

Sustainable Tourism and Urban Planning

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Abstract This research paper is an attempt to delve into what constitutes a contemporary 'city of heritage' and harmonizes the relationship between its past, present and future. The city of Luxor is a prime target for this most critical discussion because of the myriad of challenges facing the desire to create and sustain a coherent urban fabric that respects both the patrimony of antiquities and the daily lives of people. The paper, in its summation, aspires to collage a number of complex subjects into a fruitful discussion. The goal is to evoke questions on the multidisciplinary levels of tourism, conservation endeavors and urban living and then proceed to formulate practical solutions to these questions. Concepts such as sustainable tourism, place making, added value, authenticity and local economy are addressed in a trial to formulate a clearer image of the development approach that should be followed in Luxor. The fundamental logic of the discussion is how to combine traditions, vernacular lifestyle, cultural attractions and heritage sites into one coherent touristic map of the city.

We are in Luxor, overlooking the Temple, the excavations of The Sphinx Alley, the city, April 2009 (Fig. 1).

What is the context of Luxor, that a sustainable project of urban development must face? The context is very complex. For ages (we can say since the nineteenth century) the relations between the central power (colonial, national, foreign) and local/local authorities has determined a monument-centered development (its preservation and exploitation in economic terms) both in its material and immaterial aspects. Antiquity is the resource around which heritagization and touristification, two processes barely separable that determine the shape and the image of the city, act. The latter have always looked beyond the boundaries of archeology, Egyptology and conservation to be able to touch upon geopolitical, political-economic themes that are connected with the construction of the national identity as well as the nation itself.

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Fig. 1 Domina Emilio Hotel panoramic terrace (Luxor)

Since the “colonial” era, when the tourist vocation has emerged (the first travel guide of Luxor was published in 1892, the guide of Egypt in 1830, Luxor is a special territory, an autonomous governorship. It is important to stress that besides the local population (ethnic groups, different social and religious groups ...) there is the presence of the “foreign” (here intended both the Westerners and Cairo’s municipal administrators and officials). This group grows up becoming strong and influential. Certainly, since the end of the nineteenth century Egyptologists, pioneers and travelers, have been standing alongside tourists.¹

Locally, on the east shore, the regional resources of Luxor, administrative and material, are divided, between two families since the early twentieth century. The first is Copt, it exercises powers in land management assuming, for this reason, avocational roles that link them to Western community. The second is Muslim, it is the guarantor of the city’s religious heritage and it controls trade and business as well. Moreover, the presence of many foreigners requires the establishment of a local foreign administration very soon and, consequently, the need to found various administrative and institutional representation offices.

The duality of powers lays the foundations for a division between the groups that seek to concentrate and gather appointments to hold administrative power and those who look to grab the monopoly of the resource management: antiquity and tourism. Instead, The west riverside, where there are the villages, builds its own narrative

¹As a mass phenomenon tourism places its foundations at the end of the nineteenth century.

around the legendary sack of the Dayr al-Bahary mummies that happened in 1881. This event almost becomes founding myth and icon-stereotype for touristic marketing activities since 1890. In today's tourist guides, this history has reported yet, but also the metaphor about the relationship between heritage and national identity, theme recaptured by a movie in 1969² that reinterprets this latter to explain the construction of nationalist feeling.

It is important to recall that since 1882, when the British Empire occupied Egypt in order to have control of Suez Canal, the Luxor temple, used as basement till then, was valorized starting an excavation plan carried on intermittently until 1920s.³ On the temple insisted the so-called Arab village, which had to be "dismantled". It was a procedure that led an actual urban restructuring plan with related displacement of the living populations, paying quite-balanced allowances for the houses by means of negotiation that also involved the villas and facilities of the foreigner residents (English, French, German).

Over the years of the English Protectorate an independent movement is increasingly growing. The ancient heritage is gradually invested by politics and the processes of decolonization of Egyptology and administration of ancient sites become strategic.⁴

King Fouad has begun an action capable of being defined tourist marketing. Egypt, indeed, disseminates its international image through its Monuments that are intrinsically linked to a possible use for tourist purposes. In 1912, he founded an Egyptian Propaganda Association to promote actions around three major themes (still relevant and fundamental) about comfort, advertising and security. During the two world wars, this association becomes the main interlocutor abroad for what concern agreements and regulation of activities related to tourism (accommodations and transport).

After the 1919 Revolution leads by the nationalist leader Saad Zaghloul, in the first months 1922, Egypt win independence but the strategic ministries remains under British control and the antiquities one under French leadership.

However, during 1920s, Luxor (whose morphology changes according to what we call the heritage/tourism needs) becomes an administrative unit, with a quite active municipality. In this division of "power and control" Luxor becomes battlegrounds among colonial powers, governments and local authorities. Areas of discussion are economy issues, management of historical sites both in term of touristic attraction and urban planing: 1922 is a crucial year. It is also the year of the

²The film "The Mummy" by Shadi Abdel Salam is part of the debate on political independence and nation; The shootings begin in 1967, just as Egypt loses the six-day war against Israel, the film expresses the idea that monumental antiquity is an emblem and collective value.

³To give an idea of the climate of contrasts and clutches among the subjects involved in the governance of the territory, one can also see the work of a subsequent restructuring plan of the city of the 1930s (more precisely 1937) to enlarge the Corniche and arrange a garden of Faced with the facade of the temple, because of the opposition between local and municipal authorities and the central service of antiquities will be interrupted until we find agreement of 1943).

⁴Gamblin (2007).

incredible discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb. A particular juncture happens, the death of the lender and owner of the tomb excavation and the rise of a secessionist in quality of prime minister. He aims at the nationalization⁵ of the goods, he calls for suspending excavation in order to rewrite the rules and agreement between foreign excavations and the Egyptian government. The Egyptian Carter is not able to continue excavations, and the rediscovered material is no longer divided as previously done, but it is considered wholly owned by Egyptian state. The groundbreaking ceremony turns into an anti-British political claim. It conveys the idea of a revival of an Egyptian awareness of the value of its historical heritage promoted to symbol the foundation of the nation. Luxor, as Cairo, becomes the theater of a nationalization of ancient vestiges.⁶

Also in regards to the relationship between ancient monument and national unity, in Luxor contest, it is worth mentioning the experience of New Gurna, the modern village designed by architect Hassan Fathy. The work started in 1945 but was interrupted in 1948. It originated in an experimental and utopian idea, let say romantic, which points out the theme of sustainability, in relation with politics vision for territorial development and tourism marketing aimed at regulating/demolishing the informal settlements on the mountains close to historical sites. New Gurna village embraces a vernacular idea of going back to the origins (presumed Nubian architecture) in order to reduce construction costs. The vernacular revival regarded both the constructive form and constructive system with local materials, raw ground for the walls and roof domes, which articulates. An urban settlement is equipped with "facilities" (school, flies, theater ...) to meet the need of reformist demands. Population did not want to abandon their homes, and only the strong demographic growth of 1970s pushed for use these houses, which were enlarged and modified with other constructive methods retracting the principle of relationship with the ancient heritage, here intended as retableing the theme tradition/national identity for built environment in broad sense.

The Department of Antiquity moves from French to Egyptian leadership in 1958, year when Nasser creates a fund to support the completion of works around the Luxor Temple... the city extends. However, the government of the Egyptian Republic doesn't want to nationalize either the tourism department or the antiquity department in order to maintain cash flow. During Nasserian period, tourism for Egypt is an important source of incomes but it is not at the center of political

⁵Also playing the rivalry of "foreign nationalisms" between British protection and antiquity services related to the French.

⁶*Faronism* is defined as this form of national imagery that produces a targeted and a-confessional image of the nation on a regional scale and on a global scale. There is a need for a synthetic specification, Egyptian nationalism of the ethno-territorial form, it is basically anti-colonialist and develops from the nineteenth century and it is imposed until the first decades of the twentieth century. Arab nationalism is instead secular and has a socialist political, and its utmost dissemination is during the GA Nasser government.

concerns for reformation or planning (such as agrarian reform, industrialization, illiteracy...). Nevertheless, tourism sector, although under state system, has got continuity of private and foreign investment.

In the 1970s, Saddam Infiṭāh's policy of economic openness⁷ inflates public sector and the state has more influence in tourism development. The ministry, through the newly established of national tourist agencies, gives the leadership of the market to fellow investors. The state steers the market but relies on the private. It becomes a partner of foreign companies and international finance agencies. It controls this profitable sector dictating terms and promoting actions that support networks able to ensure the control and its replica.

Since the 1960s, UN, UNESCO and the World Bank have encouraged policies for enhancing the historical and cultural heritage. They define programs that promote international tourism in the countries of the South of the World. International tourism⁸ should drive economy and support development of disadvantaged countries. Their commitment for Luxor territory is increasingly intense.

Since, the 1980s, the report "Our Common Future" (Brundtland Commission, 1987) and, subsequently, "United Nations Conference on Environment and Development", most commonly called the Rio Conference (1992), put at the center the theme of sustainability, also acknowledged by several tourism agencies. "Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities".⁹

In the nineties, it finds nourishment the idyllic idea that international tourism must be not only sustainable but also responsible. Tourism is seen as an instrument to support political stability, a tool of: social sustainability, peace, exchange and cultural knowledge. Tourism sectors often work in partnership with NGOs. In these years a series of terrorist attacks, that ravaged Egypt and the territory of Luxor (1992–1997), take place. As we have already seen in the 1970s, tourism development in Egypt can be pursued if environmental conditions, that welcome the development opportunities itself, are assured .

How to say, create a shared base for tourist development. Ideologically speaking: development, civilization, combating poverty and underdevelopment (as if they are the "cradle" of any terrorism) and political awareness of the value of tourism, are at the base of the programs that they want to protect the sector, which produces employment and wealth, from the risk of terrorism.

In the early 1990s, tourist sector resort to international financial, there is concentration of capital at the monopoly's limit. Thanks to IMF programs increases the privatization of public institutions, the debts to foreign is reduced by 50% (at the

⁷Openings to market logics push for a change in international alliances (from the Soviet Union to the United States).

⁸World Tourism Organization (Now UNTWO, since 2003 becomes a specialized agency of the United Nations, is formed by members of 150 states plus another 300—other organizations, private companies, universities, NGOs, professional associations ...).

⁹<http://sdt.unwto.org/content/about-us-5>.



Fig. 2 The city of Luxor and the territories on the east bank

end of the Gulf War) and new government agencies are created (for: distribution of financial support, promotion of the tourist image in the world, diversification of the tourist attractions).

Focusing again on Luxor context, in 1976 a decree defines the region (and its monuments) as a tourist region and, therefore, management goes to the Ministry of Tourism, creating competition and potential discord with the Ministry of Culture, which is responsible for Egyptian antiquities.

In 1979, UNESCO includes Luxor/Tebe and the necropolis of the west riverside into its list. By extension, there is a controversy between various player for the management of the territories: (within the government, between local government

and central power, between local groups and private investors locals and not, between international government agencies and local administration).

In 1989 it is made a new statute that defines the city as territorial unit of exceptional value for its capital assets and for those come from international tourism. A small town but defines as “a city that has a particular importance in reason of: its ancient archaeological, cultural character and international tourism. It is, therefore, a cultural showcase for the Arab Republic of Egypt”. The concept of showcase is interesting because it is intended not only as showcase for Egypt in its relations with foreign countries, it is also the showcase for international Investors who may have a reputational benefit from investment in an area perceived as the cradle of civilization.¹⁰

The exception of Luxor’s administration responds to: the centralist political strategies, the monopolistic approach, as well as to the management of local economic resources for archaeological sites and tourist revenues.¹¹

Between 1994 and 2004, the frequent turnover of presidents, designated by the central government (four in total, three of them were previously senior military) has makes difficult to implement long-term development programs, in addition, it has made impossible to maintain a continuity in planning urban regeneration and local administration. Increasingly, joint boards carry out the management (board of trustees), and the central government make every strategic decision about planning.¹²

In this framework, the “Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Luxor, Egypt” has been elaborated since 1996 for the development of the territory with a vision until 2017 (Fig. 2).

Within the “Comprehensive Development Plan for the City of Luxor, Egypt” the group of the Ph.D. in Architecture, Urban Design, Conservation of Housing and Landscape of Politecnico di Milano, Italy proposes a study called “The Development of a Monumental and Visual Values of the Sphinx Alley.” between 2009 and 2011.

The main purpose of the Comprehensive Development Plan is to find solutions to the problem of a general serious impoverishment. Impoverishment is due to exponential growth of population (attracted by opportunity to get job or make business in a city where tourism is the foremost economy) which determines a major housing emergency. Also for this reason, the United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat), the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities Higher Council of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) are partners of the project (Fig. 3).

¹⁰Gamblin (2007).

¹¹At the top council of the city, the tourism and antiquity sectors are usually represented by members designated by Cairo, in great detail (with a ratio of four and three out of 18 members, respectively).

¹²An example, important to understanding the framework in which Comprehensive planning is born, USAID’s US agency enters Luxor in the Secondary Cities Development program (1994/2014).



Fig. 3 Living poor in Luxor (Karnak) and in Gurna

Over 20 years four programs were developed. Common points on which the 1984 and 1993 plans were made are: dismantling of informal settlements around monumental areas, setting of new urban focal points, removal of rural villages from the city to transform the new free space into urban areas that redefine the city's boundaries. An Urban development that: promotes low density and implementation of public and touristic facilities, improves living standard creating new jobs, lays the foundation for new urban communities, almost satellite towns, for redundant population. The 2000 Plan (later updated by the 2004 Plan) proposes to transform heritage areas into an Open-Air Museum.¹³ To improve the urban sector it plans to provide new areas and tourist activities, supporting also supply industry, with beneficial results for economy and recovery process of agricultural areas along both sides of the Nile. Six projects have been selected in this plan: the restoration of Sphinx Alley, the development of El-Toad's tourist settlement, the development of a new community in New Luxor, the provision of the infrastructures needed for

¹³Kamar (2014).

these two settlements, the strategic plan for high quality agriculture, the development of the Open Air Museum and “heritage” district.

The proposal “The Development of a Monumental and Visual Values of the Sphinx Alley” made by the Ph.D. student of the doctoral program “Architecture, Urban Design, Conservation of Housing and Landscape” was referred to the investment project number one and number six: the restoration of the Sphinx Alley and the design project of Luxor as the Open Museum. From both actions were expected a strong environmental and urban impact (actually extended at territorial level) that may transform the shape of the city and its policies.

The approach was to face the study with a multi-disciplinary perspective able to deal with spaces and forms at different scale and, above all, with the scientific areas involved. For this reason, issues that need to be analyzed by different disciplines (such as economic sciences, human sciences) have been taken in the light of complexity and translated in specific solutions by project always under the umbrella of taking care of the urban territory. The sustainability criteria were already defined by the International Commission within the program. “Sustainability” has been the implicit background, always taken into account, that has made possible to drive various domain towards a design synthesis.

The WTO defines sustainable tourism: “Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities”.¹⁴

The project of urban architecture is sustainable because it is respectful of the resources available and able to preserve them, with the view of leaving resources to future generations.

¹⁴*Reference: Making Tourism More Sustainable—A Guide for Policy Makers*, UNEP and UNWTO, 2005, pp. 11–12—“Sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability. Thus, sustainable tourism should:

(1) Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity. (2) Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance. (3) Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

Sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and it requires constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary.

Sustainable tourism should also maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them”.

Paraphrasing Nicola Emery,¹⁵ the sustainable urban project wants to offer space and not to occupy it. “To cure means to show relationships and to preserve them, being in relation to natural diversity and to the fabric of the pre-existence. It means to choose a modality different than the colonizing process of shopping mall or the negation one that act individually. To Cure means: creating free space rather than occupying it. It means working to supply space, such as the place, the receptacle for multiple energies. A reserve, a shelter not to be exhausted but to be respected and recognized.”

Architecture doesn't reflect social identities only, but contributes to setting them. It is a “device that should have the overall aim to cure and harmonize space, understanding this last as a fundamental common good.”¹⁶ The quality of human experience is inherent in its relational character, and it is transmitted to architecture. This relation has to be placed at the center of a design project for territories where tourism is not just an important theme, but it is what informs the context. A synthetic glance, by which jointly address environmental, social and human ecology, a glance shifted to hybridization in order to operate within a “laboratory” where different “expertise”¹⁷ work together.

A project for Luxor also requires a comparison with sociological and anthropological debates about tourism, if the aim is to provide not a design project for a codified sustainable tourism but architectures for a long lasting sustainability in a context full of contradictions where tourism as a key role for economy.

We are particularly interested in the relationship to the concept of authenticity and not authenticity of experience (Fig. 4).

Mass tourism was born, as already mentioned, in the mid-nineteenth century (and it boomed in the twenties of last century). It is expression of modernity and it represents its fundamental characteristics of separation and standardization of time: working time-leisure time (even more time out of the ordinary, tourism experience becomes the time of evasion from the ‘Ordinary and routine’).

Many studies consider mass tourism as a phenomenon of standardized experiences. The journey is just an entertainment moment, with the criticalness of becoming almost pre-packaged and specially massive recipe.

The widest possible dissemination through desire-building operations around a product conveyed by mass media. Communication, just like any other industrial product, is a consumer product. In this sense, we can say that are offered inauthentic experiences (but they have effect on places where there is a trend to reproduce panoramas according to created expectations that are replicated as a kind of non-place).

This vision of an uniform standardization, an absolute lack of authenticity and artificiality of tourism, instead, is reduced by surveys and reflections such as those of Cohen and MacCannel. They retrace different ways and reasons that drive

¹⁵Emery (2007).

¹⁶Op. cit.

¹⁷Bruno Latour, *Atmosphère, atmosphère*, 2003 in Garcia-Germán (2010).



Fig. 4 In-authenticity of the experience of producing alabaster objects (typical craftsmanship)

tourists as well as they identify a form of authenticity in the perception that the single tourist has of his own tourism experience. The first, in *Who is a Tourist?*,¹⁸ classifies types of tourists, mobility models, their temporalities and motivations.

Cohen tells us that mass tourism seeks to build a sort of environmental bubble, where the tourist can rediscover his cultural patterns and, thus, he acts as a mediator in the relationship with culture, thought, and local living and, eventually, a superficial view of the life there is enough for him.

How to stay in the bubble or get of, becomes a modern tourist-pilgrim (because the will to authentically know and experience exists). They are always part of a consumption relationship with the offer of local cultures. Changing processes start and they go beyond: authenticity, staging and tourists' satisfaction (both aesthetic and in term of expectations) provided by local cultures.

MacCallen¹⁹ supports the idea that tourists seek authentic experiences and they try to get in touch and interact with the local population. Six modalities can be identified, with different grades between what is artificial and what is truly authentic. Four intermediate stages exist between the Front region (the social space where the relation between tourists and locals is mediated by tour operators) and Back region (where, like in a back-stage, inhabitants live a normal life, that was staged in the previous one, therefore this one would be the place of authenticity).

¹⁸Cohen (1974).

¹⁹MacCannell (1973).

According to this last point of view, the tourist becomes part of the environment where he is living, even temporally, and the local perceives him as belonging the context.

In the 1980s, a post-modernist theory about tourism was taken into account. It assumes that different elements lead us to move and visit new places. We should bear in mind that consumption change the meaning of objects, goods, cultural production and consumer goods build personal and collective identities. Furthermore, the tourist, according to Urry,²⁰ is aware of being a tourist, and aware that not a single authentic experience exists.

These theories, although criticized, are essential to rethink a tourist theory able to connect: sociology of tourism, Cultural Studies and “mobility paradigm”.²¹ The modern paradigm switches from distinction and separation between practices and social fields to their merge. Tourism and culture are mixed, tourism industry is linked with cultural industry, and mobility becomes pivotal: what moves is no longer just the physical flow of tourists but also objects, data, images, communications.

Also tourism is essentially based on combination of different physical mobility, imaginable and virtual. Tourism, as a cultural practice, is “symptomatic of an society always more mobile and has a central role rather than being a marginal and peripheral activity.”²²

For Appadurai,²³ culture is a moving entity with five flows, that he called with the suffix *-orama*: the *ethno-rama*, which is the flow of men (workers, tourists, immigrants, refugees...) the *flow of technology* (ever faster and extensive), the *flow of money*, the *flow of images* (personal and by media) and the *flow of ideas*. The idea of intersecting flows, that independently by their direction effect one another, makes clear that their separation is not possible for a discrete analytical definition, and the suffix *-orama* (comes from panorama) stresses that it doesn't exist a key position for their observation. Observation is always a point of view within the flows; speed variation increases complexity and, actually, the container—the control body of the various layers of social life (the “national state”)—is heavily weakening (Fig. 5).

“Reality” is where there are points of overlap between flows, which are in motion by nature, this destabilizes process of location, sense of belonging and place. You cannot do anymore their actual spatialization.

The concept of flow implies movement, and movement is in contrast with our log-established idea that sense of belonging can be localized. The different *-orami* are no longer recognizable in spatial sense, but their transformation and complex

²⁰Urry (1990).

²¹Mascheroni (2007).

²²Mascheroni, Giovanna “Le mobilità turistiche: il turismo come movimento di persone, luoghi, oggetti, immagini e comunicazione” in *Annali Italiani del Turismo Internazionale*, 2006 volume n. 1 (cit Rojek, C. e Urry, J. *Touring Cultures: Transformations of Travel and Theory*, Routledge, London, 1997).

²³Appadurai (2001).



Fig. 5 The town “practicable” by the tourist (Corniche) and the back of Sphinx Avenue

interactions must be traced. Therefore, one central force of the modern world is the de-territorialization.

The concept of place, as unique space where there is a particular culture, is overcome (for Luxor’s, it is still incontrovertible the uniqueness given by the presence of its monuments, recognized all over the world as heritage of humanity).

Places are hub within a network of flows, hybrid entities where material elements meet. On the stages created by the tourist understanding, we can say that also the tourist and his footprint are part of the performance, therefore places become space for hybridization (Fig. 6).

“Global mobility, through the hybridization and mobilization of places and cultures, generates new spatialities that are located in the middle between places of origin and destinations, canceling their distinctions”.²⁴

The historical excursus, initially proposed as a description of Luxor’s context, would like to show how, over the centuries, political administrative dynamics regarding tourism have been structured and reproduced. We focus on actors to emphasize multiple scales and, at the same time, the strong dirigisme by local authorities, central power/powers and international capitals. It was important for our project, in fact, to understand in which context the plan of development was defined. Within a situation where tourism management is strategically and strongly handled (deep and continuous transformations are faced, in fact, in terms of management, organization or marketing), it seems that the relationship between tourism and society should have been a long-term one, but actually, in name of a higher yield (political, economic, of image), it wasn’t.

It is proposed a re-reading of the project that during the development has taken into account additional aspects of the “tourism phenomenon”:

- Tourism as a development policy, how it replies to specific requirements of political and economic investment but, furthermore, its consequences for population;
- Tourism with regards to: relationship between foreign and local, “involvement” of local populations, changes within communities from the point of view of social and cultural relations and contradictions.
- Tourism and its own culture as well as in relation to the tourist as a subject.
- Sustainable and responsible tourism, as already seen in environmental and social terms, with reference to heritage, impact on natural or historical environments, taking into account security (even more crucial) as theme that should be addressed.

The Sphinx Alley is a physical break within the urban fabric. It divides longitudinally the urban space and it drastically reduces connections. The buffer zone, protecting the monument and impeding visitor’s enjoyment, creates a situation of further isolation. In the project, the infinitely long spit avenue is no longer a connecting channel or a monument that should be isolated, but becomes a path. A path along which (six) stations are proposed, sort of milestones for a narrative in development.

²⁴Mascheroni (2006).



Fig. 6 Brothers coffee shop

The path offers opportunities for resting, crossing, appreciating alterity of the place, changing direction, entry and exit... The six stations offer multiple experiences, they meet the needs of a new cultural tourism that is different compared to the massive one of the 1980s of which Luxor was a typical example in Egypt context (Fig. 7).

Since 2006, Unesco has promoted creative tourism, with the slogan “less museums, more squares”²⁵ With the idea of path and possible relations, it is pre-figured a proposal that goes beyond the “environmental bubble” defined by Cohen. This last seems on the stage yet and it precisely on the track of an environment that replicates the own culture of tourists, indeed, the project not only would transform and define the territory, but it offers many point of view for tourists.

According to Urry’s definition (maybe outdated and overcome in favor of modern one in which visitors and guests can more easily interact, the “glance”²⁶) look is a way to make places and cultures part of our background. It changes according to historical periods, social contexts, individuals. These looks can be divided into three dichotomies that can help during design process of project that welcomes and proposes a different experiences: the romantic/collective dimension

²⁵“Creative Tourism” involves more interaction, in which the visitor has an educational, emotional, social, and participative interaction with the place, its living culture, and the people who live there. They feel like a citizen. This third generation requires that managers also evolve, recognizing the creativity within their city as a resource, and providing new opportunities to meet the evolving interests of tourists. While creative tourism must be linked to culture, the particular cultural expressions will be unique to each place.” fonte UNESCO: Discussion Report of the Planning Meeting for 2008 International Conference on Creative Tourism Santa Fe, New Mexico, U.S.A. October 25–27, 2006.

²⁶Chaney The Power of Metaphors in Tourism Theory in Coleman and Crang (2008).



Fig. 7 The tissues behind the first curtain on the Sphinx Alley

(the first puts privacy and contemplation, the second, the presence of crowds and tourist infrastructure), the historical dimension/modernity (priority to cultural heritage before tourism facilities), the dimension authentic/fictional compared to local culture.

The project offers “space” not a specific views, it is for a city not limited to meet and have a comparison with tourism, but in which the “tourist dimension” is the constitutive DNA.

The idea of a city museum, with the view of boosting the economy, is open to the tourist dimension as confirmed by the trend of a global promotion of cultural tourism in cities that we will mention later.²⁷

Moreover, the idea of city museum certainly involves issues related to conservation of an archaeological site, but it loses effectiveness when tourism policies encourage more the touch and go model than “slow” experience. In fact, if significant investments and priorities are focused on building accommodations and facilities (with high incomes for investors) in more peripheral areas protection switches towards potential degradation phenomena that jeopardize the archeological or historical site (also in terms of investments for protection, safeguard, research, proper communication etc.) (Fig. 8).

If urban scale actions can act as an enzyme for tissue regeneration, it is conceivable, always within the framework of future socio-political stability, to propose model of stay more scattered in the city and in the redeveloped fabrics, with actual wide return also for social economy.

According to this view we deal with issues connected to New Town that the Plan foresees. We have to accept that those who work in tourist sector, at small scale, (included the huge number of temporary workers that benefit of tourism organized by “operators”, tourist guides, calash drivers, peddlers, taxi drivers, small restaurant owners, that are contracted or freelance), needs to live close to sites.

Commuting doesn't allow them to access the actual economic resource. Furthermore, during the development of our project there wasn't a “middle-class” that could move.

In Luxor, a critical issues regards the housing projects for the local population. To maximize the return, they have been re-converted for luxury tourism (it is also important to take into account the request of luxury by Egyptian middle-class and the pressure of Arab investors operating in this market) and therefore they don't generate the expected improvement for sort of *mixité* between locals, tourists, “foreign” residents.

²⁷The 5th Global Summit On City Tourism in November 2016 was held in Luxor. The strategic importance of the promotion of “the city's tourist (cultural and creative)” is confirmed. Many interesting points have emerged: the importance of tangible and intangible “culture” and “cultural heritage” as a means for destination competitiveness and also for local community empowerment; Tourism in cities is an opportunity to safeguard and enhance the quality of life of the local community and an incubator of innovation and technology.



Fig. 8 Antiquities and revenue



Fig. 9 Tourists at Luxor Temple

The problem of security (already with the attacks in the 1990s, and in particular the one in 1997 in Deir el-Bahari) has generated a feeling of separation between the various elements of the territory, like bubbles around an attractive center (Fig. 9).

This happens for the areas of the monument, the tourist facilities of the site (the mall, the street of souk etc.) and the tourist accommodation (high delocalized but

offering new services for sport and wellness etc., hence, with a potential of being monument's competitors).

Social separation: informal settlements are more and more a political issue than an urban planning one, a national issue often managed choosing models of "gated community" in both directions (gold "gated community" for rich and separated districts "slums" for poor people) and the matter of informal settlements is basically used to endorse speculative operation with high return in the short term.

Re-reading the project

We get across the city along the Avenue of Sphinx, describing the stations (following the ancient Egyptian processional ritual) in brief, because already in deep discussed by other essays of this publication.

1. The first station is a space dedicated to Virtual Simulation, an immersive educational and informative space equipped with digital technologies in order to enhance the tourist experience recreating in three dimensions historical scenarios or proposing a vision of heritage and archeological remains that cannot be directly touched for conservation reasons.

Virtual Simulation and augmented reality, technologies always more accessible, are not proposed as a playful attraction, but they would enrich the visit experience with scientific contents user-adjustable and they can be used for development of educational laboratory for school visits.

It is a "sustainable device" because it allows physical protection of fragile material that otherwise would be available to specialists only. Moreover, nowadays, replicas are accepted and appreciate thanks to the paradigm shift in cultural tourism.

Public is increasingly aware that common heritage should be safeguarded and safeguard. In April 2016, for instance, the exact replica²⁸ of the Tutankhamon's mortuary chamber tomb, which is expected to close in the coming years due to higher moisture content generated by visitors (about 1000 per day on average in 2010), was inaugurated.

2. The Green Terraces: is a complex of open spaces, along an hypothetical pathway between the two temples, where people can stop and rest. It is close to the museum and commercial facilities and services of the urban fabric. It is, as already mentioned, a device support exchange processes between tourists and inhabitants, a space of hybridization according to a view that would overcome the mechanisms described by MacCannell.

²⁸Is about a one kilometer away from the original, and was made after years of 3D scanner pads by Factum Arte.

No simulated authenticity, but an urban space of beauty, a passage and connecting device as the one that is designed for the area close to the bridge that connects the two parts of the city of which especially one risks to become a back side.

Supply space through architecture is a “promise”, renewable/durable, for the quality of space itself and life.

3. Pharaonic and Public Garden. It wants to be a public garden of connection the Nile, the Corniche and the sphinxes' boulevard, but it is also a new tourist supply. Part of it as a botanical garden, where it is possible to grow local species of flowers and tree, more precisely the 256 ones collected by Tutmosis III and reproduced in the Karnak Temple. It is a space for the city but also a new high quality attraction. Pedestrian accessibility and its location away from the other stations, are in compliance with the idea of enjoying the Open Museum city not as an excursion but as a continuous experience of the city extended in time.

An attraction not only for tourists but also citizenship, always with a view of social sustainability. If linked with the urban fabric it may boost revitalization and development of local opportunities related to food services and more.

Stations 4, 5 and 6 are part of a sort of system.

4. The Folk House: is a chance.

It is a building structure located near a possible secondary entrance of Karnak Temple. When it will be restored, It could be used as meeting center and party house by locals but it could also be opened to tourists who can enjoy its cultural offering. Its restoration, if financed, needs that all off those who manage tourism and heritage are involved and, finally, it requires to add also minor urban patterns in the planning with the aim of their future use and management by the local population (Fig. 10).

Since the early 2000s, Zahy Hawwas has been led the Council of Antiquity. The institution promotes a vision that encourages relationships between the archaeological monument and its surroundings. The proposal is especially focused on urban fabrics, including informal ones, that have characterized the image of the city for ages but they are inconsistent with an expected higher profitability.

Therefore, in addition to preservation of built environment, the proposal identifies new opportunities for a slow transformation of this part of the city. It would promote a cultural tourism that ask for authenticity (understanding and participating in the life of the city), and it wants to encourage, even more, a widespread creative tourism. It would protect and, at the same time, return an open space for local population, where it is possible to establish new positive relationships. A recover minor urban fabric, not monumentalized or picturesque, which participates in the Open-Museum as a heritage and not as an attraction.

A urban fabric that becomes safe, a self-regulating network of exchanges where a tourist can find and can be guided to additional interesting places such as the cemetery, or the informal settlements, hence, a peculiar and multi-colored urban pattern etc (Fig. 11).



Fig. 10 The tissues of Karnak village



Fig. 11 The cemetery

The theme of security is faced with the conviction, not the propaganda, that knowledge and sharing as an active path is the basis of peace pacification.

5. In this area is always pivotal to create an extended milestone, almost a district, the Quality Craft Shop where culture and shopping bump into each other. It is required to invest in relationship between tourists and local people, starting from fostering craft production and widespread commercial opportunities, with microcredit instruments.

The “gentle” commercial relationship between tourists and locals, not driven by others and not extremely pushed by the “commission” system, needs and creates, at the same time, conditions and perceptions of security that encourage also the so-called responsible tourism.

Security is perceived when relationships with territory are complex, when the “practices” are manifold. In an *mixité* environment (housing, trade, manufacturing, services) it is beneficial for a tourist experiences the same environment, however, according to the conditions that tourism is the economic engine and the main source of incomes (as in the extreme case of Luxor), it is essential to support a fair competition in order to recreate an environmental conditions of security.

6. Palm Grove: is an existing oasis, in visual contact with the temple of Karnak. It is an opportunity when a scenery is no longer built to satisfy the tourist, but to preserve and safeguard a natural space and collective resource (Fig. 12).



Fig. 12 The oasis palm grove

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