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Doing (In)Justice? Cairene Place Naming and Politics of Forgetting

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ABSTRACT

Toponym is a crucial part of the city's symbolic meanings. Its investigation explores what is said or unsaid about the past and explains memory operation. Cairo experienced multiple cases of naming and renaming throughout its history; however, whose history is remembered, misremembered, or forgotten? The author argues that Cairene's toponym is used as a tool for the politics of dictated forgetting and misremembering. The study explores the Cairene naming and renaming politics processes in three significant eras: Historic Cairo (before 1800), Royal Cairo (1840-1950), and Pretorian Cairo (after 1956). Such an investigation aims to comprehend the authorities' naming and renaming impact on the Cairo memorial landscape. Decoding the Cairene memorial landscape demands an interdisciplinary study. Urban sociology analyses history as a data source for creating models; urban geography deals with the city on its fundamental level, and urban history searches for events' meanings and consequences for the city. Focusing on what is accessible and observable in the Cairene memorial landscape suggests finding the best alternative conclusion. While places in historic Cairo were named by identities, Royal and Pretorian Cairo introduced toponyms for manipulating public memory.

Keywords: Urban Studies, Urban Memory, Toponym, Memorial Landscape, Cairo.

INTRODUCTION

In 2015, activists from the *Osez le féminisme* renamed 60 streets in Paris, France, to bring gender parity in place naming. In 2024, activists renamed streets in Leone, France, after Palestinian activists and journalists. Furthermore, protesting students of Columbia University, USA, renamed Hamilton Hall after a female toddler, Hend Ragab, who was killed in Gaza. Other students renamed McGill University's buildings in Canada after ruined villages and towns in Palestine. The Hamilton Hall was an arena for protesting against the Vietnam War and the Apartheid Regime of South Africa. During the student's protest against the South African regime, the hall was named after Nilsson Mandela.

Toponyms have challenged discrimination, violence, and inequality [1], [2], [3]. Their material structures shaped how people interact and identify historical and memorial events. Naming sites is a significant part of the urban linguistic landscape, and the signage used to mark toponyms constitutes a considerable part of the city's symbolic power [4]. Naming is not limited to cultural, historical or political contestation; institutions commonly encourage donations by naming halls, buildings, or other permanent elements after donors.

Urban history is not just a story. Understanding the urban changes in the past will lead to understanding contemporary urbanism. Interpreting the origin and changes of the city's tangible and intangible components is necessary to decode its symbols [5, p. 4]. Thus, the central subject of urban history should not describe city walls, gates, streets, and buildings but its multidimensional urban life cyphered in distinctive signs. Signs and symbols preserve and adapt the memories of communities' experiences [6], as remembering or forgetting specific locations and events is an essential part of the collective memory. Swart argued that street naming "opens up possibilities of a more inclusive history [7, p. 120]." Nonetheless, she emphasises the dangers of creating urban injustice. In Australia and the United States, for example, memorials and monuments have traditionally been built or "written" in ways that ignore or misrepresent the history of Indigenous peoples [8, p. 210]. Alderman raises significant questions about how street naming can do injustice to the history of those victimised and discriminated against. What is said and not said about the past? Whose history is remembered or forgotten through the spatial inscription of memory? To what extent does the differential treatment of histories silence certain accounts of the past while it gives voice to others? [9, p. 41].

Investigating street names is vital in comprehending the Cairene operation of the memory. The names of the streets reveal a lot about the city's historical development and changes. One should first examine how they operate to understand the apparent efficacy of remembering and forgetting [10, p. 47]. Cairo's policy of forgetting needs to be comprehended, especially after experiencing aggressive urban deformation in the 19th and 21st centuries. The urban policy of forgetting in Cairo is unique in many ways. It highlights how Cairo's authorities decided to replace its past with the glossy future of generic anywhere-fit standard design in the name of 'development'. What makes the study of Cairo's policy of forgetting essential is that city transitions could significantly impact our experiences, collective memories, and knowledge of the past. As cities deform, collective memory becomes even more critical for the present generations and those who may need to learn from their cities' urban palimpsest [11, pp. 17 and 16].

Reading the city's history concerns its origins, long-term changes, and decoding of meanings. Suppose such an approach considers urbanism a way of life [12]; Sennett's argument about the city as an arena of competing forces and players explains the changes in the system of meanings [13]. Urban elements like space, place, street, boundaries and names express intangible identities. These elements are defined as individual and collective knowledge belonging to a particular group and associated with its member's emotions and sociocultural and economic values [14]. Toponymic practice is widely used in the modern Cairene landscape. There is a long tradition of authoritarian-dictated interpretations of history and heritage. Schools, streets, and sites are named according to the governing elites' synoptic viewing of Egypt's history since the middle of the 19th century (for more details about the synoptic view, see [15]). Moreover, the Cairene renaming process neglects the value of historical justice and symbolic reparation. The author argues that naming and renaming spaces were exercised in Cairo as a tool for dictated forgetting and historical injustice.

This study explores the naming and renaming of Cairene streets along three essential eras and explains their meaning and relationship to the politics of remembering and forgetting. Tracing naming politics along with Cairo's urban history aims to explore the relationship between naming and renaming streets and the public right to memory. The politics of naming and renaming will be traced in historic Cairo (the city before 1800), Royal Cairo (the city between 1840 and 1950), and Pretorian Cairo (after 1956).

To answer how naming and renaming streets are used as tools for Cairene's politics of remembering and forgetting, the author intends to associate their symbolic values with urban and political changes. Moreover, the Cairene toponym is investigated to identify historical attempts to do (in)justice. It must be noted that the author faced a significant challenge in finding official and transparent answers for the Cairo streets naming policy. Consequently, the author will produce multiple alternatives, among which the best explanation will be considered.

Decoding urban signs involves disciplines such as urban sociology, history and geography. Urban sociology analyses history as a source of data and examples to create models. However, seeing urban history from a sociological perspective only might reveal sources of misunderstandings with historians. Sociology perceives history as valuable examples selected according to theoretical assumptions, and urban history examines the historical nature of cities and the process of urbanisation [16], [17]. Furthermore, urban geography deals with the city on a fundamental level on which landscape, or space and place name, occur [18], [19], [20].

Tracing toponyms in Cairo's landscape demands an interdisciplinary study. Integrating linguistic expression into urban sociology, history, and geography helps read the city as a text of historical symbols, signs, and social models. Interdisciplinary studies explain the sociocultural and political relationships that indicate how the place is named, the most suitable name, and how it affects the community's policy of forgetting [3].

Exploring Cairo's semiotic dimensions means treating it as a text on urban society. The 'text' metaphor critically reads the histories and ideologies written into (or written out of) the content and form of memorial landscapes [21]. Consequently, randomly selected spaces (streets and places) will be explored in various parts of Cairo. Those parts represent the three eras: historic Cairo, Royal Cairo and Pretorian Cairo.

Collective memory theory serves as the foundation of this study by viewing the past as an "object undergoing interpretation and representation" [22, p. 47]. This interpretation is mainly done by discovering changes in Cairo's politics of naming and renaming. Focusing on what is accessible and observable from the city memorial landscape suggests using maps, indexes, and related literature. Historical events will be analysed regarding their impact on Cairo's politics of naming and renaming. Moreover, historical events and the Cairene politics of naming and renaming will be investigated from related literature, site visits and spontaneous interviews.

POLITICS OF NAMING SPACES AND PLACES

The most significant traces expected for symbolic expression are naming, linguistic elements' emplacement, graphic ideology, and language policy [23]. Moreover, identifying a public space starts by naming it, as naming has a performative, stabilising, and ordering character [24]. Hendry argued that "the power to control symbolic systems" mirrors semiotic values and legitimate conceptions [25, p. 25]. Names are not only linguistic expressions referring to an object in the real or imagined world; they are also symbols that bring about a variety of feelings depending on the relationship between the name user(s) and the named object. When thinking of a named place, what comes first into mind, the place or its name, or do they appear simultaneously? “To some extent, it is a chicken-and-egg dilemma” [26, p. 109].

Names are used in various functions, expressions of particular objects and cognitive, emotional, and social communication (Andersson 1994, p. 8, cf. [26, p. 99]. Despite the Royal Opera House in Cairo being burned to the ground on the early morning of 28 October 1971, the place is still known as 'Midan el-Opera’ (Opera Square), but the site hosts a multi-story garage. The name introduces a memorial meaning and sense that provokes stories about how and why it was burned. Toponyms can serve as cues inspiring reflection and education about an unfamiliar past, which has a significant impact since many citizens might be unaware of the history associated with names [27].

Moughtin and Mertens argued that naming is related to the symbolic meaning of an urban site, making it its most crucial function [28, p. 88]. Spaces require physical structure, but places do not. They might be part of a defined or undefined space. Applying a name to a spatial sector means creating a place. In 1801, the French engineers recorded various commercial places along *el-Azam* Street in Cairo. Despite the street’s continuity as a linear space, it was divided into sectors [29], [30], [31], each accommodating a marketplace and being named differently [32].

A place name points out a place and mediates a cluster of memories and meanings attached to it [26, p. 100]. Renaming Hamilton Hall, for example, mediates meaning and memories of students' struggle for social justice and their struggle against oppression, apartheid, and war. News of Columbia students renaming the Hall after Hend Ragab evoked memories of naming it in another event after Nelson Mandela, which emphasises the commemorative value of Hamilton Hall. Duncan Light posits that names commemorating essential events or personalities from a country's history can be significant expressions of national identity with decisive symbolic importance [33].

Place name acquires a functional value “that easily matches their utility as instruments of reference.” Proper names are widely regarded as paradigmatic referring expressions. Although it may seem implausible to suppose that all words ‘hook onto’ or 'refer to' something, certain types of words are arguably of the referring sort, such as proper names, pronouns, indexicals, demonstratives, plurals, natural kind terms, and other property terms [34]. A definite description can ‘hook onto’ something if introduced in referential terms. Reference is a relation between certain sorts of representational tokens and objects. For example, naming a street after Saad Zakhloul is a solid reference to the 1919 Egyptian revolution.

It became essential for urban spaces to be labelled in the modern city as part of its physical infrastructure and spatial reference system. While monuments can be torn down and their footprints obliterated, a street or public space must have a name. A street cannot be left without a name, as a removed statue can leave behind an empty pedestal [35, p. 310]. Before 2015, *Tahrir* Square contained an empty pedestal. It was not common knowledge what the pedestal was for. Few knew the pedestal was supposed to be for Ismail Pasha’s statue. The statue was not built as Ismail Pasha was exiled to Istanbul by the British in 1879, and its pedestal presented memorial problems. However, the place was named and renamed.

NAMING PLACES IN CAIRO

Although Cairo produced street signage in the second half of the 19th century [36], place names represented a conscious part of its cultural heritage. Place names in historic Cairo have been handed down orally from generation to generation. They are a particular part of its cultural heritage, telling about the places they refer to. When one considers that place names are coined to describe it, it becomes evident that the coining group deals with a material of immense historical value [26, p. 102]. Coining a place or a residential entity in historic Cairo after a group, such as *el-Maghareba* (residents from Morocco, Algeria and Tunis), identified the place and set a rule of belonging between the place and a group of people. On the other hand, places in Royal and Pretorian Cairo are coined from a political and authoritarian perspective.

Naming Places by Identities in Historic Cairo

In historic Cairo, places were identified for urban functions and geographic characteristics or their founding origine (tribe, profession or ethnic groups). Places such as *el-Kotobeia* (book traders) and *el-Sanadeqeia* (bookbinders) were familiar as they were determined according to their urban function. If streets were identified by their geographic properties, places such as *el-Khalij el-Masry* (the Cairene Gulf) are common. *El-Khalij el-Masry* was a Nile Channel crossing the city from south to north. Streets such as *bien el-Qasrien* (between the two palaces), *bien el-Surain* (between the two walls), and *Bab el-Luq* (the wetland's door) are examples of naming places by physical reference. *Bien el-Qasrien* was between the two Fatimid palaces, and *bien el-Surain* was between two defensive walls. *Bab el-Luq* was a training field surrounded by a wall. The name *Bab* means door, and *el-Luq* is some soil. In modern times, the wall and door were demolished, and the context of the place was developed. Although *bien el-Qasrien*, *bien el-Surien* and *Bab el-Luq* lost their physical references, the three places sustained their names. *Haret el-Maghareba*, *Haret el-Shawam* (residents from Palestine, Lebanon and Syria), Zwila Gate and *Haret el-Saqayen* (residents working in water delivery) are some examples of places named after their founding origin.

Nevertheless, one can identify places named after individuals who developed an area and took residence in it. It is unclear whether the developers or the public named those places. In the late 15th century, a land developer named Azbak bin Tatakh el-Yusufi bought a significant area by a lake in Western historic Cairo. After developing it and constructing his palace, the area and the lake became known as *El-Azbakeya*. El-*Mosky* Market was named after Prince Izz el-Din Mosk, who built a private palace and a row of shops along a street around the 12th century. Nevertheless, the name is commonly disputed. Some interviewers said the name comes from the French word '*Moqueé*' as the Napoleon army commanders lived in the area (1798-1801).

Such politics of naming do not perfectly match William's expression of 'identity by naming' [37]; they match the expression of 'naming by identity'. The latter expression goes beyond the objectivity and materiality of places to their intangible aspects. Naming a place according to its identity and characteristics produces symbolic meanings and is easily remembered.

However, other sites in historic Cairo were named according to unknown references to the author. For example, the vast open area at the Citadel was named *Qara-Midan*. *Qara-Midan* means the Black Square; nevertheless, the colour has no physical signification. The name's linguistic structure does not follow Arabic grammar; it follows Turkish, and its naming process still needs clarification.

Cairene Place Naming and Context

A meaningful street in historic Cairo was known as *el-Aazam* Street before modern times (in modern times, it was renamed el-Moa'az Street). *El-Aazam* Street (the Greatest Street) was the city's most prolonged, regular street and economic and sociocultural heart [38]. It was the city commercial centre [39], a global commercial hub in the Islamic world from 1300 till 1800 [40]. It was the primary route for caravans passed through the city, connecting its northern and southern gates. Its significant value to the city explains its name.

On the other hand, naming a road after Salah Salem by 1960 commemorates him as a 'Free Officer', but it questions the choice's meaning. Salah Salem was designed as a ring road at the city's eastern arc. Its context was the desert and cemeteries. It does not answer why Salah Salem was chosen for this specific context. However, it might reflect the sense of the 'Free Officers' domination of the Egyptian political theatre after 1956. The name becomes meaningless because it is not connected to context by justifying how the road should be recognised.

Cairene Place Naming and Authoritarianism

Street signs became part of the Cairene landscape only by the second half of the 19th century. Statues, nodes (Midan) and monumental structures signify locations. Significant streets in Royal Cairo were named after royal family members such as Mohammed Ali Pasha, Ibrahim Pasha, King Fouad, and King Farouk Streets. Others were named after royal family entourage, such as Suliman Pasha Street, and foreign dignitaries, such as the one named after the Ottoman Sultan Abd el-Aziz during his visit to Cairo in 1876. Those streets commemorate living and dead royal family members and their entourage. However, some were meaningless, others lost their meanings throughout history, and some presented a specific sense beyond their references. Streets that lost their initial sense, such as Clot Bek Street, became an Egyptian mockery by referring the name to the French word for underwear (as they both are pronounced in Egypt, the T in Clot is not considered silent). Unfortunately, it is not common knowledge that Clot Bek was a French physician who founded the Egyptian School of Medicine in the 19th century.

From 1956 to 1971, streets and places in Pretorian Cairo were named after 'revolutionary' individuals and events, such as Medinet Naasr (city of victory), Medinet el-Omaal (city of labours) and Salah Salem Road. In the mid-1970s, Egypt started a political shift that resulted in an evident socioeconomic change. Newly developed areas, streets and towns were named after Sadat's political achievements and Gulf dignitaries. For example, new desert cities were named Sadat, the 10th of Ramadan, 06 October, *el-Salam* (Peace) and Sheikh Zayed (of UAE) cities. The first four cities commemorated the president as a hero of war and peace. Two decades later, Sadat's political shift created socioeconomic and cultural changes that affected different life aspects, including urban development. Gated compounds and informal housing result from such socioeconomic changes, significantly challenging Cairo's urbanism [41]. Newly developed areas were named in English or non-Arabic in countless senses; Gardenia, Dream Land, Porto-Marina, and Florida Mall are a few examples.

Around 2017, aggressive urban interventions were exercised in Cairo. Streets were widened, flyovers constructed, traditional roundabouts and street green islands demolished, and express roads cut through historic cemeteries. The authorities went beyond the early Pretorian regime's (1956-2013) politics of renaming existing places by imposing physical changes associated with military memorial toponyms. Newly constructed flyovers and roads were named after army generals and divisions. *Cobry el-Gish* (army flyover), *Tariq el-Sa'aqa* (the special forces road) and *Mehwar el-Farique* el-Assar (General el-Assar express road) are a few examples of Cairene military memorial landscape. The Cairene authorities, after 2017, might have found that the sense behind the names should be recognisable within the State's new urban influential class.

THE CAIRENE TOPONYMIC MECHANISM

Cairo introduced three toponymic mechanisms. The first and second mechanisms were introduced before 1800, and the third after the beginning of the 19th century. The first was dynamic, related to urban and function changes. The comparisons of consecutive Cairo maps and indexes (1803, 1879, 1920, 1949) introduced countless cases. For example, *Qasabet* Radwan became *el-Khiameia* (tent makers and traders), *el-Sanadeqeia* (bookbinders) became *el-Sagha* (jewellery traders), and *el-Shamaien* (candle traders) became *el-Nahasien* (cooper traders). Names such as *el-Aqadyn* (rope sellers) and *el-Nasakhien* (book copiers) vanished as their functional reference decayed. Even though those places sustained their physical characteristics, their former names became uncommon. In such a mechanism, the toponyms of the past became historical knowledge, and the place identity lost its functional anchorage.

The second toponymic mechanism was more resilient than the first. Names such as *bien el-Qasrien* (between the two palaces), *bien el-Surain* (between the two walls) and *Souq el-Silah* (arms market) were sustained despite losing physical references—places like those stimulated stories from successive historical eras [42]. In historic Cairo, arguing that physical references construct a more stable or static toponymic mechanism seems inaccurate. It does not explain why specific places lost their physical anchorage but sustained their original names. However, the commonality between the two mechanisms in historic Cairo is their grassroots naming process.

The third toponymic mechanism was widely practised in Cairo after the mid-19th century. It became related to urban intervention and authoritarianism. Physical interventions imposed short-term changes in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Places vanished, their names became unknown, others disappeared, and names of nearby places were affected. For example, *el-Hararien* (silk carpet traders) was located between the two structures of the el-Ghury complex. By constructing el-Azahr Street, the place changed its physical context and took reference from the complex as it became el-Ghureia. El-Azhar area introduced a rich urban palimpsest. A street planned and executed during the 19th century, el-Sikka el-Gidida and el-Azhar Street was scheduled in 1870 but executed in the early 20th century with significant modification. Furthermore, an important historic area of the eastern el-Azhar Mosque was demolished to develop the '*a la mode'* Azhar University.

After establishing the Republic of Egypt, the intense politics of renaming targeted the so-called 'people's enemies' and their 'recessive symbols' [43]. Ismailia area (named after Ismail Pasha during the second half of the 19th century) was renamed '*Wast el-Balad'* (the City Centre). Renaming King Fouad Street as 26 July Street, King Farouk Street as *el-Gish* Street (Army Street), Ibrahim Pasha Street as *el-Gumhuria* Street (Republic Street), King Fouad University as Cairo University, and Ibrahim Pasha University as Ain-Shams University left their marks on the city memorial landscape. If such a process is politically understandable, renaming non-royalty streets, such as *el-Sekah el-Gedida*, to Gohar *el-Qaead* is unusual. Still, it reflects the authorities' aggression toward the Monarch's symbolic 'New Way'.

Egypt's liberation from British occupation leads to the renaming of Midan el-Ismailia as Midan *el-Tahrir* (Liberation Square). Midan *el-Tahrir* presents a fascinating urban palimpsest. Its contextual street pattern dates from the second half of the 19th century, and the surrounding buildings have different styles dating from the 20th century. Two royal palaces from the late 19th century were reused in the second half of the 20th century. One became the American University in Cairo, and the other was the Foreign Ministry Headquarters.

Furthermore, the old Egyptian Antiquity Museum -built in the early 20th century- is located on a significant site by the Square. An American-style hotel and a Soviet-style structure are located on two other sides. The missing statue of Ismail Pasha and the reuse of two royal palaces might have encouraged people to forget the original name, Midan el-Ismailia. The Place's architectural ensemble produces grounds for misremembering the past. 2011, the place's name gained significant sense and meaning; the 25 January 2011 revolution produced moral meaning for *Midan el-Tahrir*. The place became a symbol of the fight for justice and freedom.

THE RIGHT TO MEMORY, TRUTH AND JUSTICE

To frame our discussion, we must start from several unconnected facts that imply a breeding ground for the Cairene toponymic landscape and politics of forgetting: name, place, context, time, storytelling, and justice. The rapid development of cities brings challenges, including achieving and maintaining urban justice. Liu argued that urban justice is fairness in accessing city resources by different social groups [44, p. 145]. However, accessing the city resources is only one aspect of a just city. Justice, democracy, and citizenship are considered by González as rights to participate in the State's politics and include all people and groups in identity-making. Injustice cities become places of privilege and marginalisation, restricting participation in the city's social life for population segments based on specific attributes [45, p. 274]. Nonetheless, there are other essential forms of justice. Visvanathan coined "cognitive justice" to frame the normative principle of the right of different knowledge to coexist so long as they sustain people's lives, livelihoods, and life chances [46]. David Harvey defines territorial justice as the search for the distribution of social resources [47]. Environmental justice [48], environmental racism [49, p. 10], and historical justice discuss aspects of a good urban quality of life for all citizens. Similarly, memorial injustice can be defined as any policy, practice or directive that differentially affects or disregards (whether intended or unintended) the citizens' right to memory [50].

Naming and renaming places are some aspects of historical justice and truth. In early Pretorian Cairo (1956-1975), for example, renaming places was not just an act of rewriting street signs; it created a new layer of memorial traces. This renaming of national history and tradition does more than alter texts, maps, and signs. It is a consequential rescripting of people's everyday lives and identities [51]. Naming places must consider the community's rights to memory and history. Such rights can be seen in remembering and natural or dictated forgetting.

THE CAIRENE POLITICS OF FORGETTING

The naming politics collided between unofficial and official or resisted and dictated [52] due to remembering and forgetting. The politics of natural forgetting was associated with the grassroots urban dynamics in historic Cairo, and dictated forgetting is associated with authoritarianism.

The Cairene Politics of Remembering and Natural Forgetting: Time and Stories

Nora argued that people's memory is defined by the relationships between the social dimension and place; the longer the change takes place, the stronger the relationship [53]. Living through the change, people become part of the change and develop new experiences and memories [54]. One can argue that time is a common factor in the Cairene toponymic mechanisms. Time refers to short-term or long-term changes that create different toponymic mechanisms. The author contends that investigating such an argument in historic Cairo's memorial landscape leads to more speculation than answers.

One can identify places that followed or partially followed the rule of time and others that did not. *Qara-Midan* was the name of an open area at the Citadel before the end of the 18th century. During the French occupation (1798-1801), it was identified on the Cairo map (the Napoleon Map: [55] as the *el-Rumailah*. In the second half of the 19th century, it officially became Midan Mohammed Ali. However, a prison was built on the area's east-southern side and became known as *Qaramidan* (as one word). As the *Qaramidan* prison became a landmark, the place became known as *Midan Qaramidan* or *Qaramidan* Square (the word *Midan* is repeated twice to impose the Arabic grammar and consider the Turkish two syllabus names as one). This name was sustained till the 20th century, and Midan Mohammed Ali was not commonly used. When Mohammed Ali's statue was relocated to Alexandria, the place was renamed *Midan* Salah el-Din after the Citadel's founder. It is unclear why the public sustained the new name (Salah el-Din) and forgot the formers: *Qaramidan*. One can only speculate that the *Qaramidan* became a synonym for the prison and was lost by demolishing it, but Salah el-Din found anchorage in the Citadel.

Determining whether slow changes in historic Cairo invited the community memory to be gradually replaced with new memories is challenging. Nonetheless, traces of the past remained through storytelling and naming by identity found references in stories. Because stories provide essential supplements to toponyms about the people who settled in the past [26, p. 101], places in historic Cairo were named by identities and storytelling was used for referencing.

Storytelling is a co-creation ideology based on learning alliances. It offers an opportunity to bridge time, change and knowledge to foster cognitive justice [56, p. 2]. Storytelling helps foster empathy, understand the meaning of complex experiences, and inspire action [57]. Storytelling can be a model 'of urbanism' or 'for urbanism'. The first refers to storytelling as an essential everyday activity in all formal and informal social interactions. The second enables actors to share an understanding of their place's symbolic meaning and "allows them to consider new options they had not thought of before" [56, p. 2].

Storytelling in historic Cairo responded to place naming by identity through cognitive justice by replacing the lost urban palimpsest. For instance, as *bien el-Qasrien* maintained its name despite losing physical reference, the author speculates that stories of a lost dynasty, a decayed political system, and the stories of modern literature (such as Naguib Mahfouz novel entitled Bien el-Qasrien) sustained the name in the collective memory. Moreover, as the name has meaning and historical sense, it creates a cognitive bond with the storytellers [58]. Similarly, places with overwhelming historical events, such as the Citadel, Qara-Midan and Zwila Gate, stimulated the cognitive bond to storytelling. Interviewing residents in historic Cairo provokes stories about the place and what has gone along with time. Zwiela Gate, in old Cairo, supplemented the sociocultural activities of a group that settled near the gate in the early 10th century. While meeting people in the place, stories about its toponym are used as a form of social communication. The vast open space, Salah el-Din Square, is a rich source of memories from the 12th century to the 21st century. The name and its stories create the spirit of the place; it is *a 'genius loci'* [59].

The Cairene Politics of Dictated Forgetting, Time and Authoritarianism

It might be argued that modern Cairo's (1870-2023) politics of naming and renaming were imposed by and for the influentials. Such an argument is supported by Mitchell's notion that "each age attempts to refashion and remake memory to serve its contemporary purposes" (Mitchell, 2003, p. 443 cf [60, p. 1]. Nonetheless, place naming and renaming cannot be fully understood or evaluated outside of name replacement—a moment of new or unrealised commemoration [35]. Place naming is an arena for struggles over remembering and forgetting specific historical interpretations, events or individuals. It is a creative and selective mixture of remembering and forgetting [61], [62]. As an arena of contestation, the Cairene modern urban interventions provided a substantial opportunity for the city authority to practice political hypocrisy. The influence of power on urban space is mainly reflected in the fact that some interest groups or organisations prioritise their interests and adjust the use of urban space [44, p. 146]. Modern Cairo's palimpsest introduces a power contestation and a struggle between the past that must be forgotten or misremembered and the present or between the elites' interests and the public resistance. For example, Midan Trimph in Heliopolis eastern Cario is a roundabout named in the early 20th century. The Pretorian State's authorities tried to rename it several times, but the public maintained the original name.

The politics of dictated forgetting was exercised on a limited scale by the second half of the 19th century. Several urban interventions delivered the keystones for practising this politics. They were named after the new present by imposing a new memorial landscape disconnected from their context. For example, constructing el-Sika el-Gedida, Mohammed Ali, and el-Azhar Streets required demolishing a significant part of the street context to sell the extra land for profit. Rebuilding each street's defining structures isolated it from its historic landscape and dictated a new present. Walking along Azhar Street, one can hardly imagine the context behind the scenes. It can be argued that naming those cases after the new present is an insignificant event. However, they were essential in the city's urban communication system. For instance, el-Azhar Street connects the city's modern cultural centre in the Opera Place with the el-Azhar Mosque (Cairo's traditional and religious centre) in the east. Farouk Street was the longest street in Royal Cairo; it connected the old southern city with its new suburban in the northeast.

At this stage (before the second half of the 20th century), it is challenging to determine if the act of naming places aimed at exercising the politics of dictated forgetting or if the dictated forgetting became a result of such an act. However, Royal Cairo reshaped the collective memories and replaced Cairo's historical memorial landscape with an imaginary landscape of 'progress' through the car-oriented solution.

After the second half of the 20th century, the Cairene politics of dictated forgetting became strongly associated with political changes. Short-term or sudden changes introduced the authorities' power to dictate what will be remembered, forgotten or misremembered. It cannot be argued that renaming downtown streets was aimed at commemorating the 'revolutionary' events only, as the city authorities claim. Renaming streets mirrors contemporary events, issues, and tensions [9, p. 40]. Place names are nodes within broader assemblages of power, identity, histories, memories, and belonging [35, p. 313]. Players are involved in selecting this or that version as a "reliable memory" [63, p. 128] because they are engaged in sociocultural, economic, and political territorial disputes [15], [64]. Such engagement is exercised with toponyms to influence collective memory formation and dictate which virtues and aspects of events should be stressed [65].

Reshaping the Cairene streets after 2017 succeeded in de-characterising many sites in Cairo, such as Heliopolis [66]. Predicting the impact of sudden urban changes in 2017 on collective memory is challenging. Nonetheless, the authorities denied the citizens their "right to memory" by erasing the urban palimpsest and introducing car-oriented solutions, as da Silva argued in similar cases [67, p. 2]. By exercising the politics of dictated forgetting, places become part of the political space and the urban memory is suppressed [68, p. 4]. Much of the dictatorship's public space memorial program started by the second half of the 20th century, including roads and streets dedicated to ruling class members about authoritarianism. Naming and renaming streets in Pretorian Cairo creates new references that are empty of meaning and impoverish the urban landscape, as Canosa et al. (2009 cf. [45, p. 271]) argued in similar cases.

Players might use a place of memory—consciously or unconsciously—to impose certain behaviours, and whether they advance remembering or forgetting, their endeavours constitute the politics of memory [69]. For example, naming new roads during the second Pretorian era (from 2014 till now) after military symbols, events, divisions, and generals is a conscious decision in constituting a new policy of memory in which selected players are commemorated. Political contestation between the present and the past introduces conflicts over the urban memory by renaming or creating places of memory [70]. Politics operates in the sphere of representation, and the erosion of citizenship comes with the increased urge of the State to imprint the public spheres [71, p. 1].

Even though stories are pivotal for circulating urban knowledge and bridging time and place, modern Cairene places rarely introduce stories about ways of life and symbolic meanings that can survive urban changes. Only some places in the Royal Cairo, such as Mohammed Ali Street, present a breeding ground for storytelling. Mohammed Ali Street creates multiple layers of memories. The name reminds the public of the Turkish Waly, who laid the foundation for his dynasty. It symbolises the entrainment and music industry of the beginning of the 20th century and the low-cost furniture market after the second half of the 20th century. On the other hand, places in Pretorian Cairo needed to be qualified to evoke stories. Since Linda Smith considered stories to co-create spaces for the voices of the silenced to be remembered [72], those places lost their connection to urban justice.

While the renaming moment in Cairo is ostensibly a struggle over the past and present, it is also a struggle over whose identities and lives matter now and into the future. Imprinting the Cairene public space with military toponyms is unjust because toponyms often reflect the values and worldviews of dominant elites [73, pp. 30–31]. Furthermore, toponyms are tools for claiming and maintaining certain power relationships and language control, especially in apparent settings [74].

CONCLUSIONS

Along with Cairo's history, urban sites (places, streets, or spaces) were named and renamed according to conflicting politics. Tracing the politics of memory in Cairo explained how the city politics of naming and renaming shifted from cultural to socio-political and political aspects.

Naming and renaming are natural urban phenomena in Cairo. However, they were related to site identity and the natural urban dynamics in historic Cairo. In Royal and Pretorian Cairo, they are imposed by the influential. Place naming shifted from an identity reference and symbolic value in historic Cairo to becoming a tool for political contestation in Pretorian Cairo.

While historic Cairo did not introduce linguistic signage, its naming and renaming politics seemed efficient by replacing the toponymic signage with storytelling; such a replacement created social communication in a dynamic place. Places were subjected to many forces, such as the type of change, the duration of each stage (before and after the change), and symbolic and cultural factors.

A significant difference between historic, Royal and Pretorian Cairo is its naming process. Historic Cairo followed a bottom-up process associated with historical events and urban changes. On the other hand, Royal and Pretorian Cairo followed a top-down process related to authoritarianism. Despite the strong relationship between street names and their commemorative value, the Royal and Pretorian Cairene street toponyms undermined or misinterpreted such a relationship.

Contrary to the Cairene naming by identity (before 1800), Royal and Pretorian Cairo's authorities imposed similar objectives and tactics in changing the city memorial landscape; both eras reconstructed the collective memory and imposed their power traces on the city. Despite the 'revolutionary' slogan of the first phase of the Pretorian State (1956-1975), the authorities maintained similar ideologies of the 'recessive' past of the Royal State (1840-1950) in producing memorials and historical injustice.

In Royal and Pretorian Cairo, the fight for attention to specific symbolic representations is forced by top-down politics of naming, renaming, forgetting and misremembering. Influential players selected their reliable version of the past to influence the collective memory and construct a new present.

Royal and Pretorian Cairo's authorities forced their politics of forgetting or misremembering to operate according to their interests regardless of historical reference. Associated sites with influential players seem to commemorate those players, but they became connected with political contestation and memorial injustice. During the Royal and Pretorian eras, the Cairene authorities mobilised political references to drive the community into ideological and sociocultural transformation. Such an ideology targeted the politics of reshaping the urban memory by disconnecting the memory subject from historical meanings.

In Royal and Pretorian Cairo, street names are written by the authorities, leaving little room for interpretation and community involvement. Misconceptions and conflicts between public memory and authoritarian naming politics are common.

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