

Abstract

Hatem E. Nabih

The 'Corniche' Phenomenon: The Study of Social and Behavioural Outcomes of Changing Design Strategies along Egyptian Waterfronts.

Waterfronts within Egyptian dialect is labeled as 'El-Corniche', it is the main, public gathering place where people go out to for evening strolls with friends & family. Bodies of water within most Egyptian cities shape the behavioural patterns of the local inhabitants. This example is seen in the city of Alexandria, the second most populated city in Egypt after Cairo, which linearly extends along the coast of the Mediterranean. The waterfront area is considered as a dominant aspect of Alexandria defining the whole length of the city. This Corniche, mainly used for evening strolls, is accessible from nearly all the residential areas in Alexandria. The word 'Corniche' has even been labeled to residential edges without any body of water whatsoever ¹. Similarly, Cairo's 'Corniche' extending along the River Nile, allows for many residential areas to use their closest water edges. Other cities along the Mediterranean & the Red Sea contain at least one 'Corniche', which indicates the inevitable influence of waterfronts within Egyptian lifestyle. The term 'El-Corniche' has further become generally used to label public areas, particularly edges that contain convenient walking space, food carts, & wide views, a unique example of Egypt's outdoor public life within urban settings ². 'El-Corniche' as a phenomenon can largely become a counterpart to the urban conception of the Italian 'Plaza, as it is similarly used as an activity-gathering point. However, it is largely different, as it is strongly characterised by its linearity. Nowadays, Egyptian waterfronts have dramatically changed, along the Mediterranean & Red Sea coasts. This change has appeared as a result of mass touristic development projects that have transformed the physical configuration of the waterfronts. The waterfront transformations have been presented within a touristic framework with extra emphasis on recreation & optimising land value particularly within tourist resorts. Thus the linear character of the Corniche has changed into a more recreational type of waterfront. The paper reviews the spatial configurations of present tourist developments along waterfronts within Egypt & their effect on the social & behavioural qualities in parallel with the traditional Corniche setting.