

Investigating the Role of Community in Heritage Conservation through the Ladder of Citizen Participation Approach: Case Study, Port Said, Egypt

Authors : Sara S. Fouad, Omneya Messallam

Abstract : Egypt has countless prestigious buildings and diversity of cultural heritage which are located in many cities. Most of the researchers, archaeologists, stakeholders and governmental bodies are paying more attention to the big cities such as Cairo and Alexandria, due to the country's centralization nature. However, there are other historic cities that are grossly neglected and in need of emergency conservation. For instance, Port Said which is a former colonial city that was established in nineteenth century located at the edge of the northeast Egyptian coast between the Mediterranean Sea and the Suez Canal. This city is chosen because it presents one of the important Egyptian archaeological sites that archive Egyptian architecture of the 19th and 20th centuries. The historic urban fabric is divided into three main districts; the Arab, the European (Al-Afrang), and Port Fouad. The European district is selected to be the research case study as it has culture diversity, significant buildings, and includes the largest number of the listed heritage buildings in Port Said. Based on questionnaires and interviews, since 2003 several initiative trials have been taken by Alliance Francaise, the National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH), some Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and few number of community residents to highlight the important city legacy and protect it from being demolished. Unfortunately, the limitation of their participation in decision-making policies is considered a crucial threat facing sustainable heritage conservation. Therefore, encouraging the local community to participate in their architecture heritage conservation would create a self-confident one, capable of making decisions for the city's future development. This paper aims to investigate the role of the local inhabitants in protecting their buildings heritage through listing the community level of participations twice (2012 and 2018) in preserving their heritage based on the ladder citizen participation approach. Also, it is to encourage community participation in order to promote city architecture conservation, heritage management, and sustainable development. The methodology followed in this empirical research involves using several data assembly methods such as structural observations, questionnaires, interviews, and mental mapping. The questionnaire was distributed among 92 local inhabitants aged 18-60 years. However, the outset of this research at the beginning demonstrated the majority negative attitude, motivation, and confidence of the local inhabitants' role to safeguard their architectural heritage. Over time, there was a change in the negative attitudes. Therefore, raising public awareness and encouraging community participation by providing them with a real opportunity to take part in the decision-making. This may lead to a positive relationship between the community residents and the built heritage, which is essential for promoting its preservation and sustainable development.

Keywords : buildings preservation, community participation, heritage conservation, local inhabitant, ladder of citizen participation

Conference Title : ICACHME 2018 : International Conference on Architectural Conservation, Heritage Management and Environment

Conference Location : Paris, France

Conference Dates : October 29-30, 2018