

# **Building in Natural Heritage Listed Areas: Evaluation of The Design of “Wadi Al-Hitan” Protected Area, Egypt**

**Dr. Iman O. Gawad**

**Associate Professor, Architecture Departement, Faculty of Fine Arts, Helwan University**  
[iman.gawad@hq.helwan.edu.eg](mailto:iman.gawad@hq.helwan.edu.eg)

## **Abstract**

With the growth of Nature-Based Tourism and Ecotourism and the economic interest associated with these endeavours, many Protected Areas have gained popularity as tourist destinations. However, because of the particular economic focus of tourism and the complementary conservation focus of Protected Areas, the relationship between tourism and Protected Areas is considered as a multifaceted one. In fact, the design of these areas' Visitors Centres, and infrastructure development must reflect various qualitative characteristics of its unique location and History. It is therefore important that new designs and improvement projects, carried out in this regard, consider contemporary drifts in architectural design through the innovative environmental knowhow which is capable of reducing the effect on the environment while taking into consideration the Vernacular Architecture of the site.

The study investigates the relationship between 'Natural Heritage Areas' and Sustainable Design, with a special focus on the Egyptian National Protected Areas and Listed World Heritage Sites. It highlights the importance of developing a complete planning and building strategy while implementing a managerial plan to moderate negative tourism impacts and maintain the site importance and characteristics with special emphasis on the collaboration with the local society. A general analysis of successful examples of tourists' service buildings and infrastructure of Protected Areas in Egypt was conducted. The case study of the “Fossil and Climate Change Museum” and adjacent services and administrative buildings in “Wadi Al-Hitan” Protected Area was then evaluated. The Author also proposed a plan for the development of an Egyptian “National Design Guidelines” and building regulations for local Protected Areas taking in consideration the international, regional, and local design principles and benchmarks.

## **Keywords:**

Natural Heritage Tourism, Protected Areas, Sustainable Design, World Heritage Sites