

The Nile River: River Tourism, Waterfront Development and Cultural Ecosystems

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ABSTRACT

Town dwellers in Europe and developed countries accorded great importance to rivers as a mean of transporting merchandise as well as tourism and waterfront development. River banks usually inhibit the cores around which towns evolve. They constitute the historic districts that have significant tourism sites and distinctive urban activities. On the one hand, various recreational activities have come to exist on the shores of rivers benefiting from such potential means of transportation and tourism development. This has led to the emergence of a new kind of tourism within European towns, namely river tourism, which relies on the various natural and human potentials on the banks of rivers.

On the other hand, river banks are considered mainly public spaces that include multiple layers of social interaction and community communication. Hence, waterfront development plans and consequent river tourism activities must promote the creation of a balance cultural and social ecosystems to guarantee smooth and sustainable usage of implemented projects. As the social value of public space lies in its relevance to the local context and in people's memory of places, successful public spaces must provide opportunities for social interaction, social communication, social inclusion, and also facilitate community ties.

This paper, therefore, aims to theoretically explore the evolvement of tourism development with respect to rivers waterfronts. It also aims to explore and document the connection between effective and sustainable public spaces with respect to balance cultural ecosystems within rivers waterfronts and consequent river tourism activities. Furthermore, using the case of the River Nile waterfronts, this paper aims to shed light on the shortcomings of the development planning process within waterfronts areas in Egypt. It helps the decision-makers to critically understand the impact of the evident lack of attention to the cultural and social ecosystems indicators on both the official regulations governing the development planning process as well as successive development plans of the Nile River waterfront and consequent river tourism activities.

KEYWORDS

River Tourism, Waterfront Development, River Nile, Cultural Ecosystems

1. TOURISM: BACKGROUND AND DEFINITIONS

Tourism is by no means a new phenomenon. Its historic origins can be traced in the ancient cultures of Ancient Egyptians, Greek, and Roman social activities. People have always travelled to distant parts of the world, to view great buildings and works of arts, learn new languages, experience new cultures, and taste of different cuisines (Casson 1974; Chakraborty and Chakravarti 2008; Onor 2015). Tourism has been associated with the Industrial Revolution (1760-1840), especially in the United Kingdom, the first European country to promote leisure time for the increasing industrial population (Singh 2008). The transition to modern tourism happened principally due to the revolutionary changes in technology, transportation, and communication; rising personal incomes due to rapid industrialization; and the enterprise of middle-class professionals related to tourism activities (Allan 2002). Till the mid-1940s, academic tend to define tourism as:

“the sum of the phenomena and relationships arising from the travel and stay of non-residents, in so far as they do not lead to permanent residence and are not connected to any earning activity” (Hunziker and Krapf 1942:11 cited in Onor 2015:41)

The above predominant definition of tourism continued throughout literature till the very late 1970s in spite of the mega shift in the tourism paradigm after WWII (1939-1945). In the aftermath of WWII, the long and deprived war years led to an increased desire to travel to foreign destinations. The war had given rise to great numbers travellers, especially of British nationality to witness the sites of battles such as Normandy beaches and St. Nazaire. North Americans and Japanese were flocking to sites of conflict in the pacific as Iwo Jima and Guadalcanal. Meanwhile, the surplus of aircraft in immediate post-war years paved the way towards the growth of private-sector airlines (Holloway 2006; Onor 2015). From its humble, tourism started to be recognized as a very important economic activity worldwide as:

“an activity essential to the life of nations with its direct effects on the social, cultural, educational, and economic sectors of national societies and on their international relations” (Manila Declaration 1980:1)

Yet, it has not been until the rise of the globalization movement and the consequent entrepreneurial approach in urban development during the very early 1990s that the relationship between tourism, urban development, and consequent local physical planning of waterfronts and harbour zones, has been recognised practically and academically. The globalisation movement grabbed countries attention to the importance of cities and localities. The slogan of “think global act local” has been the driving force to trigger another mega shift in the tourism paradigm, urban planning, urban governance and city management. Tourism no longer only means travelling for leisure and entertainment yet also means experiencing culture diversity and social interaction (Gladstone 1998; Vallega 2001; Chen 2015; Huang *et al* 2015). This new perception has been reflected in The World Tourism Organization (WTO) definition of tourism as:

“The activities of a person travelling outside his or her usual environment and culture (...) and whose main purpose of travel is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from the place visited” (WTO 2001:1)

2. WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

The waterfront is considered the origin context of human culture and economy because of trading and movement of humans and goods. The rise and fall of many cities were related to transportation and trading. Villages located on waterfronts turned into fishing villages and trading ports. During

the Industrial Revolution Era (1760-1840), many industrial districts were established by seas and rivers mainly for the purpose of efficient transportation (Hayuth 1998).

Nevertheless, after the industrial revolution, the epic advancement of technology and communication and the rising awareness of negative environmental, health and social impact on communities has led to a dramatic shift of the industrial structures all over the world. Industrial companies, areas, and districts moved their activities to edges of cities and in most case outside cities borders. Consequently, the unused land of old industrial districts and ports became one of the main foci of urban planning practitioners and academics for their favourable usual geographical positions in approaching downtown (Hoyle 2000; Chen 2015). Hoyle (1999) claims that the redevelopment of waterfront land became a global urban phenomenon, from advanced countries to developing countries from cosmopolitan cities to small towns, have been affected greatly by the success experience of Baltimore inner harbour renewal since the mid-1960s (i.e. the Baltimore Type) with massive spatial, economic and ecological change to waterfronts all over the world.

Vallega (2001) points out that the waterfront development has passed two distinctive stages. The first stage (1960- 1990) waterfront development focused on saving local GDP and employment rate via commercial and national tourism activities and their consequent physical planning activities. The second stage (since the mid-1990s), the rise of globalisation, sustainable development, diversity, cultural heritage, coastal management, city image and city labelling concepts had a major impact on waterfront development activities pegged with soaring international tourism. Since the mid-1990s, the notion of sustainability and globalisation, governance and management have been the cross-cutting edge as well as the connector of all development disciplines including urban development, tourism development, and management, environmental management, strategic planning, etc. Hence no development plan could be formulated without the taking into consideration all underpinning corners of sustainability (i.e. economic, social, environmental and urban dimensions).

3. WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT: CLASSIFICATION AND PRINCIPLES

From the literature review, there are many classifications for waterfront development, however, could be collectively presented in three main types of classifications. The first type is classifying waterfront development according to location and function of activities. This is summarized in six main categories as ecological protection zones, new urban development outside cities, rebuilding and/or extending old ports and industrial zones, new development connected to residential areas, new development connected to downtown area, and finally new development for leisure and travel (Chang *et al* 2001; Keith 2004).

The second type of classification reflecting the only function of waterfront development regardless of its location which some scholars and practitioners perceive as a disadvantage. In this type waterfront development is categorized into commercial, cultural, educational, environmental, historic, entertainment, residential, services, and work zones (Breen and Rigby 1985; Malone 1999). The last type of classification reflects the added-value by waterfront development. It classifies waterfront development into three main categories: added-value labor (i.e. traditional aquaculture and fishing, fishery, and offshore fishing), added-value production (i.e. goods distribution, product processing, trading, and logistics), and finally added-value services (i.e. leisure and recreation, tourism, culture preservation, and Marine research) (Toffler 1980; Vallega 2001; Chen 2007; Chen 2015).

It is crucial that decision makers decide what type and location of activities, as well as the added-value type, will be included in concerned waterfront development. Such decision helps to guide the

physical planning process during both the formulation and implementation of plans. Moreover, it is of great importance to deeply understand the factors of success of any waterfront development projects. Many scholars and practitioners such as Chang *et al* (2001); Dovey and Sandercock (2002); Huang *et al* (2011); Kojima *et al* (2013); Flood and Schechtman (2014) stress the importance of satisfying the four study population of any waterfront development project in order to guarantee its success (i.e. the government, the planning agencies, the developers, and the public interest). First, to satisfy the government, waterfront development shall: contribute to economic growth, help to increase employment, and help to improve the city image.

Second, regarding the planning agencies, waterfront development shall respect, confirm and present the distinctive characteristics the city, echo the future development vision for the city, and if necessary, promote sustainability, globalization, culture diversity, and social interaction concepts. Third, concerning developers, waterfront development shall provide enough development profits as well as social recognition. Finally, waterfront development shall provide the public with improved living standards, quality of life, and elevated sense of belonging and pride.

4. WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT: GUIDELINES AND PROCESS

As a part of urban development, waterfront development follows the very same underpinning methodologies. It also deals with the same public policy, planning and implementation institutions and agencies of each country. Hence, waterfront development requires a very committed deliberate political will that helps ensure its success or failure. On the one hand, this leads to the formulation of distinctive urban vision and urban planning public policies on the national and local level that reflects the specific culture, social, economic, environmental, and urban context of each individual country and city (Huang and Chu 2003, Shetawy 2004). On the other hand, equally important, waterfront development shall comprehensively explore, document and analyze in details current problems and its origins, current potential and constraints locally and nationally. Empirical case studies from all over the world present some hard evidence on the importance of such analysis for the success or failure of waterfront development (Church 1988; Krausse 1995; Bassett *et al* 2002; Ryan and Cooper 2004; Kojima *et al* 2013).

Although there are three distinctive methodologies to follow when formulating and implementing development policies and plans (i.e. Blueprint methodology, scientific rational methodology, and communicative rational methodology), the one that stands its professional grounds since the emergence of the urban planning discourse in 1947 is the scientific rational methodology. It follows a specific set of successive phases that summarizes the process of development. It starts with the data collection phase that includes the exploration and documentation of current physical, economic, social environmental, culture, and policy contexts on both the local and national levels and relationship with international development trends. The second phase, data analysis, helps in documenting current development potentials, problems, and constraints via one or combined analysis techniques (i.e. PCP, SWOT, and TIT) (Shetawy 2004).

The third phase, finding solutions, includes the formulation of concerned development vision and mission that aligns with the city and country main development visions. It also sets to formulate various development strategies and consequent structure planning alternatives. Moreover, it includes alternatives evaluation and the choice of proper development strategy and structure plan and consequent masterplan and detailed plans that achieve the most of preset goals and aims of development vision and mission. The final phase, implementation, sets to explore and decide the effective and efficient implementations techniques, institutions and agencies to ensure the success of the implementation process. It also sets the mechanisms through which decision makers and involved professionals follow-up, update and amend plans where needed (Shetawy 2004).

5. RIVER TOURISM: GUIDELINES AND COMPONENTS

Although river tourism is a distinctive important form of waterfront development that can represent and/or include all categories of the above waterfront development classifications, it has been long neglected by tourism development academics, researchers, and practitioners. It was not until 2009 that a systematic academic attempt to map and shape the literature of river tourism via the analysis and documentation of several case studies from all over the world.

“Rivers are an important but surprisingly neglected aspect of the global tourism industry. Yet rivers form the basis for many of the ecosystems that underpin ecotourism and other recreational activities, in addition to providing water to sustain urban growth, farming, agriculture-related experiences such as viticulture and the transport of goods and people. (...) rivers have apparently been of little interest to tourism academics, although the same cannot be said for leisure and recreation scholars, who have demonstrated considerable interest in fluvial systems as outdoor recreation resources” (Prideaux *et al* 2009:1-2).

From the literature review of various case studies, it has been noticed that rivers have many factors that affect their functions. Factors as physical (e.g. length, width, seasonality, location, navigability, reserves, etc), political (e.g. local, state, national, legislative, border conflicts, etc), management (e.g. planning, catchment, resource allocation, etc), river banks land use (e.g. urban, agriculture, wilderness, recreational, etc), Biological, (e.g. species composition, fishing, trophic structures, etc), industrial use of rivers (e.g. irrigation, manufacturing, sewerage disposal, water intakes, hydroelectricity, etc), recreational (e.g. swimming, diving, boating, fishing, etc), transportation (e.g. industrial shipping, passengers, pleasure cruises, etc), environmental (toxicity, invasive species, salinity, etc) are crucial to study before setting river tourism plan. Neglecting any of the above factors in some sector of the river might have a severe unanticipated impact on development plans elsewhere along the river (Cooper and Prideaux 2009).

Prideaux *et al* (2009) identify four main relationships between rivers and tourism development. First, rivers provide a wealth of attractions, amazing natural landscapes, beauty and interesting history and aesthetic appeal for tourism. The second relationship is rivers as transportation corridors, commerce and trade, and cruises. Third, rivers are an important resource for tourist destinations in three ways: to provide drinking water for tourist establishments, to facilitate the development of intense tourism-oriented environments such as landscaping and golf courses and to fill swimming pools, fishing activities and watersports facilities especially important considerations in arid regions. Finally, river water is necessary to grow agricultural products and generate the electricity needed to sustain tourism.

Furthermore, conducted analytical and exploratory research and implemented several projects on river tourism, commonly agreed that there are three main fundamental groups of physical activities underpinning the formulation and implementation of river tourism plans that are river tours, water sports, and fishing activities. It has to be stressed that the existence of all three fundamental physical categories and consequent activities underpinning river tourism is not a pre-requisite for river tourism planning. One or more of such basic activities can sustain booming river tourism that might work as a pulling factor for the existence of other required activities. It has also to be emphasised that the more availability of such activities on river banks the better river tourism plans can be formulated and the better environmentally-sound physical development plans on river banks can be guided and sustained (Abd Elrahman 2006, Abd Elrahman *et al* 2010).

Table (1): Basic Physical Activities Underpinning River Tourism Planning

Activities	Pre-requisite activities near and/or on river banks
River tours	Traditional and historic buildings and areas
	Natural reserves and/or national parks
	Recreational and open spaces and entertaining activities
	Accommodation overlooking riverbanks and/or floating
	Museums, Exhibitions and Show Rooms
Water sports	spaces that can be equipped for marinas and boat anchors
Fishing	slow water flow zones

Source: (Abd Elrahman *et al* 2010)

6. CULTURAL ECOSYSTEMS, WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT, AND RIVER TOURISM

Public spaces could be presented in various forms such as streets, promenades, waterfronts, plazas, parks, playgrounds, and neighborhood spaces in residential areas, etc. (Worpole and Knox 2007; Abou El-Ela *et al* 2010). El-Sadek, (2011) stresses that the ownership of a certain public space (i.e. public, private, public-private) and its appearance do not define the public space but rather its shared diverse range of activities by different societal groups of different socio-economic classes. Public spaces, including waterfront development and corresponding river tourism, play a vital role in the social life of communities. They act as a ‘self-organizing public service’, a shared resource in which experiences and value are created and shared. The social value of public space lies in its relevance to the local context and in people's memory of places (Whyte 2001).

Successful public spaces, including waterfronts, must provide opportunities for social interaction, social communication, social inclusion, and also facilitate community ties. The success of a certain public space doesn't always lie in the hands of the architect, urban designer, or planner. People make spaces more than spaces make people. Consequently, public space is a co-product of spatial and physical settings activated by dynamic and changing social patterns according to certain activities, cultures, and timetables. This explains why particular places are associated with particular social class, specific class culture, and/or social and economic activities with both negative and positive results (Bowers and Manzi 2006; Worpole and Knox 2007). Moreover, public space management has always had a vivid impact on social exclusion and reducing social and cultural diversity within public spaces (Ploeg 2006; Vaswar 2009).

The cultural ecosystem is a finely balanced system that is located in defined time and space edges. Any intervention in public spaces without studying the target users, activities patterns and physical setting of space results in an unstable cultural ecosystem that may not be able to maintain itself and eventually collapses. The case of historic Parque Central in San José, Costa Rica shows that an intervention took place neglecting the social and cultural balance of the setting failed to maintain a well-balanced community where it became abandoned by the previous users and faced major security and safety issues (Low 2000; Worpole and Knox 2007). Consequently, in order to maintain a balanced stable cultural ecosystem, it is vital to critically maintain existing major

activities and physical settings and even patterns of use of public space while introducing new activities, physical and social settings (Srivastava 2005; Mean and Tims 2005).

Although cultural diversity became a “politically correct” catchphrase during the 1980s, it has not been addressed in urban planning and design practice in terms of sustainable development till late 1990s (Mean and Tims 2005). While sustainable development includes “maintaining cultural diversity and community interaction” as a conceptual goal, there is little agreement on what it means. Nevertheless, cultural diversity and interaction provide a way to evaluate cultural and social sustainability and is one observable outcome of the continuity of human groups in culturally significant places (Low et al 2005).

“Social sustainability is the successful maintenance of existing cultural ecosystems and cultural diversity. It is safeguarded when the systems of social relations and meanings are inclusive, rather than exclusive. In this sense, social sustainability is fostered by understanding the intimate relationship between history, values, cultural representation, and patterns of use in any culturally diverse context. In fact, the inclusion of local people, their histories, and their values ultimately strengthens any park’s long-term social sustainability.” *(ibid: 64)*

Many scholars and academics such as Whyte (2001), Low et al (2005), Battesti (2006), Worpole and Knox (2007), Attia (2011), El-Sadek (2011) and Fleury-Bahi et al (2016) conclude main indicators to promote and maintain culture diversity and social interaction and consequently a balanced cultural ecosystem within public parks, each is derived from one or more of park ethnographies studies as shown in figure (1). Nevertheless, they all stress the rule that such indicators may not be applicable in all situations and are meant to provide an evaluation framework for culturally sensitive decision making in public space planning, management, and design.

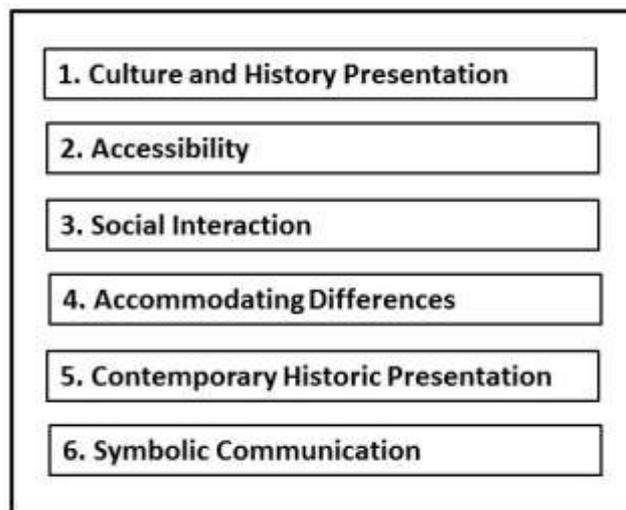


Figure (1): Balanced Cultural Ecosystem Indicators
Source: Adapted by the Researcher from various References

The balanced cultural ecosystem indicators in public space are: (1) if people culture are not represented in historical national parks and monuments or, more importantly, if their histories are erased, they will not use the public space. (2) Accessibility is as much about economics and cultural patterns of public space use as circulation and transportation; thus, income and visiting patterns must be taken into consideration when providing access for all social groups. (3) The social interaction of diverse groups can be maintained and enhanced by providing activity patterns and safe territories for everyone within the larger space of the overall site. (4) Accommodating the differences in the ways social class and different groups’ use and value public space is essential to

making decisions that sustain cultural and social diversity. (5) Contemporary historic preservation should not concentrate on restoring the scenic features without also restoring the facilities and diversions that attract people to a public space. (6) Symbolic ways of communicating cultural meanings are important dimensions of place attachment that can be used to promote cultural diversity.

Provided the above cultural ecosystem indicators, it is evident that basic river tourism activities do not correspond to all indicators. This makes it extremely difficult for the urban planner, tourism developer, and city management to sustain a balanced cultural ecosystem. It will only provide the physical environment within which the social activities and interaction would take place rather than promoting social diversity, inclusion, interaction, and communication between different societal groups of user and visitors. Consequently, concerned waterfront development projects and corresponding river tourism plans would be unstable and unsustainable wasting time, efforts and resources of all institutions involved.

Over the coming section, the indicators of cultural ecotourism will be tested against rivers waterfront development regulations as well as successive waterfront development plans of the Nile Rivers banks in Greater Cairo Region (GCR). This would provide the city and project management and execution teams centrally and locally a clearer understanding of what to expect after and during execution. It will also help decision-makers to take all necessary actions to remedy shortcomings before, during and after execution where possible.

7. THE NILE RIVER: WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

The Nile River is 6695 kilometers long and flows through a total of nine countries: Ethiopia, Zaire, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi and Sudan, and Egypt. The Nile River has been always playing an extremely important role in the civilization, life, and history of the Egyptian nation. It flows from South to North through most of the main cities in Egypt, from *Abo Simbel* to the South to Damietta (*Domiat*) and Rosetta (*Rasheed*) to the North. It also flows through the Greater Cairo Region (GCR) bordering Cairo and Giza Governorates as shown in figure (1).



Figure (1): The River Nile

The only government institution that is responsible for issuing standards and regulations concerning waterfronts and watersheds all over Egypt is the National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH), an organization created by the Ministry of Culture in 2004 to promote “the values of beauty all over Egyptian urban space” (Moursi 2011; Law 119/2008). Consequently, NOUH sets the standards and regulations regarding waterfront development and tourism activities of the River Nile and its banks, however, calls it “beach areas”. NOUH (2016) defines beach areas of the River Nile as “those areas within urban and rural areas overlooking and physically, geographically, and visually connected to the river”.

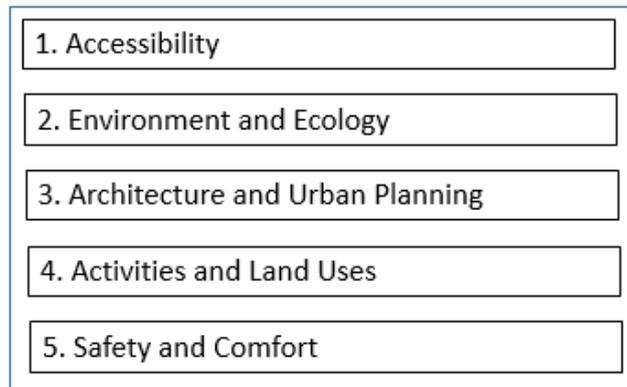


Figure (2): Aspects of Waterfront Development of the River Nile
Source: NOUH (2016)

NOUH sets the standards and regulations of any waterfront development activities of the River Nile in five main aspects that are: Accessibility, environment and ecology, architecture and urban planning, activities and land uses, and safety and comfort, as seen in figure (2). Of all regulations relative to the latter aspects only two vague and unbinding bands under the architecture and urban planning aspect touches the role of communities in the development process. The first is band states “the call for a public hearing to express their opinion and needs”. It does not, however, state any criteria and/or guidelines of “the public” choice to attend the project meetings and/or outcome. It also does not state any guideline as to when exactly such meetings (i.e. public hearing) shall take place in the urban development process. Moreover, it does not state where exactly such meetings will be hosted. The second band of the architecture and urban planning aspect states “the possibility of community participation in the decision-making process”, however, the questions of how, when, and/or where, is totally neglected. Furthermore, all other bands of all other aspects focus only on the physical dimension of the development process leaving behind any attention to the cultural and social development. Standards and regulations are set in a manner to guarantee an ordered physical setting outcome rather than setting up a balanced culture ecosystem to guarantee smooth project management and social interaction after execution. Yet, no guidelines and/or regulations are stated regarding the execution process.

8. THE NILE RIVER: WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT PLANS IN GCR

There has been three main studies and projects that have been commissioned by government agencies to deal with the waterfront development of the Nile banks in GCR. The three of which theoretically based their methodologies and analysis on the standards and regulations of NOUH.

The first study was conducted by the Faculty of Urban and Regional Planning (FURP), Cairo University (Yousri 2003). Throughout the study, considered as the first academic comprehensive

attempt to understand the Nile banks and river tourism activities in GCR, the author presents a comprehensive documentation with respect to the existing land uses, heights, facades, building conditions, and many other fieldwork maps. It also tries to present the public (in general) perception about what is happening on the river banks and tourism activities as well as concerned activities behavior (i.e. commercial, tourism, industrial, recreational, agriculture, etc.). Furthermore, it reviews all concerned laws and regulations related to the Nile River and connected activities and land uses (Yousri 2003). Nevertheless, the study does not include any analysis related to the culture ecosystem and social aspects. Although it tends to test the public opinion on the current situation at the time, it does not touch their vision and/or perception on the hoped future settings.

The second study/project was also assigned to the Faculty of Urban and Regional Planning, Cairo University by the Ministry of Tourism, The General Organization for Tourism Development (FURP 2005). The project was presented in three volumes focusing mainly on the physical setting of the waterfront development of the Nile River banks in GCR. The main aim was to provide a Masterplan of the river banks and related tourism activities. The project report states the aims of the concerned Plan as: the protection of arable land to the North and South of urban agglomeration of Cairo and Giza, providing alternative roads and consequent road network adjustments to divert crosscutting traffic from the river banks, and the concentration of tourism and recreational activities the river banks and watershed, and creation of crosscutting green corridors connecting the river banks with the city as seen in Figure (3) (FURP 2005). The social and cultural aspects were presented in vague general terms in two pages. Sentences like, the right of all society to enjoy and has direct access to the River Nile is very common and summons up the two pages (FURP 2005). No given methodology, framework, guidelines, and or recommended further studies related to culture diversity, cultural ecosystems, social communication, and/or social interaction are stated.

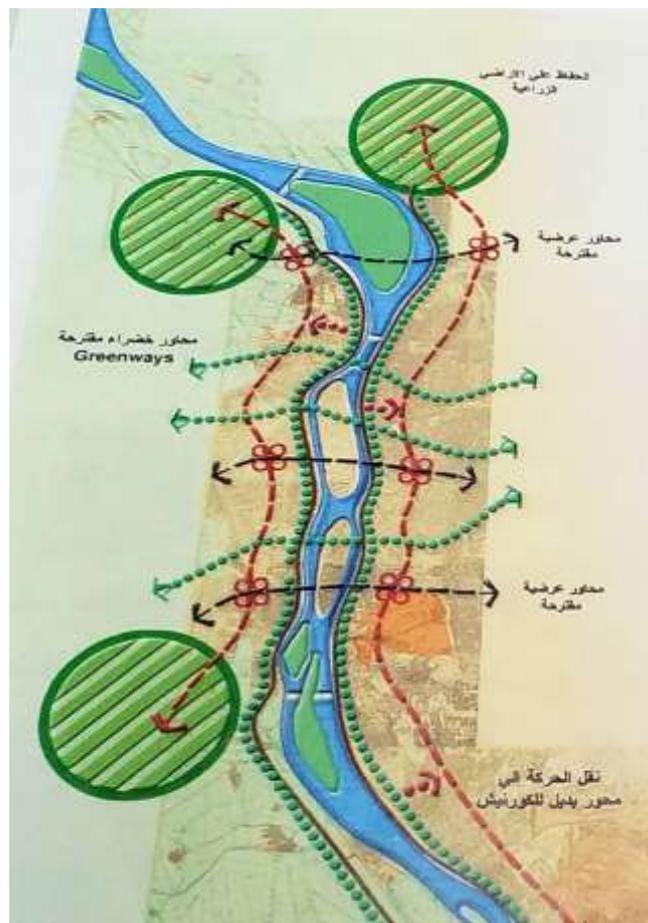


Figure (3): the Strategic Plan of the Nile River Banks in GCR
Source: (FURP 2005)

The third and final main project related to the waterfront development of the Nile River banks was also commissioned to FRUP but this time through the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Development, the General Organization for Physical Planning (GOPP) (FURP 2009). The aim was to provide the detailed execution Plans of the proposed Masterplan, Hence the focus was only physical (FURP 2009).

The three main studies/projects only focus on the physical aspects of the waterfront development and river tourism planning and merely touching the economic, social, and cultural aspects. Even though, none of the studies follows the regulations of NOUH with respect to the call for a public hearing and forming public groups to critically understand “the public future needs”. Furthermore, none of the studies discussed the implementation process in relation to community involvement and/or required institutional framework.

9. CONCLUSION

The tourism discourse went through three distinctive shifts in its paradigm, concepts, definition, scope, categories and activities. The first is related to the social change that happened during and post the industrial revolution, especially in the UK. The second noticeable shift is related to World War II and the urge to discover and experience others cultures and environment all over the world. The third more recent shift is related to the globalization movement and technology revolution since the early 1990s. The waterfront development also went through three distinctive shifts for the very same reasons. From being the origin context of human culture and economy to being the physical focus of manufacturing, trading, and shipping, and later on being the focus of urban and tourism development to achieve distinctive global city images and local quality of life. Various academic and practical attempts have been carried out to set standards, guidelines, and practical methodology to merge the two discourses (i.e. tourism development and waterfront development).

Although river tourism is a distinctive important form of waterfront development that can represent and/or include all categories of the above waterfront development classifications, it has been long neglected by tourism development academics, researchers, and practitioners. It was not until 2009 that a systematic academic attempt to map and shape the literature of river tourism via the analysis and documentation of several case studies from all over the world. From the analysis of various case studies, it has been concluded that there are three main categories of pre-requisite physical river activities underpinning the river tourism development: river tours, water sports, and fishing. This is not to neglect the political, social, economic and environmental aspects.

As public spaces, rivers waterfronts and related tourism and recreational facilities must achieve cultural and social ecosystems indicators to guarantee the optimum and smooth usage. From the literature review, it has been commonly agreed between scholars and practitioners that the balanced cultural ecosystem indicators in public space are: culture and history representation, accessibility, social interaction, accommodating the differences, contemporary historic preservation, and symbolic communication. It has been noted that the pre-requisite physical settings of river tourism only focus of the physical arrangement of the environment rather taking further steps and/or towards guideline to guarantee a balanced cultural and social ecosystems after project execution.

Taking the River Nile waterfronts in Greater Cairo Region as a case study, it has been practically evident that neither the official regulations nor the successive development plans and projects (urban and tourism) give attention to the culture and social aspects. Furthermore, they do not recommend any future guidelines, frameworks, and/or institutional arrangements that guarantee the involvement of “the public” in the development process (i.e. formulation and implementation).

None of which provides a way forward to guarantee a balanced cultural and social ecosystems leaving the outcome of future development projects uncertain. The cultural ecosystem indicators must be embedded within the planning process of waterfronts and tourism development from the formulation of goals and interests through the formulation process of the development plans and for sure through the implementation of projects. Such intervention requires the change of NOUH official regulations to be clearly stated and bound to any development process. Furthermore, it also requires the amendment of Law 119/2008 to assign monitoring and follow-up enforcement techniques to NOUH to review and agree on development plans no matter the institution initiated the concerned plans.

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