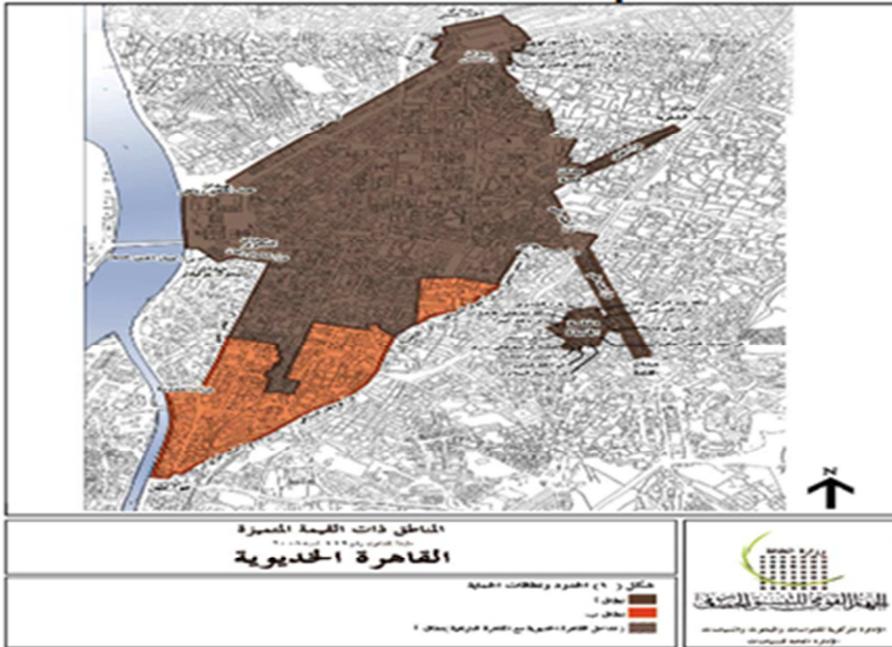


Fig 5 – Map of Khedivial Cairo, (Copyrights of the National Organization of Urban Harmony).

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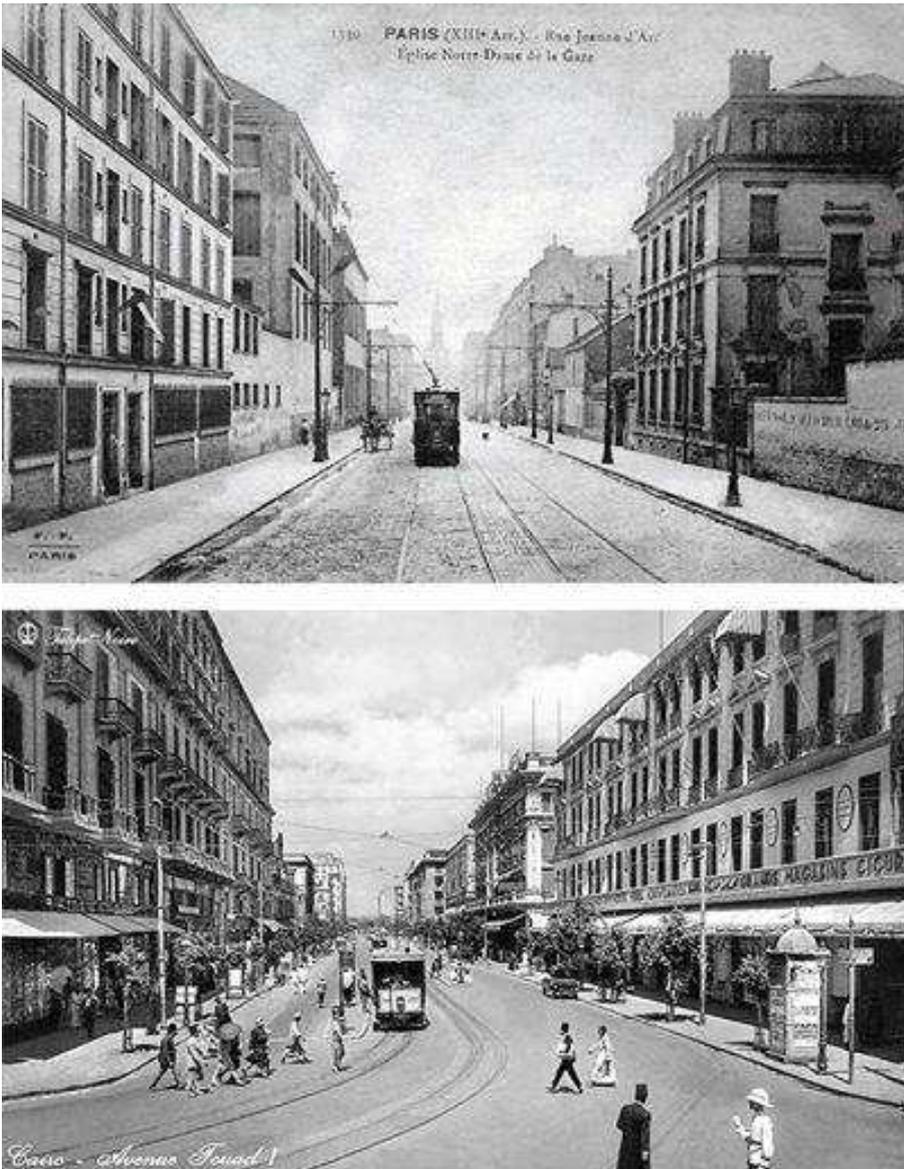


Fig. 6 – Comparison between Jeanne d'Arc street on the top and Foud Pasha street on the bottom in Khedivial Cairo.

Yet, decades of neglect and decay left it a pray to sporadic development, random commercial activities, little consideration to both aesthetic harmony and feeble preservation of its cultural heritage. (Fig. 7 a-b).⁷ Just

⁷ Talaat Harb street was originally named Soliman Pasha square after the name of a French colonel Joseph Antelme Sève from Lion in France. He came to Egypt with the French expedition of Bonaparte (1798-1801). After the departure of the French expedition, he decided to stay in Egypt. Years later, Mohamed Ali chose him to train some 500 officers to be the start core of the Egyptian army. Later on, he changed his name into Soliman and was awarded the pasha rank. The square bore his name until the twentieth century where it was changed to be called Talaat harb square after the name of Talaat Harb pasha the first Egyptian who decided to build an Egyptian bank. It was the bank Misr which is still functioning nowadays. Yet the square is nowadays known by the two names soliman and Talaat Harb. Following, QATAMECH. Y. (2014). *L'Égypte aux yeux des français*, 1st Ed. Cairo: General Organization of Culture Palaces, p. 46-48.

recently, Tahrir square⁸ and its surrounding neighborhoods of old Khedivial Cairo became spontaneous tourist attractions following both revolutions of the 25th and the 30th of June. (Fig. 8). The surrounding streets equally turned into a hub for art and culture that carry the flair of the recent social and political developments. (Fig. 9).



Fig. 7° – An old photo of Talaat Harb square in Khedivial Cairo.



Fig. 7b – A photo of Talaat Harb square after the 30th of June revolution.

⁸ Tahrir square was originally called Ismailia square by the name of Khedive Ismail who had the idea of expanding the construction of Historic Cairo to arrive to the left bank of the Nile and even across the Nile to el Gezira called now Zamalek District. That is when he erected the Qasr el Nil Bridge. Ismailia square bore the name till the 1952 revolution where the name was changed to Tahrir square meaning "Liberation" square. Following, ARAFA A. A. (1998). *Cairo during the reign of Ismail*. 1st Ed. Cairo: Egyptian Lebanese Press, p. 59-64.



Fig. 8° – David Camreon UK Prime minister visiting Tahrir square after the revolution.



Fig. 9 – Damages caused by burning the historic French school Lycée de Bab el Look in Mohamed Mahmoud Street as well as some graffitti of the 25th of January 2011 revolution. (Copyrights of Nermin SHOUKRY).

Urban Tourism and its relation to Cultural Heritage

From all the above, we conclude that there is a fact that cannot be denied that is the current social and political events taking place in Egypt have created a demand on tourism services in both Historical and Khedivial Cairo Districts.

As is well known, urban tourism is a type of tourism, known and practiced for a long time in various countries around the world but rarely in Egypt. This kind of tourism generally rebounds after economic and political crises the thing that allows countries to take the opportunity to reactivate their economies.⁹

The increased numbers of visitors revealed the shortage in tourism supply in this region. Tourism services are limited to hotels, the Cairo Museum and the Islamic Museum which is now partially ruined following the recent sad terrorism event. (Fig. 10) So, the interpretation of the ancient, modern, and contemporary history as well as cultural movements that both Historical and Khedivial Cairo stand witness for is currently offered sporadically by shop keepers and cafe stewards. (Fig. 11) Moreover, the traditional crafts professions, linked to the district's cultural heritage, risk to disappear due to lack of preservation and modernization. (Fig. 12). Efforts need to be made to conserve the cultural heritage of the district, particularly the intangible heritage, to regain its splendor, enhance cultural and touristic interpretation, raise awareness on the value of the destination and integrate it into the touristic itinerary.

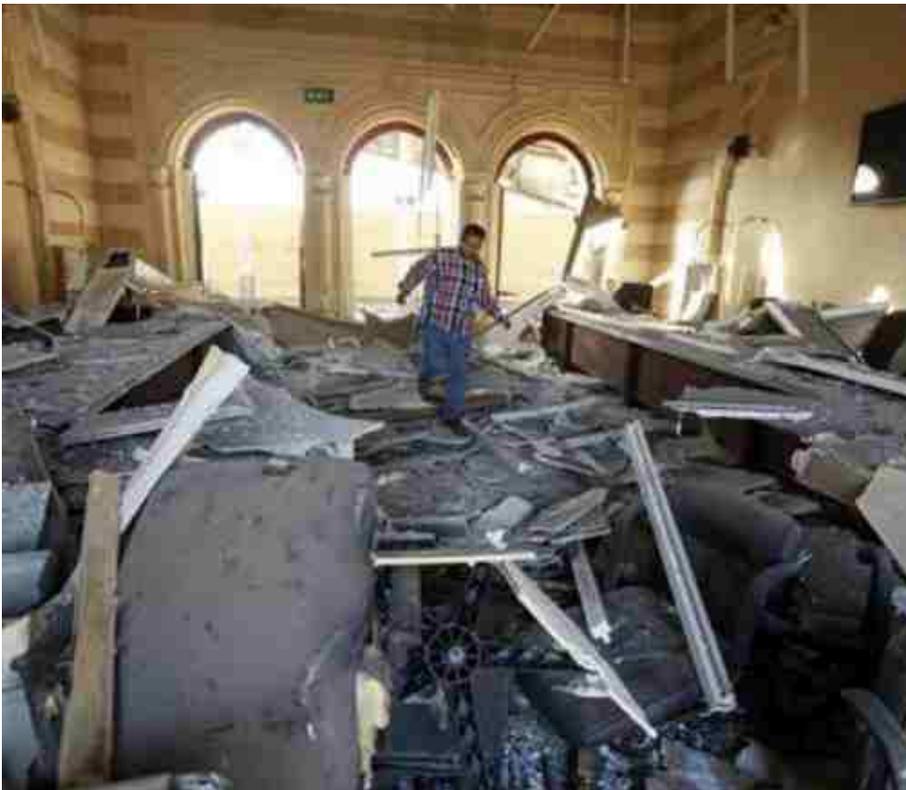


Fig. 10 – The Islamic Museum after the terrorist attempt.

⁹ NASSER N. (2003). "Planning for urban heritage places: reconciling conservation, tourism and sustainable development", *Journal of Planning Literature* 17 (4), Sage Publications, p. 467-479.



Fig. 11 – Borsa Café in Down Town Cairo.



Fig. 12 – Khayameya traditional artifact in Khayameya Street in Khedivial Cairo.

Role of New Technologies in producing new Urban Tourism Products through the Preservation of the Culture Heritage

View the current economic difficulties in Egypt, solutions affecting the daily lives of Egyptians had to be found while protecting the cultural heritage patrimony of Cairo. In other words, it is about encouraging tourists to visit the city by organizing special touristic programs for the city. This cannot be achieved without the documentation of the patrimony. The documentation must also include the events that took place in the chosen area as well as people who lived there.

But this kind of tourism cannot be developed through normal touristic process of travel agencies as it is not applicable to mass tourism.¹⁰ On the contrary, it can only be achieved through individual electronic programs whereby tourists would have access to mobile applications supplied by GIS maps where all or part of the information is already uploaded. New technologies will then play a double role of preserving cultural heritage and regenerating economy which leads to sustainable development of the chosen area.

This article aims to show how urban tourism in Egypt can be generated while using the new technologies for documenting and preserving the national patrimony and how to preserve the undeveloped area of both Historical and Khedivial Cairo that that are threatened to lose their identities.

A mobile application¹¹ can be used to help producing the work reports, the documentation of tangible and intangible heritage, the maps as well as all the surrounding activities such as raising the awareness of the inhabitants and involving them in the project's activities.¹² It will then be available for the individual tourists and thus creating a new tourism product which is the city tourism. (Fig. 13)

¹⁰ In other countries around the world, tour operators can use locals to give interpretation to tourists but in Egypt, the tourist guides law number 121 for the year 1983 prevents any person from giving any guidance explanation or interpretation for tourist without having the tour guide permission which is issued from the ministry of Tourism after graduation from the faculty of Tourism and Hotels Management/ Guidance Department (4 years of study). Then, locals cannot work as professional tour guides for tour operators or travel agencies or they will both be facing judicial charges. On the contrary, if a project was undertaken to preserve the city's cultural heritage then an initiative to educate the locals about their heritage must be done as part of raising the society awareness concerning their environment. Thus, the inhabitants or the persons working in the sites can always have updated information so that when talking to tourists they won't give any wrong information and thus they can communicate correctly with the visitors.

¹¹ Of course this is only a model of what can be done. I used a free mob app. Builder but if funds are available we would use more prof programs to build up the project.

¹² World Heritage Convention, UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme.

D Nermin Shoukry made his own app **Cairo Walking Tour**

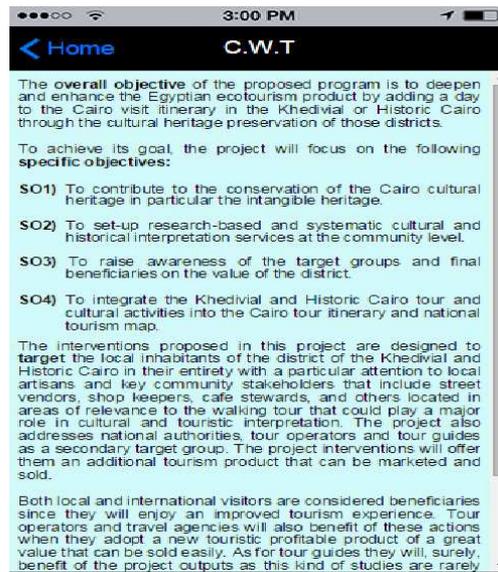
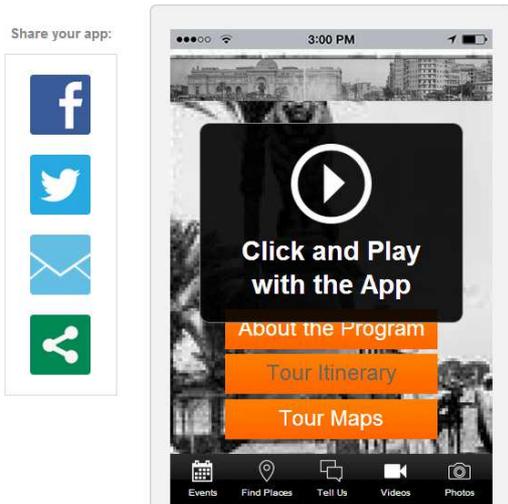
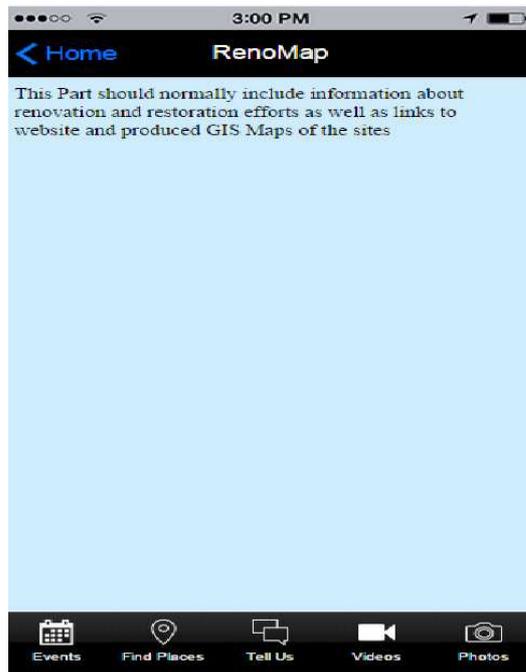


Fig. 13 – Mockup 1: A print screen of the mobile application designed by the author to show how helpful new technologies would be for the producing of new tourism product out of the local cultural heritage.(Copyrights of Nermin SHOUKRY).

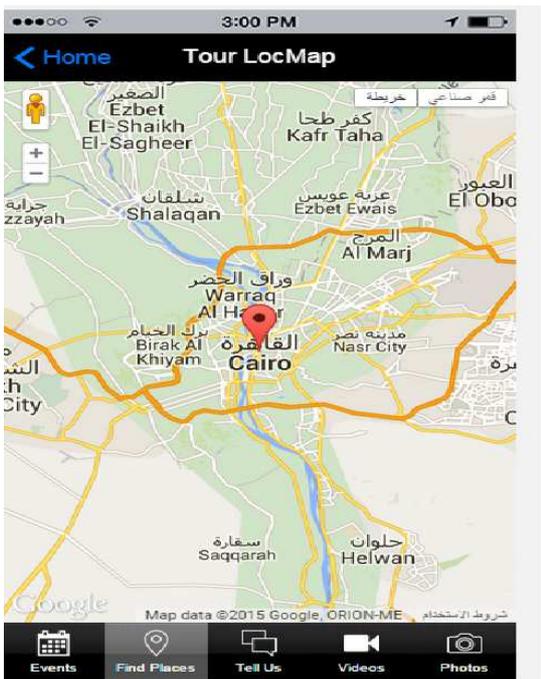
Mockup 2: About the Program includes the vision and mission as well as the overall goals.



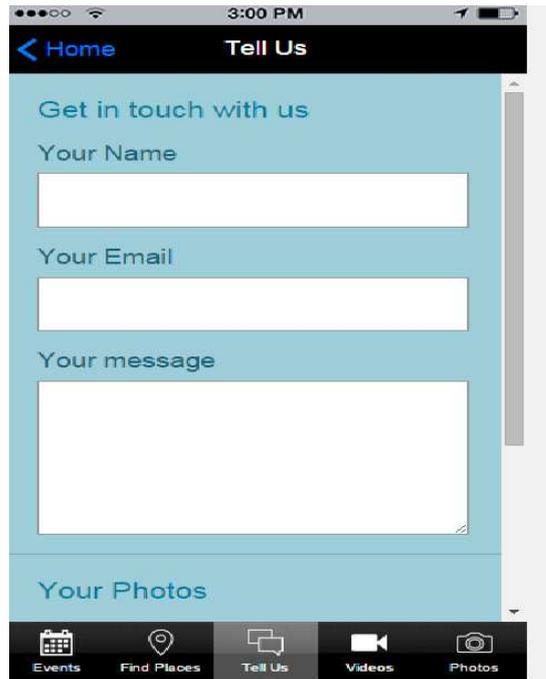
Mockup 3: It shows the different itineraries inside the program and the options the tourist can choose including thematic tours or even if he just want to see some traditional crafts fabrication or attend some intangible cultural heritage events.



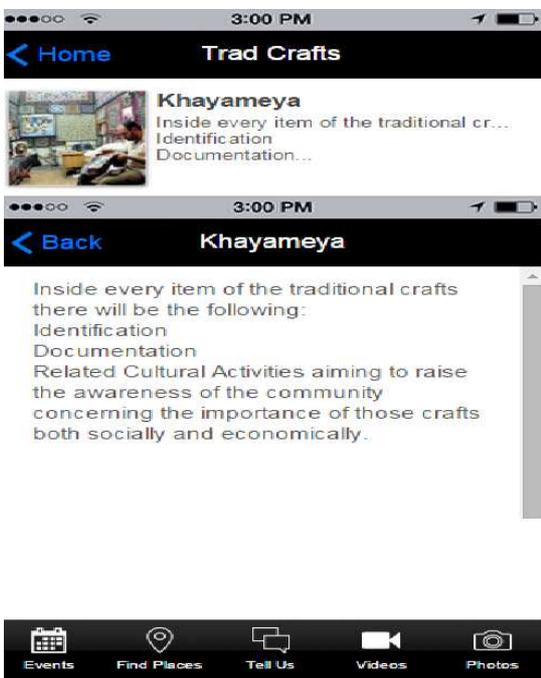
Mockup 4: This part should include the Maps of the sites including the produced GIS maps. As for the events, it should bear a calendar showing the different cultural events taking place in the site. The videos and photos are normally uploaded by the administration and by the visitors of the site.



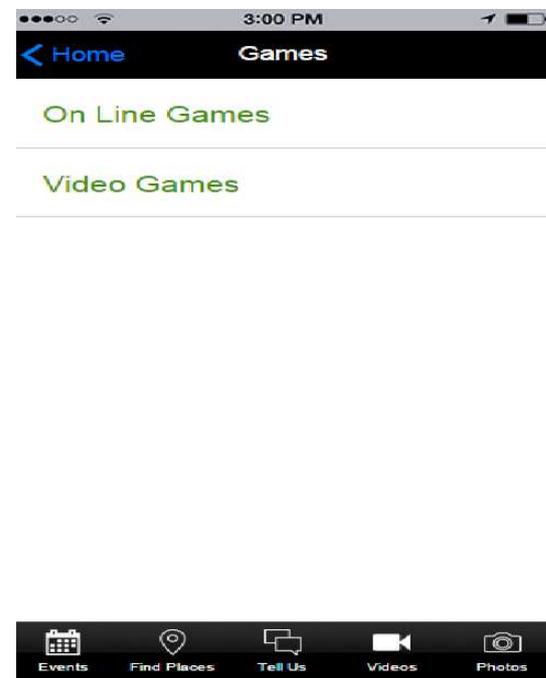
Mockup 5: It shows the different itineraries on the map as well as the places of the production of the traditional crafts, old cafés, restaurants, and traditional concerts such as rababa music or Inshad soufism music.



Mockup 6: It gives us the feedback of the clients or tourists using the mobile application.



More Options in Mockup 7: This part should include information about traditional cairo crafts



More options in Mockup 8: This part should include video and online games based on thematic character from our cultural heritage

Conclusion

Particular added-value elements

In terms of sustainability, the proposed idea carefully addresses environmental concerns through the development and introduction of the thematic walking tour, as a low impact physical activity. The tour will also include stops at the district's most important landmarks that include local artisans' workshops and stores to help generate income through the sales of souvenirs and art work.

The idea carries an important feature which is its ability to generate income to the local community through the use of the copyrights over the thematic brand that can be further used in other income generating activities in the future such as film production, video games, etc...Moreover, this income can be sustained during low touristic seasons by means of online sales of artefacts and project outputs such as publications. If a suitable fund is provided, then this whole idea can be developed into a project where partners will work together through a new entity that will manage the activities of the project. The interventions are designed to pave the way to the establishment of a cultural center located in the Khedivial Cairo district in partnership with the local communities to play this role, thus contributing to job creation, equity and participation.¹³

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¹³ UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme, *Action Plan 2013-2015*.

Imprint:

Proceedings of the 19th International Conference on Cultural Heritage and New Technologies 2014 (CHNT 19, 2014)

Vienna 2015

<http://www.chnt.at/proceedings-chnt-19/>

ISBN 978-3-200-04167-7

Editor/Publisher: Museen der Stadt Wien – Stadtarchäologie

Editorial Team: Wolfgang Börner, Susanne Uhlirz

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