

CASE STUDY 11

Cairo (Egypt)

Claims of the emergence of a 'right to heritage'

The revolution of January 2011 resulted in the destruction, degradation and looting of vital components of Cairo's historic heritage. In response to that state of affairs, which they regarded as attributable to weak institutional governance, civil society movements for the protection and management of cultural heritage have sprung up, relying on social networks. They claim that citizens have the right to play an active part in the protection of their heritage and living environment. The 'Save Cairo' initiative, designed to protect the city's urban heritage, organizes sit-ins in front of buildings threatened with destruction, as well as campaigning publicly. While it has not always been successful in averting destruction, it has drawn attention to the issue of conserving urban heritage. Other kinds of action are being taken on a neighbourhood scale. The Heliopolis heritage initiative is documenting the architectural heritage of the twentieth century through photography competitions, guided tours and campaigns directed at the authorities. The Ana min Al-Zaher ('I'm from Al Zaher') initiative prompted the state to renovate and reopen an architectural treasure, the Al Sakakini Palace. The Athar Lina ('the monument is ours') initiative in Al-Khalifa Street is advocating for citizen participation in heritage protection, enabling the interests of local residents to be better addressed. Participatory workshops involving both the local residents and the authorities were set up in 2012. The commitment has been followed up with the creation of a school of heritage and a number of restoration activities (medieval domes, twentieth-century buildings, etc.). The defence of the citizens' interests has since broadened to include the regeneration of public areas and improvement in the management of household waste collection.



Source: ALECSO, report for Study Area 2