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ORIGINAL STUDY

Framing Inclusive Heritage Urbanism Reconfiguring Publicness in Mosque-Centered Precincts in Historic Cairo

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Abstract

Mosque-centered precincts in historical cities face a continuous tension between touristic-led redevelopments, security management policies, and urban life of commons. Recently in Historic Cairo state-led interventions occur in major mosque-centered settings with upgrading intent by enhancing visual order, crowd control and visitors' experience, yet socio-spatial inclusivity stayed insufficiently incorporated in those implications. This study discourses this gap by initiating the Heritage Socio-spatial Inclusivity Framework (HSIF) to assess inclusivity across major mosque-centered realms – AL-Hussein Mosque and Al-Sayida Zeinab Mosque precincts.

HSIF synthesized urban design and heritage conservation concepts through indicators covering aspects like communal livability, user experience, governance and heritage sustainability. The study aimed to propose context-sensitive guidelines that balance tourism pressures, governance, and locals' rights to urban heritage, through operationalizing HSIF as a diagnostic tool before a prescriptive model.

Empirically, the study adopted a triangulated methodology of analysis by integrating users' surveys, mapped on-site observations and historical precedence of urban morphological evolutions. The outcomes demonstrated an operational imbalance; as the state-led interventions helped enhance the precincts' vitality, temporal inclusivity, visual and spatial experience, yet a vivid weakness in participatory governance, access equity, and heritage incorporation in everyday life was witnessed.

These results exhibited that inclusivity in rich-heritage precincts exists yet is reshaped in a form of consumption-oriented publicness, marginalizing commons needs and authenticity. Therefore, the study proposed three clusters of context-sensitive guidelines and their implementations, each addressing a weakness while strategically leveraging high-performing indicators for inclusive outcomes; paving the road for a sustained users' sense of inclusivity in rich-heritage precincts.

Keywords: Heritage regeneration, Human scale urbanism, Historic Cairo, Living heritage, Socio-spatial inclusivity

1. Introduction

Recent discourse of heritage conservation scope drifts from preservation of rich-heritage areas to a broader managerial approach, achieving a livable dynamic system in historical contexts as in Historic Urban Landscape recommendations (UNESCO, 2011) and “living heritage

approach” (ICCROM). Though there is an ongoing conflict between the local community socio-cultural needs and the tourism-led economic strategies of development for such heritage realms, as seeing heritage from the “commons” view resists appropriation of economic-led interests (Azazy, 2022; Labadi, 2019; Smith and Waterton, 2012).

In various parts of the Global South, trials of heritage conservation are frequently criticized for

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implementing “Museumification” strategies where the monument is enhanced visually and context is polished for touristic use, causing spatial gentrification and displacement of authentic practices (Porter, 2010). Within this discourse, the concept of “heritage justice” (Harrison, 2013; Silverman and Ruggles, 2007) has developed to address the ethical side of conservation on who has the right to access, infer, and benefit from the rich heritage context.

These state-led interventions disclosed noticeable upgrading for rich-heritage environments in terms of infrastructure and overall spatial performance. The result is rich-heritage contexts that prioritize visually conserved over daily communal dynamics (Ali, 2025). The challenge for urban designers and conservation representatives is not only preserving heritage but ensuring the communal right in their rich-heritage realms.

This tension is clearly evident in Old Cairo, especially mosque-centered contexts like the plazas and surroundings of Al-Hussein Mosque and Al-Sayyida Zeinab Mosque, which operate as a “Thirdspaces” (Soja, 2010). These areas are not only historical, but they are a product of residents’ daily patterns, the economic dynamics of surrounding shops and cafes, as well as the visitors’ unconditional spiritual attachment to Al Aqsa Mosque, Family of Prophet Mohamed pbuh.

Recent urban redevelopment state-led strategies efforts were oriented towards a security-oriented vision for heritage conservation and urban rigidity to ensure order and monument preservation. Interventions like eradicating informal vendors, adding barriers, and reshaping vehicle circulation by widening streets or transforming other routes to pedestrian paths changed the rich-heritage livable context into a “conceived space” (Abaza, 2011; Al Sayyad, 2012). Critics claimed that this strategy risks suppressing the livable urban experience and affecting the symbolic bond and spatial connectivity between those sacred spots and their vital surroundings.

Current assessment tools for rich-heritage contexts often lack a holistic scope. Traditional and contemporary architectural evaluation frameworks commonly focus on morphologies and visual preservation. Also, sociological assessment-based frameworks highlight users’ reclaiming their spatial rights (Kou *et al.*, 2024). The gap between socio-political theories, conservation strategies, and human urban needs has triggered the need for a holistic framework capable of merging intangible socio-political rights and tangible design metrics that can operate with conservation strategies to generate an inclusive rich-heritage context.

From this point, the study synthesizes two theoretical viewpoints. First, the urban design and concepts like Henri Lefebvre's Right to the city (Biagi, 2020; Lefebvre, 1996), Edward Soja's spatial justice (Soja, 2010), and John Gehl's Life between buildings (Fyllio and Katsavounidou, 2024; Gehl, 2011; Gehl and Svarre, 2013) provide a human-centered lens for spatial interventions and implementations for better urban quality. Second, the socio-ethical frameworks like Waterton and Smith's concept of heritage as a common (Labadi, 2019; Smith and Waterton, 2012), where heritage is an inclusive resource for community, Harrison and Silverman's framework of heritage justice (Harrison, 2013; Harrison, 2013; Hö *et al.* 2016) that defines heritage conservation as a dialog between various stakeholders, and Living Heritage Approach (ICCRUM/UNESCO) (ICCRUM). This synthesis of approaches can generate a multiscale framework for inclusivity assessment in rich-heritage contexts, aiming to articulate guidelines for implementations that can transmute old Cairo's mosque-centered plazas into inclusive, resilient spaces.

2. Problem statement

State-driven conservation and redevelopment strategies in Old Cairo, specifically in rich-heritage mosque-centered contexts like Al-Hussein and Al-Sayyida Zeinab mosques, are concerned with visual enhancement to suit the tourist-led approach of development and economic vitality of those districts, which may risk gentrification and potentially disconnect the intangible bond between those sacred spots and their communities.

While those strategies enhance the overall physical condition of these areas, they particularly focus on preserving the monument as an artifact; rather than a livable heritage and a socio-cultural resource, and they neglect the local community's daily urban patterns and sustained belonging to their environments. This approach increasingly constrains informal livelihood, organic rituals, and locals' daily practices, which gradually disconnect locals from their context. This gap identifies the absence of a clear integrated framework capable of assessing how physical conservation interventions can affect the socio-cultural inclusivity and spatial justice while accounting for human scale and behavioral indicators.

3. Study objective

In response to the mentioned gap, this study aims to develop a multiscale framework for inclusivity

assessment in high-density rich-heritage religious contexts. Utilizing the case studies of the precincts of Al-Hussein Mosque and Al-Sayyida Zainab Mosque. The study aims for four targets.

- (1) Synthesize a theoretical framework that re-defines inclusivity through bridging the gap between socio-political, cultural rights, and physical spatial qualities.
- (2) Operationalize the framework by translating its intangible factors into measurable indicators to evaluate the inclusivity of the rich-heritage context.
- (3) Examine the two selected case studies' inclusivity through the generated framework from the users' perspective.
- (4) Propose context-sensitive guidelines rebalancing tourism pressure in rich-heritage mosque-centered areas with the inhabitants' right for their everyday urban life.

4. Study methodology

This study adopts a concurrent mixed-method approach (Creswell, 2014) to evaluate inclusivity in mosque-centered historical contexts in Historic

Cairo. As shown in Fig. 1. The methodology is divided into three phases.

- (1) Phase 1: the Model Synthesis, where the study started with incorporating urban design theoretical concepts (right to the city, spatial justice, and life between buildings) along with heritage conservation frameworks (heritage as common, heritage justice, and living heritage approach).
- (2) Phase 2: the empirical investigation starts with the selection of two historical mosque-centered case studies with socio-cultural significance. Followed by data gathering through a mixed-method strategy to trace both spatial qualities and living experience by users' surveys, on-site behavioral mapping observations that quantify the subindicators of the proposed model, and qualitative data derived from urban morphological evolutions of state-led interventions. Data analysis includes concurrent analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative data undergo comparative and descriptive statistical analysis and qualitative data identifies special patterns of each zone. Data interpretation includes the triangulation of results between quantitative and quantitative analyzed

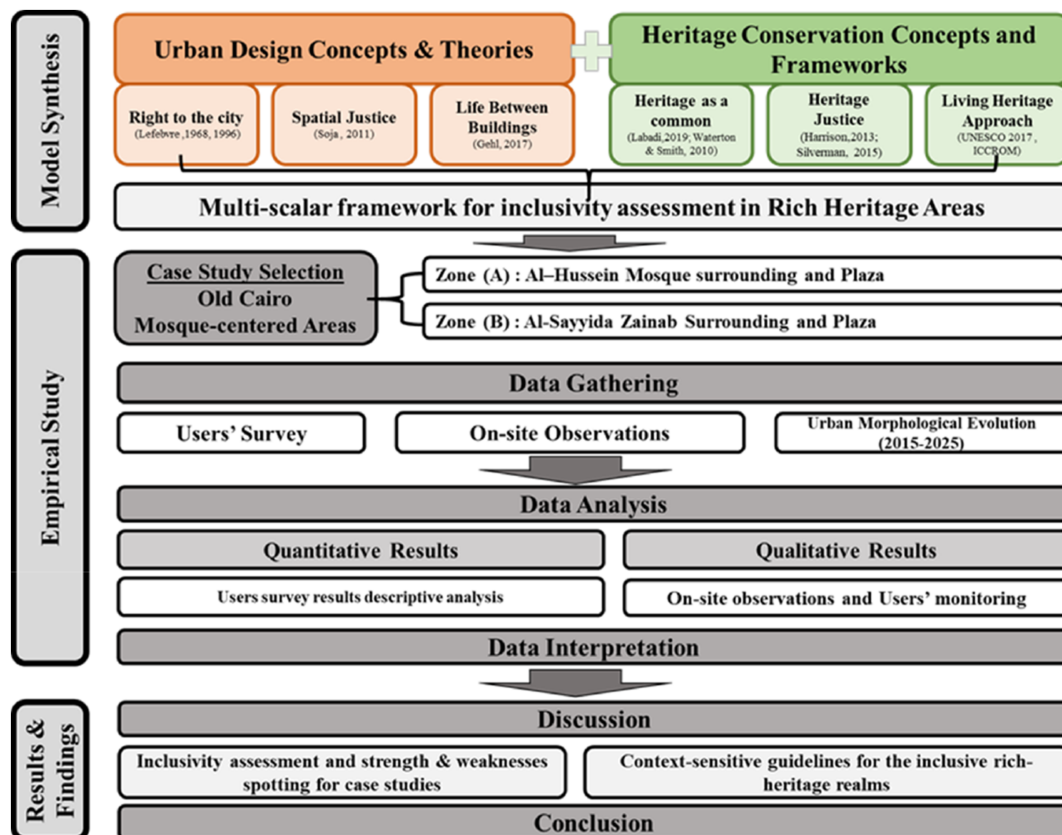


Fig. 1. Study methodology (Author, 2025).

data to evaluate the inclusivity performance in the selected cases and reveal their potentials and weaknesses.

- (3) Phase 3: results and findings, this phase includes the study discussion where the combined results propose a comparative evaluation between the two selected areas that eventually paves the road for proposing context-sensitive guidelines for augmenting inclusivity in rich heritage urban contexts.

5. Literature review

Recent studies on historical urban environments increasingly reject the preservation of heritage as a physical fabric solely and advocating instead the perception of rich heritage environments as a socio-spatial dynamic that needs to be sustained (Ali, 2025; Abaza, 2011). To assess inclusivity in dense multilayered contexts like Historic Cairo, this study integrates two diverse yet complementary approaches which are the social urbanism the scope that provides spatial metrics for tracing inclusivity in livable urban environments and heritage conservation concepts which tackles the ethical mandates for inclusivity while preserving cultural heritage.

Heritage conservation governance traditionally adopts the approach identified as Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) (Akagawa, 2018); which is a top-down approach that elevates the authorized expertise visions of preservation and privilege monumental visual and esthetical conservation strategies over local community social and urban needs. The outcome of this approach is often a “museumified” historic district dedicated to touristic and economical purposes, neglecting the daily patterns of its inhabitants (Smith and Waterton, 2012; Waterton and Smith, 2010).

To counter this approach, opposing studies offered the notions of “heritage as a common” (Labadi, 2019; Smith and Waterton, 2012) that claims that community has an inclusive right to heritage resources and that heritage cannot be a privatized or gentrified. This ethical approach aligns with the spatial paradigm of Henri Lefebvre’s “production of space” (Lefebvre, 1991). That addresses the conflict between “the conceived spaces” the spaces that undergoes strictly planned conservational agendas versus “the lived space” the convivial spaces that hosts daily social patterns.

In Historic Cairo and specifically mosque-centered districts appropriation is the core principle so that inclusivity can be properly exist, as “The right to the city” (Biagi, 2020; Lefebvre, 1996)

concept confirms that accessibility is not the sole principle for claiming urban spatial rights but the right to adapt, appropriate and use the space for spontaneous daily life needs. Therefore, and inclusive rich heritage context is a harmonious environment between socio-cultural livability and well conserved monument.

Since “heritage as a common” discusses ownership rights, Harrison (2013) and Helaine Silverman (2020) proposed ideas that tackles “The heritage justice.” They argued that conservation strategies are originally political-led and the result of those strategies is prioritizing elite and economical touristic approaches while alternative, community-based dynamics are marginalized. In urban planning concepts this inequity is addressed by Edward Soja’s concept of “spatial justice” (Soja, 2010). Soja claimed that the unbalanced distribution or exclusivity of spatial amenities and resources is a violation for communal fundamental rights (Buchholz, 2011).

By perceiving Historic Cairo through the lens of Soja; rich heritage open plazas like Al-Hussein Mosque Plaza and Al-Sayida Zeinab Mosque Plaza can be identified as “Thirdspaces” (Bloch *et al.*, 2023; Soja, 1996). Those plazas are concurrently spiritual and physically alive. Soja highlighted that inclusivity in urban places depends on distributive justice of high-quality services and resources with no discrimination such as clean paving, adequate lighting and shading, etc.

Literature on Historic Cairo’s conservation often discuss the discourse of “Gentrification of the scared” where those heritage regeneration trails elevate the esthetic value of the urban setting and provide high-quality services exclusively for highly paid touristic cafes or other facilities that common inhabitants cannot afford or even access. Countering these discussions, it is crucial to propose spatial regeneration strategies that sustain permeability between local community and tourist and resist their segregation (Nimrod, 2022; Yip and Lee, 2025).

Justice application ethical regulations need to be supported and grounded in physical reality. The Living Heritage Approach (ICCROM) identifies heritage value through its functional continuity and for a rich heritage context to remain living and functioning physical design metrics needs to afford its community patterns of daily dynamics. The work of John Gehl “Living between Buildings” (Gehl, 2011) offers a structural diagnostic framework derived from human activity patterns that provide spatial quality and consequently spatial justice.

Gehl's framework depends on hierarchy and type of activities as necessary activities like walking will take place despite the spatial quality yet social activities like sitting and talking will take place depending on the spatial quality and affordance (Fyllio and Katsavounidou, 2024; Gehl, 2011; Gehl and Svarre, 2013). In the heavily dense contexts of Historic Cairo spatial comfort goes beyond western notions of beautifying spaces, comfort here is defined through physical affordance like pedestrians' security from traffic, finding a shaded spot or the existence of seating areas that facilitates social interaction (Abdel *et al.*, 2009; Shehayeb and Seidal, 1995).

However, scholarships offer little guidance regarding human scale design in religious contexts specifically public rich heritage contexts that hosts various activities and heavy crowds such as religious occasions like Moulids and Eid celebrations. An inclusive place with suitable human scaled design metrics; a place that gives locals the opportunity for spatial appropriation can offer the capacity for bridging this literature gap.

Recent urban spaces assessment frameworks are fragmented into big umbrellas like spatial quality that assess user spatial needs and human scale neglecting other factors, spatial inclusivity that targets community rights solely, heritage conservation frameworks like (AHD) (Akagawa, 2018) that prioritize visual preservation and tourism attraction. All those major fragments neglect the spiritual factor infused in rich-heritage contexts especially mosque-centered urban spaces as in Historic Cairo. There is a paucity of unified framework that merge those fragmented umbrellas.

This study proposes a multiscalar framework that tackles this gap. A framework that synthesis

physical affordance, human factors in design, political and spatial rights, and heritage conservation principles that suits mosque-centered urban spaces into measurable indicators that to ensure historical continuity and communal rights.

6. Framework rationale

The study proposes the Heritage Socio-Spatial Inclusivity Framework (HSIF) to assess inclusivity in rich-heritage contexts. This framework integrates two pillars, the urban design theories and heritage conservation frameworks that combines abstract theory and empirical metrics as in Table 1. HSIF is not a performance index, rather it operates as a relational diagnostic framework designed to highlight structural discrepancies between place-making, governance strategies, socio-cultural dynamics in heritage precincts. HSIF operationalize contemporary urban theories by integrating three theories; the right to the city (Lefebvre, 1996; King, 2018) and spatial justice (Soja, 2010) and life between buildings (Gehl, 2011). Each theory addresses a specific layer of inclusivity combining rights, equity, and spatial experiences.

Henry Lefebvre's right to the city (1968) core principles are appropriation and participation and it perceives government-led urbanization as a catalyst for producing gentrified spaces, the theory was concerned with the notion of spatial democratization and the user's entitlement for their urban space (Biagi, 2020; Lefebvre, 1996). In relevance to Old Cairo context; social and heritage narratives intertwine through touristic economies and conservation agendas and locals needs. This theory provides a foundation for community empowerment.

Table 1. Historic Socio-Spatial Inclusivity Framework pillars and concepts core principles (Authors, 2025).

Study pillar	Theory/concept	Core principles
Urban design theories	Right to the city (Lefebvre, 1996)	Centrality appropriation habitat and services difference social encounter
	Spatial justice (Soja, 2010)	Distributive justice locational equity recognition justice procedural justice right to public spaces relational justice sustainability justice
	Life between buildings (Gehl, 2011)	Hierarchy of activities: Necessary, optional, resultant
Heritage conservation frameworks	Heritage as a common (Waterton and Smith, 2010)	Community-led participation equity access rejection of authorized heritage discourse
	Heritage justice (Harrison, 2013)	Heritage, diversity and human rights social justice in heritage management recognition of marginalized voices
	Living heritage approach (ICCROM)	Temporal continuity people-centered participatory stewardship activities diversity coexistence

Edward Soja's concept of spatial justice, he defined inclusivity as the process of how social inequalities are reflected and reproduced in spatial organizations with core values of distributive spatial justice and locational discrimination (Buchholz, 2011). This theory highlights justice must be embedded socially and spatially, equity of heritage benefits distribution (Fainstein, 2010; Uitermark and Fainstein, 2011). Applying this theory on rich heritage areas in Historic Cairo elaborates effect of justice implementation through spatial configurations on the urban space inclusivity.

Jan Gehl's life between buildings perceives inclusivity as an observable urban behavior and interaction quality in the urban space. Gehl's theory provides a tangible reference for physical affordance. Gehl's core principles provided a physical affordance criterion for human metrics related to protection, comfort and enjoyment (Fyllio and Katsavounidou, 2024; Gehl and Svarre, 2013). The integration of Gehl's theory in historical environment enables evaluation of the spatial qualities capacity to encourage cultural continuity and social interaction.

The heritage conservation frameworks is addressed through the works of Emma Waterton and Laura-Jane Smith's "heritage as a commons" that addressed heritage as an inclusive resource for communities to use, interpret and benefit from and rejection of AHD as historical areas should serve people not only elites as a touristic purpose (Labadi, 2019; Waterton and Smith, 2010). This concept encourages community-led participation, promotes equity access.

The heritage critical approaches by Rodney Harrison introduced concepts for analyzing heritage in the contemporary world (Harrison, 2013). Harrison's work aligns with the "heritage justice" by Silverman and Ruggles works complementing Soja's "spatial justice" (Soja, 2010) but with the ethical approach of representation and recognition of heritage. The core principle of this concept (Silverman and Ruggles, 2007) are shown in Table 1. These concepts enable the study to include deterrents that evaluate the diversity socio-cultural narratives and equitable heritage polices of mosque-centered urban spaces in Old Cairo.

The UNESCO Living Heritage approach perceives heritage as embedded identity that merges into the dynamic daily life not a static monument (ICCRUM). This approach tackles the tangible built heritage and the intangible socio-cultural practices and its temporal continuity. UNESCO asserted that a successful heritage conservation strategy must be people-centered and inclusive; allows communal

cohesion (UNESCO, 2024). This approach proposes deterrents that evaluates how the daily activities vary and coexist in harmony in Historic Cairo mosque-centered precincts.

Notwithstanding those theoretical pillars offer a robust foundation for comprehending and examining inclusivity, yet each of them operates with discipline boundaries that limits their application in rich-heritage precincts in Historic Cairo. As global urban design paradigms like Gehl's life between buildings (Gehl, 2011) focuses on human scale and behavioral interactions overlooking the spiritual and ritual factor embedded in religious environments. Also, Lefebvre's right to the city (Lefebvre, 1996) and Soja's spatial justice (Soja, 2010) provides an essential perspective of socio-spatial empowerment that is conceptually abstract and untranslatable to measurable spatial indicators. Likewise, mentioned heritage conservation frameworks as heritage as a commons (Waterton and Smith, 2010), living heritage approach (ICCRUM) and heritage justice (Harrison, 2013) focuses directly on cultural significance and continuity and communal rights to heritage in a literature discourse yet they lack the design-oriented tools and spatial metrics required for evaluating contemporary users urban needs.

In the rich-heritage context of Historic Cairo, there is a layered interaction between spiritual intensity, daily life practices and socio-economical dynamics which make those mentioned theories methodologically insufficient if applied autonomously. Therefore, the study proposes the HSIF as an integrated model that synthesizes those paradigms in a trial to reconcile these disciplinary gaps by translating socio-political abstract concepts into measurable indicators grounded in spatial analysis and users experience with special reference to rich-heritage environments.

Through systematic coding and synthesizing the previously listed principles; the HSIF can be initiated to advance a holistic understanding of inclusivity in rich heritage urban contexts by proposing seven interrelated indicators listed in Table 2 accompanied with the theoretical mapping identification of each indicator of HSIF as well as listing its measurable subindicators that will guide the empirical survey and on-site observations.

7. Case study selection

The study focuses on mosque-centered precincts in the dense urban fabric of Historic Cairo; to operationalize HSIF. The selected sites are Al-Hussein Mosque and Al-Sayida Zeinab mosque. Those two cases are strategically selected as they

Table 2. The Heritage Socio-Spatial Inclusivity Framework indicators description, theoretical base, and subindicators (Authors, 2025).

HSIF indicator description	Derived from	Subindicator(s)
<i>Access and equity:</i> Measuring fair physical accessibility to heritage and equity in resources and amenities distribution	Distributive justice (Soja, 2010) right to access (Lefebvre, 1996)	Inclusive physical accessibility easy and free mobility around the place affordability and equity for all income levels fair distribution of amenities and services
<i>Participation and governance:</i> Assessing level of community involvement in decision making	Right to participation (Lefebvre, 1996) collective stewardship (Waterton and Smith, 2010)	Mechanism of communal participation transparency in heritage management public consultation and representation shared responsibilities and cogovernance
<i>Diversity and social encounter:</i> Assessing the spatial capacity of hosting various groups and facilitating social interaction	Social activities (Gehl, 2011) recognition justice (Harrison, 2013) heritage justice (Harrison, 2013; Silverman, 2015)	Users diversity (age, sex, social and cultural background) level of interaction/coexistence among different groups
<i>Spatial quality, sensory and human experience:</i> Measuring factors that encourage users to stay like physical comfort, protection, and sensory stimulations	Life between buildings (Gehl, 2011) spatial justice (Soja, 2010)	Comfort (spatial and climatic) safety ease of way finding enjoy-ability level sensory stimuli presence and effect (visual, sounds, etc.)
<i>Vitality and everyday life:</i> Evaluating the intensity and continuity of activities that keep heritage a living entity	Optional activities (Gehl, 2011) living heritage approach (ICCRUM)	Variety and diversity of activities live-ability and engaging atmosphere
<i>Temporal inclusivity:</i> Assessing access and safety and affordance of space in different times and occasions	Temporal rights (Lefebvre, 1996) hierarchy of activities (Gehl, 2011)	Safety and inclusion across different times (day/night/weekend/weekdays) accommodation of seasonal changes and cultural or religious events
<i>Heritage as a shared and living resource:</i> Assessing the level of intangible spatial attachment of users towards the site and the resistance of its adaptation to gentrification	Heritage as a common (Labadi, 2019; Waterton and Smith, 2010) heritage justice (Harrison, 2013; Silverman, 2015) living heritage approach (ICCRUM) right to appropriation (Lefebvre, 1996)	Inclusivity of access for heritage areas level of community participation reflection/living traditions balance between tourism and local life

provide an ideal landscape for investigating inclusivity where living heritage dynamics intersects with state-led regeneration projects.

7.1. Al-Hussein mosque precinct

Al-Hussein Mosque precinct is considered the spiritual core of Fatimid Cairo; it has multiscalar functions where tourism meets local pilgrimage. It is considered the clearest embodiment of AHD in Cairo as it currently shifts towards tourism-oriented development strategies. This state-led regeneration strategies launched in 2022 to reshape its socio-spatial dynamics into a conceived space through prioritizing visual order and security measures; they removed all informal commercial activities and adding gated perimeters around the mosque zone (Arab contractors, 2022; Elshater and Abusaada, 2022). This point makes Al-Hussein Mosque precinct a subject of spatial justice tension, where the right to appropriation of local vendors, worshippers and inhabitants' conflicts with the state-led global vision of heritage beautification for the sake of gentrification (Nimrod, 2022; Yip and Lee, 2025).

7.2. Al-Sayida Zeinab Mosque precinct

Al-Sayida Zeinab area is considered the social and spiritual domestic living heritage for middle-class and low-class inhabitants. It is characterized by high level of flexible appropriation for religious occasions and activities such as Moulid, Eid celebrations, and Ramadan prayers. This area has a great potential for function and temporal inclusivity. The zone was a subject for a massive state-led redevelopment in 2024 where the prayer area was expanded and the surrounding area was reconfigured to adopt intense pedestrian and vehicles flows (Egypt Presidency, 2024). The choice of Al-Sayida Zeinab precinct is crucial to investigate if the interventions facilitate or hinders the social encounter.

7.3. Urban morphology chronological evolution of the selected cases

The first step of the triangulation analysis starts with a chronological urban morphological for the study cases. The study used high-resolution

satellite maps obtained from the historical archive of Google Earth Pro; covering a 10-year period from 2015 till 2025. A 5-year interval was strategically deliberated to highlight the major urban morphological evolutions and state-led interventions that took place in the selected zones. This temporal interval was structured to exclude short-term urban variations and disclose the transformations in urban fabric, public versus private spatial permeability and materiality upgrades.

7.3.1. Morphological urban transformation Al-Hussein precinct

The decadal urban morphological transformation of Al-Hussein precinct in Fig. 2 shows a steady conversion from an open and integrated public space to a secured monumentalized space. The study started with 2015 baseline where the plaza was permeable with multiple access points to the mosque with no fences separating the surrounding urban fabric. The presence of green pockets provided nature integration, thermal comfort, and space for social lingering.

In 2020; fences were added around the mosque and its plaza revealing a state-led intervention for spatial compartmentalization. Security gates were built leading to the mosque surrounding isolating from the urban fabric as a touristic site. In 2025 the current and postrenovation phase; discloses a significant transformation where the mosque plaza was enlarged on the expense of green open area removal and the addition of fences and security gates. The plaza was permitted during certain hours and spread of security administrating the social

flow. This morphological shift shows that Al-Hussein Mosque precinct was a shared urban space and transformed to a controlled touristic enclave.

7.3.2. Morphological urban transformation Al-Sayida Zeinab precinct

The urban morphological evolution of Al-Sayida Zeinab Mosque precinct shown in Fig. 3 reflects the strategic process of socio-spatial regulation and overall contextual upgrade. In 2015 the area acted as a multifunctional context with inclusive access and no clear boundaries. The presence of green pockets was utilized by locals as prayers extensions and microeconomic activities.

In 2020, a clear state-led transition phase; as materiality change took place and the green pockets were replaced by white granite flooring. This esthetical upgrade replaced the social adaptive spaces where locals interact. In 2025, the current postrenovation and reopening to public shows a vivid enlargement for the precinct, with rigid security gates and fences. The urban morphological analysis shows that the enlargement and visual upgrade of the plaza with intent of make it pleasant for visitors and tourists deteriorated its inclusivity and eroding the locals' opportunities in practicing their living dynamics normally.

8. Empirical study

8.1. Methods

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach to operationalize the HSIF to evaluate inclusivity across the selected cases. The study ensured

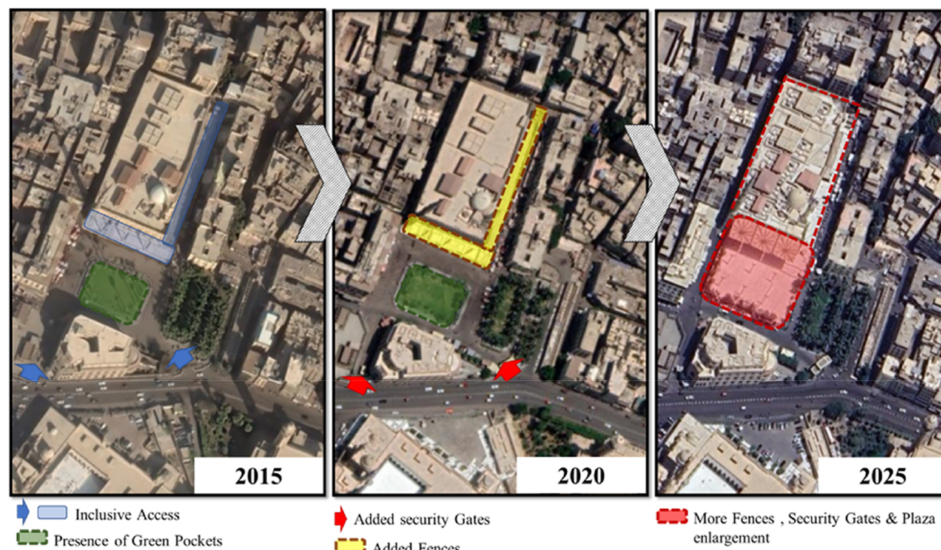


Fig. 2. Urban morphological evolution of Al-Hussein Mosque precinct 2015–2025 (Google Earth Pro, Author, 2025).



Fig. 3. Urban morphological evolution of Al-Sayida Zeinab Mosque precinct 2015–2025 (Google Earth Pro, Author, 2025).

validity through triangulating three levels of analysis; Level one is the quantitative descriptive analysis of users' survey; participants ranked their experience through a five-point Likert scale for HSIF subindicators anchored by one-word identifying bipolar pairs as in Table 3 to minimize survey

fatigue. This method was selected to provide accurate statistical visualization by calculating average means for the indicator and subindicators. Level two, the qualitative analysis of the HSIF indicators and subindicators on-site observations and behavioral mapping through visualized maps and photo

Table 3. Heritage Socio-Spatial Inclusivity Framework indicators and subindicators survey fragmentation and their one-word bipolar ranking pairs (Author, 2025).

HSIF indicator	Subindicator(s)	Bipolar ranking pair
Access and equity	Inclusive physical accessibility	Accessible (5) → restricted (0)
	Easy and free mobility around the place	Permeable (5) → Obstructed (0)
	Affordability, equity for all income levels	Affordable (5) → Exclusive (0)
	Fair distribution of amenities and services.	Equitable (5) → disproportionate (0)
Participation and governance	Mechanism of communal participation	Participatory (5) → top-down (0)
	Transparency in heritage management	Transparent (5) → opaque (0)
	Public consultation and representation	Consultative (5) → excluded (0)
	Shared responsibilities and cogovernance	Collaborative (5) → centralized (0)
Diversity and social encounter	Users diversity (age, sex, social and cultural background)	Diverse (5) → homogenous (0)
	Level of interaction/coexistence among different groups	Integrated (5) → Segregated (0)
Spatial quality, sensory and human experience	Comfort (spatial and climatic)	Comfortable (5) → harsh (0)
	Safety	Safe (5) → vulnerable (0)
	Ease of way finding	Legible (5) → confusing (0)
	Enjoy-ability level	Pleasurable (5) → unpleasant (0)
	Sensory stimuli presence and effect (visual, sounds, etc.)	Stimulating (5) → dull (0)
Vitality and everyday life	Variety and diversity of activities	Multifunctional (5) → Mono-functional (0)
Temporal inclusivity	Liveability and engaging atmosphere	Vibrant (5) → stagnant (0)
	Safety and inclusion across different times (day/night/weekend/weekdays)	Timeless (5) → Curfew-ed (0)
	Accommodation of seasonal changes and cultural or religious events	Adaptive (5) → rigid (0)
Heritage as a shared and living resource	Inclusivity of access for heritage areas	Shared (5) → Enclosed (0)
	Level of community participation reflection/living traditions	Living (5) → Museumified (0)
	Balance between tourism and local life	Balanced (5) → commodified (0)

grids to ensure results validity. Third level the survey and observation results interpretation with the urban morphological evolution mapping mentioned in section 7.3 and analysis of current redevelopment strategies.

To ensure methodological reproducibility, onsite-observations and behavioral mapping were codified systematically into quantitative values using the same five-point Likert scale applied to HSIF indicators and subindicators, as they were assessed against observable current conditions and in correspondence to predefined users' survey criteria for example the inclusive physical accessibility sub-indicator was scored as 5 for full accessibility and 3 for partial permeability or controlled access and 1 for low to restricted access. This process supports triangulation and allows qualitative insights integration with the users' survey results and historical precedence of cases urban morphology in Figs. 2 and 3 aiming for a heuristic assessment for socio-spatial inclusivity. The users' survey consistency was statistically verified by Cronbach's alpha with a coefficient of $\alpha = 0.756$ demonstrating an acceptable level of internal consistency across HSIF indicators and subindicators confirming the tool reliability.

8.2. Sampling

The study embodied a stratified purposive sampling approach (Blair and Blair, 2021; Farthing, 2016). This approach ensures collecting survey data from a diverse spectrum of context users who interact with the heritage areas physically and

regularly. The total sample for both sites is $N = 200$ respondents with equal distribution of $n = 100/\text{site}$ in order to achieve a balanced comparative analysis.

8.2.1. Sampling demographic profiles and fragmentation

The survey respondents for both sites were divided into five categories based on their interaction with the study areas. Their percentages are relevant to their existence within the urban context during different times and occasions as shown in Table 4.

The absence of tourists' category in Al-Sayida Zeinab zone as in Table 4 was a significant finding during data gathering opposite to the excessive presence of tourists in Al-Hussein zone. Therefore, the study presented tourists in Al-Hussein context with 5% as an analytical variable. This divergence will aid the comparative analysis of both sites across two state-led managerial models where Al-Hussein is a commercialized touristic heritage site and Al-Sayida Zeinab is local oriented heritage site.

8.3. Data analysis

This section represents the comparative analysis of the two study areas based on the aforementioned methods of analysis for HSIF indicators and sub-indicators. The analysis shows detailed sub-indicators scoring with interpreting the scores to identify the convergence and divergence patterns between Al-Hussein and Al-Sayida Zeinab

Table 4. Study sample's categorization and fragmentation (Author, 2025).

User category and description	Al-Hussein Mosque Zone		Al-Sayida Zeinab Mosque Zone	
<i>Locals</i> : Permanent residents and surrounding neighborhood inhabitants	30%		35%	
<i>Shop owners and vendors</i> : Formal and informal vendors acting as the economic representatives	30%		30%	
<i>Visitors</i> : Egyptian visitors for the sites for religious and social purposes	30%		30%	
<i>Security</i> : Government representatives for applying regulation and management	5%		5%	
<i>Tourists</i> : International visitors for religious and site seeing purposes	5%		—	
Total ($N = 200$) $n = 100/\text{site}$	100%		100%	
<i>Sex Classification (%)</i>	M.	F.	M.	F.
	66	36	60	40
<i>Age groups (%)</i>				
>30	20		26	
30–40	37		23	
41–50	16		27	
<50	27		24	

precincts. This data analysis approach ensures synthesis of results for broader insights on socio-spatial inclusivity dynamics rather than solely descriptive observations.

8.3.1. Indicator (1): access and equity

8.3.1.1. Subindicator 1.1: inclusive physical accessibility. Al-Hussein zone scored moderate mean (3.6) in Fig. 5 for physical accessibility, it shifted from inclusive permeability in 2015 to monumentalized enclosure in 2025 in Fig. 2. Entry is now limited to certain times and mediated with security checkpoints and the mosque and plaza are surrounded with high permanent fences and limited gates in Fig. 4 Al-Sayida Zeinab zone, the lower mean (3.3) in Fig. 5 revealing the physical barrier created by the high stepped narrow pavement affecting inhabitants (3.1) and visitors (3) ease of access as in Table 5. The limited accessible gates and permitted zones in the plaza in Fig. 4. This declines in inclusivity contradicted by the 2015 inclusive access as in Fig. 3.

8.3.1.2. Subindicator 1.2: easy and free mobility around the place. Al-Hussein zone average mean (3.4) as in Fig. 5 demonstrates a perceptual gap between vendors highly ranking (3.9) and inhabitants lower

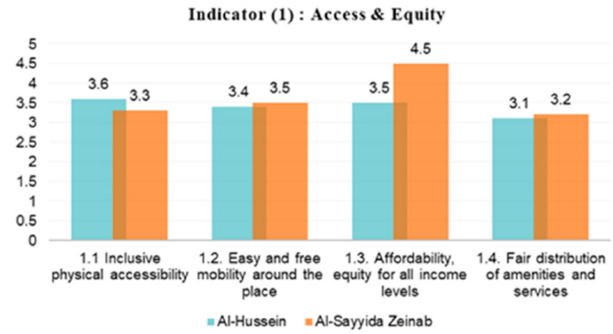


Fig. 5. Comparative means' scoring for indicator (1) subindicators (Author, 2025).

ranking (2.8) as in Table 5 This aligned with Fig. 3 2025 urban morphology and Fig. 5 where commercial and touristic flow is prioritized yet local inhabitants flow is limited by security gates. Al-Sayida Zeinab average score (3.5) in Fig. 5, high ranking from security guards (4.4) yet inhabitants scored less (3.3) showing reduced permeability of movement in the precinct due to the presence of permanent security fences and movable barriers which divides the mosque plaza and interrupt the pedestrian flow as shown in Figs. 3–2025 mapping – and Fig. 4.

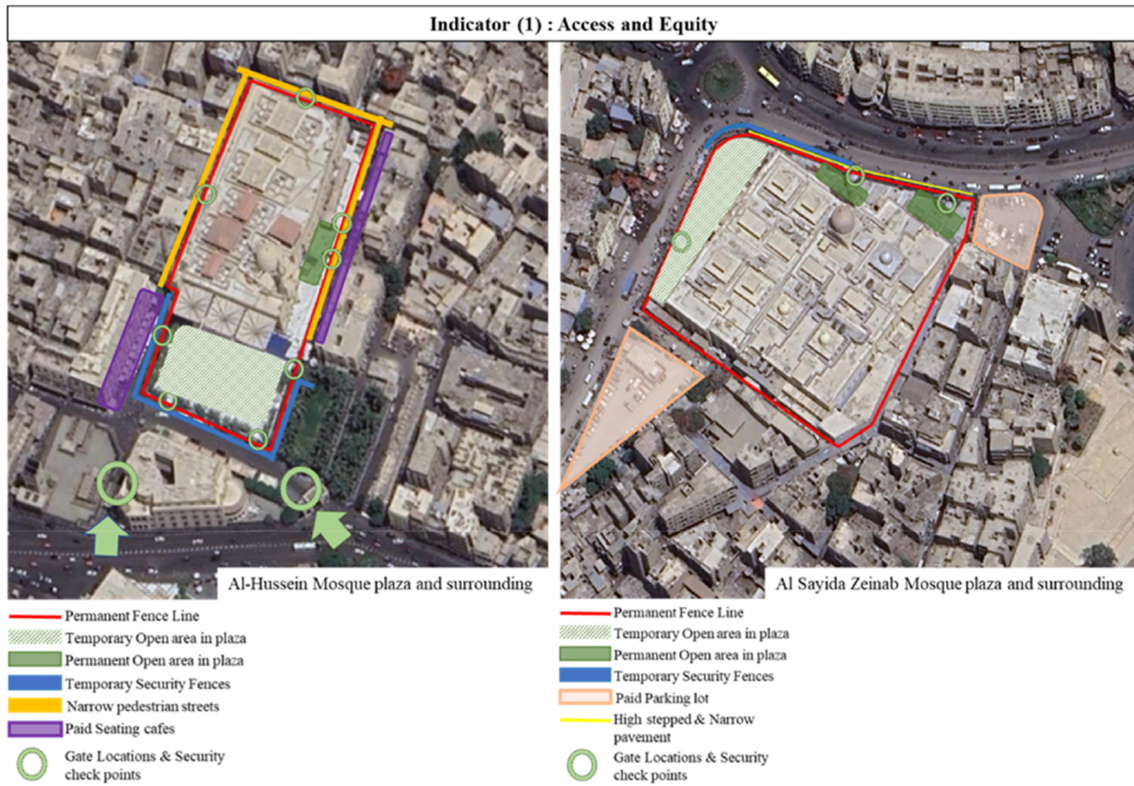


Fig. 4. Comparative observations and mapping for indicator (1) access and equity (Author, 2025).

Table 5. Comparative stockholders' perceptual means for indicator (1) (Author, 2025).

Subindicators No.	Al-Hussein Mosque zone				Al-Sayida Zeinab Mosque zone			
	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4
Inhabitants	3.1	2.8	2.7	2.7	3.1	3.2	4.5	2.9
Shop owners	4.1	3.9	3.7	3.5	3.6	4	4.3	3.5
Visitors	2.6	2.5	3.1	3	3	3.2	4.7	3.2
Security	3.6	3.6	3.2	3.2	4.4	4.4	4.2	4
Tourists	3.8	3.4	3.8	0.4	–	–	–	–

8.3.1.3. *Subindicator 1.3: affordability, equity for all income levels.* Al-Hussein zone average mean (3.5) as in Fig. 5, yet in Table 5 local inhabitants low ranking (2.7) reveals the erosion of equity. Figs. 2 and 4 aligned in demonstrating the transformation of free public spaces and green pockets into gated plaza and touristic-oriented cafes and restaurants; shifting the mosque precinct into a touristic zone. Al-Sayida Zeinab zone scored the highest average mean (4.7) as in Fig. 5 and reinforced by visitors (4.7) and inhabitants (4.5) as in Table 5 as they mentioned that shops, cafes, and restaurants are affordable and local oriented without the commercial encroachment seen in Al-Hussein zone.

8.3.1.4. *Subindicator 1.4: fair distribution of amenities and services.* Al-Hussein zone average mean (3.1) as in Fig. 5, inhabitants scored (2.7) as they sense the area is redeveloped for touristic purposes so as shown in Fig. 4 the upgraded services are surrounding the mosque – where tourists locate. Yet tourists have no background to score the sub-indicator as they perceive the zone as a fully touristic zone. Al-Sayida Zeinab zone scored low average (3.2) as in Fig. 5 vendors (3.5) and visitors (3.2) have access to services due to their direct access to main street as shown in Fig. 4. Inhabitants showed low ranking (2.9) as in Fig. 3 the transformation from 2015 till 2025 shows restriction of access and limitation of services.

8.3.2. Indicator (2): participation and governance

The results demonstrate a profound failure of communal representation in both study areas and lowest ranking among HSIF indicators.

8.3.2.1. *Subindicator 2.1: mechanism of communal participation.* Al-Hussein zone low ranking (0.6) as Fig. 6. The inhabitants scored (0.3) as in Table 6 which reinforced the urban morphological evolution in Fig. 2 where the area transformed from inclusive access to secured and fenced plaza away from local participation. This state-led interventions excluded residence from the decision-making process. Al-Sayida Zeinab zone scored slightly higher (0.7) as Fig. 6, inhabitants scored (0.9) in Table 6

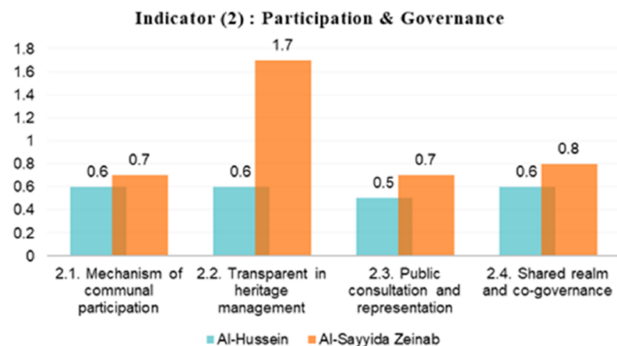


Fig. 6. Comparative means' scoring for indicator (2) subindicators (Author, 2025).

reveals that participation is structured and limited. Security ranked slightly higher (1.2) as they are part of the top–down governance as in Fig. 7.

8.3.2.2. *Subindicator 2.2: transparency in heritage management.* Al-Hussein zone lacks transparency in heritage management (0.6) average score as in Fig. 6. Inhabitants (0.9) sees this from the top–down governance in maintenance and renovations as in Fig. 7. Tourists (0) and visitors (0.3) does not have background rank the sub-indicator they see a maintained area. Al-Sayida Zeinab zone shows average score (1.7) as in Fig. 6 –remains low ranked – as in Table 6; shop owners (2.1), visitors (1.6), and inhabitants (1.5) perceived the plaza enlargement and flooring change as an upgrade they can benefit from despite its restrictedness.

8.3.2.3. *Subindicator 2.3: public consultation and representation.* Total absence for the sub-indicator; Al-Hussein zone average score (0.5) as in Fig. 6. In Table 6 visitors (0.1) and inhabitants (0.3) responses align with photos in Fig. 7 showing the top–down governance through signage, fences, and movable barriers. These interventions contradict with communal participatory development strategies. Al-Sayida Zeinab zone average score (0.7) as in Fig. 6 also a critical failure of communal participation. The inflated score of security guards (3) in Table 6 aligned with the morphological urban evolution in Fig. 3 highlighting the top–down dominance while inhabitants (0.7) are marginalized.

Table 6. Comparative stockholders' perceptual means for indicator (2) (Author, 2025).

	Al-Hussein Mosque zone				Al-Sayida Zeinab Mosque zone			
Subindicators no.	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4
Inhabitants	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.9	1.5	0.7	0.9
Shop owners	1.1	0.9	0.9	1.1	0.9	2.1	0.7	0.6
Visitors	0.3	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.4	1.6	0.2	0.4
Security	1.2	0.6	0.8	1	1.2	1.2	3	2.4
Tourists	0	0	0	0	–	–	–	–

8.3.3.4. Subindicator 2.4: shared realm and cogovernance. Al-Hussein zone scored average (0.6) as in Fig. 6 reflecting the urban morphological evolution in Fig. 2 in 2025 as the map shows the shared street fragmented into paid seating cafes and movable security barriers. The area shows lack of collective management as it prioritizes commercial and touristic purposes over communal needs. Al-Sayida Zeinab zone average score (0.8) as in Fig. 6. This score aligns with the fences, signage, and removable barriers in Fig. 7, as security scored (2.4) as they perceive the 2025 version as a successful model of governance neglecting the lost sense of ownership scored by inhabitants (0.9), visitors (0.4), and shop owners (0.6) as in Table 6.

8.3.3. Indicator (3): diversity and social encounter

The indicator ranked the highest among the seven indicators of HSIF for both sites; despite the morphological enclosure from 2015 to 2025

illustrated in Figs. 2 and 3. This result ensures the spiritual significance of the study areas despite the imposed physical barriers of state-led interventions.

8.3.3.1. Subindicator 3.1: users' diversity. Al-Hussein zone peaked a high average score (5.3) as in Fig. 9. The area acts as a spiritual pilgrimage as there is a place for every user group as in Fig. 8 mapping. According to Table 7; tourists highly ranked it (5) and security guards too as they have permanent surveillance allowing them to monitor heterogeneous populations in the area overtime. Al-Sayida Zeinab zone scored slightly lower (4.7) as in Fig. 9. The inhabitants score (4.8) and visitors (4.7) as in Table 7 showing a rooted domestic diversity for various ages and sexes while lacking the touristic volume.

8.3.3.2. Subindicator 3.2: level of interaction/coexistence among groups. Al-Hussein zone average score (4.3) as in Fig. 9 indicating social cohesion reinforced by

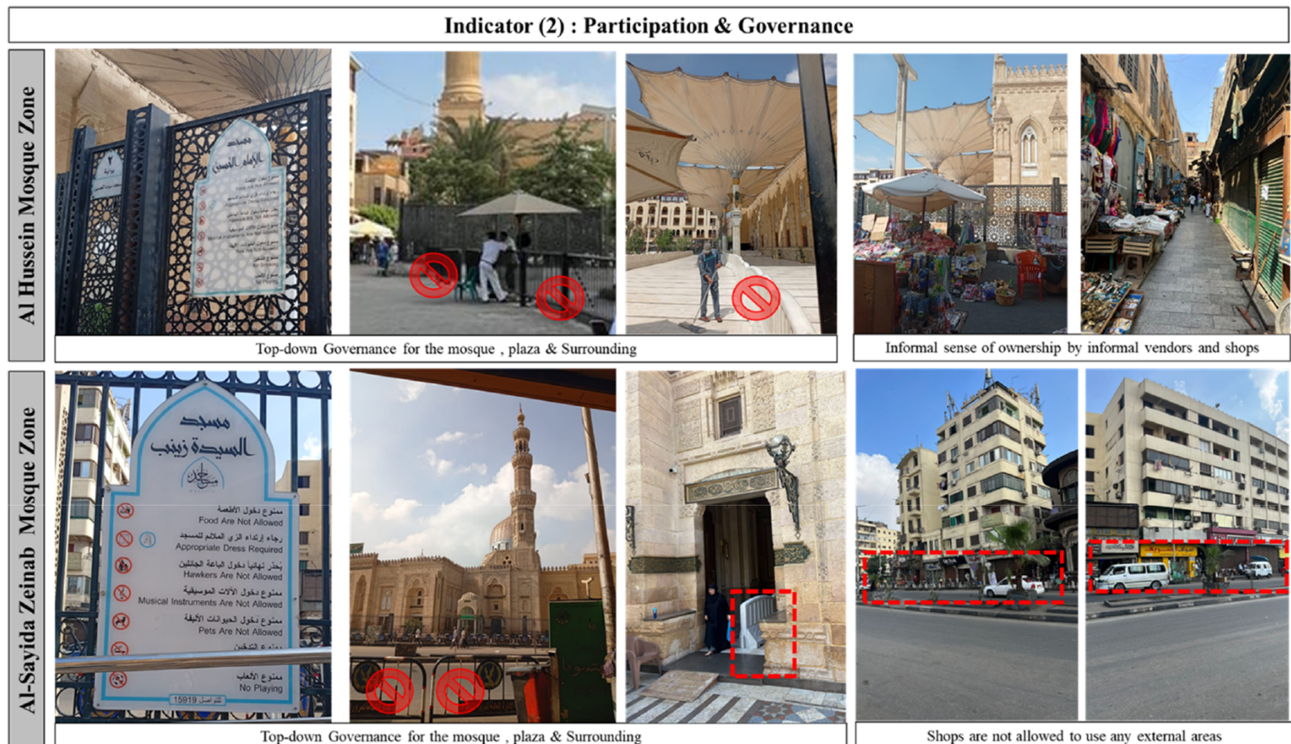


Fig. 7. Comparative photo grid for indicator (2) (Author, 2025).

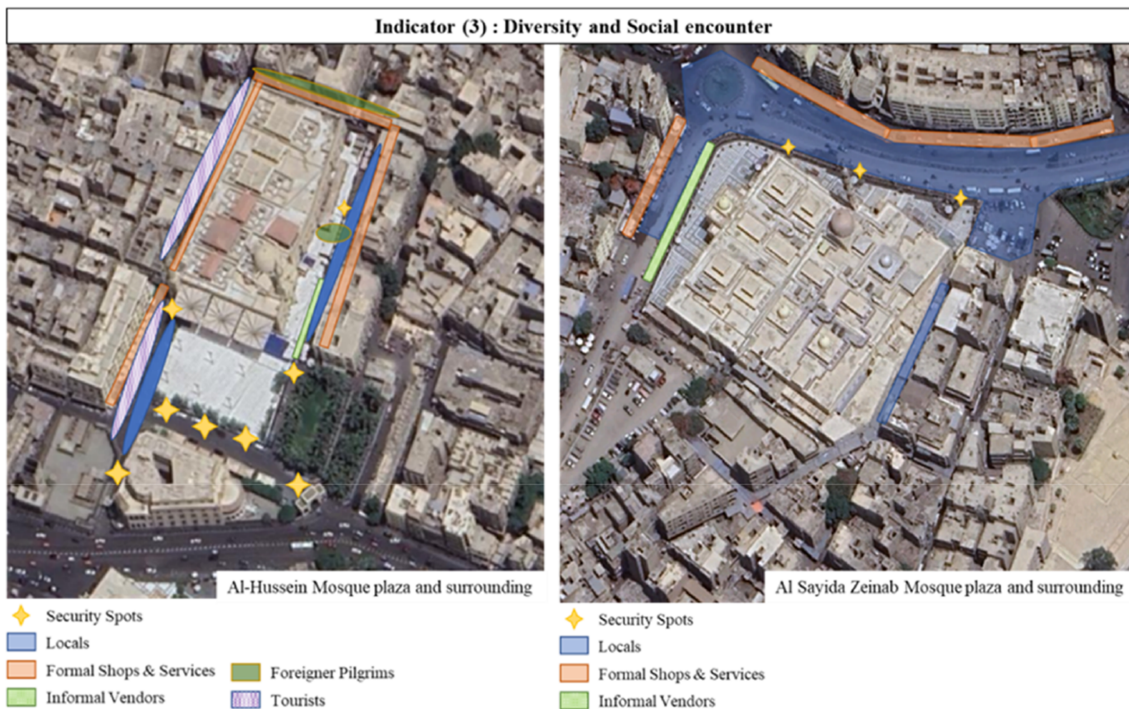


Fig. 8. Comparative observations and mapping for indicator (3) (Author, 2025).

Table 7. Comparative stockholders’ perceptual means for indicator (3) (Author, 2025).

	Al-Hussein Mosque zone		Al-Sayida Zeinab Mosque zone	
Subindicators no.	3.1	3.2	3.1	3.2
Inhabitants	4.8	4.1	4.8	3.9
Shop owners	4.7	4	4.7	4.3
Visitors	4.6	3.8	4.7	4.1
Security	5	4.4	4.4	3.8
Tourists	5	3.4	—	—

users’ groups scoring in Table 7. The lowest rank are tourists (3.4) this result related to the concentrated interaction in limited access points to plaza and mosque creating a monitored form of groups coexistence as in Fig. 8. Al-Sayida Zeinab slightly lower average (4.1) as in Fig. 9 and complemented

by locals ranking (3.8) in Table 7 aligning with the on-site observation mapping in Fig. 8 as the plaza enlargement eroded social friction provided by the open green pockets from 2015 as in Fig. 3.

8.3.4. Indicator (4): spatial quality, sensory, and human experience

The indicator results show Al-Hussein zone performed better in comfort, enjoy-ability, level and sensory quality as it targets pedestrians by enduring active facades and shaded zones. Al-Sayida Zeinab zone showed strong potentials of way finding but weaker spatial and user experience due to vehicle dominance leading to poor environmental and sensory performance.

8.3.4.1. Subndicator 4.1: comfort (spatial, climatic). Al-Hussein zone average score (3.8) as in Fig. 11 indicates moderate-high comfort as illustrated in Fig. 10 the zone has shaded area inside the plaza which lessen the thermal stress. As in Table 8

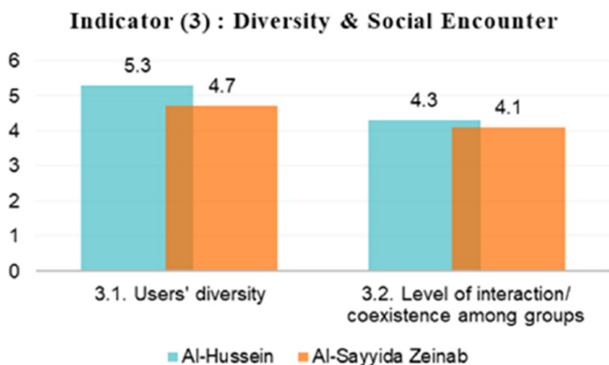


Fig. 9. Comparative means' scoring for indicator (3) subindicators (Author, 2025).

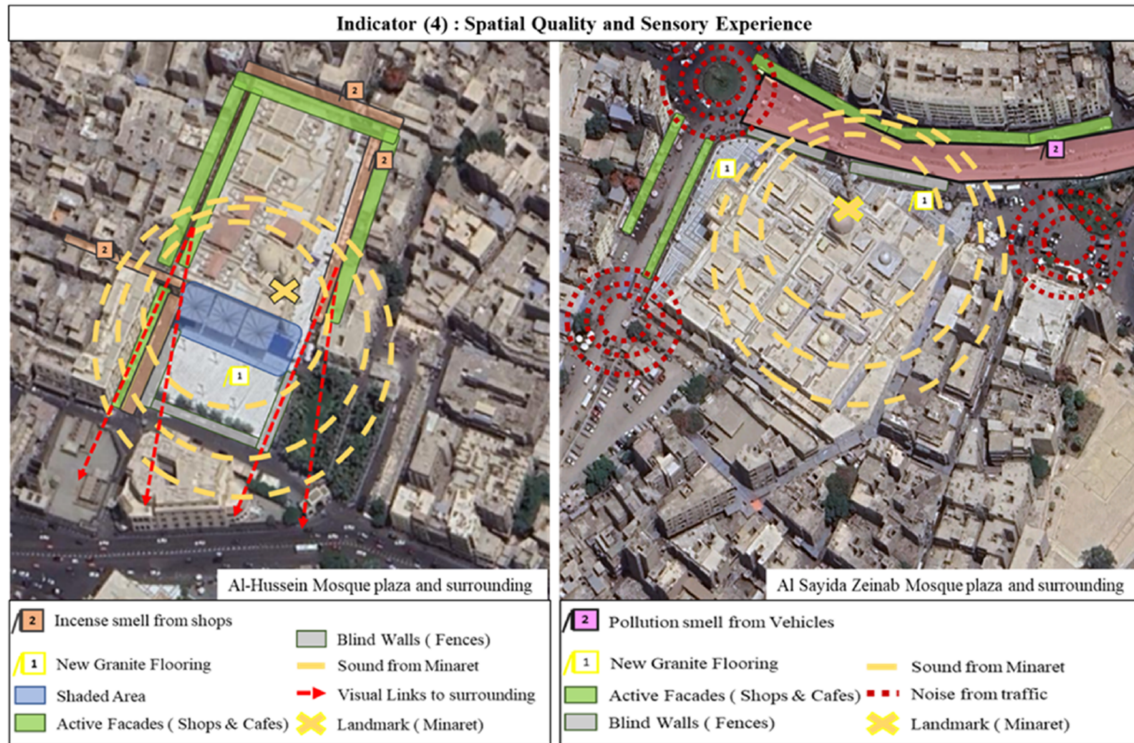


Fig. 10. Comparative observations and mapping for indicator (4) (Author, 2025).

Table 8. Comparative stockholders' perceptual means for indicator (4) (Author, 2025).

	Al-Hussein Mosque zone				Al-Sayida Zeinab Mosque zone					
Subindicators no.	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5
Inhabitants	3.6	3.2	4.1	4.5	4.8	2.9	3.7	4.7	3.7	4.5
Shop owners	3.7	2.6	3.5	4.5	4.4	3.7	3.9	4.7	4	4.5
Visitors	3	3.6	3.4	3.9	4.4	3.1	2.5	4.2	3.6	3.5
Security	4.2	5	4.2	4.8	5	4.6	4.4	4.6	2.4	2.6
Tourists	3.4	2.6	2.6	3.8	5	—	—	—	—	—

security (4.2) scored the highest as they witness the area during day and night. Visitors and tourists scored least (3) as it is affected by crowdedness during peak times. Al-Sayida Zeinab zone had slightly lower average score (3.3) as in Fig. 11 shows lower climatic comfort and spatial limitation due to fences and barriers and exposure to traffic as in Fig. 10. In Table 8 inhabitants scored the least as they endure this spatial experience daily yet shop owners scored higher (3.7) due to their presence inside their shops most of the day.

8.3.4.2. Subindicator 4.2: safety. Al-Hussein zone with average score (3.7) as in Fig. 11, showing the area is safety reinforced by the security score (5) in Table 8 as the space is visually permeable as shown in Fig. 10. However, tourists scored the least (2.6) as they complained from beggars interrupting their pedestrian strolls and witnessed by shop owners who scored the same. Al-Sayida Zeinab scored

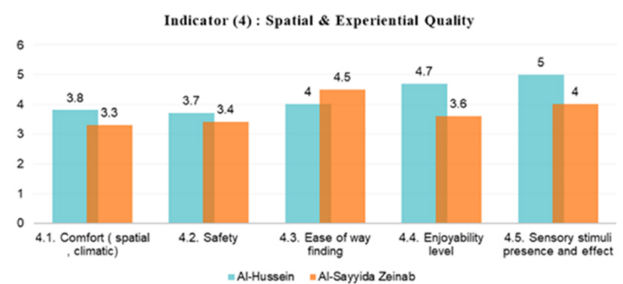


Fig. 11. Comparative means' scoring for indicator (4) subindicators (Author, 2025).

slightly lower (3.4) as in Fig. 11 due to the interruption of the pedestrian flow by traffic intersections and narrow paving as in Fig. 10, that is the reason behind visitors scored the lowest (2.5) in Table 8. But security scored the highest (4.4) as fences, barriers, and limited secured gates gives them spatial control.

8.3.4.3. *Subindicator 4.3: ease of way finding.* Al-Hussein zone scored (4) in Fig. 11 showing high spatial intelligibility due to axial visual continuity and the mosque as a central landmark as in Fig. 10. In Table 8 tourists scored (2.6) due to crowdedness and narrow paths around the mosque hindering their way finding. Al-Sayida Zeinab zone scored slightly higher (4.5) in Fig. 11 reflecting higher level of spatial legibility. In Table 8 visitors scored the highest (4.7) as they see the mosque dome and high minaret as a vivid landmark as illustrated in Fig. 10.

8.3.4.4. *Subindicator 4.4: enjoy-ability leve.* Al-Hussein zone scored high (4.7) in Fig. 11 reflecting a positive user experience due to the proposed various activities – shopping, religious, recreational – and active facades as in Fig. 10. But visitors (3.9) and tourists (3.8) scored lower in Table 8 due to crowdedness and beggars yet their stay is still enjoyable. Al-Sayida Zeinab zone scored lower in Fig. 11 showing a less pleasant experience due to traffic inclusion and noise nodes as in Fig. 10. Shop owners and vendors (4) scored the highest in Table 8 as this crowdedness benefits their trade. Security scored the lowest (2.4) as during religious occasions like Moulid and Eid prayers – enjoyable time for users – an extra load for them.

8.3.4.5. *Subindicator 4.5: sensory stimuli presence and effect.* Al-Hussein zone scored highest (5) in Fig. 11 confirming high sensory users' experience from shops, cafes, the dominant incense smell, and controlled noise. The visual stimulation from merchandise exhibition for visitors and tourists creates a unique sensory experience as mapped in Fig. 10. Al-Sayida Zeinab scored lower (4) in Fig. 11 showing sensory stresses due to noise and pollution from traffic, yet there is positive stimulation from the visual esthetics of the mosque, plaza, and minaret as a sound and visual magnet. In Table 8 inhabitants and vendors scored high (4.5) as they prioritize the mosque as a landmark they belong to over noise and pollution.

8.3.5. Indicator (5): vitality and everyday life

Both sites have activities merging between services, hosting and commercial. The urban morphological evolution shown in Figs. 2 and 3 shows urban transformations that altered the users' daily activities but it kept the area as lively.

8.3.5.1. *Subindicator 5.1: variety and diversity of activities.* Al-Hussein zone scored the highest (5) as in Fig. 13 reinforced by on-site observation map in Fig. 12 which reveals the approachable location and diversity of activities in the site for pedestrians.

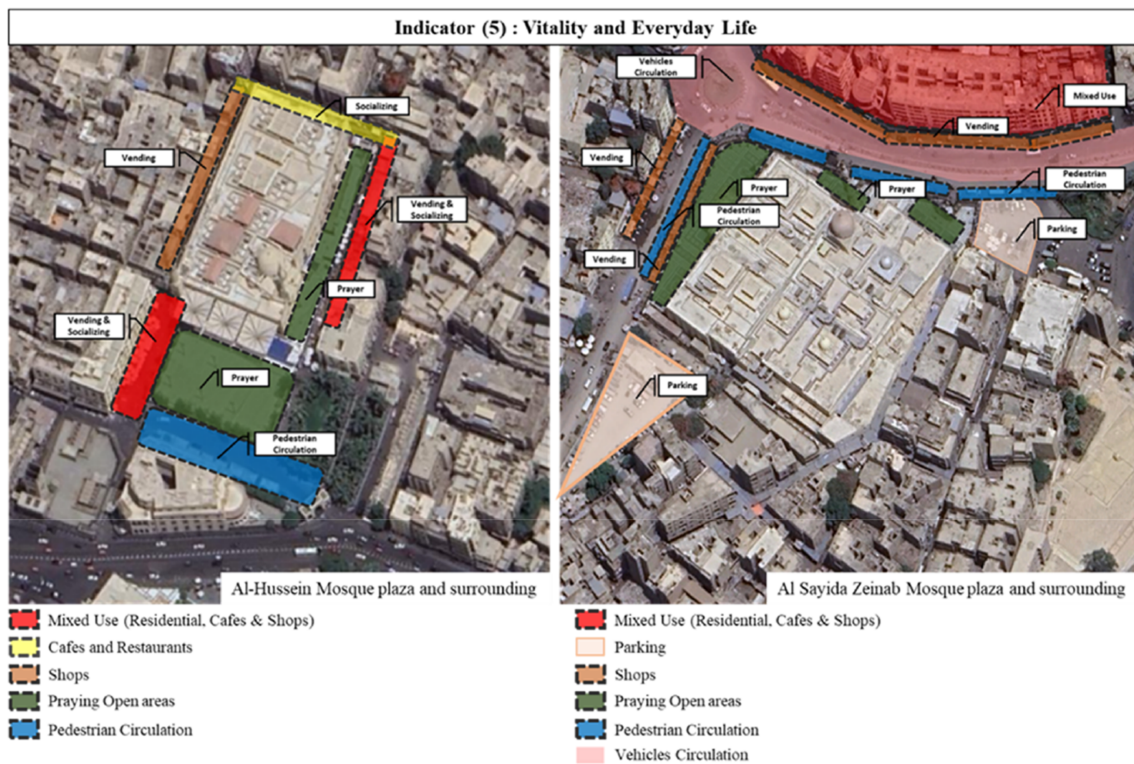


Fig. 12. Comparative observations and mapping for indicator (5) (Author, 2025).

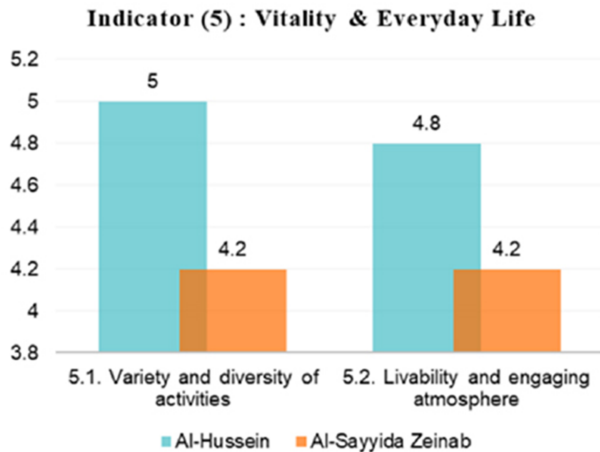


Fig. 13. Comparative means' scoring for indicator (5) subindicators (Author, 2025).

Table 9 shows reinforcement to this high score as all users' groups positively rated the subindicator. Al-Sayyida Zeinab scored lower (4.2) as in Fig. 13; the lower score is due to the less variety of activities as its locals oriented not touristic-oriented. Yet the zone has a diversity of activities for local inhabitants and visitors' services and more affordable than Al-Hussein zone as illustrated in Fig. 12. Table 9 shows the low scoring of visitors (3.8) as they compare it with Al-Hussein zone activities.

8.3.5.2. *Subindicator 5.2: liveability and engaging atmosphere.* Al-Hussein zone scored high (4.8) as in Fig. 13 revealing the engaging atmosphere from the surrounding shops and paid cafes as shown in Fig. 12. The lively experience is unique for users, yet Table 9 shows the effect of informal vendors and beggars on visitors' (3.8) and tourists (4.2) experience as they feel pushed to buy and use the cafes. Al-Sayyida Zeinab zone scored lower (4.2) as in Fig. 13 reflecting that state-led interventions have reserved the mosque and plaza as a monument yet it eroded its connectivity with the surrounding as shown in Fig. 12 and align with inhabitants score (3.8) in Table 9 yet the area is lively during religious occasions like Moulid and Eid celebrations.

Table 9. Comparative stockholders' perceptual means for Indicator (5) (Author, 2025).

	Al-Hussein Mosque zone		Al-Sayyida Zeinab Mosque zone	
Subindicators no.	5.1	5.2	5.1	5.2
Inhabitants	4.8	4.5	4.4	3.8
Shop owners	4.7	4.6	4.3	4.3
Visitors	4	3.9	3.9	4.4
Security	4.8	5	4.2	4.6
Tourists	4.8	4.2	–	–

8.3.6. Indicator (6): temporal inclusivity

The two areas are optimized by state-led interventions for large-scale religious and social events. Both plazas operate under time-based regulation that limits their inclusivity rate on different occasions.

8.3.6.1. *Subindicator 6.1: safety and inclusion across different times.* Al-Hussein zone average score (3.8) as in Fig. 15 that reflects the strong temporal shift plaza's inclusivity. It is restricted during day, open after sunset and totally accessible during religious occasions as in Fig. 14. This score aligns with Table 10 where tourists (3.4) and visitors scored (3.3) as they usually do not have the chance to spend the whole day or attend religious events. Al-Sayyida Zeinab scored higher by (4.8) as in Fig. 15, where the plaza daily access is continuous but limited to certain spots but during religious occasions its overcrowded and traffic is added as shown in Fig. 14. Table 10 shows visitors' low scoring (3.1) as they have limited access to the plaza unless it is a religious occasion.

8.3.6.2. *Subindicator 6.2: accommodation of seasonal changes and cultural events.* Al-Hussein zone scored (4.8) as in Fig. 15 as the plaza shows great resilience due to the presence of expandable umbrellas shifting its 1/3 into a fully shaded outdoor space during Eid and Friday prayers. Table 10 shows the alignment of inhabitants (4.4) and security (4.4) scores as they witness the precinct's resilience during different times and occasions. Al-Sayyida Zeinab zone scored high (4.7) as in Fig. 15 as the plaza enlargement and upgrade enhanced its' potential of host more visitors as in Fig. 14. Inhabitants in Table 10 scored (4.8) as they witness the transformation of the plaza during religious occasions to accommodate the large crowd effectively.

8.3.7. Indicator (7): heritage as a shared and living resource

The indicator scores revealed polarity in subindicators ranking, creating a perceptual gap that reflects a physical separation between managed heritage and the livable shared space where users' need to feel a sense of ownership.

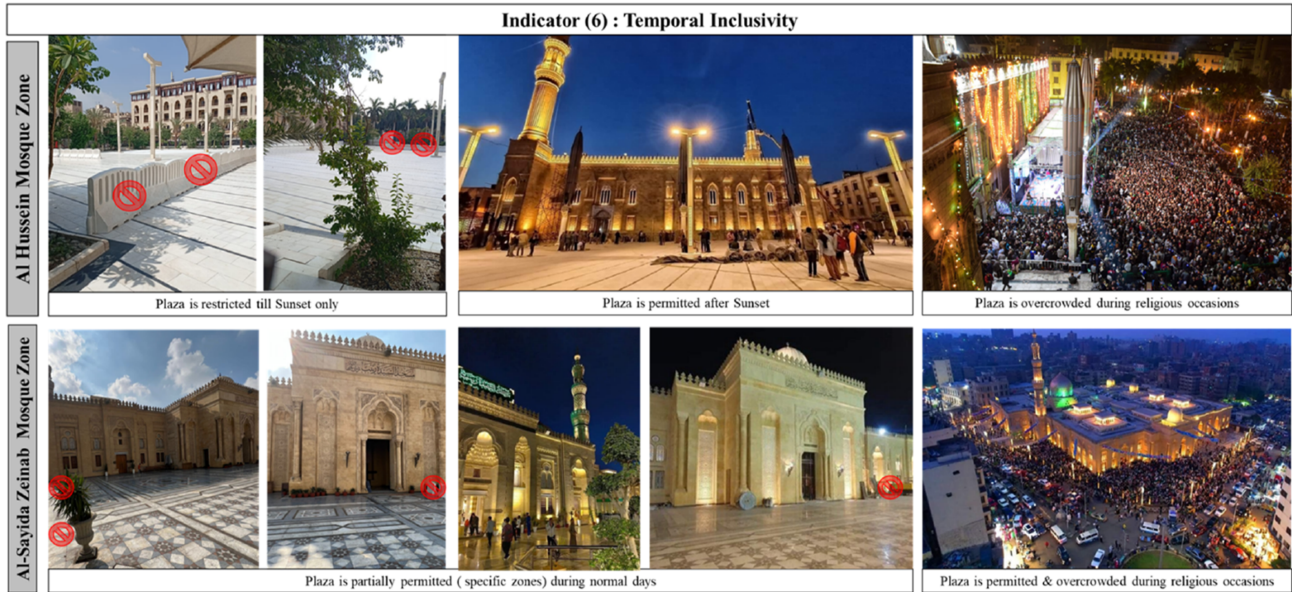


Fig. 14. Comparative photo grid for indicator (6) (Author, 2025 (Egypt Presidency, 2024; Abdel, 2023);).

Table 10. Comparative stockholders’ perceptual means for indicator (6) (Author, 2025).

	Al-Hussein Mosque zone		Al-Sayida Zeinab Mosque zone	
Subindicators no.	6.1	6.2	6.1	6.2
Inhabitants	3.6	4.6	4.1	4.8
Shop owners	3.2	4.2	4	4.7
Visitors	3.3	4.4	3.1	4.7
Security	4.4	4.6	4	4.2
Tourists	3.4	3.8	—	—

8.3.7.1. Subindicator 7.1: inclusivity of access for heritage areas. Al-Hussein zone scored (3.2) as in Fig. 17. Where in Fig. 16 the inclusive zones considered limited compared to restricted zones. In Table 11 security guards scored (3.8) as they perceive the access checkpoints as control dominance, yet

inhabitants scored the lowest (2.1) as they perceive those checkpoints as physical barriers. Tourists (4.4) aligned with security guards as they are accompanied by guides knowing the full access times. Al-Sayida Zeinab scored slightly higher (3.6) due to presence of active facades and more inclusive zones as in Fig. 16. These results align with inhabitants score (3.9) and shop owners in Table 11 which maintains some level of functional access yet the access to the heritage site is considered limited yet does not affect their daily patterns.

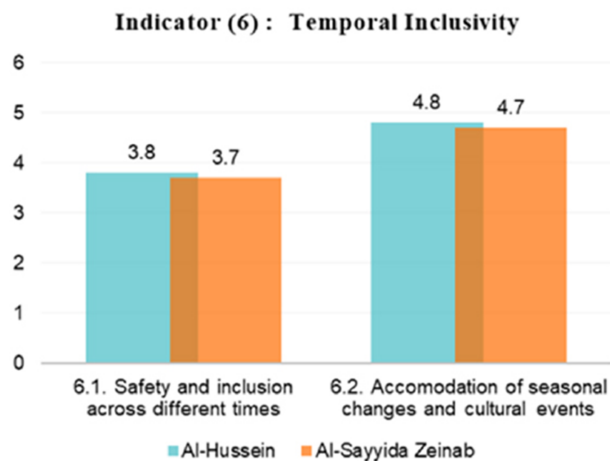


Fig. 15. Comparative means’ scoring for indicator (6) subindicators (Author, 2025).

8.3.7.2. Subindicator 7.2: level of community living traditions. Al-Hussein zone scored (2.5) as in Fig. 17, as touristic and exclusive zone occupies most of the area as in Fig. 16 and the ritual hotspot confinement affecting the flow of pilgrims. These results align with inhabitants low score (1.6) in Table 11 as the zoning in Fig. 16 hinder their spontaneous community traditions. Al-Sayida Zeinab zone scored higher (3.5) as in Fig. 17 as the inclusive areas is spacious and does not conflict with the locals’ daily dynamics as in Fig. 16. Table 11 shows the vendors (4.1) and inhabitants (3.9) high scoring due to

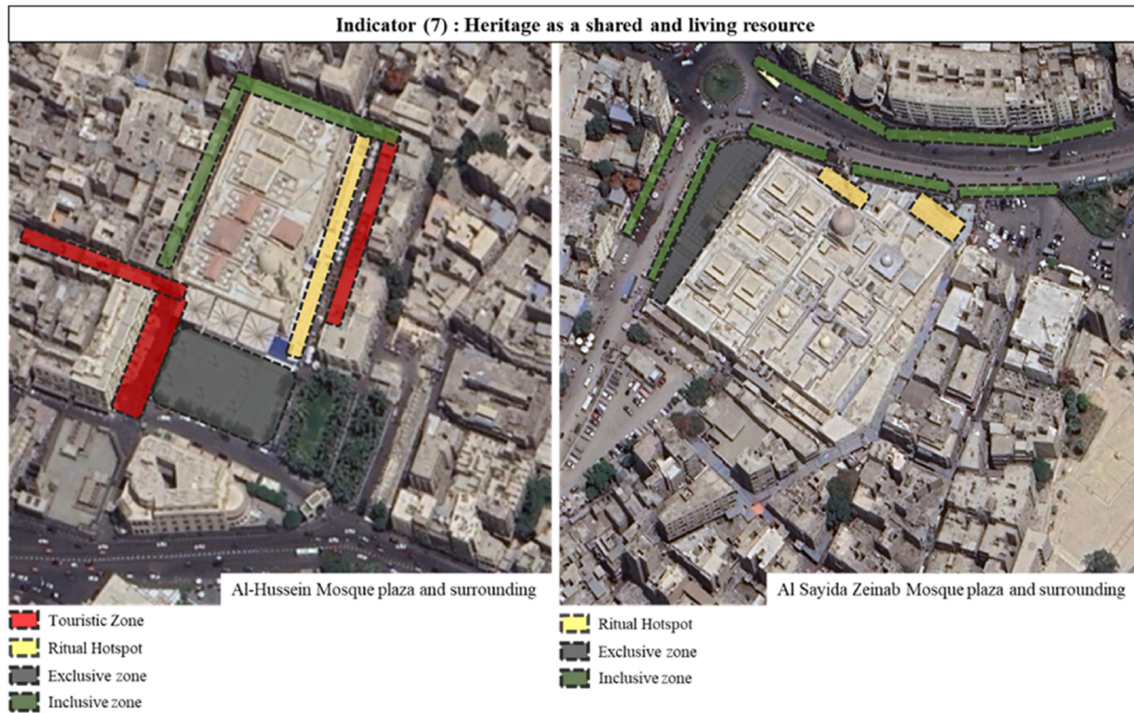


Fig. 16. Comparative observations and mapping for indicator (7) (Author, 2025).

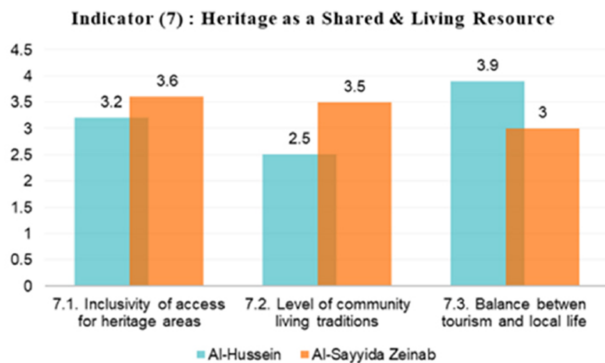


Fig. 17. Comparative means' scoring for indicator (7) subindicators (Author, 2025).

continuous access to the mosque and partial access to the plaza as in Fig. 16 the ritual hotspot is an inclusive accessible space.

8.3.7.3. Subindicator 7.3: balance between tourism and local life. Al-Hussein zone scored (3.9) as in Fig. 17

as the touristic zone is the most dominant as in Fig. 16. Table 11 shows the tourists (3.6) and visitors (3.7) moderate high score as they feel well served. Al-Sayida Zeinab scored lower (3) as in Fig. 17 as it is still considered a locals-oriented zone despite the beautifying upgrade and presence of inclusive areas as in Fig. 16. Services that attract tourists doesn't exist as much, local visitors scored (3) in Table 11 as they feel familiar and well served.

Thus, the data analysis spotted a relatively common pattern across both study areas with high scores in HSIF indicators related to spatial and socio-cultural experiences and lower scored in indicators related to governance, access, and heritage inclusion. Al-Hussein Mosque precinct showed higher values in touristic intensification, activities and spatial control while Al-Sayida Zeinab Mosque precinct demonstrated higher performance in local integration and heritage continuity. These highlights create a base for the interpretative discussion that follows.

Table 11. Comparative stockholders' perceptual means for indicator (7) (Author, 2025).

Subindicators no.	Al-Hussein Mosque zone			Al-Sayida Zeinab Mosque zone		
	7.1	7.2	7.3	7.1	7.2	7.3
Inhabitants	2.1	1.6	3.1	3.9	3.9	2.8
Shop owners	2.7	2.3	3.4	3.7	4.1	2.9
Visitors	3.2	2.4	3.7	3.4	3	3
Security	3.8	3.4	4.6	3	3	3.6
Tourists	4.4	2.8	3.6	–	–	–

9. Discussion

After the triangulated interpretation of data, the comparative assessment of Al-Hussein and Al-Sayida Zeinab precinct through the HSIF indicators disclosed a convergent dynamic of socio-spatial inclusivity in rich heritage public realms. The HSIF indicators were comprehensively quantified through equally averaging its subindicators to generate the radar chart shown in Fig. 18. Those reveals an asymmetrical performance configuration between high livable spatial experience that expands in the lower quadrants – indicators 3, 4, 5, 6 – and weakened communal and institutional dimensions shown in the upper right quadrant – indicators 1, 2, 7. The two study cases are following the same geometric imbalance but with slightly different scores that confirms a qualitative deficiency.

This performance gap confirms that state-led interventions transformed the precincts from inclusive organic fabric into a gated heritage model as in Figs. 2 and 3 through the period 2015–2025, prioritize visual and spatial order, economic vitality and touristic engagement while undermining communal participation, cultural continuity, and users' equity. The strongest performing indicator is indicator (3): diversity and social encounter, Al-Hussein area is ahead of Al-Sayida Zeinab area. Their enlarged plazas were redeveloped to function as a high-capacity space that hosts diverse user groups homogenously. Though, the behavioral mapping and on-site observations indicates that these heterogeneous users are segmented showing that existence doesn't necessarily interpret into social integration. This observation aligns with literature that spatial capacity and affordability solely

does not create an inclusive communal life (Soja, 2010; Gehl, 2011).

The second strongest performance is indicator (5): vitality and everyday life, Al-Hussein is ahead of Al-Sayida Zeinab area. This result reflects the continuity of activity after state-led redevelopment where informal vendors were replaced by formal commercial touristic-oriented venues – especially in Al-Hussein area – which indicated a shift from communal to consumption dynamic. This shift did not erode the precincts urban vitality yet reconfigured it, supporting literature on commodification of heritage public spaces (Labadi, 2019; Waterton and Smith, 2010).

Indicator (6): temporal inclusivity performed equally strong in both precincts, as they have the spatial capacity and religious significance to host large religious events. Nevertheless, the drastic difference in users' volumes between peak ceremonial periods and normal daily use reveals the episodic nature of accessibility showing that the precincts' inclusivity is temporally selective than permanent. Indicator (4): spatial and experiential quality is the last strong performing HSIF indicators, with Al-Hussein ahead of Al-Sayida Zeinab precinct. The result demonstrates that aesthetical high performance is associated with the sanitized state-led interventions aiming to redevelop the heritage context into a touristic magnet. Yet the decline in the subindicator 4.1 related to spatial and climatic comfort shows that those strategies prioritize visual up-scaling over environmental comfort and social interaction reinforced by critiques of visual-led regeneration in rich-heritage precincts.

On the contrary, indicator 1: access and equity weakly performed in both sites, yet Al-Sayida Zeinab is slightly ahead of Al-Hussein area as it more community-oriented context. The perceptual gap between access and equity and functional performance in high scoring indicators (4, 5, 6) demonstrates a critical conflict between physical openness and social accessibility. Where circulation, amenities and maintenance are well structured in both sites yet social access to services, mosques and plazas undergoes controlled logistical process by permanent gates and movable barriers.

Indicator 7: heritage as a shared and living resource shows equal low performance for both study areas. Demonstrating a clear heritage museumification which erodes its authentic role as a living cultural system. The functional segregation between touristic zones and ritual zones shows a transformation from inclusive religious node into a representational heritage. This outcome supports

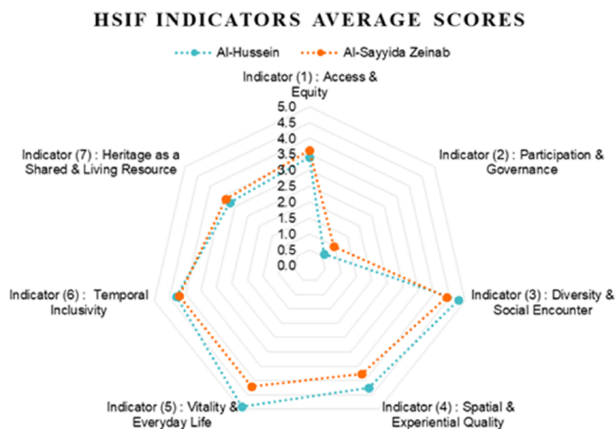


Fig. 18. Comparative radar chart for HSIF indicators' scoring (Author, 2026).

studies of heritage materiality preservation and visual authenticity in heritage management while neglecting including heritage in social process continuity (Smith and Waterton, 2012).

The weakest performing HSIF indicator in the study areas is indicator (2): participation and governance, with Al-Sayida Zeinab is slightly ahead of Al-Hussein area. The results confirm the top-down control over heritage management while marginalizing communal participation. This leads to disconnection between the communal representatives and state-led management strategies. This outcome aligns with the top-down heritage management models which detain the participatory governance of rich heritage management (Waterton and Smith, 2010).

Collectively, the HSIF indicators' assessment shows that up-scaling state-led redevelopments generated a safe, well-managed, and esthetical public realm, but it eroded the inclusivity and cultural continuity of the rich-heritage precinct. The public life dynamics in both study areas is not demolished but sense of belonging and stewardship is transformed and redefined into institutional control and commercial orientation which does not ensure inclusive heritage publicness.

10. Context-sensitive guidelines for relational rebalancing of socio-spatial inclusivity in rich heritage precincts

The proposed guidelines are derived from the empirical outcomes of assessing (HSIF) indicators to align with the study objective in proposing context-sensitive enactments to enhance inclusivity in rich heritage precincts. The guidelines adopt a relational approach rather than corrective, by using the high-performing indicators to mitigate the structural weaknesses spotted in weak performing ones. The proposed guidelines are fragmented into three clusters addressing the deficits in HSIF indicators 1, 2, and 7. The proposed guidelines is not meant to reverse recent urban morphological

changes yet it is a proposed reconfiguration aiming to help locals regain their right to their everyday urban dynamics.

10.1. Cluster I: equitable access and spatial porosity

Empirical study outcomes demonstrate a discrepancy between the locals' experience in accessing mosque-centered plazas and its apparent openness. Despite the state-led interventions where plazas were significantly upgraded and enlarged and the pedestrian circulation regulation, yet indicator (1): access and equity performed poorly in both case studies. This result is associated with the excessive presence of permanent fences, movable barriers, and security checkpoints, those elements reshape the open plaza from an inclusive extension to the surroundings into a managed restricted area.

Accordingly, this restrained access is not out of spatial inadequacy as high scores in indicator (3): diversity and social encounter ensures and the plazas' capacity to host diverse events and user groups. Indicator (4): spatial and experiential quality; high score confirms the effectiveness of recent upgrades in supporting prolonged use and the pleasurable users' experience. Indicator (6): temporal inclusivity performed highly indicating the sites' flexibility to operate efficiently in different times and occasions.

Table 12 include cluster I proposed guideline and its operational implementations. As in Al-Hussein zone, continuous controlled space produced a safe space yet socially restrictive touristic enclave as perceived by inhabitants. Despite the plaza's spatial capacity for accommodating users' effectively. On the contrary Al-Sayida Zeinab zone admit partial permeability which gives locals a slight sense of equity despite the existence of physical barriers. This contrast shows that spatial porosity can occur with crowd management. Access and spatial porosity can be a flexible condition and time-sensitive practice not a permanent constrain.

Table 12. Cluster I: equitable access and spatial porosity guideline and implementations (Author, 2026).

Proposed guideline	Reconfigure access control system from permanent, exclusionary boundaries into porous, graduated and adaptive thresholds	
Responding to indicator	1	Supporting indicators 3, 4, 6
Guideline implementations	<p><i>Design mechanism:</i> Reduce use of movable barriers, surround fencing with soft lining tools as vegetated buffers, seating edges and paving transitions to ensure symbolic boundaries without harsh physical exclusion. <i>Managerial mechanism:</i> Apply time-based access regulation that allow daily spatial permeability while ensuring controlled management during peak occasions.</p> <p><i>Regulatory mechanism:</i> Inject security measures into the spatial design to preserve crowd control supervision without limiting locals' sense of belonging and ownership</p>	

10.1.1. Cluster II: participatory governance and joint management

Outcomes presented indicator (2): participation and governance as the weakest performing indicator of HSIF in both case studies. This result ensures a structured top–down managerial model. In spite of the two rich-heritage precincts' high performance in indicator (3) diversity and social encounter as the plazas attracts various user groups, activities also formal and informal economical practices. Likewise performing high in indicator (5) vitality and everyday life as all users and activities are functioning lively daily. Yet governance and decision-making are centralized and security-driven with large detachment from locals' dynamics as perceived by inhabitants. This misalignment reveals the mismatch between the space functioning dynamics and its institutional regulations.

Empirically, in Al-Hussein zone the consolidation of authority between state-led interventions and security representatives created a strictly controlled context prioritizing touristic management through crowd regulation while relegating locals despite their sustained presence. On the contrary, Al-Sayida Zeinab zone has authority representatives yet it retains forms of negotiated governance through tolerated market activities and inhabitants growing sense of belonging and responsibility towards their context yet they also feel marginalized in the decision-taking process.

This discrepancy shows that inclusivity does not depend on authority absence, but the presence of

mediating models able to include locals and translate their needs into inclusive regulations to sustain the locals' daily dynamics while preserving the rich-heritage environment. Table 13 include cluster II proposed guideline and its operational implementations based on those empirical outcomes.

10.2. Cluster III: assimilating heritage into circadian urban life

Outcomes shows the deficit in indicator (7): heritage as a shared and living resource in both case studies, highlighting a rupture between heritage preservation strategies and commons daily life. In spite of, the mosques visual and spatial centrality and the users' unique experience identified in high scored indicator (4): spatial and experiential quality. The continuous lively atmosphere peaking indicator (5) and adaptability to big-scaled religious events which summing indicator (6): temporal inclusivity. Heritage is framed as a visually preserved asset rather than a social resource, which ensures heritage progressive museumification through aesthetic upgrade, spatial control, and event-based access and marginalizing locals' practices.

Empirically, Al-Hussein zone showed clear fragmentation in ritual and touristic zones limiting potentials of locals' informal daily routines. Al-Sayida Zeinab zone is more locals oriented as presence of the streets and market inclusive areas compensate the low permeability of the mosque and plaza. Table 14 include cluster III proposed

Table 13. Cluster II: participatory governance and joint management guideline and implementations (Author, 2026).

Proposed guideline	Modify authority models from top–down, security-led governance into a participatory management model that recognize commons' needs and stewardship of their heritage contexts		
Responding to indicator	2	Supporting indicators	3, 5
Guideline implementations	<p><i>Managerial mechanism:</i> Establish an area-level mediation council incorporating communal stakeholders (shop owners, locals, mosque administration) with state authorities to regulate access terms, spatial rules and temporal closures within existing governance frameworks.</p> <p><i>Regulatory mechanism:</i> Initiate a flexible regulation system where rules of vending, seating, gathering around the precinct are periodically adjusted based on users' feedback, recognizing their everyday needs as a valid source of governance knowledge for upcoming state-led interventions</p>		

Table 14. Cluster III: assimilating heritage into circadian urban life guideline and implementations (Author, 2026).

Proposed guideline	Urban heritage needs to be a living and shared resource through special governance and spatial configuration that preserve the commons cultural practices, provide temporal flexibility and recognize users' needs into heritage managerial processes		
Responding to indicator	7	Supporting indicators	4, 5, 6
Guideline implementations	<p><i>Regulatory mechanism:</i> Legitimize specific zones in the precincts for commons daily cultural practices (local rituals, noncommercial social use, and informal gatherings), those zones preserved from touristic-driven and commercial appropriation. <i>Design mechanism:</i> Propose spatial layouts strategies allowing the precincts' flexible adaptability between peak ritual intensity, touristic, and visitors' flows and local appropriation. <i>Managerial mechanism:</i> Involve local residence and shop owners into heritage stewardship formal structures recognizing their cultural and spatial ownership and benefit from their knowledge in sustaining intangible heritage</p>		

guideline and its operational implementations based on those empirical outcomes.

11. Conclusion

The study examined the effect of recent state-led interventions and spatial transformations on urban inclusivity in rich-heritage mosque-centered precincts in Historic Cairo. The study proposed context-sensitive guidelines aiming to balance the touristic and economic pressures with commons rights to space, through the application of the theoretically grounded model HSIF. The study showed that recent state-led interventions has structurally redefined spatial publicness without diminishing it. The recent urban condition of both cases prioritizes esthetics and visual order, touristic attraction, crowds' control, and event-base vitality. Yet revealing a critical functional weakness in access equity, governance, and communal participation and heritage inclusion as a social resource.

HSIF perceived inclusivity as a multiscalar, relational dynamic that is a product of spatial configuration, heritage regeneration, governance strategies and everyday communal practices. Empirically, the study triangulated users' perception, on-site observations and morphological evolution analysis for a robust reading of how inclusivity operates and constrained overtime in a comparative analysis between the two heritage precincts. This analysis of Al-Hussein and Al-Sayida Zeinab precincts highlighted that the inclusivity erosion is not solely a result of tourism prioritization or security dominance but an outcome of top-down governance models that marginalize commons from decision-making constraining their authentic cultural traditions and dynamics. Both study areas exhibited profound performance in diversity, vitality, temporal inclusivity, and spatial and experiential quality; those strength points are directed to support consumption-oriented publicness and touristic-led developments rather than communal ones.

Notably, the study outcomes ensured that high performance HSIF indicators should not be treated as separate successes, but as aptitudes redirected to reinforce the weaker indicators through attuned inclusive management and design enactments. The proposed guidelines provide concepts for subtle intermediations benefiting from existing social and spatial potentials. The guidelines focus on soft boundaries, hybrid governance models and integrating heritage in daily locals' dynamics while preserving its monumental significance.

Beyond Historic Cairo, HSIF can be a subject of imminent application on other historical contexts

with the same tourists, governance and commons dilemma. Further research can undergo longitudinal assessment of inclusivity overtime; emphasizing the idea of inclusivity as a sustained human right that can be negotiated, managed, and designed rather than a fixed outcome.

Ethics information

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. participation in the survey was voluntary and the respondents were informed about the purpose of the research prior participation. Responses were collected anonymously to ensure confidentiality and no personally identifiable information was recorded.

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Author contribution statement

The author (Ghada S. Ghazala) of the Manuscript titled: Framing inclusive heritage urbanism: reconfiguring publicness in mosque-centered precincts in Historic Cairo, was solely responsible for the conceptualization, methodology, investigation, data curation, formal analysis, writing (original drafting, writing), review and editing, visualization, validation, and supervision.

Conflict of interest statement

The author declares that there is no competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper or any financial and personal relationships with other people or organizations that could inappropriately influence their work.

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