

WestminsterResearch

<http://www.westminster.ac.uk/westminsterresearch>

**Alternative Urbanism Between The Formal And Informal:
Investigating The Transformative Potential Of Small Urban
Interventions In Neoliberal Cairo**

Akl, Ameera

This is a PhD thesis awarded by the University of Westminster.

© Mrs Ameera Akl, 2022.

<https://doi.org/10.34737/w1vq7>

The WestminsterResearch online digital archive at the University of Westminster aims to make the research output of the University available to a wider audience. Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the authors and/or copyright owners.

**ALTERNATIVE URBANISM BETWEEN THE FORMAL AND INFORMAL:
INVESTIGATING THE TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL OF SMALL
URBAN INTERVENTIONS IN NEOLIBERAL CAIRO**

Ameera Adel Akl

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of
Westminster for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

July 2022

Author Declaration

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

Abstract

Over the past two decades, there has been a growing research interest in community-based small urban interventions that have been activating and reshaping urban spaces in many cities around the world. The study engages with the arguments regarding the transformative potential of these alternative modes of intervention discussed in the literature under various titles such as tactical urbanism, temporary urbanism, or everyday urbanism. Although originally emerging informally, these urban practices have recently taken on a more mainstream character especially in European and North American cities after the global financial crisis of 2008. While attending to the development of such practice and the corresponding theorisation attempts in the North, this study opens a further line of investigation by situating this alternative approach of intervention in Cairo providing insights from the global South. In this context, the study presents ‘alternative urbanism’ as an overarching frame for such practices delineating a nuanced approach to urban design that lies at the interface between the formal and informal.

Drawing on Lefebvre’s concept of differential space coupled with the theory of coproduction, the study explores the dynamics of this approach using three case studies within different problematic localities in Cairo. Extensive fieldwork, based mainly on observations, semi-structured interviews and mapping spatial practices, revealed how small collaborative interventions transformed an underpass, a vacant land, and in-between spaces into meaningful places nurturing local lived experiences. However, despite the positive spatial and socioeconomic impact, numerous challenges arose limiting the potential of the intervention and affecting sustaining improvements over time. Many challenges stemmed from the lack of supportive planning system and the narrow window of opportunity to test new ideas. Local resources, priorities and cultural norms also influenced the level of proactive engagement of residents. Findings revealed that the success of such projects is linked to creating a network of local actors that have the capacity to sustain activism and respond to opportunities. The study demonstrates the crucial role designers and planners can play acting as mediators and facilitators enabling unlikely collaborations between multiple stakeholders. This thesis argues, using empirical evidence from Cairo, that small urban interventions can embrace existing informality, respond to local needs, and enhance the use and quality of deteriorated settings without imposing change or displacing inhabitants.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	iv
List of Tables	ix
List of Figures	x
Acknowledgements.....	xvi
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
1.1 Research Background.....	2
1.2 Research Setting	5
1.3 Research Questions and Objectives	8
1.4 Research Methodology	10
1.5 Structure of the Thesis.....	11
Chapter 2: Conceptual and Theoretical Foundations of Alternative Urbanism.....	13
2.1 Introduction	14
2.2 The Emergence and Evolution of ‘Alternative Urbanism’	14
2.2.1 Rethinking City Planning, Urban Activism and Counterculture.....	15
2.2.2 The Creative City	21
2.2.3 Vacancy and Indeterminate Space	23
2.2.4 Megacities, Urban Informality and Uneven Growth.....	25
2.3 Renewed Perspective and Conceptualizations	30
2.3.1 Emerging Conceptual Arguments	31
<i>Transient and Makeshift</i>	31
<i>Small, Quick but Effective</i>	33
<i>Local Communities and Socio-Spatial Patterns</i>	34
2.3.2 Defining Alternative Urbanism as a Domain of Action.....	35
2.4 Theoretical Framework	38
2.4.1 Lefebvre’s Differential Space	39
<i>Everyday ‘Lived’ Space</i>	41
<i>Spatiotemporal Placemaking</i>	44
2.4.2 Coproduction.....	46
<i>Mediation and Tactics/Strategy</i>	47
<i>Community Empowerment</i>	51
2.5 Reframing Alternative Urbanism as a New Mode of Practice	53
2.5.1 Rethinking the Formal/ Informal Dichotomy	55
2.5.2 Rethinking the Planned/ Unplanned Dichotomy.....	57
2.5.3 Rethinking the Temporary/ Permanent Dichotomy	58
2.6 Possible Implications of Professionalizing Alternative Urbanism.....	60

2.7	Conclusion.....	62
Chapter 3:	Situating Alternative Urbanism in Cairo.....	64
3.1	Introduction	65
3.2	Greater Cairo: Three Cities in One.....	66
3.2.1	The Urban Core along the Nile	69
3.2.2	The Informal Periphery	73
3.2.3	New Desert Towns	78
3.3	Neoliberalism and Socio-Spatial Polarization.....	80
3.3.1	The Emergence of ‘Capital Spaces’	82
3.3.2	Informality as a Way of Life and Resistance	84
3.4	Cairo’s Post-Revolutionary Master Plan for Urban Development.....	86
3.4.1	Cairo 2050, the New Capital and the Restructuring of Cairo	86
3.4.2	Situating the Formal/Informal Relationship in Cairo’s urban Development Master Plan	90
3.5	The Rise of an Alternative Mode of Practice	92
3.5.1	The Legacy of an Alternative Practice	93
3.5.2	Establishing an Alternative Practice	98
3.6	Conclusion.....	102
Chapter 4:	Research Design and Methodology	105
4.1	Introduction	106
4.2	Philosophical Stance and Researcher Positionality	106
4.3	Methodological Approach.....	109
4.3.1	Qualitative Research, Case Study Rationale and Quasi- Ethnographic Approach.....	109
4.3.2	Selection of Study Cases	112
4.3.3	Introducing the Selected Case Studies	117
4.4	Exploratory Framework	120
4.5	Methods and Sources of Evidence	121
4.5.1	Direct Observations.....	122
4.5.2	Mapping Spatial Practices.....	123
4.5.3	Open Ended Semi-structured Interviews.....	124
4.5.4	Documentary Data (Secondary Sources)	126
4.5.5	Data Analysis	127
4.5.6	Ethical Considerations.....	128
4.6	Conclusion.....	129
Chapter 5:	Case Study 1 - Downtown Passageways.....	131
5.1	Introduction	132
5.2	Unpacking the Contextual Specificities of Downtown Cairo	133

5.2.1 Historical Emergence and Transformations of Downtown (1863-1980).....	133
5.2.2 Pre-revolutionary Downtown (1981-2010).....	135
5.2.3 The Tahrir Square Effect: Downtown in Flux (2011-2013)	136
5.2.4 Urban Development Approaches in Post-Revolutionary Downtown Cairo	139
<i>State-led Urban Development Approach</i>	139
<i>Private Sector-led Urban Development Approach</i>	141
5.3 The Passageways Project and the Role of Designers as Mediators and Facilitators	141
5.3.1 Conception, Project Initiation and Stakeholders	142
5.3.2 Design Process and Implementation	147
5.4 Tracing the Passageways' Change over Time.....	155
5.4.1 Mapping spatial Practices.....	156
5.4.2 Exploring the lived and Spatiotemporal Experience.....	161
<i>Reshaping Everyday Experience and Acquiring Meaning in Kodak Passageway</i>	161
<i>Temporary Installations as Tools of Placemaking in Kodak Passageway</i>	163
<i>An Enhanced Everyday Experience in Philips Passageway</i>	167
<i>Limited Social Interaction in Philips Passageway</i>	168
5.4.3 Exploring the Roles of Actors and Power Dynamics.....	169
<i>Effective Mediation and Empowered Outcomes in Kodak Passageway</i>	169
<i>Collaborative Maintenance and a Degree of Collective Control in Kodak Passageway</i>	171
<i>Unsuccessful Collective Action and Internal Conflicts in Philips Passageway</i>	173
5.5 Accumulative Impact of the Passageways Project	175
5.5.1 Passageways as 'Alternative Spaces'	175
5.5.2 Spatial-Socioeconomic-Symbolic Impact and Limitations.....	176
5.5.3 Wider Ripple Effects	179
5.6 Conclusion.....	181
Chapter 6: Case Study 2 - The 'Geneina' Meet and Play Space.....	183
6.1 Introduction	184
6.2 Unpacking the Contextual Specificities of Masakin Uthman	185
6.2.1 Historical Emergence	185
6.2.2 Challenges and Hardships	187
6.3 The Geneina Project and the Role of Designers as Mediators and Facilitators	190
6.3.1 Conception, Project Initiation and Stakeholders	190
6.3.2 Design Process and Implementation	192
6.4 Tracing the Geneina's change over Time.....	198

6.4.1 Mapping Spatial Practices	198
6.4.2 Exploring the Lived and Spatiotemporal Experience	203
<i>Generating Everyday Social Patterns and Experiential Meanings....</i>	203
<i>Immersive Experience as a catalyst for Social Interaction.....</i>	207
6.4.3 Exploring the Roles of Actors and Power Relationships	211
<i>Community Controlled Spaces and Risks of Co-optation</i>	212
<i>Collaborative Maintenance and Sense of Ownership</i>	215
<i>Geneina as a local Asset</i>	216
6.5 Accumulative Impact of the Geneina Project.....	218
6.5.1 Geneina as an ‘Alternative Space’	218
6.5.2 Spatial-Socioeconomic- Symbolic Impact and Limitations.....	219
6.5.3 Wider Ripple Effects	222
6.6 Conclusion.....	223
Chapter 7: Case Study 3 - Ezbet Khairallah Underpass Project	225
7.1 Introduction	226
7.2 Unpacking the Contextual Specificities of Ezbet Khayrallah	227
7.2.1 Historical Emergence	228
7.2.2 Challenges and Hardships	232
7.3 The Omar Ibn Elkhatab Tunnel Project and the Role of Designers as Mediators and Facilitators	235
7.3.1 Conception, Project Initiation and Stakeholders	235
7.3.2 Design Process and Implementation	239
7.4 Tracing Change of Produced Spaces in Time	246
7.4.1 Mapping Spatial Practices.....	247
7.4.2 Exploring the Lived and Spatiotemporal Experience	249
<i>Everyday Social Patterns and Experiential Meanings.....</i>	249
<i>Inducing an Interstitial and Immersive Experience</i>	253
7.4.3 Exploring the Roles of Actors and Power Dynamics.....	255
<i>Collective Control and Intracommunity Power Dynamics</i>	256
<i>Collaborative Maintenance and Lack of Resources</i>	257
7.5 Accumulative Impact of the Project.....	259
7.5.1 Omar Ibn Elkhatab Tunnel as an ‘Alternative Space’	259
7.5.2 Spatial-Socioeconomic-Symbolic Impact and Limitations.....	261
7.5.3 Wider Ripple Effects	262
7.6 Conclusion.....	264
Chapter 8: Discussion and Conclusions.....	266
8.1 Introduction	267
8.2 Emphasizing the Alternative Dimension Across the Three Case Studies.	267
8.3 The Transformative Potential of the Alternative Approach of Urban Intervention	272

8.3.1 Emerging Themes	273
8.3.2 Accumulative Impact	276
<i>The Passageways Intervention</i>	277
<i>The Geneina Meet and Play Intervention</i>	277
<i>Omar Ibn ELkhattab Underpass Intervention</i>	278
8.3.3 Challenges and Limitations of the Alternative Approach in the Cairene Context.....	278
8.4 The Role of Designers as Mediators and the Power Dynamics between Actors	280
8.5 Contextual Influences Involved in Alternative Practices and Coproduction Processes	284
8.6 Recommendations to Maximize the Transformative Potential	288
8.7 Contributions of this Research	291
8.8 Recommendations for Future Research	296
References	298
Appendix A: Table of Interviewees	327
Appendix B: Acronyms and Abbreviations.....	330

List of Tables

Table 1 Alternative urban practices and online platforms.	99
Table 2 Potential case studies	116
Table 3 Timeline for the process and produced spaces.....	157
Table 4 The timeline of the process and the produced spaces with key events and appropriations.....	200
Table 5 The timeline of the process key events	247
Table 6 Reading across the three case studies.	269
Table 7 Reading across the case studies in relevance to the emerging subthemes .	274

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 Alternative Urbanism as a Domain of Action (source: author).....	37
Figure 2.2 Alternative approach of intervention drawing on Lefebvre's differential space and the theory of coproduction (source: author)	39
Figure 2.3 Differential Space theoretical lens (source: author)	41
Figure 2.4 Coproduction theoretical lens (source: author).....	47
Figure 2.5 Theoretical Framework (source: author)	55
Figure 3.1 Map of Cairo showing the Formal, Informal and Desert Cities (Source: Sims, 2010)	67
Figure 3.2 The formal city growth until the 1950s (source: Sims, 2010)	70
Figure 3.3 The contrast between the new centre and the old centre (source: Rashed, 2015).....	71
Figure 3.4 First Public Housing in Nasr City (Source: Abu Lughod, 1971)	72
Figure 3.5 Informal Housing in Boulaq ElDakrour (source: Sabry, 2004).....	75
Figure 3.6 Dense informal settlements in contrast with neighbouring planned formal neighbourhoods (source: Mehrem, , 2015).....	76
Figure 3.7 Informal housing on agricultural land divisions (source: www.citiesalliance.com).....	76
Figure 3.8 Informal area 'Ezbet Khayrallah' on state owned desert (source: Tadamun, 2013)	77
Figure 3.9 Map showing formal city and the informal periphery (source: Sims, 2010)	77
Figure 3.10 New Desert Towns (source: Sims, 2010)	78
Figure 3.11 The 10th Ramadan city growth plan and land uses, it is one of the very first implemented desert towns (source: Hegab, 1985).....	79
Figure 3.12 Collection of photos from real-estate ads of new gated communities (source: Egypt Real Estat Hub website).....	83
Figure 3.13 Cairo 2050 futuristic vision (source: GOPP).....	87
Figure 3.14 The model of New Capital at the Egypt Economic Development conference in 2015 (source: www.independent.co.uk).....	88
Figure 3.15 The Plan of the New Capital (source: www.theguardian.com)	89

Figure 3.16 Al-Azhar park area before and after implementation (source: AKTC)	96
Figure 3.17 The transformation of the derelict space under the bridge into a public space and a cultural node providing wider community access to arts (source: www.culturalwheel.com)	97
Figure 3.18 Timeline of the Alternative Practice in Egypt (source: author).....	102
Figure 4.1 Map showing the three urban entities of Greater Cairo (source: Sims, 2010)	113
Figure 4.2 Locations of Potential Case studies (source: author using google maps).....	116
Figure 4.3 Map of Cairo highlighting formal, informal and desert cities and case studies locations (source: author adapted from Sims, 2010).....	117
Figure 4.4 Map of Downtown Cairo showing street network vs pedestrian passageways in-between buildings (source: author adapted from Nagati, 2018 and Sims, 2010).....	118
Figure 4.5 Philips and Kodak passageways (source: CLUSTER).....	118
Figure 4.6 The Geneina project during implementation (source: Takween ICD) ..	119
Figure 4.7 Local children playing in the Geneina space (source: Takween ICD) ..	119
Figure 4.8 Omar Ibn ElKahtab Tunnel before intervention (source: Takween ICD)	119
Figure 4.9 Community members in the tunnel (source: author)	120
Figure 4.10 Children playing in the tunnel (source: Takween ICD).....	120
Figure 4.11 Exploratory Framework (source: author)	121
Figure 5.1 Occupying the Tahrir Square and the surrounding streets during the eighteen days of the revolution (by Pater Mcdiarmid, source: Washington Post). 136	
Figure 5.2 Informal Encroachments overtaking sidewalks and extending into roads blocking vehicular flow (Source: Nagati and Stryker, 2013).....	138
Figure 5.3 Public Spaces turned into arts venues with a broader audience than Institutional art spaces and private galleries (by Sherif Gaber, 2011, source: ibraaz.org)	138
Figure 5.4 The proliferation of revolutionary Graffiti on Downtown Cairo walls (by Basma Hamdy, 2013, source: jadaliyya.com)	139
Figure 5.5 The Tahrir Square and surrounding streets in post-revolutionary Cairo (by Mohamed Abd El Ghany, source: Washington Post)	140

Figure 5.6 Forced removal of mobile vendors from downtown streets in August 2014 (source: CLUSTER).....	140
Figure 5.7 Map of Downtown Cairo showing street network vs pedestrian passageways in-between Buildings (Source: Nagati, 2018)	144
Figure 5.8 The location of Kodak and Philips passageways (source: author using Google Earth)	145
Figure 5.9 Passageways project stakeholders (source: author).....	146
Figure 5.10 Left Kodak Layout before intervention, (Source: author), right Kodak Passageway before intervention (photo by Mohamed Hassan).....	147
Figure 5.11 The students' workshop in Kodak passageway and a vacant shop overlooking the passageway owned by Al-Ismaelia (Source: DEDI)	148
Figure 5.12 Kodak Passageway's interventions as in 2015 (source: author).....	148
Figure 5.13 Philips passageway before the intervention (source: CUIP)	149
Figure 5.14 Philips passageway layout (source: author).....	149
Figure 5.15 Students negotiating with local community members in Philips Passageway (source: DEDI).....	150
Figure 5.16 Apparatus to collect drainage water (source: author).....	151
Figure 5.17 Movie Screenings in Philips Passageway (source: DEDI).....	151
Figure 5.18 Philips intervention (source: author)	151
Figure 5.19 An illuminated signpost at the entrance of Philips Passageway (source: DEDI)	152
Figure 5.20 Kodak passageway redesign in 3D rendering presented to local authorities to obtain official permits (Source: Nagati, 2018).....	154
Figure 5.21 Professional drawings and renderings for the redesign of Philips Passageway presented to multiple local authorities to obtain official permits (source: Nagati, 2018).....	154
Figure 5.22 Kodak Passageway mapping in April and August 2018 (source: author)	158
Figure 5.23 Kodak Passageway mapping in April and August 2019 (source: author)	159
Figure 5.24 Philips Passageway mapping in 2018 and 2019 (source: author).....	160
Figure 5.25 Eish and Malh Restaurant opened at the corner of the passageway (source: author)	163

Figure 5.26 Spring inspired decorations and swings were installed in Kodak passageway in April 2018 (source: author).....	164
Figure 5.27 Community Iftar at Kodak passageway (source: CLUSTER).....	165
Figure 5.28 Temporary exhibitions taking place in the vacant shops owned by the real estate developer (source: author).....	166
Figure 5.29 ‘I love Cairo’ artwork has created a hot spot for pictures (source: author)	167
Figure 5.30 The blank wall that was prepared for movie screenings has never been used except on the inauguration day of the project (source: author).....	168
Figure 5.31 A revitalisation proposal for Kodak passageway designed by Al-Ismaelia Company for Real Estate Investment. (Source: Al-Ismaelia for Real Estate).....	170
Figure 5.32 A shop owner destroyed his own façade as it was renovated without his permission (source: author)	172
Figure 5.33 The kiosk owners have extended displaying goods into the passage limiting visibility and accessibility (source: author).....	174
Figure 5.34 Passageways as ‘alternative spaces’ (source: author).....	176
Figure 6.1 Location of Masakin Uthman in relation to other areas in Sixth of October New Desert Town (source: author using Google Earth)	186
Figure 6.2 Masakin Uthman housing blocks from Al-Wahat al-Bahariyya Road (source: author)	187
Figure 6.3 The modernist design of Masakin Uthman Housing (source: author)...	188
Figure 6.4 Tuktuks are a common feature in the neighbourhood (source: author).	189
Figure 6.5 Geneina project stakeholders (source: author)	191
Figure 6.6 The future vision of the area delivered with the Geneina Project (source: Takween ICD).....	193
Figure 6.7 Children participating in the co-design workshops (source: Takween ICD)	194
Figure 6.8 The different zones incorporating various types of play elements generated from the participatory design sessions (source: author adapted from Ayman et al., 2015).....	194
Figure 6.9 Workshops announcement on social media platforms (source: Takween ICD).....	196
Figure 6.10 The children participating in the construction of the playing elements using recycled tyres (source: Takween ICD).....	197

Figure 6.11 Local children participating in construction (Source: Takween ICD).	198
Figure 6.12 Tracing change over time (source: author using Google Earth).....	199
Figure 6.13 Geneina project and surrounding area (source: author).....	201
Figure 6.14 Geneina spatial mapping (source: Author).....	202
Figure 6.15 A panoramic view of the playground taken in August 2017 (source: author)	204
Figure 6.16 The playground and the adjacent football pitch after two years from the intervention (source: author)	204
Figure 6.17 The German national Television visiting the project (source: SFD)...	205
Figure 6.18 Project location before and after the intervention (Source: SFD)	206
Figure 6.19 local children's football practice (source: author).....	208
Figure 6.20 Social practices taking place in the playground and adjacent areas (Source: SFD)	210
Figure 6.21 The vacant plot of land adjacent to the playground and football pitch (source: author)	213
Figure 6.22 Signpost installed by Takween (source: author).....	215
Figure 6.23 Small businesses such as cafeterias, diners and children games spaces opening in the area (source: author)	217
Figure 6.24 Geneina as an Alternative Space (source: author).....	219
Figure 7.1 The construction of the Ring Road in the late 1990s divided Ezbet Khayrallah (source: Google Earth)	230
Figure 7.2 Ezbet Khayrallah is subdivided into entities falling under four different administrative districts (source: Tadamun, 2013)	233
Figure 7.3 Access points from Ezbet Khayrallah to the Ring Road (source: Ibrahim and Mannoun, 2017).....	234
Figure 7.4 The painting initiative of Takween to renovate the facades of five buildings in Ezbet Khayrallah (source: Takween ICD)	236
Figure 7.5 Omar Ibn Elkhatab tunnel before the intervention (source: Takween ICD)	237
Figure 7.6 Underpass project stakeholders (source: author).....	239
Figure 7.7 Co-design workshops (source: Takween ICD).....	240
Figure 7.8The underpass pilot project (source: Takween ICD).....	241

Figure 7.9 Side walk before and after the intervention (source: Takween ICD)	242
Figure 7.10 Staircase to the Ring Road before and after the intervention (source: Takween ICD).....	243
Figure 7.11 Painting the mural in collaboration with the community (source: Takween ICD).....	244
Figure 7.12 The free artwork of children (source: Azza Ezzat).....	245
Figure 7.13 Mapping spatial practices in the underpass and the surrounding area (source: author)	248
Figure 7.14 Local children playing in the underpass (source: author).....	250
Figure 7.15 Open spaces along the ring road at the exit of the underpass (Source: author).....	251
Figure 7.16 Section of the mural showing one of the residents and his cart (source: Azza Ezzat)	254
Figure 7.17 The underpass and the mural showing signs of degradation two years after the intervention (source: author)	255
Figure 7.18 Tea cart (source: Ibrahim and Mannoun, 2017)	257
Figure 7.19 The mural after three years from the intervention (source: author)	259
Figure 7.20 Street vending practices started to remerge in the underpass (source: author)	259
Figure 7.21 Omar Ibn Elkhatab Tunnel as an Alternative Space (source: author).....	260
Figure 7.22 Example of murals on houses near the underpass (Source author)	263
Figure 7.23 One of the other tunnels renovated by the local government (source: author).....	263
Figure 8.1 The three case studies (source: author partially adapted from Google Earth).....	268
Figure 8.2 Alternative mode of Practice (source: author).....	290

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the help and support of several individuals who in many ways contributed to the completion of this study.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my dear primary supervisor, Dr Krystallia Kamvasinou, for her continuous support, academic guidance and the precious time she spent with me to develop this study. I am truly glad I had the opportunity to work with her and learn from her expertise. I am also indebted to Dr Tony Manzi for his constructive discussions and insightful remarks that helped me enhance the quality of the thesis. It was a great pleasure working with both of my advisors to whom I owe a lot. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Dr Marion Roberts for her support and guidance throughout the early phases of my study.

To my parents, Adel and Asmaa, I owe the most. Their unconditional love and tremendous support gave me the strength to work hard throughout the period of this research. I am eternally grateful to them for their encouragement and faith in me. I would also like to thank my dear brother Sherif who guided me through many hard times by his advice and enthusiasm.

I am also extremely grateful to my dear husband Hatem who abundantly helped me and encouraged me in every possible way. I cannot thank him enough for his patience and support that always lifted my spirits during my long working hours. Also, there are no words that can ever express my love and gratitude to my children Ali and Malak who always have been my source of inspiration and motivation.

Finally, I would like to thank all the people I was fortunate to interview. The time, knowledge and experiences they shared with me were crucial to this research.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research Background

There has been a growing interest over the past two decades, both in academic and professional planning circles, in small community-based urban interventions that have been proliferating in cities around the world and their potential contributions towards activating and reshaping urban spaces. These interventions represent alternative modes of production of space that range from physical space appropriations and urban design experiments to temporary social and cultural activities, which potentially transform the function and the meaning of public space (Hou, 2010; Rabbiosi, 2017). The urban practices discussed in the literature as examples of this domain of action indicate different ways of acting and thinking in relation to urbanism that aim primarily at ensuring ‘the quality, the accessibility and the usability of everyday local city spaces that citizens know, care for and claim’ (Talu, 2016, p.18). The exemplars of this movement cover a broad range of urban practices that usually involve repurposing vacant lots, empty storefronts, overly wide streets, highway underpasses, surface parking lots and other little used places (Lydon and Garcia, 2015). These practices could take the form of spontaneous practices initiated by individuals or self-organized civil networks, or become embedded in a more organised collaborative spatial design process involving activist practitioners and urban designers working with community members, local officials and non-governmental organisations (Pagano, 2013; Fabian and Samson, 2016; Lydon and Garcia, 2015; Rabbiosi, 2017). In general, the exemplars are usually small-scale and cost-effective urban alterations that ‘work in the cracks between formal planning, speculative investment and local possibilities’ (Tonkiss, 2013, p.313).

Along with the proliferation of these interventions, there are attempts to conceptualize these projects and investigate their wider implications on the city. In Europe and North America, numerous terms have been coined in service of the novel interest especially after the global financial crisis in 2008. This brand of urban interventions is discussed in the literature under various titles such as tactical urbanism (Lydon and Garcia, 2015), temporary urbanism (Hayden and Temel, 2006; Bishop and Williams, 2012) everyday urbanism (Crawford, Chase and Kaliski 1999), and do-it-yourself (DIY) urbanism (Iveson, 2013; Douglas, 2014). The general argument underlying these terms is that an alternative to mainstream urban planning offers alternative solutions and explores novel possibilities in the city.

In the literature, this alternative approach of urban action has been celebrated as a revolt against privatization of space and socio-spatial injustice representing an attitude of contestation and resistance to the prevalent neoliberal economic practices which prioritize private profits at the expense of social needs. It is argued that community based tactical urban interventions represent an opposition to top-down, market-led, bureaucratically sanctioned urban planning (Hou, 2010; Novy and Colomb, 2013; Fabian and Samson, 2016).

This urban movement has also been seen by different scholars and observers as a potential regeneration tool with a possible transformative effect (Bishop and Williams, 2012; Colomb, 2012; Oswalt, Overmeyer and Misselwitz, 2013). Small-scale and short-term urban interventions are argued to be catalysts for urban development and alternative models that rework orthodoxies of mainstream urban planning especially in vacant lands, urban voids and post-industrial settings (Lehtovuori and Ruoppila, 2012; Nemeth and Langhorst, 2014; Rabbiosi, 2017). At the same time, these urban practices empower local communities by being key participants in this transformation (Groth and Goriijn, 2005; Hou, 2010). Accordingly, this domain of urban action has influenced the agenda of urban planning offering alternative models of urban development. In this sense, some of these urban practices are appreciated by institutional stakeholders in public and private sectors as they value their potential of enhancing the attractiveness and revitalizing certain parts of the city by fuelling creativity, entrepreneurship and sustainability (Groth and Goriijn, 2005; Alovjanović, 2012). Moreover, these interventions may alleviate some of the disruptive socio-spatial consequences of neoliberalism, thus partially making up for the diminishing role of insufficiently resourced public institutions (Brenner, 2015). Although these interventions are mobilized from below and started as initiatives of concerned citizens, whether they are professionals, artists or local residents, they take place through partnerships with different agencies and socio-economic structures supported and framed by institutional domains and local authorities (Alovjanović, 2012). The involvement of different stakeholders requires a process of negotiation mediating between the different and often conflicting interests (see Round, Williams and Rodgers, 2008; Andres, 2013).

The emerging discourse on alternative urbanism articulates a strong set of claims regarding its transformative potential (Brenner, 2015). Mostly, the coverage and analysis of these practices in the popular press and scholarly literature has been

laudatory, romanticizing the movement and its potential in urban regeneration, although this potential of transformation is not adequately justified by empirical evidence or warranted by convincing analyses of case studies (see Andres, 2013, Finn, 2014). Despite the growing interest in the idea, the alternative modes of production of space remain theoretically underdeveloped (Bishop and Williams, 2012). The way through which these urban practices can contribute to long-term inclusive transformation in the urban environment has not been fully examined (Andres, 2013).

It can also be argued that the novel popular terms associated with these practices are formulated without giving enough consideration for how these ideas emerged, evolved and manifested in different parts of the world whether in developed or developing cities. Besides that, many of the available studies on these urban practices offer descriptive explanations with little in-depth discussion of their process and their transformative effect on the longer term with relevance to their context (Andres, 2013). In the literature, the conceptualizations of alternative urbanism are mostly discussed covering loosely connected examples with little consensus on an overall understanding of that domain of action and how it could be situated and viewed in different geographical contexts with varying specificities (Wendler, 2014).

More research is needed to understand the potential and the implications, as well as the limitations of these projects in the wider context of the production and transformation of space beyond the cities of the global North. Most of the existing body of literature, as well as the relevant theoretical framework, is embedded in Northern cities, which questions its applicability separated from its area studies origins. Several scholars argue that planning ideas informed by the experiences of the global North cities may not be universally applicable (Roy, 2009; Miraftab, 2009; Healey, 2012; Watson, 2014a). It is important to examine the potential of this alternative approach of intervention from the standpoint of the Global South. It is also important to comprehend the novel shift in addressing these practices in the literature from marginal and undesired to catalytic and creative. This new perspective might have consequences regarding the actions themselves and their transformative potential, where the actors staging these urban innovations are not only local residents but also professionals, local authorities and corporate entities (Wortham-Galvin, 2013). This necessitates examining the power dynamics within different sets of stakeholders and in relation to different forms of engagement with the state.

More research is also needed to understand how this alternative paradigm represents a nuanced design approach redefining the role of urban designers, architects and planners who act unconventionally, outside of professional boundaries, along with local actors to address their critical urban conditions. The potential contributions of these alternative practices towards activating and reshaping urban spaces inducing change for a better urban environment demand further investigation. This study aims to address the aforementioned gaps of knowledge.

1.2 Research Setting

Most of the published case studies on tactical, temporary or everyday urbanism address contexts in Europe and North America. This study aims to provide insights from the global South expanding the geographical context of empirical studies for the different design and planning ideas beyond the global North (Miraftab, 2009; Watson, 2014a). In this sense, the study explores how these ideas are attuned to the realities of megacities in the global South and how small-scale urban interventions can effectuate big change for the better in deprived, deteriorated and insufficiently resourced contexts (Gadanhó et al, 2014; Brenner, 2015).

Greater Cairo is the chosen setting of this research. The city of Cairo is considered to be the largest and the most influential city in both Africa and the Middle East (UN Habitat, 2012). Its central location, rich history and long-standing connections with other states in the region and the entire world make it a historical bridge connecting the East and West (UN Habitat, 2012). The city is seen as a point of intersection and a laboratory that generates new transnational processes, socio-political mobilizations and urban solutions (Singerman and Amar, 2006). Singerman and Amar (2006) point out that amid transnational sociocultural, political and economic flows, Cairo has recently been exhibiting more bottom-up claims-making practices and enhanced agency among more individuals and collective groups.

Cairo is an expanding megacity that has quadrupled in size in the last fifty years shaped by three different forms of urban growth which are the formal city in the urban core along the Nile, the informal periphery, mostly built illegally on agricultural land, and the desert towns on the eastern and western deserts on the outskirts of Cairo (Sims, 2010; Elgendy, 2013; Nagati, Stryker and Mostafa, 2013). These different modes of growth evolved and developed in response to political,

social and economic conditions creating segregated enclaves and a fragmented urban fabric. Several studies describe Greater Cairo with its three geographic entities (the formal core, the informal periphery and the desert towns) as ‘three cities in one’ based mainly on the work of David Sims (2010) in his book ‘Understanding Cairo: The Logic of a City out of Control’ (see also Elgendy, 2013; Nagati, Stryker and Mostafa, 2013). These three urban entities represent isolated systems, with different social, cultural and economic structures (Elgendy, 2013).

Differing from other rapidly expanding megacities, Cairo had the advantage of expanding into the vast eastern and western deserts avoiding the land use and environmental conflicts that commonly occur in metropolises that expand in all directions confronting a rural hinterland (Sims, 2010; Elgendy, 2013). However, Sims (2010) argues that these desert opportunities in Cairo have been wastefully exploited due to the state’s misguided approach to urban planning and development. Cairo’s rulers’ persistent ambitions of modernity throughout the years were translated into large scale urban projects along the lines of Western urban ideals. The modern planning norms adopted in the new desert towns, which were created beginning in the late 1970s as the government’s solution to counteract informal urbanisation (Stewart, 1996), do not match the Egyptian urban culture that excels at diversity and compactness (Sims, 2010).

Abdelmonem (2016) argues that Cairo’s successive planning systems have long been ‘inscribed by the predominance of politically motivated visions that attempted to manipulate the social structure, to relocate inhabitants, and to craft an engineered image of a grandiose state that reflects the power and wealth of the rulers’(p.158). Top-down strategies and masterplan-driven approaches have been implemented in the form of grand projects promoted and claimed to change the lives of the millions through physical planning (Ibrahim, 2014; Watson, 2014b). Neoliberal policies have been deployed associated with megaprojects mostly benefiting the elites and foreign investors (Dorman, 2013; Ibrahim, 2014). On the other hand, uncontrolled informal residential settlements have continued to grow on the outskirts of Cairo as well as informal encroachments in the streets and public spaces as alternative venues for work, sociability and recreation (Bayat, 2012). The formation of secluded mega-scale entities, whether they are mega-nodes, mega-malls or mega-slums have significantly fragmented the city fabric (Elgendy, 2013).

The formal urban development in Cairo has been based mainly on wiping urban informality in its different forms, while continuing to support grand master planned projects detached from the critical problems evident on the ground. This is despite that informal settlements in Cairo, differing from the typical precarious slums prevalent in many other Southern megacities, exhibit high structural quality where many of the apartment blocks reflect significant financial resources although built without use of formal contractors (Sims, 2010). Rather than capitalising on the assets of low and middle income families, the Egyptian successive governments promoted megaprojects involving demolishing large segments of the existing urban fabric especially in informal areas displacing thousands of families to the deserts and selling the lands to investors (Shehayeb, 2009; Ibrahim, 2014). This is not to romanticise informal urbanism, as informal areas suffer from inadequate infrastructure and public services as well as serious environmental problems, but only to point out the shortcomings of the official approach to address informality. Moreover, the formal channels of state-society engagement are not satisfactory reflecting the ills of the top-down mode of planning and governance (see Watson, 2014a).

The Egyptian uprising in 2011 acted as a catalyst triggering collective urban interventions that resonate with the emerging practices and concepts evolving in Northern cities under the titles tactical, temporary, and everyday urbanism. Urban activism in Cairo has been manifested in small community-based urban interventions involving local residents, experts as well as extra-local collaborations. The city of Cairo provides compelling cases uncovering alternative modes of intervention that lies at the interface between the formal and informal. They took place in many locations around Cairo across its three geographic entities (the urban core, the informal periphery and the desert towns on the outskirts). The Cairene context helps explore and examine the potential as well as the limitations of alternative urbanism through case studies from different socioeconomic contexts, revealing the dynamics of the involved power relationships and the nature of engagement with the state.

Although the urban development in Cairo remains largely dependent on large scale top-down planning, alternative practices in Cairo took place through different arrangements with local authorities. The key actors in these interventions are designers and architects collaborating with local communities. In some cases, they partnered with local governments within win-win agreements, in other cases the initiators of these interventions had to infiltrate through cracks in the formal system or

take calculated risks to facilitate the process (Nagati and Stryker, 2016; El-Azzazy and Zaaza, 2017). Funding these projects varied depending on the available opportunities (crowdfunding, corporations, donations, International/ local NGOs or local governments). These interventions indicate a new mode of practice and point to the potential of the interplay between the formal and the informal systems in reshaping local city spaces (see Nagati and Elgendy, 2012; Ibrahim, 2014).

Being a native Egyptian researcher, who lived most of my life in Cairo, has enabled me to have intimate knowledge of the city and its people as well as witness various initiatives taking place on the ground seeking an alternative approach to urban development over the last decade. Sharing the same identity, language and experiences with the study participants was crucial in this research enabling a better approachability and a deeper understanding.

1.3 Research Questions and Objectives

The study aims to explore the transformative potential and the efficacy of the emerging alternative modes of intervention, in transforming city spaces in the Cairene context. For this purpose, the study engages with the set of arguments associated with these practices in the literature regarding their transformative potential where this alternative approach is argued to counteract market-led urbanism producing meaningful, inclusive and dynamic public spaces catalysing positive urban change. ‘Alternative urbanism’ is presented in the study as an overarching frame for such practices delineating an approach to urban design that lies at the interface between the formal and informal. Drawing on Lefebvre’s concept of differential space coupled with the theory of coproduction, the study explores the dynamics and the potential of this approach to reshape and transform urban spaces. The study focuses on the lived experiences produced as a result of these interventions and the different roles of the actors involved in initiating, planning, managing, and using these urban spaces. Empirically, the research draws upon case studies within different contexts in Cairo, the expanding megacity, as an attempt to contribute to the academic debate in this area beyond the western contexts by investigating the potential of ‘alternative urbanism’ in a city under stress from rapid growth of population, inadequate infrastructure and social polarization. Accordingly, the main research question is:

What is the transformative potential as well as the limitations of alternative urbanism in the Cairene context?

Several aspects are embodied within this research question represented in the following sub questions:

- What are the main characteristics that define ‘alternative urbanism’ as a new mode of practice that challenges conventional urban intervention approaches?
- In what ways and to what extent can this alternative mode of practice transform local city spaces?
- How can this mode of practice reshape the role of urban designers and planners?
- How do the physical, socioeconomic context and the power relationships involved in the intervention influence the process and the transformation of space?

In view of the above, the following are the main objectives of the research seen as the steps taken in order to answer the research question and sub-questions:

- Developing a broad understanding of ‘alternative urbanism’ as a domain of action clarifying its characteristics and the key arguments on which it is based.
- Reframing ‘alternative urbanism’ as a mode of spatial practice positioning local communities as coproducers and clarifying how this redefines the role for urban designers and planners.
- Identifying the specificities of Cairo as a neoliberal city and understanding the emergence and rise of this mode of practice in Cairo.
- Generating a framework to interrogate this alternative mode of practice regarding the roles of actors, the potential of the produced spaces, how people have experienced them and how they have been used and maintained.
- Exploring the impact and limitations of alternative urbanism through case studies from different socioeconomic contexts in Cairo in order to understand the dynamics of transformation and reveal the

limitations in relevance to the different contexts and power relationships.

1.4 Research Methodology

The study adopts primarily a qualitative research methodology. The qualitative approach is chosen in order to grasp meanings, perceptions and motives regarding the intervention process, roles of actors and involved power relationships as well as the lived experiences and perceived benefits produced as a result of these interventions (see Yin, 2009). The research is based on multiple case studies allowing in-depth multifaceted investigation of the cases in their real-time setting where the selected cases are examined from different perspectives through using multiple sources of evidence over time (see Yin, 2009). The research is designed based on three case studies so that one is selected from each of the three geographical and socio-economic contexts of Cairo (urban core, informal periphery and desert towns).

Data collection and fieldwork is based on observations, semi-structured interviews with inhabitants, users, practitioners and the different stakeholders involved in the urban intervention or the use of space. Also, because the interventions included temporary practices with unpredictable timeframes, some of the data was based on secondary resources such as newspaper articles, web pages and booklets published about the projects on online platforms. The visual method involves mapping out the spatial practices generated in the produced spaces as a result of the intervention demonstrating the dynamics of use.

A case-by-case in-depth empirical analysis is carried out to understand the roles of actors, power relationships and the manifestations of change as well as the challenges and limitations in relevance with the contextual circumstances. Accordingly, comparative conclusions are drawn by juxtaposing the three case studies clarifying how the different contexts and the different stakeholders have influenced the process, the outcome and the impact of the intervention. For analysing the data, an inductive approach is used where the data was classified into key themes in order to answer the research questions. The themes provided empirical evidence that were used to reflect on the concept of alternative urbanism and its potential in urban transformation in the Cairene context as well as the limitations with reference to the contextual specificities of the cases.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

The research consists of eight chapters. After this introduction of the study, Chapter Two discusses conceptual and theoretical foundations of alternative urbanism. The chapter starts with reviewing the historical background of the alternative modes of production of space in theory and practice informed by different contexts situated in different parts of the world in both cities of the global North and South. The chapter also attends to the conceptualizations developed by scholars to address alternative urbanism and suggests an overarching definition. The theoretical framework is also discussed in Chapter Two. Drawing on the work of Lefebvre, particularly the concept of ‘differential space’, and the theory of coproduction as a theoretical frame, the study explored the transformative potential of alternative urbanism.

Chapter Three discusses situating the study in Cairo. It aims to understand the different expansion modes of Cairo tracing the effects of top-down planning and the neoliberal paradigm on the Cairene cityscape. Moreover, it presents a critical overview of the formal/informal relationship within the official urban development masterplan in post-revolutionary Cairo. The chapter ends with understanding the rise of an alternative mode of practice in Cairo.

Chapter Four discusses the methodology of the research. A framework for analysis is developed in this chapter to ground the empirical investigation in the light of the theoretical foundations of the study. This was used in later chapters to interrogate case studies of co-produced urban spaces in Cairo. The chapter develops a qualitative research methodology based on multiple case studies and explains the criteria upon which the case studies were selected. The research methods and sources of data are also identified discussing semi-structured interviews with the involved stakeholders, extended observations and reviewing relevant documentary data, as well as mapping the activities generated in the produced spaces. Finally, the chapter ends with explaining how the data was analysed and how each research question affected the research design.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven present the three case studies of the research. Chapter Five examines the Passageways project, an urban intervention that took place in one of the most significant central areas in Downtown Cairo in 2014 to revitalise the in-between passages as alternative spaces for development. Chapter Six examines an urban intervention known as the ‘Geneina’ in a relatively new social housing in the

Sixth of October City, one of the satellite modern desert towns to the west of Greater Cairo. Chapter Seven, on the other hand, examines the project of reclaiming Omar Ibn Elkhatab underpass in one of the largest and most densely populated informal neighbourhoods namely Ezbet Khayrallah located at the city periphery. Each chapter starts with unpacking the multidimensional context of case study which is crucial to understand the challenges faced throughout the process of intervention and in the use of space. The empirical investigation within each chapter includes how the project was implemented, funded, and officially sanctioned, and who the actors were and how they were engaged in the process. Subsequently, each chapter of the three traces the everyday life of the produced spaces, the emerging patterns of social use, lived experiences, users' perceptions, efforts of social control or conflicts arising from different groups claims. Chapters Five, Six and Seven end with discussing the accumulative impact and the ripple effects of the respective projects.

Finally, Chapter Eight discusses and reads across the different case studies, draws conclusions and summarizes the key findings of the study in relevance to the main research question and sub questions. The chapter ends with recommendations to transcend limitations and maximise the transformative potential of alternative urbanism as well as recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2:
Conceptual and Theoretical Foundations
of Alternative Urbanism

2.1 Introduction

This chapter critically examines the conceptual articulations of the alternative modes of production of space, where ‘alternative urbanism’ is presented in the study as an interpretative frame to understand a variety of emergent tactical design experiments and temporary appropriations proliferating around the world. It is also important to understand how these ideas and concepts are attuned to different parts of the world in cities of the global North and South. Accordingly, the chapter is divided into three different sections. The first section aims at setting the context of the study through discussing the main lines of investigation and themes that frame and explain the emergence and the evolution of this urban movement in both developed and developing cities through time and the concepts interrelated with its emergence. The second section discusses different concepts developed by urban scholars to describe and examine these alternative practices. Following that, an overarching definition of ‘alternative urbanism’ as a domain of action is suggested to help clarify the ambiguity caused by the diversity of the terms and concepts used in the literature. The third section discusses the theoretical framework of the study, upon which alternative urbanism is reframed as a nuanced urban design approach and a mode of practice that lies at the interface between the formal and informal. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre’s concept of ‘differential space’ coupled with the theory of coproduction, a trajectory of transformation for spaces produced as a result of these spatial interventions is suggested. The theoretical framework is used constructing interpretative formulations that explicate the characteristics of alternative urbanism as a new mode of practice. Finally, the chapter ends with possible implications that could arise from professionalising or institutionalising these practices.

2.2 The Emergence and Evolution of ‘Alternative Urbanism’

There is a growing body of literature on the potential of citizen-led, informal, and temporary urban practices as alternative possibilities to face the unpredictable and rapidly changing dynamics of the contemporary city (Bishop and Williams, 2012; Andres, 2013; Oswalt, Overmeyer and Misselwitz, 2013; Lydon and Garcia, 2015). Nevertheless, these alternative practices are not novel manifestations and have always existed in cities. For practical reasons and necessity, cities have always contained temporary flexible elements needed for special events, disasters or mass migrations

(Oswalt, Overmeyer and Misselwitz, 2013). Also, the spirit of citizen-led urban interventions aiming at improving the quality of urban life is a basic human instinct that is not exclusive for a specific time. Lydon and Garcia (2015) argue that tactical urbanism is the latest response to our human ingenuity and ‘self-directed action toward increasing social capital, economic opportunity, access to food, safety from natural and human enemies, and general liveability’ (Lydon and Garcia, 2015, p.25).

In developing cities of the global South, citizen-led urbanism represents a way of life and survival (see Al-Sayyad, 2004). The diminished role of the state and the economic liberalization has generated social and economic changes that forced a vast number of groups to rely on themselves to fulfil their basic needs (Bayat, 2012). This has led to significant growth of informal housing settlements as well as informal landscapes at street corners, underpasses, and residual spaces.

While these practices have always existed, whether in Northern or Southern cities, considering their potential in relation to urban planning and development is relatively novel. The recent surge of these urban practices echoes concerns and initiatives of Northern scholars in the sixties and the seventies, which triggered a wider revision of the social and political concerns of that period in the light of the global financial crisis of 2008 (Zardini, 2008). To set the context of this study and understand the emergence and the proliferation of this movement in different parts of the world, the following section traces back the roots and the earlier strains of this movement. This is along with understanding the current themes that contextualize and frame the resurgence of this urban movement underpinned by the convergence of economic, social and cultural transformations in cities in the past four to five decades (see Groth and Goriijn, 2005; Bishop and Williams, 2012; Lydon and Garcia, 2015). For this purpose, the following part is divided under four subtitles: Rethinking Urban Planning, Urban Activism and Counterculture; the Creative City; Vacancy and Indeterminate space; and Megacities, Urban Informality and Uneven Growth. These subtitles represent the interrelated forces and circumstances that converged engendering the proliferation of this urban movement.

2.2.1 Rethinking City Planning, Urban Activism and Counterculture

The philosophies and ideas of some urban thinkers and activists, beginning from the 1960s’, represent the earlier forms of today’s citizen-led tactical and temporary urbanism. Considered ground-breaking at the time, they reasserted people-centred

planning principles that were forgotten during the period of rapid industrialization and clean-sweep planning (Silberberg et al, 2013). By the mid-twentieth century, the urban built environment became increasingly formal and professionalized. Western cities were master-planned and regulated according to building and zoning codes; and the urban landscape was tightly controlled and altered only by professionals (Douglas, 2012). Nevertheless, in terms of planning ideas, ‘thinking big was not in itself a guarantee of big success’ (Riley, 2002, p.12). Many comprehensive plans and grand urban renewal schemes in western cities produced big mistakes instead of the desired outcomes (Riley, 2002). Many of these planning ideas were transferred to Southern contexts through complex processes of globalisation and colonialism (Watson, 2009).

Reacting against the modernist urbanism, writers and urban activists such as Jane Jacobs and William Whyte took up the cause against large scale urban interventions and instead advocated for incremental fine-grained local interventions (Jacobs, 1961; Whyte, 1980; Finn 2014). Jacobs in her seminal (1961) book *‘The Death and Life of American Cities’* argued: ‘emphasis on bits and pieces is of the essence: this is what a city is, bits and pieces that supplement each other and support each other’ (Jacobs, 1961, p.377). In her writings, Jacobs rebukes modern city planning, and on the other hand, celebrates the human scale city construction prioritizing the daily life as the generator of good urbanism, which allows diverse experimentations and adaptations in both public and private spaces (see Jacobs, 1961).

In this sense, the role of city dwellers in shaping the city in terms of urban planning and participation in decision making was being debated from the beginning of the 1960s (see Finn, 2014). Urban activists argued that healthy cities are built gradually and are always in continuous change produced by inhabitants’ interventions. Ideas on user empowerment and experimenting with participatory design, advocacy and self-help architecture and countercultural activities were manifested in Northern cities by the late 1960s and 1970s. One of the early examples was the ‘Non Plan’ proposal in 1969 by Cedric Price, Reyner Banham, Peter Hall and Paul Barker that called for a free plan that would allow the participation of urban inhabitants in the urban development (Barker, 1999). Professionals acted as community advocates discussing options with authorities and explaining technical terms. An influential text on community participation, inclusiveness and bottom-up urbanism is *‘Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning’* (1965) published by Paul Davidoff in which he formulated what is known afterwards by ‘advocacy planning’. In his article, he calls for an

inclusive pluralistic planning approach that seeks to represent diverse group interests within the society especially minorities and low-income groups, promoting social justice and equity in planning (Davidoff, 1965). Christopher Alexander's *Pattern Language* (1977) was one of the seminal texts, in which he explains that neighbourhood growth and change in the city occurs gradually over time and that decisions should be made 'piecemeal'. Alexander in his writings blurs the boundaries between the urban designer and the citizen, explaining that residents should be an integral part of design as he proposes design incrementalism as a way through which people practice democratic processes (see Alexander, 1977).

Guy Debord led the *Situationist International movement*, a Paris based political and artist group from the 1950s to the early 1970s, which employed experimental modes of art as a critique of the rise of functionalism and the dominant consumer culture at the time (Debord, 1957). Henri Lefebvre in the late 1960s introduced the concept of the 'right to the city' in his seminal book of the same name '*Le Droit à la Ville*' (1968). Lefebvre defines the right of citizens as a 'transformed and renewed right to urban life', which was a response against inequality and oppression in cities (Lefebvre, 1996, p.158). The concept of the right to the city was then subsequently articulated and reinterpreted by different urban scholars and geographers and it has become a catalyst for thought, policy and action in urban issues. De Certeau's '*Practice of Everyday Life*' (1984) identified the concepts of everyday life as a potential site for creative resistance and liberatory power. He drew a distinction between two modes of operation: strategies and tactics, where tactics are manifestations of everyday creativity and 'art of the weak' that can change the organization of the space as a counterpractice to official strategies and sanctioned urbanisms (Andres, 2013).

Homesteading activities in the 1970s can be considered antecedents of today's DIY movement in Western cities. Among these, the squatting movement of vacant properties that stood for decent housing for all as a right and a real community control of urban development plans. Squatting was an urban phenomenon in Europe and North America, where the number of people squatting in Britain increased to 50,000 squatters by 1975, so that over than 2,000 houses were licensed to squatters in London (Wates and Wolmar, 1980). Also, in the United States, urban homesteading programmes were established in 1973 in the east coast cities of Wilmington, Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York 'as one of the myriad responses to urban

blight and destabilized neighbourhoods' (Wortham-Galvin, 2013, p.28). Wortham-Galvin (2013) argues that this configuration of home and community of squatters was a means of social and economic empowerment, and a bottom-up effort that focused on making neighbourhoods.

Another example of homesteading is community gardening and food growing on vacant lands. 'Guerrilla gardening' was originally promoted by artist Liz Christy and her Green Guerrilla group in 1973 in New York, where a derelict private lot was transformed into a garden (Finn, 2014). Since then, green guerrillas began proliferating in different parts of the world rallying people to use community gardening as tool to reclaim urban land, grow food for self-sufficiency or grow flowers to brighten the street scene for all (Bishop and Williams, 2012). Linn argues that community gardening 'not only produces healthy food but cultivates community among neighbours' (Linn, 1999, p.43). Surveys indicate that people participate in community gardening because they enjoy meeting and thus, they incorporate sociability settings like benches, picnic tables and barbecues (Linn, 1999). The growing sense of community empowers residents and strengthens their physical, social and mental health; and the widespread network of grassroots gardeners contributes to the building of a more democratic society (Linn, 1999).

Activities like skateboarding and BMX bicycling are also early resemblances of this movement that took place in the streets of Western cities as early as the 1970s where participants adapted urban landscape by repurposing existing infrastructure (Ferrell, 2001). The creative temporary adaptation of streets is also found in the history of parklets that can be traced back to the work of Bonnie Ora Shrek, an artist and landscape architect, in the early 1970s in San Francisco (Lydon and Garcia, 2015). Lydon and Garcia (2015) consider her well-known intervention *Portable Architecture* to be the forerunner of pop-up parks and Park(ing) Day installations found today in many cities worldwide. Shrek's intervention revitalized the dead public spaces of San Francisco through a series of portable parks over the span of four days (Lydon and Garcia, 2015).

Urban activism has been manifested, on the other hand, in the expanding cities of the global South in different ways generating an insurgent citizenship constituting the struggles of the residents for the basic resources of life (Holston, 1998, 2009). Holston (2009) argues that marginalised groups claimed their rights to the city by

appropriating the cityscape informally to have a daily life worthy of citizen's dignity. Andres et al., (2021) argue that these informal practices act as 'alternative substitutes in places experiencing real difficulties in creating, implementing, and enforcing formal planning processes' (p. 30). Bayat (2012) describes such informal dynamics as the 'quiet encroachment of the ordinary'. This refers to non-collective direct actions of individuals and families to acquire necessities of life including land, shelter, urban collective consumption, informal jobs, and entrepreneurial opportunities, which were done in a quiet and unassuming manner (Bayat, 2000). They appropriate and use outdoor spaces as assets in both the economic livelihood and social/cultural reproduction (Bayat and Denis, 2000; Bayat, 2012). This is why Bayat calls these informal actors 'quiet rebels' and 'passive networks' to describe their 'non-movement approach' of survival (Bayat, 2000; Bayat, 2012). The neoliberal restructuring in developing cities has intensified these urban informal processes. The liberal economic reform has increased the number of people that can be called 'urban marginals', 'urban disenfranchised' or the 'urban poor', which led to an explosion in the range of their informal activities (Al-Sayyad, 2004).

Despite the various precedent resemblances with today's tactical, temporary and DIY urban practices in cities of both the global North and South, their value is argued to be realized within planning and urban development discourse once the shortcomings of the 'entrepreneurial city' had been recognized (Hall and Hubbard, 1998), particularly the implications of 'commodification, monofunctionality and control' (Groth and Corijn, 2005, p.503). The rationale of capitalism has dominated the post-Fordist city represented in knowledge-based and culture economies (Oswalt, Overmeyer and Misselwitz, 2013). In the context of increasing global competitiveness, urban development is based on the commodification of culture and everyday life (Harvey, 1989), where consuming patterns extended to all areas of social and public life including aesthetics, arts, leisure and recreation (Amin, 1994). Another characteristic of the city is the obsession of surveillance through both technological and physical ways of security (Sorkin, 1992). This led to the emergence of enclaves of controlled mono cultural spaces with diminishing chances of encounter forming a 'zero-friction society' (Hajer, 1999). Entrepreneurial approaches in planning is largely based on the sanitization and aestheticism of space where the space is functionally and economically shared but vulnerable to social and cultural segregation (Robins, 1993; Groth and Corijn, 2005).

In the turn of the new century, neoliberal urbanisation had gone global through 'integration of financial markets that are debt financing urban development around the world' (Harvey, 2008, p.25). Thus, global developers, liberated from any form of state interference, have been having a leading role in forming an investor-driven upgrading for urban environments. The neoliberal urban developments led to the privatization of many public spaces and services and the gentrification-led restructuring of city centres. This is along with the emergence of new urban forms of exclusion and displacement, such as gated communities that have come with securitization and physical fortressing (see Mayer, 2013). Harvey (2007) argues that the neoliberal policies had a significant and a lasting effect on the economies and societies of the global North and South, engendering what Bayat (2010) calls 'neoliberal cities'. Moreover, they have produced urban peripheries of poverty and inequality in many cities worldwide (Holston, 2009). Neoliberal policies have played a significant role in mobilising the Arab revolutions that is widely described as the 'Arab Spring' (Ayeb, 2011; Ibrahim, 2014). De Soto (2011) argues that the revolutionary dissent in the Middle East was in part pushed by the 'forces of the market' to 'emancipate the entrepreneurial poor'. In examining activism in the Middle East, Asef Bayat (2013) argues that the individual self-help, or what he calls 'non-movements', turn into organised collective and social movements when the opportunity arises.

Since the communicative turn in planning in the early 1980s, the participative planning process has been widely accepted as a requirement for ethical practice in planning. Also, the importance of contextual solutions and the downsides of top-down approaches have been widely recognized (Finn, 2014). Nonetheless, the alternative urban paradigm takes this mindset to a more radical end (see Finn, 2014). This is because the role of citizens in shaping the city should be more than attending public meetings and workshops (Watson, 2014a). Communicative planning manifested in charrettes, advisory boards and public hearings have long been criticized for the gap between the rhetoric and action (Fainstein, 2000). The participative decision-making process necessitated by communicative planning has not proved to challenge the existing power relations engendered by neoliberalism (Purcell, 2009).

Moreover, in many Southern cities, participation within the institutional context of planning remains only rhetorically applied (Watson, 2009). The planning approach in many cities of the developing world is still based on large-scale planning ideas and

top-down action, which are often ‘entangled in inefficient politics, corrupt bureaucracy, and economic insufficiency’ (Gadanhó, 2015, p. 18). Watson (2014a) argues that collaborative planning in principle has been informed by the particular social conditions in the regions of the global North characterized by Western liberal democracy and advanced economies.

2.2.2 The Creative City

Much of the research on the potential of alternative urbanism has been carried out in relation to the concept of the ‘the creative city’. The creative city is a term first used by David Yencken in 1988 and developed in the 1990s by Charles Landry to describe a city focused on ‘creative industries’ (see Howkins, 2001). In recent years, there has been a growing interest in culture and creativity as essential components of the vibrant, competitive post-industrial city; and the creative industries are becoming an important economic sector and many cities are applying culture-led regeneration strategies to project a new image in an increasingly global market (Bishop and Williams, 2012). Yencken (1988) argues that a creative city should be fostering creativity among its citizens and providing emotionally satisfying places and experiences for them. According to Landry (2005), a creative milieu is ‘a place that contains the necessary requirements in terms of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ infrastructure to generate a flow of ideas and inventions’ (Landry, 2005, p.4). Richard Florida (2002) promoted the ‘creative class’ strategies to attract creative talent where cities develop urban environments that are open, dynamic and ‘cool’. According to Florida (2002), cities should be magnets for talents or young professionals in order to succeed in knowledge economy.

The creative industries have occupied a pivotal position in urban regeneration as a means to bolster urban economy (Miles and Paddison, 2005). Nevertheless, this is not a new phenomenon, in the 1970s and 1980s cultural-led regeneration strategies emerged to deal with the socioeconomic problems and the declining urban centres in post-industrial cities in North America and Western Europe (Lin and Hsing, 2009). Merging cultural policy and urban regeneration was viewed as a solution for creating a post-industrial urban landscape, making up for the shortage of public finance, and strengthening urban competitiveness (Bassett, 1993; Lin and Hsing, 2009; Andres, 2011). In the context of global competitiveness, cultural strategies have emerged strongly as one of the place-branding themes where the image of the cultural city is

delivered to the global market through selling local cultural products attracting investments (Lash and Urry, 1994).

The idea of the creative city has gained ground not only in developed cities but also in many developing cities. Also, since the UNESCO launched the UNESCO Creative City Networks (UCCN) in 2004, cities in the Global South have been keen to join the network (Chuangchai, 2021). Cairo is one of the cities that became a member of the network and was awarded the "City of Crafts and Folk Arts" by UNESCO in 2017 for its development of cultural and creative industries (UNESCO ICCSD, 2020). The idea was also employed by real estate developers and corporate entities realising the catalytic economic potential in inner-city areas and central business districts (Awatta, 2015). Moreover, many artistic and cultural industries in Southern cities have been initiated and funded by International cultural institutions to support local communities (see Elickhof, 2017).

The creative industries sector is driving many grassroots projects and temporary uses in many cities around the world both in the North and South, as creative entrepreneurs and artists use vacant buildings on temporary leases and adapt them to their needs which helps change the image of the area (Bishop and Williams, 2012; Awatta, 2015; Ashour, 2019). Also, the patterns of consumption of culture have changed where spontaneous urban culture has hit streets in recent years (Klanten and Hubner, 2010). There is a shift away from the conventional formal stages of arts and the showroom space to space in general where the audience response is becoming the main event (Bishop and Williams, 2012). Culture and arts are becoming more accessible and active and the boundaries between culture and counterculture are blurred (Feiriess, 2010; Bishop and Williams, 2012). This is facilitated by new technology and information revolution expanding the means of producing and circulating arts giving easier access to a larger number of participants (Hall, 1997).

Beiber (2010) argues that grassroots informal artwork is a democratic reaction against the elitism of the art scene. He adds that grassroots entrepreneurialism and creativity, whether sanctioned or unauthorized, are forms of activists' resistance provoked by neoliberalism and the hegemonic tendency in capital accumulation strategies (Beiber, 2010). Accordingly, this kind of urban interventions can paradoxically be fostering the image of the global competitive 'creative city' as well as representing resistance to the institutionalized domain and neoliberal urban development (Groth and Goriijn,

2005). Furthermore, when grassroots' claims on the city are translated at an institutional level, they gain visibility and strength, however, the emancipatory concept underlying these practices against capital-driven urbanisation is being challenged (Stickells, 2011). Consequently, this urban movement may conceptually represent the overlap between the contestation and the articulation of neoliberalism (Alovjanović, 2012). It is helpful to understand the different dimensions of citizen-led urbanism and grassroots urban interventions especially when they are based around collaborative projects involving diverse stakeholders as it could be interpreted within the concept of urban activism, and alternatively from the lens of the creative city.

2.2.3 Vacancy and Indeterminate Space

Temporary uses and grassroots interventions are historically associated with vacant urban spaces, derelict lands or abandoned buildings (Kamvasinou, 2015). Groth and Corijn, (2005) argue that the indeterminate status of these urban 'no-man's-lands' allow the emergence of non-planned urbanism motivated by 'different marginal lifestyles, informal economies or artistic experimentation' (p.503), which may lead to the transformation of public space allowing a high degree of social inclusion. This is most evident in developing cities where informal actors repurpose the seemingly abandoned, unnoticed or little used plots of land as alternative spaces for work, sociability and recreation (Bayat, 2012). Leftover spaces, underpasses and backstreets are breeding grounds for their social and economic empowerment.

In the literature, vacant urban spaces were first addressed in 1980-1990s with notions as 'lost space', 'antispaces' (Trancik, 1986), 'urban voids' and 'cracks in the city' (Loukaitou-Sideris, 1996) to describe the gaps in the urban form exemplified in residual, in-between and underused spaces which are often deteriorating (Kamvasinou, 2015). Such vacancies in the urban core are explained to be a result of the modernist movement in design which is based on abstract ideals for the design of isolated buildings while ignoring the importance of in-between spaces, street space, urban squares, gardens or any outdoor rooms (Loukaitou-Sideris, 1996). In addition, monofunctional zoning separates uses usually leaving spaces, setbacks and buffer zones along highways or boulevards (Trancik, 1986). Ignasi de Solà -Morales (1995) develops the notion of the 'terrain vague' referring to the potential of the 'spaces that exist outside the city's circuits and productive structures' (p.120), such as derelict post-industrial landscapes and discharged infrastructure. Such spaces offer

possibilities for people's informal appropriation, differing from the tightly controlled public spaces of the late twentieth century (Kamvasinou, 2015).

In this sense, temporary urbanism is regarded as a solution to urban dereliction, caused by the processes of deindustrialisation, and the shrinking city phenomenon such as in the case of Detroit and Cleveland (see Groth and Corijn, 2005; Bishop and Williams, 2012). Researchers expand on the power of 'informal actors' to unlock the potential of post-industrial abandoned sites and buildings (see for example Lehtovuori and Sampo, 2012; Andres 2013; Németh and Langhorst, 2014). Among the prominent successful examples, the reuse of old warehouses in the inner city of Makasiini in Helsinki by diverse artists. This led to the transformation of the area to the 'living room' of the capital and a stronghold of grassroots urban culture and artistic production. The area, which was completely ignored by the authorities, turned into a significant and meaningful meeting place for people (Lehtovuori, 2005). Another significant example is the Raw-Temple in Berlin, which was formerly a derelict vast area of industrial structures embedded between high density residential areas, that evolved into a major socially stabilizing element for the district accommodating youth sociocultural projects and activities for the unemployed (Groth and Corijn, 2005).

One of the immediate effects of the global financial crisis in 2008 was the withdrawal of finance from the market, where many urban development projects were suspended or abandoned, causing spatial dereliction and a rise in vacant land (Lydon and Garcia, 2012; Tonkiss, 2013; Nemeth and Langhorst, 2014). These vacancies offer possibilities for appropriation by people far from institutionalized domains and highly controlled public spaces, which can provide opportunities for transformation through social, cultural, economic, and ecological processes (Nemeth and Langhorst, 2014). Kamvasinou (2015) argues that the dynamics of recession allowed synergies between traditionally oppositional parties enabling the collaboration between landowners/developers and temporary users. The Skip Garden in London is an example of a community-oriented temporary project embedded in a long-term regeneration scheme, receiving support from local authorities, local businesses and the developers of the masterplan (Kamvasinou, 2015).

The properties of the indeterminate and vacant spaces, exemplified in the cases mentioned above, link to what Franck and Stevens (2007) describe as 'loose space'. Such spaces allow a dynamic process of appropriation permitting 'new perceptions,

attitudes and behaviours' (Franck and Stevens, 2007, p.4). This responds to the social and cultural transformations that have been taking place as a result of global connectedness where the urban realm has no longer been marked by homogenous life patterns, but by plurality of lifestyles and contested identities (Groth and Goriijn, 2005). Despite the association of citizen-led appropriations and temporary activities with the problem of urban vacancy and dereliction, the positive role of these practices goes beyond filling vacant spaces as they can open possibilities for a more creative pluralistic and people-centred planning (Temel, 2006; Kamvasinou, 2015, 2018).

2.2.4 Megacities, Urban Informality and Uneven Growth

In megacities, or developing cities, the urban poor have been living for years an informal life characterised by flexibility, self-reliance and continuous struggle for survival. The narrative of urban informality and citizen-led urbanism is viewed in the global South as survival tactics born of need, which is differentiated from what Devlin (2017) describes as 'informality of desire' promoted by Northern scholars to capture the essence of the traditional humane city enlivening the public realm. Not only many people reside in informal settlements on the city peripheries, but also inhabitants have no choice but to extend their daily lives to the outdoor spaces, alleyways and streets appropriating and repurposing open spaces to accommodate their needs (Bayat, 2012). The everyday messy life in the niches and the crannies of the city has become the norm. Bishop and Williams (2012) argue that the newfound interest in temporary urbanism has been a welcome development for cities that are part of the post-industrial economy, while temporariness in large parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America is not a matter of choice. Devlin (2017) argues that there is conceptual slippage between Southern and Northern literature discussing citizen-driven urbanism and informal practices. Scholarship on urban informality in the global North is relatively new compared to that in the South revealing a great deal of inconsistency glossing over the difference between informal practices 'born of desires' versus those 'born of needs' (Devlin, 2017). Devlin (2017) differentiates between 'acts undertaken by the urban poor to meet basic needs and those engaged in by more well-off residents for convenience, efficiency, or creative expression' (p.3). Nevertheless, this perspective does not mean that informal practices in Southern cities that are born of need are 'undesired'. Moreover, informality in the cities of the global South can be 'born of need' (survival tactics) or 'born of desire' (manifesting cultural expression and every day authenticity) (see Devlin, 2017). While temporary and

informal urbanism fills the gaps left by the absence of formal planning (Andres et al., 2021), the potential of the alternative paradigm in the cities of the global South could also be seen outside the realm of necessity that occurs only when there is no available alternative. Integrating temporary flexible and sometimes informal forms of urban making is an essential condition of creating ‘liveable’ cities that not only involves citizen-led coping survival solutions, but also responds to the fluctuant rhythms of everyday life and the associated placemaking dynamics (Andres et al., 2021).

This argument situates the alternative urban paradigm in the global South in the broader discourse that shifts the narrative of urban informality from being undesired activities or even a threat that needs to be eliminated to being a terrain for innovative solutions. Although informal urban practices have been dominant for years in the Southern cityscapes, this research argues that the urban movement of alternative practices is manifested in the South and developing cities recently in a different way. Despite the fact that planning institutions in many Southern cities still hold to outdated modernist clean sweep planning ideas, there has been a recent surge in collective urban actions, involving local residents and professionals, embracing existing informality and moving forward towards a better environment (see Ibrahim, 2014; Shrestha and Aranya, 2015; Moawad, 2020; Bakare, Stevens and Melgoco, 2020).

In the Arab region, the Arab Spring was an important factor catalysing collective urban interventions. In Cairo, the uprising of 2011 is believed to have opened a window of opportunity facilitating cooperation between civil society and local authorities (Ibrahim and Singerman, 2014). Stadnicki, Vignal, and Barthel (2014) argue that although the post-uprising transformations in the Arab cities did not shift away so much from former urban politics, it empowered new actors, among which the dwellers and all range of non-institutional actors. These actors have been striving to challenge the status quo advocating for an alternative approach to urban development (Nagati and Elgendy, 2012; Ibrahim, 2014; Moawad, 2020). Within this alternative approach, the potential of temporary urbanism and urban informality is recognised in its different forms, whether born of need or born of desire, involving both the innovative solutions of the urban poor to acquire their basic necessities as well as the liveability of everyday appropriations (see Ibrahim, 2014; Moawad, 2020; Bakare, Stevens and Melgoco, 2020). The arenas of informality are viewed within this urban

movement as full of potential rather than pockets of dissent that need to be ignored, endured until they can be eradicated.

This research does not intend to romanticise informal urbanism. Urban informality has recently been celebrated in transnational academic research, aestheticizing poverty and presenting survival tactics as heroic and genius activities, but muting the voices and experiences of informal dwellers and workers (Roy, 2004; Al-Sayyad, 2004). Moreover, informal urbanism reflects solutions developed in particular places and the capacity and capabilities of certain people, but never results in a coordinated citywide approach to place-making (Andres et al., 2021). The intention in this study is to understand how the interplay between the formal and informal and the mediation between the bottom-up and top-down can provide alternative approaches to urban development attuned to poor or deteriorated areas enhancing the lived experiences of the inhabitants.

The mediation between bottom-up and top-down urban practices requires redistribution of power within the dynamics of state-society engagement on urban development issues (Andres, 2013; Watson, 2014a). This reveals another gap in the literature as normative thinking on the subject of alternative urbanism and state-society engagement is mostly informed by Western contexts, predominantly liberal democratic states (Watson, 2014a). Watson (2014a) argues that institutions in cities of the global North are designed to deliver democratic strategies, while governments in the global South cities are mostly autocratic and highly centralised. In general, several scholars argue that established urban theories could be mostly impaired by their geographical origin in the cities of the global North, as well as the limited experience of Northern scholars to address other contexts (Robinson, 2002; Roy, 2009; Randolph and Storper, 2022).

In large areas of the global South and the Arab region, authoritative power relationships had a heavy imprint on local social spaces (see Dorman, 2013). Dorman (2009) argues that authoritarianism and the lack of negotiations contributes to state-society disengagement and restricts the possibility of social regulation. Several scholars point out that the authoritarian dispensation of power in many global South cities, limited 'reach' into the society impeding developmental goals as well as countered the government's ability to regulate grassroots efforts (Dorman, 2013; Bogaert, 2018). Moreover, Bogaert (2018) points out that local councils in

authoritarian states enjoy much less autonomy compared to Europe and the United States. Autocratic governments are also more likely to undertake redevelopment through the demolition of existing fabric without bottom-up consent (Dorman 2009; Boegart, 2018). Dorman (2009) identifies the mix of state-society disengagement and clientelism as an explanation for the explosive growth of informal Cairo.

While the Arab spring catalysed civil society activism, Bogaert (2018) argues that it did not really unsettle the predominant top-down governance in the region. Furthermore, he argues that ‘neoliberalism thrives in authoritarian contexts because it promotes a very narrow form of freedom’ (Bogaert, 2018, p.252), where the market requirements justify the authoritarian mode of governance. He explains that in Morocco, for example, authoritarianism has been shaped by the ways in which the interests of the ruling elites and the global economic elites intertwine, which led to the reshaping and restructuring of Morocco’s major cities of Rabat and Casablanca through neoliberal flagship megaprojects (Bogaert, 2018). Similarly, new master planned cities have been springing up across the Global South and the Arab region over the last fifteen years (Watson, 2014b; Bogaert, 2018; Moser, 2019). Moser (2019) points out that the construction or planning has started on over 150 new cities in Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America, where implementation budgets range from several billion to hundred billions. Watson (2014b) describes these city plans with glass box skyscrapers, luxury apartments, shopping malls and five star hotels as ‘urban fantasies’ standing in stark contrast to the lived reality of the majority of the inhabitants. It is important to understand the extent to which these contexts in the Global South would allow alternative modes of urbanism that require positive state-society engagement and redistribution of power.

There is another line of investigation in the literature that addresses the potential of alternative and tactical urbanism in relation to the uneven growth issues and the possibility of offering new urban solutions in rapidly growing metropolises. It is expected that in year 2030, the world’s population will be more than eight billion people where more than two thirds of these will be living in cities (United Nations, 2014). The growing number of people living in cities accompanied by the exponential growth in global population has created the urgent need to deliver fast, cost-effective urban improvements particularly in contexts with limited resources especially when most of the growth of urbanisation is expected to occur in Africa and Asia in rapidly expanding megacities (Gadanhó et al, 2014). This urgency is intensified by problems

of urban poverty and the ever-widening gap in the distribution of wealth and access to services (Gadanhó et al., 2014). It is estimated that one in seven of the world's population live in poverty in urban areas, with the majority of these live in the Global South cities, mostly in overcrowded informal settlements (Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 2012). Income poverty in much of the Middle East has been rising since the end of the past century (Gelvin, 2018). Gelvin (2018) identifies the deployment of neoliberal policies, the high rates of unemployment and the conflicts in the Arab region as the three main reasons for the rising numbers of those living below the poverty line in the Middle East.

This uneven growth represents a global challenge for urban scholars and practitioners. The potential of alternative urbanism in megacities redefines the relationship between the formal and the informal; and between the bottom-up and the top-down urban development (Gadanhó et al., 2014). This new perspective draws attention to the potential role architects and planners can play to address the realities of the megacities and the rising urban informality. A very prominent exemplar on this emerging paradigm is the work presented in the exhibition held at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York City in November 2014 under the title '*Uneven Growth: Tactical Urbanisms for Expanding Megacities*' where six interdisciplinary teams of researchers and practitioners presented tactical urban possibilities for six global metropolises: Hong Kong, Istanbul, Lagos, Mumbai, New York, and Rio de Janeiro (Gadanhó et al., 2014). One of the presented tactical ideas was a line of DIY easy to assemble construction kits such as the 'papaya umbrella' - a playful shed with a rainwater collection system- which was suggested to promote a better urban life in Rio de Janeiro's favelas (Sisson, 2014).

Nevertheless, the dominant body of literature addresses mostly case studies of temporary uses or tactical citizen-led interventions in North America and Europe. As mentioned earlier, more research is needed on the transformative potential of the interplay between the formal and informal in the appropriation of spaces in less privileged cities in large parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America. In the context of global urbanisation of our contemporary world, expanding the context that shapes planning and placemaking ideas beyond the Global North is crucial (see Watson, 2014a). There is also limited research on the dynamics or the impact of citizen-led interventions in the global South cities that are supported by public or private entities. Accordingly, this deals with alternative urbanism as valuable spatial processes with

emancipatory and socio-political connotations besides the practical interests of being a regeneration tool with a possible transformative effect (see Lehtovuori and Ruoppila, 2015). There is a potential for these case studies to provide a broader understanding of the dynamics of the production of alternative urban spaces involving diverse stakeholders and informal actors with often conflicting interests.

2.3 Renewed Perspective and Conceptualizations

After the financial downturn in 2008, the marginal quality of alternative urbanism started to make its appearance significantly into urban development discourse (Oswalt, Overmeyer and Misselwitz, 2013). Not only these practices attracted attention due to their ‘potential to inspire progressive placemaking’ (Webb, 2018, p. 58), but also due to insufficient resources. Numerous terms have been coined in service of this novel interest, mostly by western scholars, such as tactical urbanism, temporary urbanism, everyday urbanism. Apart from these urban practices’ characteristic radical and reactionary qualities that are born of need, activism or creativity, they are now seen as tools for urban regeneration which garnered the attention of corporations and local governments. Moreover, it has led to forming a new class of tacticians, usually described in the online urbanist media as ‘young and well educated’, with various professional and academic backgrounds leading this movement and providing toolkits, ‘official guides’ and replicable models for intervention (Mould, 2014; Berger 2017). This renewed perspective questions the subversive qualities of the alternative practices given that they could be carried out intentionally within a legal framework under the conditions of austerity (Mould, 2014). However, as a counter argument, as these practices remain inherently empowering and oppositional in nature to the status quo they have the potential to preserve their emancipatory potential besides their regenerative potential (see Wallace, 2013).

The following section discusses the conceptual frames developed by different scholars to address this domain of action as an interventionist approach to urban development. This represents a move from ‘urbanism by default’ to ‘urbanism by intention and design’ (see Kaliski, 2007). As mentioned earlier, in the literature there are numerous contemporary terms given by scholars to describe small community based urban interventions, however, terms used in this section are the more

commonly used and the more conceptually developed which hold promise for a coherent conceptual understanding. Theoretically, each term emphasizes a different aspect of the same line of thought, as they are not exact synonyms, nevertheless, ‘the elision of these terms and their definitions does contain overlap’ (Wortham-Galvin, 2013, p.22). To clarify the ambiguity that comes with the diversity of terms, the next section aims to provide some insight to the concepts’ differences and understand the different lines of investigation carried out by scholars to explain the role of these urban interventions in the making of place in our time. Also, this section explains how this renewed perspective of urban action led to including new actors that sometimes initiate, organise or lead these processes. Finally, reading across the different concepts and understanding the wider picture emerging across these concepts helps in defining alternative urbanism in its new form as a wider domain of action.

2.3.1 Emerging Conceptual Arguments

The different conceptualizations of alternative urbanism in the literature have formed nuanced specificities in articulating and instrumentalising the idea. Most of the concepts emerged in Northern cities and are represented in the South in different ways. Grappling with the variance in lexicon, as the different concepts are interchangeably used to indicate the same meaning in the popular press and online media, the different terminologies developed by scholars are grouped and examined in the following section in the light of their articulated transformative potential under three interrelated and overlapping themes representing their core arguments: Transient and Makeshift; Small, Quick but Effective; Local communities and Socio-Spatial Processes.

Transient and Makeshift

There are several terms that emerged to emphasise the aspect of temporariness in these urban practices such as temporary urbanism and pop-up urbanism. When introducing temporary urbanism, Bishop and Williams (2012) state that

‘our definition is not based on the nature of the use, or whether the rent is paid, or whether a use is formal or informal, or even the scale, endurance or longevity of a temporary use, but rather the intention of the user, developer or planner that the use should be temporary’ (p.5).

This means that temporariness should be explicit which does not necessarily mean not aiming for continuity, but it may be manifested, for example, by a temporary permission or a short lease or that the activity is temporary by nature or highly vulnerable that cannot endure (Bishop and Williams, 2012). The intentional impermanence is the distinguishing criteria for these urban interventions. By definition, the used terminologies emphasise the temporal aspect and its potential in urban development, which may involve an experimental or prototypal quality (Nemeth and Langhorst, 2014). Nevertheless, Temel (2006) argues that the temporary ‘should not be viewed as merely a substitute for the fully adequate’ (p.55) and that the ‘temporal limitation permits many things that would be inconceivable if considered in the long term’ (p.55). Bishop and Williams (2012) argue that temporary activities can enliven the urban experience and be a vital part of urban culture as well as bring benefit when incorporated into urban planning.

Some authors who attempt to theorize temporary urbanism derive different trajectories of development of temporary use in relevance to the former use of space and the expected transformation of space. For example, if the temporary use is a meanwhile use of space using a gap between an old use and a planned long-term use, or the temporary use is parasitic or coexisting with an established current use (see Oswalt, Overmeyer and Misselwitz, 2013). It is argued that a temporary use establishes itself and transform into a permanent use only when it is formalized and professionalized physically, in terms of design, and strategically in relation to owners and authorities (Andres, 2013). Many studies on temporary urbanism focus on the potential of cities’ vacant or left-over spaces, which are spaces whose future is indeterminate for a definite or indefinite period of time and formulate ‘models of action’ for these spaces (Oswalt, Overmeyer and Misselwitz, 2013).

Articulations of temporary urbanism are centralised on mobilizing policies that facilitate interstitial solutions under austerity conditions especially in western cities to ‘create kind of durability through the temporary’ (Tonkiss, 2013, p.312). This could generate possibilities of urban activism and improvisations within these settings such as community gardening, skateboarding parks and temporary exhibits for graffiti artwork. Also, proponents of temporary urbanism encourage thinking temporally in planning, so that in bigger projects spaces are to be left intentionally indeterminate for a specific function to work as ‘temporary autonomous zones’ (TAZ), inspired by the

poet Hakim Bey's book having the same name, until having enough resources for developing the site further (Bishop and Williams, 2012).

Pop-ups are a subcategory of temporary urbanism. The term has a commercial connotation as pop-ups are used as a fashionable choice in creative city branding strategies, or as a marketing technique for brands or start-ups (Harris, 2015). On the other hand, pop-ups can also be a fast cheap response for empty properties and wasted spaces during recession times described by Harris (2015) as a 'spatiality of austerity urbanism' (p.592). The term 'pop-up' emphasizes the low cost and quickness of the intervention which is desired for its expected catalytic effect (Schwarz and Rugare, 2009). Bishop and Williams (2012) argue that pop-ups take the lead in promoting the 'innovation, fluidity and flexibility' (p.220) needed in the 21st-century.

In developing cities, as mentioned earlier, temporariness in most cases is not a luxury or a choice (Bayat, 2012). Temporary appropriations of streetscape and vacant lots represent a hand to mouth existence (Bishop and Williams, 2012). Many temporary informal installations in the streets and public spaces can be considered pop-ups illustrating the literal meaning of the term. Tea stands, food carts and kiosks are pop-ups in terms of temporariness and cost-effectiveness. Embracing such informalities instead of dealing with them as uncivilised imagery is argued to open transformative possibilities (Lutzoni, 2016; Loukaitou-Sideris and Mukhija, 2016; Andres et al., 2021).

Small, Quick but Effective

Alternative to large, top-down mega interventions that typically require heavy investments and lengthy bureaucratic red tape, localized small-scale improvements are claimed to effectuate big change and long-term transformation. This is the core argument upon which several terms emerged such as tactical urbanism (Lydon and Garcia, 2015), and urban acupuncture (Lerner, 2014). The approach of intervention is based on the efficient use of existing resources while harnessing or directing community energy in positive ways to heal urban blight and improve the cityscape. Lydon and Garcia (2015), the protagonists of the concept of tactical urbanism, explain different applications of the idea, where these urban practices can be initiated or mobilized by diverse actors including governments, businesses, non-profits, social groups or individuals. They can be used to bypass conventional urban processes by

‘prototyping, protesting or demonstrating the possibility of change’ (Lydon and Garcia, 2015, p.12). Tactical interventions can be instrumentalised by different stakeholders to engage the public during project planning process and development process so that planning ideas are brought to people physically rather than inviting people to planning meetings to discuss proposals. They also can be used by developers to test projects before long term investment as phase zero implementation which is done through small scale ‘placeholder’ projects to examine the idea (Lydon and Garcia, 2015).

‘Urban acupuncture’ is another concept that evolved emphasizing the potential of small-scale urban interventions, which was first developed in Curitiba, in Brazil, by the architect and urban planner Jaime Lerner (2014). In an acupunctural manner, localised micro improvements at crucial points are claimed to trigger a positive ripple effect benefiting the city as a whole (Lerner, 2014). Small interventions that involve the public at different levels are claimed to work as micro zones for recovery and resilience, creating what Lerner (2014) describes as ‘pinpricks of change’. Lastra and Pojani (2018) argue, based on an empirical qualitative investigation in one of Mexico’s informal neighbourhoods, that acupunctural interventions ‘have the power to alleviate the stress, social pathologies and political disengagement experienced by the residents of informal settlements’ (p.1)

Local Communities and Socio-Spatial Patterns

There are several terminologies developed by scholars to emphasize the role of local inhabitants and users of space in shaping and giving meaning to the space, such as everyday urbanism and insurgent urbanism. These actors are continuously reframing the space by an ongoing process of appropriation shaped by their everyday socio-spatial patterns. In that sense, the ordinary daily routine is powerful enough to weave the fabric of space and time accommodating a ‘complex of social practices shaped by accident, desire and habit’ (Crawford, 1999, p.6). Crawford, Chase and Kaliski (1999) argue that this everyday urbanism is materialised, for example, in the marginal spaces, sidewalks, vacant lots and parks from the suburbia to the inner city. These ordinary spaces do not have a distinctive identity of their own but can be redefined by activities they accommodate, so that they become venues for expression of meanings for individuals and groups who appropriate them for their own purposes (Crawford,

2013; Madanipour, 2017). In this sense, ordinary and vernacular urban practices inform the design process which in turn encourages and intensifies temporal activities, everyday practices and appropriations (See Crawford, 2005).

These appropriations are also described by different scholars as forms of insurgent urbanism (Hou, 2010; Maziviero, 2016). The insurgence is explained to be manifested in the continuous struggle to maintain the openness and the inclusiveness of the public space through approaches of appropriation and reclamation, thus opening possibilities for more diverse and just public space (Hou, 2010; Lehtovuori and Ruoppila, 2015). The term 'insurgent' draws on the concept of 'insurgent citizenship' first articulated by Holston (1998, 2008) based on his work in Brazilian informal peripheries. Sandercock (1998), Friedmann (2002) and Miraftab (2009) incorporated the concept into planning scholarship emphasizing the everyday practices of marginalized communities and squatter citizens. Such practices are not the traditional forms of insurgence, as in protesting or demand-making movements. According to Miraftab (2009) insurgent grassroots take advantage of formal channels of participation or 'invited spaces' sanctioned by authorities; and furthermore, invent new spaces or appropriate old ones where they invoke their citizen rights to serve their counterhegemonic interests.

2.3.2 Defining Alternative Urbanism as a Domain of Action

This section is an attempt to reach an overarching definition of alternative urbanism resolving the fragmented conceptual articulations in the literature. Iveson (2013) asserts that despite the commonalties and connections between these small urban practices, searching for the appropriate terms to describe these practices indicates the uncertainty of having something connecting them across their diversity. Zeiger (2012) emphasises the academic significance of finding a wider picture emerging across these practices. Also, the aim is to ensure that the study is not constrained by a specific term and its interpreters or conform to an interventionist toolkit proposed by scholars advocating for a specific concept. In this sense, there is a potential in finding shared dynamics of alternative urbanism across the various given titles. These dynamics represent the main characteristics of alterative urbanism and how it can offer alternative possibilities for urban development.

Alternative urbanism could be defined as small or incremental urban interventions, responding to a need for change defined by a specific group of people. It can be

implemented relatively quickly, with low initial investment (Wortham-Galvin). Alternative urbanism is not defined by the actors who are participating, as tacticians can be ordinary citizens, activists or professional experts, but by the action itself and the approach of intervention, which is characterised by being realistic, participatory, innovative, flexible and quickly implemented. The actors range from those on the outside to those who are in power (Wortham-Galvin, 2013). Lydon (2012) argues that if the action aims at a longer-term tangible transformation, it is helpful to obtain official approvals and find good funding opportunities. Funding mechanisms for such urban interventions are various (crowdfunding, donations, NGOs, municipalities or local governments budgets, or a combination of two or more of these funding sources) (see Lydon and Garcia, 2015). The approach constitutes different levels of temporariness, eventuality, experimentation, creativity, and local appropriation. These urban interventions can take place wherever there is opportunity, from a blank wall to an overly wide street, little used spaces, vacant properties or lands or derelict sites (see Lydon and Garcia, 2015). The opportunity also can manifest itself as an opening in institutional planning and a growing acceptance to test change (Hou, 2020). Thus, the process of the appropriation of space, which is flexible and locally tailored, is emphasised offering possibilities for transformation unleashed by social interaction away from the conformities of formal urban development models (Lydon and Garcia, 2015). The appropriation process within alternative urbanism is very fluid explained in the literature across a range of vectors: temporary to permanent; tactical to strategic; Legal to illegal; Periphery to centre (see Iveson, 2013; Lydon and Garcia, 2015; Dovey, 2016) (see Figure 2.1).

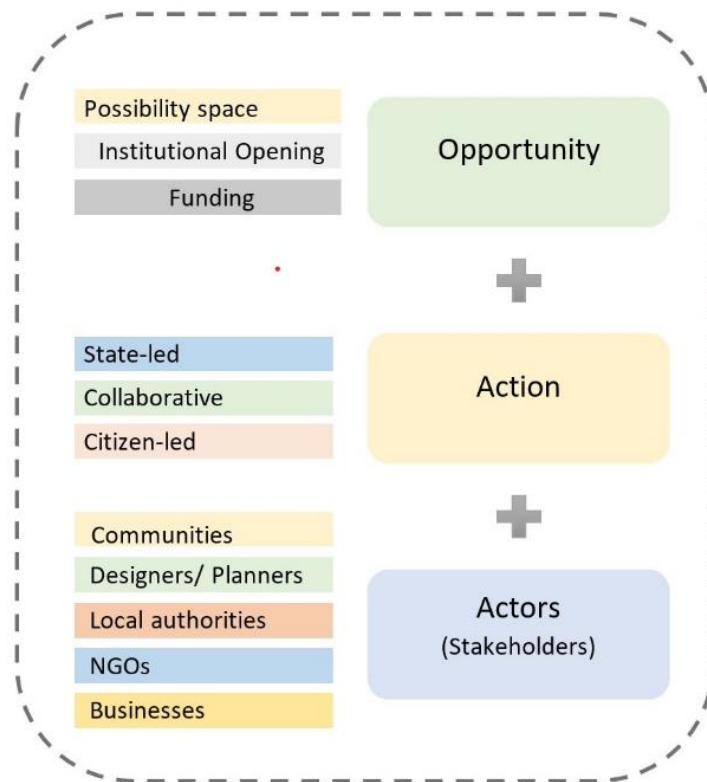


Figure 2.1 Alternative Urbanism as a Domain of Action (source: author)

The narrative of an alternative paradigm to the conventional models of urban intervention and development implies an implicit criticism to the mainstream. This criticism is articulated in the literature for different reasons depending on the context and the practice itself. Devlin (2017) explains that there is ‘divergence concerning the diagnosis of the state’s shortcomings’ as in some cases, the problem is the lengthy bureaucratic processes and the state’s outreach. In other cases, mainstream planning supports exclusionary urbanism which is largely for the benefit of the elites, instead of providing sufficient shelters and services for enhancing the quality of life for the ordinary people (see Dorman, 2013). State planning in some cities, mostly developing cities, is authoritative, hierarchical and intensively technocratic which ignores the social processes of the production of space (Dorman, 2013). Moreover, alternative urbanism problematizes large-scale masterplans and grandiose projects that do not respond to the plurality of the urban realm, in terms of lifestyles and identities, arising from what Groth and Corijn (2005) describes as an ‘increasing global connectedness and the neo-liberal re-orientation of the economic sphere (p.504).

2.4 Theoretical Framework

Although alternative urbanism in its broadest definition includes a wide range of urban practices that might or might not involve professional designers, governments, developers, and corporations, the focus here will be on collaborative interventions that include professionals, reframing alternative urbanism as a nuanced approach to urban design and spatial practice. From the very broad alternative domain of action defined above, the theoretical scope will be narrowed down to tactical design interventions mediating between professional knowledge and local knowledge constructing spaces collectively. The aim of this section is to discuss the adopted theoretical framework of the study, based on which alternative urbanism is reframed as a new mode of practice and placemaking redefining the role of the designer or the planner, while positioning local communities as co-producers. In this sense, despite their subversive origins, such urban practices can represent a form of co-production or state-citizen engagement. They enable the involvement of several actors, from local communities and business owners to civil society organisations and design professionals.

This theoretical framework resonates with the empirical scope of the research focusing on spatial design interventions in Cairo. The theoretical and empirical scope is inspired by the widespread unconventional micro-projects sweeping through Cairo led by professionals in the fields of architecture, design, planning, and arts, either acting on their own initiatives not necessarily conforming to professional norms, or assigned by communities, local governments, NGOs or even corporate entities. These projects are dependent on local inhabitants as key players and usually involve a complex network of fundraising and organisation, a high level of participation and coordination and also might include a level of sophisticated technical construction or refurbishment (see Nagati and Elgendy, 2012). These interventions represent a new mode of practice that resonates with alternative urbanism as defined earlier in this chapter (see for example Awan, Shneider and Till, 2011; Nagati and Elgendy, 2012; Ibrahim, 2014; Petrescu, Petcou, and Baibarac, 2016). These interventions blur the line between social responsibility and practice (see Cruz, 2008). The movement of alternative urbanism has been a call to action for architects, designers and planners to take their social responsibilities seriously towards their communities (Crawford, 2012). The scope was also affected by the researcher's background as a professional

architect and urban designer as well as being an interested witness to several alternative modes of intervention initiated by professionals in Cairo after the Egyptian uprising in 2011. These actions are discussed further in the following chapter focusing on the Cairene context.

Drawing on the work of Lefebvre, particularly the concept of ‘differential space’ and the theory of coproduction as a theoretical frame, the process of the intervention and the transformative trajectory of the spaces generated as a result of this approach of intervention is suggested (see Figure 2.2). This theoretical perspective grounded the empirical study interrogating case studies of coproduced urban spaces in Cairo. The theoretical framework guided the data collection process and it was critical in analysing the case studies and interpreting the findings.

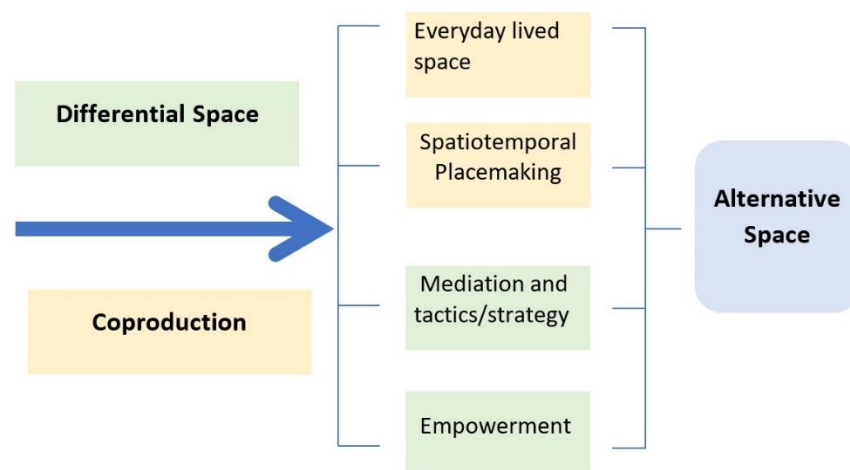


Figure 2.2 Alternative approach of intervention drawing on Lefebvre’s differential space and the theory of coproduction (source: author)

2.4.1 Lefebvre’s Differential Space

‘Differential space’ is a concept introduced by Henri Lefebvre (1991) to describe spaces that embrace and enhance ‘difference’ in opposition to abstract spaces of capitalism that tend towards homogeneity and imposing order. While the abstract space eliminates existing differences, it holds the seeds of the differential space which is born only when differences are accentuated (Lefebvre, 1991). Lefebvre (1991) explains that the abstract space ‘relates negatively to something which it carries within itself and which seeks to emerge from it: a differential space-time.’ (p. 50) Lefebvre’s concept of differential spaces and producing difference provided lessons in urban design representing an alternative form of engagement between local

socioeconomic dynamics and the design process (Milgrom, 2002; Leary-Owhe, 2015; Wolf and Mahaffey, 2016). Lefebvre's emancipatory writings empower artists, architects, cultural activists, and ordinary citizens to become key players by developing appropriations to claim their rights to 'difference' (Crawford, 2012). He highlights the role of ordinary citizens and appropriation in producing differential spaces which has a potential for transformation (Lefebvre, 1991). Moreover, he associates differential spaces and the appropriation/reappropriation process with opportunities of vacancy or abandonment of land (Lefebvre, 1991). Lefebvre (1991) describes appropriation and appropriated spaces stating:

‘An existing space may outlive its original purpose and the *raison d'être* which determines its forms, functions, and structures; it may thus in a sense become vacant, and susceptible of being diverted, reappropriated and put to a purpose quite different from its initial use.’ (p.167)

Several researchers elaborate on the importance of differential spaces during sharp economic crises and under the conditions of neocapitalism, where land and property is periodically abandoned by capital interests and the state (Andres, 2013; Leary-Owhe, 2015). In this sense, post-industrial settings, temporary uses, and appropriations are linked to the possibility of producing differences (Groth and Corijn, 2005; Andres, 2013; Leary-Owhe, 2015).

Lefebvre (1991) argues that differences also arise on the margins of the homogenised realm such as at the edges of the city or in shanty towns. He describes the shanty towns of Latin America as examples where differences endure manifesting a social life that is more intense than many districts of cities that are designed by specialists (Lefebvre, 1991). However, several researchers voiced concerns over the romanticisation of informal practices, informed by several contexts in Latin America, Africa and the Middle East (Holston, 1998; 2009, Meth, 2010; Roy, 2011; Bayat, 2012; Nagati, 2018). Informal urban practices might contradict with the characteristics of differential spaces in several ways. Based on his work in Brazil, Holston (2009) draws attention to the paradoxical outcomes that might arise when informal activities dominate as they can affect the sense of security and cause social fragmentation. Similarly, Bayat (2012) argues that the threat of ‘real and imagined dangers of crimes and extremism’ associated with informal urbanism might create enclosed and exclusive zones, adversely affecting the diversity of urban spaces as in the case of many cities in the Middle East. Nagati (2018) echoes these concerns in

the Cairene context pointing to the risks associated with the absence of the formal processes that are important to uphold the common good among the inhabitants. In this sense, urban informality in itself is not a defining characteristic of differential spaces. The interplay between the formal and informal nurtures a nuanced dimension of publicness generating a space that is not solely designed, controlled and maintained by the state (Hou, 2010).

In view of the above, the transformative potential of alternative urbanism is partly analysed through the theoretical lens of differential space and producing difference. In the following section, the concept of ‘differential space’ is further discussed under the titles: Everyday lived Space and Spatiotemporal Placemaking (see Figure 2.3).

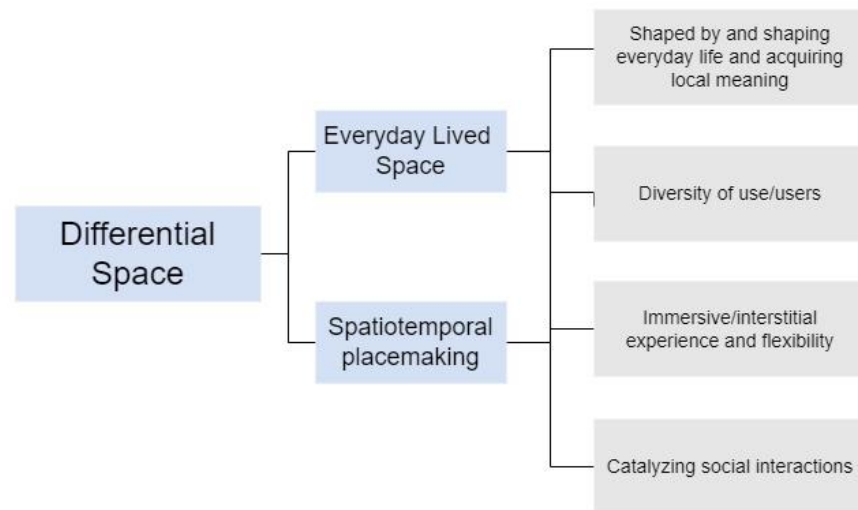


Figure 2.3 Differential Space theoretical lens (source: author)

Everyday ‘Lived’ Space

The concept of everyday space is rooted in Henri Lefebvre’s writings where everyday life is analysed into two realities: the humble repetitive natural rhythms of life, and the modern which is the constantly changing habits that are shaped by technology and worldliness (Lefebvre, 1971). While many urbanists influenced by Lefebvre criticize modernity’s effect on the city, the idea of the alternative practice as a design intervention focuses on reclaiming the qualities of the utterly ordinary in the nooks and the crannies of the city (Crawford, 1999). Groth and Corijn (2005) argue that the potential of alternative urbanism is relevant to exploring everyday spaces in the city that are not coded for market-led development. Spaces that one encounters daily in the city that are seen as obsolete in terms of use value open possibilities for symbolic

reconstructions and innovative activities (Groth and Corijn, 2005). At the same time, the recession dynamics and the lack of resources opened more opportunities or spaces for such alternative lived experiences (Madanipour, 2017). Similarly, Bromberg (2010) describes these spaces as 'possibility spaces' constituting creativity in everyday life. Franck and Stevens (2007) argue that sidewalks, streets and building entryways can offer possibilities to generate diversity and vitality of urban public life. They explain that these spaces are fully accessible and mostly perceived as safe, creating opportunities for a variety of activities (Franck and Stevens, 2007). They argue that:

‘Since the spaces are intended for circulation, or immediately adjacent to spaces of circulation, no special effort is required to discover or locate them; they appear on many people’s routes through the city. They are right there—convenient places to take a break from the everyday routine or to make a purchase, either spontaneously or pre-planned’ (Franck and Stevens, 2007, p. 36).

Theoretically, these everyday spaces have the potential to reclaim the main elements of Lefebvre’s differential space where the space is produced and controlled by its users and holds the seeds for change as it remains unspecified to a specific function allowing a high degree of diversity (Groth and Corijn, 2005). Lefebvre’s theory of the production of differential space is based on a three-dimensional dialectic made up of perceived space, conceived space, and lived space (Lefebvre, 1991; Schmid, 2008). The lived space is the complex combination of the perceived space (concrete and objective) and the conceived space (mental constructions), where it embodies both without being reducible to either (Purcell, 2002; Zhang, 2006). Zhang (2006) describes the lived space as a balancing element of Lefebvre’s triad model and a bridging concept between the pure idealism of the conceived space and the pure materialism of the perceived space. According to Lefebvre (1991), differences are formed through sedimentations of lived experiences. The lived space produces ‘difference’ as it resists homogenization because instead of being a space dominated by expertise or those who have the knowledge and power, it is continuously reproduced by users and appropriators (Elden, 2004; Merrifield, 2006; Wolf and Mahaffey, 2016). On the other hand, Milgrom (2002) argues that conventional modes of intervention tend to impose order and sanitise urban spaces overlooking inhabitants’ everyday lives.

Lived spaces are not fixed or finished but continuously evolving influenced by spatial usage, interactions, meanings, and unexpected encounters (Wolf and Mahaffey,

2016). In this sense, the motivations and the social backgrounds of those involved in these collective interventions and the users of produced spaces are of significant contribution to the transformation of space. The space of everyday life is the space experienced by the inhabitants or the users which is linked to their perception of space and interaction with others structuring their daily routines and work-life patterns (Lefebvre, 1991). Bayat (2010) discusses this aspect emphasizing how sharing social spaces between diverse groups supports and encourages collective acts. Lived spaces support social patterns and everyday activities which are the basis for transforming spaces and making them meaningful (Bayat, 2010). Hou (2010) describes these spaces as ‘smaller yet grander’ public spaces playing an important role in the social life of the community.

The production of urban space therefore entails much more than just planning the material space of the city; it involves producing and reproducing all aspects of everyday urban life (Purcell, 2002). In terms of urban design practice, urban interventions should be responsive to everyday routines and neighbourhood’s concerns in order to tailor a collective approach working within a specific sociocultural context (Crawford, Chase and Kaliski, 1999). Finn (2014) argues that the role of planners is to harness citizen-led activities in ways that are ‘safe, equitable, effective and locally appropriate’ (p. 395). This is particularly relevant when the resources are scarce which force people to compete with each other and seek individualistic solutions to their problems as means of survival (Bayat, 2002). In this sense, design interventions emphasize lived spaces to better accommodate everyday life, with its multiple facets, comprising both what Devlin (2017) describes as ‘informality of need’ and ‘informality of desire’.

Hamdi (2013) advocates for small changes that unlock and use existing assets of local communities to achieve development. He points out that design interventions should respond to small cultural and spatial practices embedded in daily life in order to effectuate positive change (Hamdi, 2013). Manifestations of such development are suggested by Low (1996) as she argues that

‘The social construction of space is the actual transformation of space through people's social exchanges, memories, images, and daily use of the material setting into scenes and actions that convey symbolic meaning’ (p. 862).

Low (1996) explains that this transformation is articulated in the details of everyday life through patterns of social use and experiential meanings of space. Similarly, Madanipour (2017) points out that the space has no intrinsic meaning by itself, but the meanings are determined by the ‘activities and the subjectivities of the diverse groups of people who make it, through the phases of planning, development, management, representation, exchange and use’ (p.1). Andres and Kraftl (2021) argue that the anticipated transformation is associated with the potential of urban reuse, creative (re)construction and sometimes informal urban practices or everyday rhythms. In differential spaces, the boundaries between the formal and the informal are blurred as the focus on everyday life generates spontaneity and difference (Madanipour, 1996; Andres, 2013).

In view of the above, the alternative modes of intervention have the potential to transform ordinary local spaces into differential spaces which could be manifested in generating everyday social dynamics embedded in the space. Such spaces have the potential to accommodate social/cultural patterns allowing diversity of uses/users; hence producing spontaneous social encounters and social interaction. Transforming the space is expressed in the diversity of uses and the lived experiences of the inhabitants provoking meanings and feelings attached to the space.

Spatiotemporal Placemaking

Lefebvre leaves a few clues on the physical manifestations of differential spaces or how they could be created, except that they nurture the contradictions that constitute urban life (Harvey, 2000; Milgrom, 2002; Groth and Corijn, 2005). In that respect, Harvey (2000) emphasises the temporality and ephemerality of social processes which contradict with fixed spatial forms. He points out the importance of accommodating a variety of spatiotemporalities (Harvey, 2000). Milgrom (2002) argues that urban spaces should respond to the peculiarities of local communities while inviting change over time.

In the same sense, alternative urbanism delineates a new mode of placemaking that is based on spatial flexibility, adaptability, and activation (Bishop, 2019; Andres and Kraftl, 2021). While placemaking as a term has origins in the work of urban designers, planners and geographers, such as Jane Jacobs (1962) who advocated for community-oriented urban design and lively neighbourhoods, the alternative approach is characterised by varying mixes of ephemerality, eventuality, flexibility,

experimentation and artistic expression (Lehtovuori and Ruoppila, 2015, Akl and Kamvasinou, 2019). Andres and Kraftl (2021) argue that practices of spatial adaptability allow different forms of activation that lead to a transformation trajectory attuned to changes in everyday rhythms, socioeconomic contexts and material circumstances. While small, piecemeal, and phased interventions are understood as a tool and an opportunity of regeneration in periods of crises and uncertainties, at the same time they can play a crucial role in reimagining city spaces as liveable places embedded within changing temporalities (Madanipour, 2017; Andres and Kraftl, 2021). The small-scale incremental approach increases the range of experimentation and speed up the learning process as the city is tuned into a testing ground where new and creative interventions can be implemented (Dovey, 2016).

Such alternative approach to placemaking creates opportunities to use space-time differently promoting public engagement. Sennett (2007) proposes leaving the design of space unfinished so that it allows appropriation by different individuals or collectives. Also, the flexibility of the furniture and the use of interactive installations are examples to induce users' improvisations. Not only do the produced spaces generate social activities between people who know each other but also with strangers increasing tolerance towards others. This approach to design fits into what William Whyte (1980) calls Triangulation in his book *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, which is a characteristic of public spaces that can bring people together, usually through an external stimulus or a catalyst that provokes interaction.

In a similar vein, Overdeik (2017) highlights the potential of immersing users of space into a new experience. The unconventional aesthetics of temporary installations, makeshift fittings and art pop-ups can intensify the experience of being imaginatively elsewhere (Harris, 2015; Overdeik, 2017). An immersive experience is described as the 'sensation of entering a space that immediately identifies itself as somehow separate from the world' (Griffiths, 2013 as cited in Harris, 2015, p. 598). Crawford (2012) argues that creating juxtapositions or unlikely insertions within the space can unsettle existing perceptions of space and open possibilities of what it can be. She further explains that this can be done through creating a sense of 'defamiliarization', which she describes as the 'cultural practice of making strange', for example, by repurposing spaces for unintended or unexpected uses. Similarly, 'refamiliarization' or making spaces more familiar and less harsh, for example by injecting private activities and qualities into the public realm, encourages people to

sit, eat, and interact in unlikely places (Crawford, 2012). Repurposing spaces can disrupt space-time or interrupt everyday rhythms and aesthetics of city spaces, but ‘does not necessarily indicate a disjuncture with other urban processes’ (Harris, 2015. p. 596).

In this sense, alternative spaces accommodate multiple temporalities arising from both linear repetitive everyday rhythms and differential moments or events that disrupt repetitions, where Lefebvre (1991) defines experienced time as the ‘link between repetition and differentiation’ (p.187). Overdeik (2017) points out that interventions employing ‘evental interstitiality’ as an approach to placemaking share a lot of similarities with Lefebvre’s concept of the ‘festival’ or the ‘magnifying moment’ in space as discussed in his *Critique of Everyday Life* (1991). Although spatiotemporal events and everyday life seem conflicting, Lefebvre (1991) points out that the ‘festival differed from everyday life only in the explosion of forces which had been slowly accumulated in and via everyday life itself’ (p. 202).

2.4.2 Coproduction

The concept of coproduction was initially defined in the late 1970s by the political economist Elinor Ostrom as ‘the process through which inputs used to produce a good or service are contributed by individuals who are not ‘in’ the same organization’ (Ostrom, 1996, p. 1073). It is a broad concept constituting processes of production engaging multiple stakeholders. After the global economic crisis in 2008, the concept has been deployed to describe cost-effective and efficient urban transformation through the involvement of users in the design process and delivery of services (Boyle and Harris, 2009). In the scholarly literature, the term has been used to explore citizen and state relations in the North and the South as well. Coproduction requires equal partnership between professionals and users ‘not to consult them more, or get them to sit on boards, but to use their skills to deliver services, policies, plans or projects’ (Albrechts, 2013). Whitaker (1980) points out that coproduction requires a different kind of authority, not imposed from above and maintained through coercion, but to be negotiated and agreed among the parties and maintained ‘through ongoing social relations and associated group support and/or sanctions’ (p.243).

With the inadequacy or absence of state provision, as in the case of many Southern cities where much of service provision is informal and self-help, the concept of

coproduction links to combining formal procedures with informal networks (Koster and Nuijten, 2016; Mitlin, 2008). By negotiating successfully with the state, low incomes or informal actors become coproducers of urban space and in doing so they claim their rights to the city (Koster and Nuijten, 2016). Thus, within coproduction processes, the nature of the state-society engagement is different from the routinized and limited participation adopted by governments, as communities are allowed to take responsibility for making things happen (Mitlin, 2008; Watson, 2014a).

In view of the above, as mentioned earlier, alternative urbanism represents new strands of planning which can be framed as a form of coproduction in terms of roles of the involved actors and power relationships. The following section further discusses the alternative practices and their potential in the light of the theory of coproduction under the titles: Mediation and the Tactics/ Strategy Dialectic and Community Empowerment (see Figure 2.4).

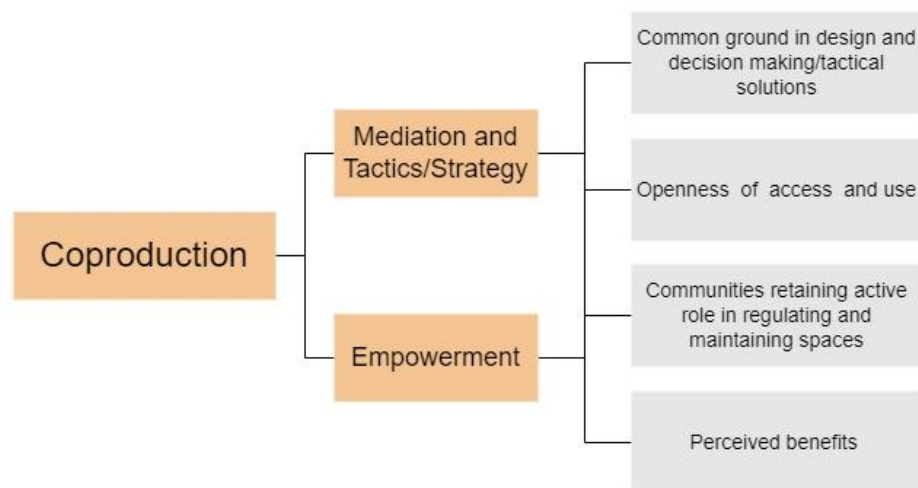


Figure 2.4 Coproduction theoretical lens (source: author)

Mediation and Tactics/Strategy

The concept of coproduction could be deployed to rethink the role of designers or planners and spatial interventions beyond charrettes. From an urban design perspective, coproduction challenges the dominance of the interests and perspectives of the more powerful in knowledge construction as the processes of coproduction do not prescribe fixed outcomes or determine behaviour (Petrescu, Petcou and Baibarac, 2016; Wolf and Mahaffey, 2016). The concept also acknowledges local knowledge and experience while continuing to value professional expertise (Boyle and Harris,

2009, p. 15). Coproduction implies that the process between the citizen and the professional is two-way, so that the user has the opportunity to transform the knowledge of the professional; thus, redistributing the resources of space, powers and knowledge among local actors and communities (see Till, 2005; Petrescu, Petcou and Baibarac, 2016). According to Awan, Till and Schneider (2011), mutual knowledge implies abandoning the hierarchies embedded in professional relationships and instead understand the process as citizen experts working with expert citizens on equal terms. This is completely different from ‘participatory design’ that is routinized in hegemonic neoliberal-led large-scale redevelopment projects and has been critiqued considerably in the literature (Till, 2005; Bovaird, 2007; Wortham and Galvin, 2013; Watson, 2014a). Participation processes in many cities in the global South and the Arab region are dominated by groups of professional elites (Miraftab, 2009; Dorman, 2013; Watson, 2014a; Verdini, 2015; Bogaert 2018). Watson (2014a) argues that urban development regulations in these contexts are mostly inherited from colonial times, where channels of engagement at best may not allow for more than presenting state plans to communities. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, as many Southern cities aspire to become a ‘world class city’, planning professionals have been deployed to implement urban projects and urban forms that are more compatible with elite tastes and patterns of consumption, rather than prioritize the needs of ordinary people (Watson, 2014b).

Coproduction processes are argued to be far more effective agents of change and transformation than conventional development interventions (Boyle and Harris, 2009, p. 11). According to Wolf and Mahaffey (2016), ‘coproduced space redistributes control of design to those that reside within the everyday life that the designs or plans are intended for’ (p.62). Local inhabitants identify the needed action and how it would be implemented. They co-design spaces and contribute with their resources, knowledge and skills (see Bovaird, 2007). Al Khani (2012) points out that urban change should be tailored considering local conditions of each area or neighbourhood, while capitalising on local assets and socio-economic dynamics.

Drawing on coproduction, the alternative spatial practice is based on developing situated design tactics within an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals and users or local inhabitants. Thus, the role of professionals is redefined acting as facilitators more than being the professional technical expertise. Architects and designers act as mediating agents between the different involved

stakeholders providing a platform for wider participation within coproduction processes (see Petrescu, Petcou and Baibarac, 2016). Instead of top-down imposition of change, they let human cultures interact and continuously reproduce the space instead of directing cultural behaviour (Wolf and Mahaffey, 2016; Akl and Kamvasinou, 2019). Coproduction as a concept represents a path for designers to demonstrate both withdrawal and engagement, a methodology for coproduction that does not view “co-” as merging things together, but as a defence/preservation of “otherness” (Wolf and Mahaffey, 2016, p.64).

‘Tactics’ and ‘strategies’ are intertwined within coproduction processes. Tactics, as previously mentioned, are explained by De Certeau (1984) as the ways we negotiate the strategies that are imposed on us allowing us to assert our individuality and autonomy. Thus, tacticians look for opportunities in time and space to resist the systemizing and opposing order of the environment. Andres (2013) argues that these opportunities for grassroots interventions arise in periods of crises and tactics are developed as a form of resistance to this context of disruptions. In the same sense, tacticians try to find and take advantage of loopholes in the official systems in order to transform initiatives into realistic projects (Elazzazy and Zaazaa, 2015). Tonkiss (2013) argues that the process involves ‘identifying the weaknesses, the joins, the blind spots and inconsistencies in a given strategy or settlement, and working both against and within them’ (p.317). Tactical solutions provide a practical, and sometimes pragmatic, mode of rethinking existing configurations and materializing ambitious ideas in the urban environment (Wendler, 2014).

According to Temel (2006), urban revitalization needs to proceed tactically rather than strategically, thus reacting to existing situations to possibly achieve large effects with little means. He adds that since urban planners no longer have the resources to act strategically, they must act tactically or collaborate with tacticians to achieve the needed change (Temel, 2006). Accordingly, the boundaries between tactics and strategies are blurred and can be applied simultaneously mediating between the interests of different stakeholders forming spaces of both resistance and exploitation (See Round, Williams and Rodgers, 2008). Thus, the relationship between the ‘distribution of powers’ and the development of tactics/strategies is based on a collaborative design process that can be more or less inclusive (Andres, 2013).

In this sense, alternative urbanism requires redistribution of power in order to allow coproduction and positive state-society engagement (see Andres, 2013). Watson (2014a) argues that coproduction processes in Southern cities can vary significantly in terms of how power operates in and through such relationships. The socio-political contexts that prevail in many cities in the Global South make it hard to develop positive ties between state and society without constructive change (Evans, 1997). Robins, Cornwall, and Von Lieres (2008) point out that in these contexts ‘civil society organisations do not automatically possess the democratising properties associated with the public sphere under liberal democracies.’ (p.1072). Authoritarian or semi authoritarian governments curtail the autonomy of civil society organisations, mostly in the name of protecting the sovereignty and the national security of the state (Al-Sayyid, 1995; Selim, 2014). Watson (2014a) emphasises the importance of having a context that prepares citizens to engage collectively and individually, with each other and with the state, to improve their urban environment. For this purpose, Al Khani (2012) points to the significance of empowering the civil society for its capacity to organise and having a better understanding of the issues and needs on the ground.

In doing the above, there is a great potential in engaging multiple stakeholders, such as researchers, practitioners, entrepreneurs with communities to bring forward innovative possibilities given the experimental nature of such alternative practices (Petrescu, Petcou and Baibarac, 2016). Alternative urbanism has the potential to diffuse the established distribution of powers between involved stakeholders, creating a process of negotiation (Andres, 2013). For example, Teddy Cruz’s extensive research and work along the Tijuana-San Diego border explores how architects and designers can act as mediators between informal practices and top-down policies providing solutions to urban disparity (Cruz, 2008). While Andres (2013) considers that transformation of space implies transforming a tactic to a strategy, and accordingly from what she describes as ‘weak planning’ to master planning, there is a transformative potential in spaces that remain fluid and indeterminate, providing an urban milieu for inclusive appropriations, sociability and tolerance (Andres, 2013; Sendra, 2015).

Community Empowerment

Based on the previous discussion, alternative urbanism is suggested to have the assumed benefits of coproduction related to community empowerment. Coproduction is argued to generate ‘empowering processes’ leading to ‘empowered outcomes’ (Zimmerman, 2000; Jo and Nabatchi, 2018). While empowerment is a broad concept with multiple definitions, many of which are related to participatory governance and policy making, the focus here is on the potential of alternative urbanism to give people the power to control and change their environment (Loukaitou-Sideris, 1996; Bailey, 2010). Not only local communities are empowered by being key actors in all stages of the intervention process, from conception and funding to decision making and construction, but also after the intervention in appropriating, maintaining, and managing the spaces. Local communities are supposed to ‘retain control and ownership over the continuous management and reproduction of the space’ (Wolf and Mahaffey, 2016, p.62).

Moreover, Cahn (2000) argues that coproduction processes aim at building a strong, resilient, mutually supportive community assuring its members that their needs would be met. Networking and peer exchanges are among the important dynamics that take place during the process of coproduction (Mitlin, 2008). An alternative practice that is based on coproduction has an emancipatory potential involving not only the views of the most articulate or powerful, but also the needs of those who have long been excluded by structural inequalities such as of class or gender (Sandercock, 1998; Albrechts, 2013).

On the other hand, as several actors are involved having different interests within these collective interventions, the risk of conflicts and co-optations is possible. The actors who have landownership power or decision-making power might exercise control and restrictions on the use and appropriations of the coproduced spaces (Andres, 2013; Madanipour, 2017). The continuous interaction between the involved actors especially local authorities, landowners/developers and local users is characteristic of the spaces produced as a result of such interventions. Controlling the space by those who have higher levels of power or limiting the beneficiaries of the space to certain groups would constrain the transformative potential of such intervention in terms of local empowerment and inclusiveness.

Moreover, instrumentalising temporary users or local efforts as a branding strategy by investors might disrupt and disempower local communities putting them at risk of gentrification (Nemeth and Langhorst, 2014; Madanipour, 2017). Despite offering opportunities, Madanipour (2017) points out the precariousness and the vulnerability of users involved in interstitial interventions that are used as a part of the urban development process.

Bailey (2010) argues that community empowerment should bring real benefits on both the individual level and community level as it contributes to building more cohesive and integrated communities. According to Tonkiss (2013), community interventions in vacant or disused spaces have the potential to create gradual spatial, social and economic gains and continued returns to actual users. Similarly, Ostrom (1996) argues that local activism through coproduction creates spills over to other areas as the experience of success encourages the community to work towards more synergetic outcomes. Alternative urbanism is argued to trigger a wave of solidarity that potentially creates a positive ripple effect (Petrescu, Petcou and Baibarac, 2016). For example, the Ecobox garden project (Paris, 2004), developed by Petcou and Petrescu's atelier d'architecture autogérée (aaa - Studio for Self-managed Architecture), started as an enabling infrastructure consisting of a series of gardens but was gradually taken over by local residents who transformed the site into a venue for social, cultural and economic activities (Petrescu, 2012).

In low-income neighbourhoods or informal settlements, small-scale urban design interventions are argued to build social trust, increase cooperative efforts to improve the neighbourhood and create a better perceived sense of safety over time (Lastra and Pojani, 2018). Ibrahim (2014) argues that little investment and attention to such neighbourhoods can reintegrate them into the city shifting the negative image associated with informal areas. Lastra and Pojani, (2018) point out that very simple physical improvements, such as planting, installing playground equipment, benches, picnic booths and sport fields, in the informal settlement of Tepito in Mexico empowered residents and enhanced the quality of life and wellbeing of the inhabitants.

2.5 Reframing Alternative Urbanism as a New Mode of Practice

Based on the former theoretical discussions, this section discusses alternative urbanism as a renewed spatial and planning approach indicating a new mode of professional practice that has a potential of transformation. This perspective resonates with the body of literature that debunks the positioning of designers and planners as elites or prerogative professionals acting from above isolated from spheres of action (Sandercock 1998; Miraftab, 2009; Dorman, 2013; Bishop 2019). Alternative urbanism not only gives prominence to civil society organizations in developing communities and cities, but also calls for a generation of urban designers and planners who play a more progressive and enabling role whilst working with communities towards urban transformation (see Miraftab, 2009). There is a need for strong mediating agents to facilitate and bring forward the possibilities of alternative urbanism especially within the challenging institutional contexts in the global South cities. Bishop (2019) argues that ‘the successful planner or urban designer is in fact a navigator and needs to work within the mechanics of the city: its processes, politics and dynamics.’ (p.76).

An alternative mode of practice in this context also echoes what Sandercock (2000) describes as planning for ‘co-existence in cities of difference’ placing the concept of difference on the agenda of planning and design professions. This perspective highlights a new form of cosmopolitanism that is emerging in the Middle Eastern cities termed by Singerman and Amar (2006) as ‘cosmopolitanism from below’ referring to heterogeneous vernacular and non-Eurocentric practices. Singerman and Amar (2006) associate these practices with the agency and creativity of diverse sets of activists, urbanists, artists and scholars in the context of Cairo who value local specificities, while at the same time espouse values of tolerance and openness to others. Similarly, Bayat (2010) suggests the term ‘everyday cosmopolitanism’ to describe the ways different individuals and groups mix, mingle and intensely interact in everyday life. In the same sense, locals are acknowledged as multiple publics coexisting in shared spaces which necessitates mediation, negotiation and building consensus when conflicts arise (Sandercock, 2000).

When focusing on the global South cities, the potential of such mode of practice strongly relates to engaging with existing informal and temporary dynamics (see Andres et al., 2021). This mode of practice not only requires effective coproduction

processes, positive state-society engagement and progressive redistribution of power, but also an approach to urban design that lies at the interface between the formal and informal. Many cities in the global South are characterised by contrasting dynamics. On one hand, power mostly remains in the hands of elite groups where top-down autocratic strategies and formal masterplan-driven approaches are implemented in the form of grand projects (Watson, 2014b; Bishop, 2019). On the other hand, uncontrolled informal settlements continue to spread on the outskirts of cities as well as informal encroachments and occupations proliferate in the streets and public spaces as alternative venues for work, sociability and recreation (Bayat, 2012; Andres et al., 2021). Flexible and adaptable approaches of intervention enable cities to respond to these contrasting dynamics based on combinational knowledge of professional planners and urban designers working alongside residents (Andres et al., 2021). It is necessary to note that although this approach has the potential to challenge orthodoxies of mainstream urban development, it is not argued to be the panacea. It would be unreasonable to claim that any single interventionist approach may solve the ‘wicked problems’ confronting cities in the global South (see Brenner, 2015). Nevertheless, it can be described as ‘nuanced design thinking, processes and spatial practices than those conventionally taught and practised’ that have the potential to create a fundamental change for the better in the everyday life of inhabitants (Loukaitou-Sideris and Mukhija, 2016, p.581).

Three key basic arguments are proposed framing alternative urbanism as a new mode of practice producing an ‘alternative space’ that is continuously in flux appropriated by its users: the first regards the formal/informal interplay where the intervention can formalize the informal context and deformalize the formal sanitized one (see Dovey, 2016). The second key argument is by rethinking the anti-planning rhetoric attributed to alternative urbanism, as Hamdi (2013) explains it as ‘making plans without the usual preponderance of planning’ (p.19). The third regards the question of time, in which the boundaries between the permanent and the temporary are blurred. Each argument will be explained in turn as follows(see Figure 2.5):

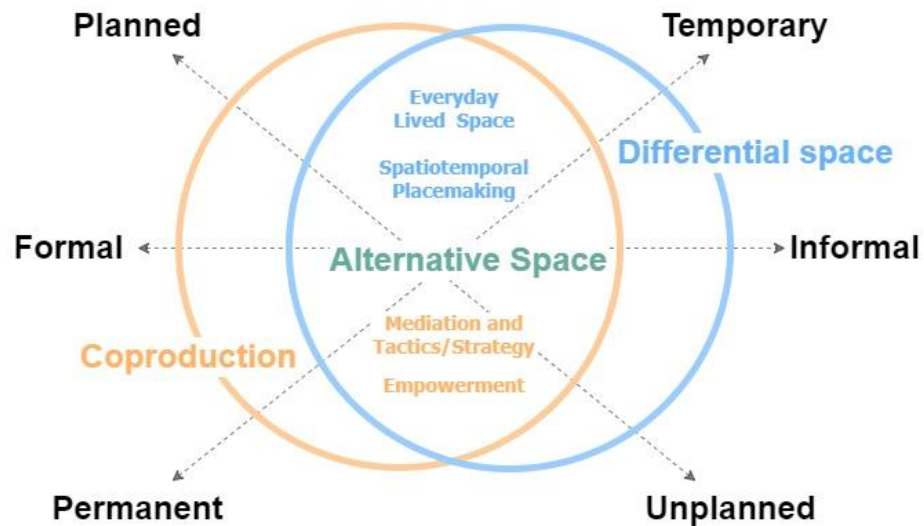


Figure 2.5 Theoretical Framework
(source: author)

2.5.1 Rethinking the Formal/ Informal Dichotomy

The typical perception of the relationship between the formal and the informal is that they are two opposing models where the informality is seen as the unregulated, uncontrolled, untidy and inefficient use of space, as opposed to the tidy, regulated and planned sphere (Lutzoni, 2016). The landscapes of informality are contested and are ‘often described in negative terms by planning and design authorities that wish to eliminate, control, regulate, transform, or just neglect them’ (Loukaitou-Sideris and Mukhija, 2016, p.579). With regards to the global South cities, the options for planners and urban administrators are usually either to turn a blind eye to informal practices or apply strict enforcement to clear away informal occupations or structures (see Porter et al., 2011). There is often very little flexibility available to planners to deal with problems of informality. Despite the provision of some basic services to informal settlements, they mostly suffer from marginalisation perceived as negative enclaves (see Al Khani, 2012). Bogaert (2018) argues that the social and spatial imagination of informal areas led to perceiving them as threatening the city and its public life. Dorman (2013) explains that engaging with informality entails bargaining and negotiating with informal occupiers or users which government officials find unpalatable or even offensive. He explains that the initiatives of international donors to help the Egyptian government reorientate Cairo’s growth, from the late 1970s to the mid-1990s, failed because the Egyptian officials rejected engagement with the informal urbanisation process (Dorman, 2013). Not only did the Egyptian government

refuse to integrate informal dynamics, Denis (2006) argues that since the 1990s it has enabled alliances with elite mega-entrepreneurs linked to foreign investors.

This research signifies a shift from presenting the formal and the informal as two distinct categories but as a process of negotiation in relational spaces and areas of hybridization between the formal and the informal spheres (see Lutzoni, 2016; Douglas, 2016). This perspective resonates with strands in the literature that move beyond the perception placing informality as a symptom of contemporary crisis (see Fischer, 2014; Koster and Nuijten, 2016; Lutzoni, 2016). Koster and Nuijten (2016) argue that for poor communities, ‘informal arrangements are not necessarily detrimental, and planned interventions are not automatically beneficial’ (p. 286). They add that the formal and informal exist in symbiosis and should be analysed as interconnected (Koster and Nuijten, 2016). Failing to integrate informal areas may occasionally lead to conflicts, for example, when one group occupies the space of another, or when unsafe, hazardous and marginalized enclaves are created (Loukaitou-sideris and Mukhija, 2016, p.579). In the same sense, Nagati (2018) argues that the proliferation of the informal self-rule might lead to the fragmentation of the public into multitudes when claims-making practices aim to fulfil private interests at the expense of others. Transformative possibilities, however, arise from the interplay between the formal and informal actors co-existing in the same urban territory (Loukaitou-sideris and Mukhija, 2016).

Bogaert (2018) points out that the formal and informal dynamics in the city are intimately connected socially, culturally, economically and politically, and he criticises that informal areas in Arab cities are dealt with as spaces to be governed separately from the city as a whole. Ostrom, Guha-Khasnabis and Kanbur (2006) emphasize that the measures adopted towards informal areas in developing countries are inadequate, such as the processes of formalisation or legalisation of property. De Vries (2016) highlights how the intricate entwining of formal and informal practices in upgrading one of the city favelas in Brazil was important highlighting the role of planners, policy makers, and local community leaders together in facilitating coproduction.

The study links alternative urbanism to coproducing differential spaces. Urban design in this sense is placed as a regulatory instrument between the formal and the informal creating a lived space open to individual and collective appropriations reflecting the

complexity of the city. Spatial tactics create a fluid interface between what may sometimes be formal or informal systems (see Watson, 2009). Informality in this context constitutes both the uses of the space born of users' survival needs as well as the everyday life appropriations for sociability, entertainment or recreation. Alternative design accommodates the spatial needs of informality responding to local socio-economic patterns instead of displacing informal users. Creative solutions can integrate informal areas to co-exist or even positively contribute to the wider urban setting (Loukaitou-sideris and Mukhija, 2016).

2.5.2 Rethinking the Planned/ Unplanned Dichotomy

Although the general perception of citizen-led urban interventions is that they are 'unplanned' as they are not formally pre-programmed in advance or from above, alternative urbanism constitutes a design approach that involves some degree of planning (see Brenner, 2015). Lydon and Garcia (2015) argue that this approach breaks through the gridlock of 'big planning' with short term incremental projects creating an open planning process allowing adjustments. The incremental phasing allows networks of individual and collective actors to be engaged in the process fostering cooperative civic action and urban activism (Sawhney, Klerk and Malhotra, 2015). Bishop (2019) argues that incremental strategies in planning offer a powerful means of mobilising public interest, induce enthusiasm for experimentation and a willingness to start a project while making adaptations when necessary along the way. For this purpose, Bishop and Williams (2012) suggest the use of looser conceptual design strategies instead of inflexible zoning and rigid masterplans. A series of small scale interventions at carefully chosen locations can induce change over time and maximise the outcome causing catalytic impacts. (Lerner, 2014).

Over-planning, on the other hand, allows little or no space for negotiation, improvisation or collective creative expression (Tonkiss, 2013). Tonkiss (2013) argues that authoritarian modes of state planning and policy in cities are associated with proscriptive approaches to the regulation and use of space that have no tolerance for temporary structures, physical re-toolings or informal economies. This raises particular difficulties for such alternative mode of practice particularly in global South cities where institutions hold on to inflexible planning systems rather than involving adaptability in planning processes and regulations. Andres et al. (2021)

argues that facing the urban challenges in the global South cities requires formally allowing uncertainty and unplanned practices in urban making processes and accepting the informal as a component of policy and placemaking strategies

In this sense, placemaking is an ongoing process where spaces are flexibly planned encouraging unplanned uses and improvisation. These uses are not intended, but the space is planned to encourage tolerance towards difference. This spatial intervention would prepare people for social interaction and encounter with strangers, so that the planned interventions give rise to the unpredictable (Sendra, 2015). Bishop and Williams (2012) argue that the designer will have at times to focus on creating the conditions for continuous local engagement rather than the solutions or hard physical design. The aim is to allow places to be purposely used and activated in response to changing economic and social needs contributing to spatial and social adaptability over time (Andres et al., 2021). Alternative urbanism constitutes spatial interventions that are not based on technical and managerial efforts to direct human behaviour towards particular ends, but they accommodate the complex reality and sometimes messy human efforts to survive and thrive (see Watson, 2009). The alternative mode of intervention is about retrofitting existing situations in ordinary spaces to better accommodate everyday life, resulting in an outcome that is organic, complex and evolutionary (see Silva, 2016).

2.5.3 Rethinking the Temporary/ Permanent Dichotomy

Urban temporariness in this research is not reduced to meanwhile uses or interim phases until the upturn of the economic cycle (see Madanipour, 2017). Urban temporariness relates to rethinking cities as livable spaces that respond to everyday dynamics and rhythms for both existing and future inhabitants (Andres and Kraftl, 2021). Bishop and Williams (2012) emphasize the role of time in spatial planning and urban design where designers and architects need to view the city as a result of temporal layers and evolutionary processes. Creating livable cities entails layering of different types of interventions with different time scales involving ‘a process of both planning at macro-scales and of micro-scale place-making’ (Andres et al, 2021, p. 29).

In cities of the global South, Andres et al., (2021) emphasize the importance of embracing informal place-making as a ‘permanent impermanent’ form of urbanism. The ‘permanent impermanent’ placemaking is an ongoing process that responds to

everyday temporary dynamics as well as constitutes the immediate solutions to the challenges of daily life undertaken by inhabitants as micro-scale attempts to enhance their quality of living (Andres et al., 2021). In the same sense, Harrison (2006) argues that in African cities temporary and informal urban practices have been crucial in constructing productive lives at a micro-scale, as well as economies and societies at a macro-scale, despite major resource constraints. Nevertheless, the issue of temporary urbanism, whether by design or designation, has not yet been addressed by planning institutions in many global South cities.

Two intertwined modes of design intervention can be involved with respect to temporariness. The first inserts temporary activities or installations that leave no traces that cannot be easily removed where no permanent changes take place in the existing surfaces or structures. The second incorporates physical alterations to appropriate the space for a different use. For example, this might involve the removal of existing structures, the removal of pavement or change finishing surfaces, changes to the micro-topography of a site, or the construction of new structures of different scales (Nemeth and Langhorst, 2014). In both alternating interventions throughout the process, the people are drawn out to the streets building social networks which will potentially trigger chain reactions and further interventions catalyzing urban development in a long-term perspective (Lerner, 2014).

Therefore, such alternative mode of practice is sustainable in terms of creating a network of actors and not regarding the action itself as collective appropriations are expected to continue responding to new opportunities and new aims. Even temporary transformations of a space, which terminate by the end of the activity, do not always return to the pre-existing form but morph into something new (Dovey, 2016). Ibrahim (2014) highlights the importance of strengthening the available socio-economic capital as a strategy towards the desired change over time. He adds that in poor areas for incremental change to take place and achieve long-term sustainability, projects should aim at building the capacity of local stakeholders (Ibrahim, 2014). This could happen in various ways, for example, through working closely with responsible government officials, raising family incomes and building the capacity of local NGOs in the area (see Ibrahim, 2014).

In this sense, temporariness is not just about the duration of the urban practices. It is also about the relationships that the urban actors construct with time as well as the

changing temporalities of livable urban spaces between the present and future (Zhang and Andres, 2020).

2.6 Possible Implications of Professionalizing Alternative Urbanism

One of the major concerns arising from shifting the narrative of alternative urbanism from being a reactionary and subversive intervention done dominantly by actors opposing the status quo to design tactical interventions is the migration of the approach to arenas of urban design consultancy (Webb, 2018). This has been manifested in the proliferation of planning, design and research firms, mostly based on young professional teams adopting this approach. Although this is a positive phenomenon in itself, it could lead to implications delineating a gap between the rhetoric and practice of alternative urbanism (Mould, 2013; Webb, 2018). Although these urban practices are promoted promising long-term inclusive transformation of local city spaces mediating between different interested stakeholders and empowering local communities, there is a chance that these actions would be co-opted by neoliberal agendas or exploited by privileged socio-economic groups. Hou (2020) argues that although these practices created important openings in formal planning systems, ‘the institutionalization of previously informal and even subversive acts has resulted in concerns regarding co-optation and de-politicization’ (p.117). Hence, the employment of creative design elements might represent welcome additions to the repertoire of urban design interventions in cities claiming to improve conventional processes, by merely disguising them with new tools (Wolf and Mahafey, 2016; Loukaitou-sideris and Mukhija, 2016). This is differentiated by Wolf and Mahafey (2016) from those who seek to reposition their role in different processes, with different actor groups. Also, it is necessary to investigate these practices in relevance to its context as they might operate differently in different parts of the world or in different parts of the city.

Professionalising and institutionalising alternative urbanism might help the corporate world to abuse the idea. For example, corporations have used pop-ups intensively, where pop-up shops selling designer brands, or even selling limited edition take away food, and whole designer malls such as Boxpark in London’s Shoreditch, are manifestations of this (Bishop, 2015). Bishop (2015) argues that ‘Masquerading as radical, they are in fact no more than another facet of the manipulation of the hapless

citizen consumer. The subversive has been subverted' (p.138). The idea is also used by private entities expanding their resources and adapting the public resources to their own needs (such as café seating). This case is particularly controversial because while enlivening the pedestrian experience, it is restricting the use for a group of people (Wortham-Galvin, 2013).

The urban practice based on voluntarism and community work is also critiqued for being easily mobilised for a neoliberal agenda (see Mayer, 2007). Madanipour (2017) points out that allowing or even supporting the use of space by community activists or creative groups would change the image of the developer and the development project in the eyes of local communities. In this case, alternative urbanism acts as a sweetener or a lubricant for the local community and as an instrument of legitimizing the major changes that take place on the site (Madanipour, 2017). Watson (2009) argues that there is no guarantee that new and apparently positive innovative urban interventions will not also be 'misappropriated and abused for political and economic gain in any part of the world' (p.179). Bishop (2015) points out that the transformational potential of such approach relies greatly on the intention and the execution of the intervention.

Moreover, alternative urbanism is being critiqued for offering a political cover for the failure of local governments to do the job (Talen 2015). Brenner (2015) argues that such interventions could rather reinforce a neoliberalized urban rule-regime. By alleviating some of the governance failures and disruptive socio-spatial consequences of neoliberal urbanism, the alternative processes do not threaten the regulatory framework governing urban development (Brenner, 2015).

Furthermore, community-led interventions are criticised for believing in their own rightness (see Talen, 2015). Finn (2014) argues that while these practices may have benefits, they may also create a flashpoint for tensions between inhabitants. He points out that

'Differences in opinion over aesthetics, perceptions about public safety, and even cultural values mean that DIY efforts may also create a potential flashpoint for class and ethnic tensions in many neighbourhoods, among other potential disagreements' (Finn, 2014, p.392).

Even with the involvement of designers and professionals in the process, as the inhabitants are key actors in all stages of the intervention, from conception and

funding to decision making and construction, the aforementioned challenges may complicate the process.

2.7 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to understand citizen-led urban interventions and the alternative modes of production of space as a phenomenon and how it is reflected on theory and practice. Alternative urbanism is presented as an umbrella term that includes a broad range of urban practices away from the conformities of conventional urban planning and development models. The shared dynamics across the different interventions are that they are mostly small-scale or incremental, cost effective, relatively short-term action and participatory. The rise of this alternative urban practice can be explained as a by-product of post-industrialism, globalism and neoliberalism as well as being a reaction to the formal process of urban planning and development. Although the interest in the potential of alternative urbanism is novel in the Euro-American literature and is still growing especially after the financial downturn of 2008, it echoes and revives the concerns, the ideas and the countercultural practices that took place in the 1960s and 1970s.

The alternative paradigm has been articulated in the literature to address different problematic urban settings in different ways. While the alternative approach proposes injecting and intensifying informal activities to enliven sanitized contexts, it can conversely embrace informal landscapes to enhance the use and quality of deteriorated environments without sweeping away the poor or prohibiting everyday improvisations. The alternative approach of intervention addresses repurposing vacancies and waiting lands in prime areas in the urban core generated by the global financial crisis, as well as developing abandoned and deteriorated post-industrial sites and buildings. This is along with its potential to offer quick cost-effective urban improvements in deprived areas or less fortunate neighbourhoods on the city peripheries. Besides this, alternative urbanism is associated with appropriating left-over spaces, in-betweens and underpasses argued to be neglected by the modern movement in design.

There are two broad interrelated lines of investigation underlying the contemporary conceptualizations of alternative urbanism given by different urban scholars (tactical urbanism, temporary urbanism, everyday urbanism, etc.). The first is that they are

argued to be catalysts for urban development and alternative models that rework orthodoxies of mainstream urban planning especially in vacant lands, urban voids, and postindustrial settings. The second argument is that alternative urbanism represents an attitude of contestation and resistance to the prevalent practices of neoliberalism. Both arguments are interconnected as manifestations of resistance to the existing conditions on the urban landscape may open possibilities for transformation.

The study presents the concept of alternative urbanism as an interpretive frame to address emergent spatial design innovative experiments mediating between diverse stakeholders having different interests in the intervention. The potential of this approach is through redefining the relationship between the formal and the informal and accordingly, alternative public spaces are produced, representing platforms for collaborative actions and negotiations between the different interest groups. Nevertheless, according to former discussions, the challenge is represented in how this approach could work against and within the neoliberal norms with its entanglements of power relationships and how this would affect the transformation and the qualities of the space. Thus, investigating empirically the transformational process of such urban interventions would help identify the potential of transformation as well as the limitations from the perspective of the different interest groups; and would clarify how the different roles and the influences of the involved actors ranging from those on the outside to those who are in power might affect the process and the outcome of the intervention. Moreover, the empirical study aims to highlight any constraints or challenges restricting the impact of such interventions, which would feed into recommendations to transcend limitations.

Chapter 3:
Situating Alternative Urbanism in Cairo

3.1 Introduction

This chapter scrutinizes how the concept of alternative urbanism, as defined and established in the previous chapter, is manifested and applied in the cityscape of Cairo. As explained earlier, theoretically, the concept of alternative urbanism is defined to address not only unauthorised and marginalised spontaneous practices but also sanctioned urban interventions that are collaborative between designers/planners and local communities delineating a new mode of design thinking and placemaking (see Nagati and Elgendy, 2012; Webb, 2018).

This chapter examines how the concept of alternative urbanism is attuned to Cairo engaging discourses on the interplay between the formal and the informal urban actors and practices. It starts with providing a general background on the city in terms of location, morphology, urban expansion patterns, practices of urban planning and structure of governance. Furthermore, the first section attends to the different modes of growth of Greater Cairo that has quadrupled in size in the last fifty years including the continuing growth of the formal core of the city, the emergence and rapid expansion of the informal city and the crafting of the modern desert city beginning in the late 1970s (Sims, 2010; Elgendy, 2013). This is necessary to understand the context of the study and the impacts of the modernist top-down urban planning paradigm and neoliberal-led urbanism on the Cairene urban landscape. Subsequently, the effects of neoliberalism on the urban landscape are discussed, manifested mainly in socio-spatial polarization, the emergence of exclusive urban enclaves and the proliferation of informality as a way of life and resistance. The officially adopted urban development masterplan in post-revolutionary Cairo is discussed represented mainly in the futuristic vision of Greater Cairo promoted by the Egyptian government. Following that, the dichotomy of the formal and informal is situated and reframed in the Cairene context. Finally, the chapter explains how the Egyptian uprising in 2011 has resulted in the rise of an alternative mode of practice in Cairo that is based on the collaboration between activist practitioners, local communities, NGOs, local authorities, and private investors (see Nagati and Elgendy, 2012; Ibrahim, 2014; Elazzazy and Zaazaa, 2017).

3.2 Greater Cairo: Three Cities in One

The city of Cairo has a very strategic location at the Southern apex of the Delta tied to the Nile Valley. The Nile passes through the city and directly to the west of it is a wide agricultural plain, beyond which the Western desert starts (Sims, 2010). To the east of the Nile, the Muqattam hills lie only five kilometres away representing the Eastern desert edge and the Northern extreme of the Nile Valley's confining cliffs (Sims, 2010). Sims (2010) argues that Cairo's unique physical space puts it in an advantageous position compared to other expanding megacities enjoying unlimited opportunities to expand into the vast eastern and western deserts, however, these desert opportunities have been wastefully exploited.

The orthodoxy of the modernist top-down master planning has been dominant in developing Cairo's desert lands, where new desert towns were created beginning in the late 1970s as the government's solution to counteract informal urbanisation (Stewart, 1996; Omar, 2018). Similarly, the planning paradigm during the eras of the different regimes of Egypt has been based on 'grand projects' promoted and claimed to change the lives of the millions through physical planning without actually engaging them (Ibrahim, 2014). Selim (2013) argues that the planning authorities in Cairo are continuously implementing a political agenda rather than informing it. Abdelmonem (2016) describes these adopted physical plans as 'an implementation of immature visions and policies to superimpose a selective imagery of foreign examples' (p. 167).

Much of the formal spatial expansion and the restructuring of the city has been fuelled by the neoliberal paradigm (Adham, 2005; Ibrahim, 2014). Ibrahim (2014) argues that the state supported capitalism through selling cheap lands in the deserts to key real estate developers, directing most of the resources to such real estate development. Now almost two thirds of Cairo's land has been sold to four investor groups: private individuals/families, states, private companies, and listed funds, while 35% of land is owned by thousands of smallholders on the stock exchange free floats (BEO, 2022). The concentration of ownership in the hands of a few groups of investors is problematic (BEO, 2022). Land ownership confers economic and social power as well as wealth on owners who can influence urban planning policies and outcomes (see Kivell, 1993; Dixon, 2009). Egyptian and foreign state-owned enterprises (SOEs) also hold a significant share of the real estate business in Cairo, where most of

their projects cater to upper middle income and upper income buyers (BEO, 2022). On the other hand, informal growth has been taking place mostly on privately owned agricultural land on the fringes of urban agglomerations. Farmers divide the agricultural strip into small plots and offer them for sale, usually through word of mouth without subdivision or building permits (Omar, 2018).

In this sense, the Cairene landscape is shaped by three different forms of urban growth which are the formal city in the urban core along the Nile, the informal periphery, mostly built illegally on agricultural land, and the new desert towns on the eastern and western deserts on the outskirts of Cairo (Sims, 2010; Elgendy, 2013; Nagati, Stryker and Mostafa, 2013). Several studies have created a metanarrative describing Cairo as ‘three cities in one’ based mainly on the work of David Sims (2010) in his book ‘Understanding Cairo: The Logic of a City out of Control’, where he breaks down the growth of Cairo over the past half century into three urban entities, representing three parallel cities within the city (formal city, informal city and desert city) (see Elgendy, 2013) (see Figure 3.1).

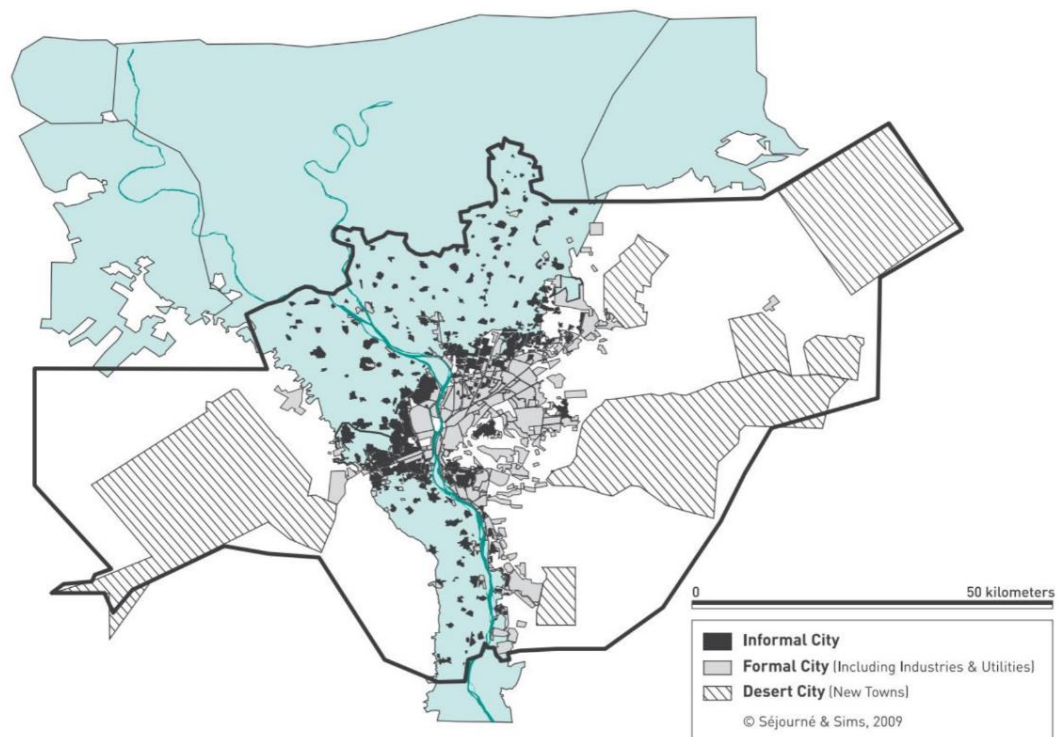


Figure 3.1 Map of Cairo showing the Formal, Informal and Desert Cities (Source: Sims, 2010)

As for the governance structure, local administration is based on three governorates that cover Greater Cairo, each of which is presided by a governor who is appointed by

the president. Sims (2010) points out that local administration in Cairo is reliant on top-down pyramidal structures where a huge bureaucratic apparatus operates under each governor. Ben Nefissa (2009) describes Cairo's administrative power as much weaker than how it should be for a megacity of such tremendous regional and global political influence. The centralised urban governance complicates urban management and makes any processes of urban development very challenging (Omar, 2018). Each governorate has ten to fifteen directorates or administrations that deal with a wide range of services including street cleaning, waste management, public housing, local street paving and improvements, building control and permits, and upkeep of gardens and public spaces (see Sims, 2010, Shawkat, 2013; Omar, 2018). Under each governorate's housing directorate there are building control functions and a physical planning department, however, these planning units are overshadowed by the national level General Organisation for Physical Planning (GOPP) (Sims, 2010; Shawkat, 2013). Moreover, the governorates are almost dependent on central government budget allocations where only 20% of the budget comes from local taxes and fees. (Sims, 2010).

The urban areas in Greater Cairo are divided into more than thirty administrative districts managed by district chiefs that are appointed by the Ministry of local development. The local districts are purely executive and are mostly preoccupied with building control and permit functions as well as dealing with day to day problems (Sims, 2010). Sims (2010) describes this style of local government as 'crisis management' or 'muddling through' as local administrations do not initiate transformational processes, or even launch concrete projects. The local municipal units do not have the autonomy to raise their own funds (World Bank, 2008; Ibrahim and Singerman, 2014). Ibrahim (2014) argues that the local level of administration does not address the needs of the residents especially in underserved neighbourhoods. Not only this is due to the centralised governance system, but also due to the lack of inter-agency coordination and the mismanagement of local authorities (Shawkat 2013; Omar, 2018). Another significant problem is that the structure does not allow local residents to voice their needs or hold the government accountable for its acts (Ibrahim, 2014). Although there is a system of local people's councils where there are elected members for four-year terms for each district, Sims (2010) argues that only a few people put any faith in the members of their local councils believed to be linked to workings of patronage and favouritism.

Urban planning and governance in Cairo has proved limited ability to face the challenges of the expanding megacity (Elgendy, 2013). The planning system and the structure of the governance indicate various challenges for alternative practices and coproduction processes. Although the Egyptian uprising of 2011 induced civic activism, cultivated solidarity among citizens and created openings in the formal rigid planning system for creative collaborative projects, a real shift in the urban development policies and practices in Cairo is still being awaited (Ibrahim, 2014). This is not to argue that alternative urbanism is the panacea, but it indicates an urban practice that is tactical, situational, reactive and creative that has the potential to produce real change.

In order to explore the potential of alternative urbanism as micro-scale urban interventions addressing problematic localities in Cairo, it is necessary first to understand the characteristics of the Cairene landscape and trace how Cairo has developed into its current form with its three urban entities. The following section discusses these entities (the formal urban core, the informal periphery and the desert towns), clarifying the intellectual climates within which these modes of growth took place. It discusses the urban policies adopted over time that converged contributing to the metamorphosis of Cairo to its current form with both its formal and informal development. This could be a starting point to understand the public realm and the urban culture reflecting the behaviour and the lifestyles within the different problematic settings. It is necessary to note that the aim of this section is not to seek revelations applicable across each of the three urban entities. This is because within each urban component there are varying and complex urban spatial patterns representing the different eras of urban development. Nevertheless, exploring the major shifts in the urban structure of Cairo helps understand the Cairene urban planning culture, the implications of public space, socio-spatial dynamics, Cairo's institutional frameworks and the visions of its key stakeholders that got Cairo to where it is now.

3.2.1 The Urban Core along the Nile

According to Sims (2010), Cairo's built area until the 1950s could be considered formal, representing the original city built along the Nile that expanded substantially in the sixties, seventies and the eighties. In this sense, the formal city expanded until

the 1950s within land subdivisions and projects conforming to laws existing at the time (Sims, 2010) (see Figure 3.2)

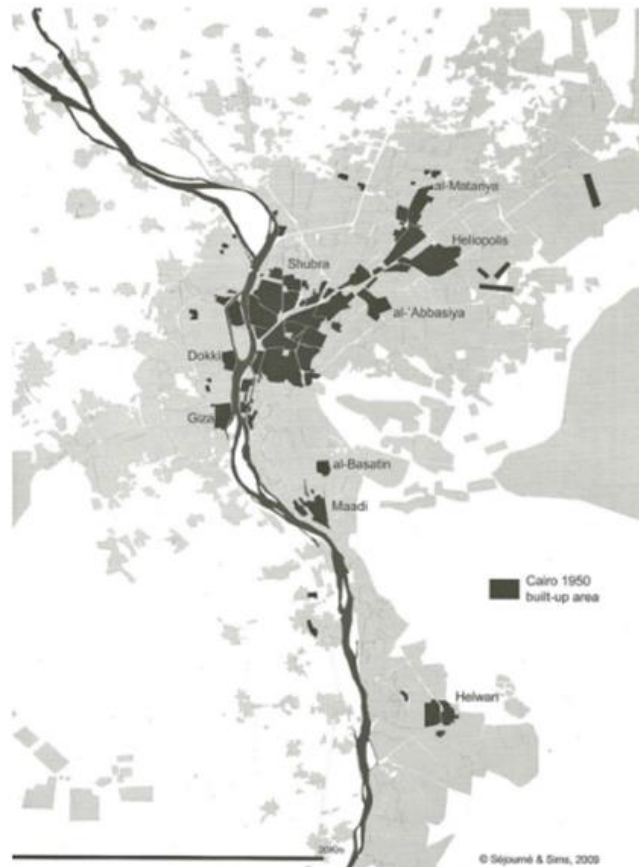


Figure 3.2 The formal city growth until the 1950s (source: Sims, 2010)

Before the 1950s, Cairo could be described as the dual city, Egyptian Cairo and European Cairo, due to the distinctive different characters of the existing old traditional Cairo and the 19th and early 20th century modernizing urban developments that were delicately planned adopting European models (Selim, 2016). Cairo's rulers' persistent ambitions of modernity throughout the years were translated into large scale urban projects along the lines of Western urban ideals. First attempts of modernizing Cairo can be traced back to the rule of Khedive Ismail who governed Egypt from 1863 to 1879. He ordered the construction of a new centre for Cairo modelled after Haussmann's Paris with its spacious squares and wide boulevards (El-Sheshtawy, 2013a). This prestigious model differs significantly from the neighbouring traditional old centre of Islamic Cairo, with its cul de sacs and narrow alleyways, which was perceived then as incompatible with notion of modernity (El-Sheshtawy, 2013a) (see Figure 3.3)

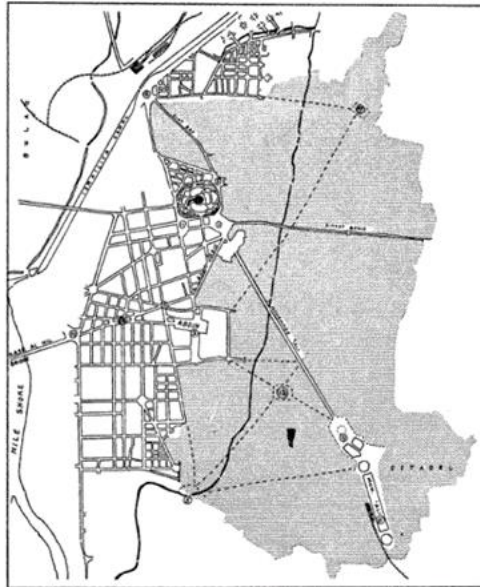


Figure 3.3 The contrast between the new centre and the old centre (source: Rashed, 2015)

During the British colonial period (1882-1922), new neighbourhoods were established to accommodate foreigners and upper middle-class Egyptians. The new districts bore the mark of modern British urban planning principles specifically garden cities (Rashed, 2015). A social gap took place between a new local bourgeoisie and foreign European elites choosing to live in a Westernized urban form and the population mounting up in the old city, which was deteriorating and stigmatised. In the 1920s-1930s, a new modern bureaucracy was created in the governmental machinery staffed by Western-educated Egyptian elites. Accordingly, the beginnings of the twentieth century were described by Egyptian scholars as the ‘duality between the acquired and the inherited’ (Abdelhalim, 1985, p.44). This dual nature between the modern and the traditional with its physical and cultural manifestations is still evident until now (see Nagati, 1998). The dream of modernity created a spatial divide and a socio-cultural conflict that hasn’t been addressed by top-down planning approaches throughout the years and the gap only continued to widen.

After the Egyptian revolution of 1952, modernization attempts proceeded under the rule of Nasser where, despite the ideology of Arab Socialism and Nationalism dominated the political climate that marked the end of the colonial rule, a western modernist approach was adopted for urban development. New districts were established based on sliced grids of wide streets and building blocks following the modern urbanism ideals (Selim, 2016). Planning these districts not only provided housing for the expanding middle-class population but also was meant to represent Cairo’s modern era and nationalist planning (Selim, 2016). The design and

implementation of the new districts was void of any form of participation by the public or future residents. (see Figure 3.4)



Figure 3.4 First Public Housing in Nasr City (Source: Abu Lughod, 1971)

On another level, due to the strong industrialization base that Nasser established, the old traditional centres of Cairo absorbed massive immigrations of workers and were suffering from chaos and problems of failing infrastructure. From the second half of the 1960's, Nasser's Governorate initiated upgrading schemes, namely 'Cairo Renewal Project' to address old districts problems. Renewal schemes were based mainly on displacing residents from zones intended for clearance, demolition and redesign (Selim, 2016).

Following Nasser, came Sadat who adopted the open-door economic policy or '*infitah*' which was the initial introduction of the neoliberal norms to the scene. Galal Amin (2000) explains the open-door policy as 'the opening of virtually all doors to the importation of foreign goods and capital, the removal of restrictions on Egyptian local investment, and the gradual withdrawal of the state from its active role in the economy.' (p.9). El Sadat aimed to restyle Cairo into the 'global city' and attract foreign investors. Accordingly, the state retreated from its role as the sole developer of large-scale urban developments and housing projects (Sims, 2010). In a very short time, capitalist entrepreneurs emerged and real estate boom began to change Cairo's formal landscape with new residential tower blocks, office buildings and hotels (Elgendy, 2013). In the meantime, the economic reform affected the value of the Egyptian pound which brought a decline in the average family purchasing power. As a result, the lack of affordable housing and the continuous increase in rents forced families to seek alternative housing solutions such as in graveyards, rooftops and garages (El-husseiny and Kesseiba, 2012). This also led to the rise of inner city slums and the emergence of the phenomenon of informal development on agricultural land and state-owned desert lands on the periphery of Cairo (Adham, 2005).

Moreover, the Egyptian government then relocated thousands of working-class families from what believed to be valuable real estate in the centre of the city to public housing on outer areas (Ghannam, 2002). Their houses were demolished and replaced by buildings and facilities that cater for upper class Egyptians, tourists and transnational communities. The public housing built by the state was claimed to modernise the housing conditions of the urban poor introducing modern ways to organise and use the space. The aim was to impose a ‘visual order that is based on the homogeneity of housing units and the separation of work from residence and private from public space’ (Ghannam, 1998, p.266).

Neoliberal policies of urban development reached the peak during the time of Mubarak, the successor of El Sadat, who followed him down the path of economic reform. The elite gradually created monopoly in formal urban development (Dorman, 2013). The 1990s was seen as ‘the decade of urban development privatization’ as the Egyptian government embarked on selling public assets according to the International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) (Adham, 2005; Denis, 2006). Thus, global developers have been having a leading role in developing urban environments which led to the privatization of many public spaces and services as well as the gentrification-led restructuring of the city centre (Adham, 2005). This is along with the emergence of new urban forms of exclusion, such as gated communities that have come with intensive surveillance, securitization and physical fortressing (Denis, 2006; Mayer, 2013).

3.2.2 The Informal Periphery

The informal periphery is formed of residential neighbourhoods, built illegally on private agricultural lands sold off piecemeal or occupying state owned desert lands, which started off without any infrastructure or basic services (Elgendy, 2013). The informal areas are entirely self-financed, self-managed, demand driven and incremental in growth. Numerous scholars indicated that no informal settlements existed prior to the 1950s. The informal city emerged at the empty pockets at the city periphery and then expanded to cover the entire external periphery of the formal city (Elgendy, 2013).

Several factors contributed to the emergence and multiplication of informal dwellings in the 1960s and 1970s. The first is due the significant immigration of rural farmers to the city aiming for a better life by taking part in the industrial boom. The shift from

agriculture based economy to industry and service based economy created jobs in the city centres (Shehayeb, 2009). Although Nasser's reforms limited the ownership of rich landowners and imposed the distribution of agricultural lands to the poor farm workers, agricultural production was no longer important once industrialisation took over and established as having higher value (Shehayeb, 2009).

At the same time rent control laws, imposed in the time of Nasser to grant the tenants the security of tenure, led the property owners to stop investing money in maintenance accelerating the deterioration of the housing stock in the centre of the city (see Attia, 2013). As a result, Shehayeb (2009) points out that many families moved out while keeping their rental units for possible future use due to the extremely low rents so that millions of housing units were identified to be vacant for that reason. The proximity of the informal neighbourhoods from the centre made it a good alternative for the increasing population that couldn't find affordable housing (Shehayeb, 2009).

Another reason that fuelled the growth of informal city is the war years between 1967 and 1975 where all formal urban development stopped while informal dwellings accommodated continued immigrations (Elgendy, 2013). The war years were followed by Sadat's liberation economy and the extreme commodification of housing production and the lack of affordable housing (Elgendy, 2013). This time coincided with the oil boom in the Gulf, where many Egyptian workers travelled to work and their savings and remittances provided the main capital for the accelerated construction of informal dwellings seen as a good choice for investment (Sims, Sejourne, and Shorbagi, 2003). Finally, as mentioned earlier, the growth of the informal areas was also due to deterioration of the old housing stock and the slum clearances in the centre of the city done by successive governments with no affordable alternative.

Cairo's informal city does not exhibit the stereotypical characteristics of the third world slums and shantytowns, except in small pockets or in newly occupied desert areas (Sims, 2010). According to 2003 UN Habitat Report on slums, the areas that could be called 'deteriorated slum pockets in Cairo' house only one to two percent of Greater Cairo inhabitants. Moreover, these areas are more to be found in the inner-city, in the decaying old districts formally developed in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, more than in the illegally built informal periphery (Sims, 2010). In

fact, many of the informal apartment blocks exhibit high structural quality reflecting significant financial resources although built without use of formal contractors (Sims, 2010) (see Figure 3.5). To avoid overgeneralisation, it is necessary to note that the older buildings are humble village style informal structures typically built with rubble or brick load bearing walls (Elgendy, 2013).



Figure 3.5 Informal Housing in Boulaq ElDakrou (source: Sabry, 2004)

Although informal settlements in Cairo have different morphological patterns, they share common physical characteristics. First, the lack of organised street network, which are usually very narrow except where had been water canals between agricultural land subdivisions (Elgendy, 2013). The poor layout of the road system makes the vehicular accessibility very challenging and in many cases emergency vehicles can hardly pass. The second characteristic is the ambiguity of public space for gathering and recreation; and the predominance of private space over public space (see Conde and Magalhaes, 2004; Elgendy, 2013). Sims (2010) points out that the tiniest green space or even trees are hard to find as informal areas are very compact with high population densities and it is very rare to find non-residential urban land uses in them. Land parcels are quite small averaging 80-150 square meters and the whole parcel is built upon except for narrow light and air light shafts, where the buildings have no side or back setbacks (Elgendy, 2013). Although the informal city represents a small portion of built-up Greater Cairo in square kilometres, it accommodates 60 to 70 percent of Cairo's population (Kipper, 2009) (see Figure 3.6).



Figure 3.6 Dense informal settlements in contrast with neighbouring planned formal neighbourhoods (source: Mehrem, , 2015)

Physically, Sims (2010) identified different patterns of informal neighbourhoods which sometimes show some ‘planned’ features. The agricultural field patterns, on which the informal buildings were built, were usually rigidly rectangular which were transformed easily into land subdivisions that appear planned (Sims, 2010). The irrigation channels between land parcels were converted to access lanes and the larger canals were transformed to the main streets in the area (Elgendy, 2013) (see Figure 3.7).



Figure 3.7 Informal housing on agricultural land divisions (source: www.citiesalliance.com)

On the other hand, informal neighbourhoods on state desert land develop organically over time. The streets, lanes and building layouts were determined through negotiation among settlers, the operations of informal markets and the common need for access and circulation (Sims, 2010). These organic patterns are indistinguishable from the medieval urban fabric in Cairo (see Figure 3.8) (Elgendy, 2013).

It is necessary to note the informality of the informal city is due to its status of illegality but its growth has been following norms and codes developed by the different communities (Elgendy, 2013). The social networks and cultural norms dictate the informal mechanisms through which the informal city has formed its organization and structure (Shehayeb, 2009).



Figure 3.8 Informal area 'Ezbet Khayrallah' on state owned desert (source: Tadamun, 2013)

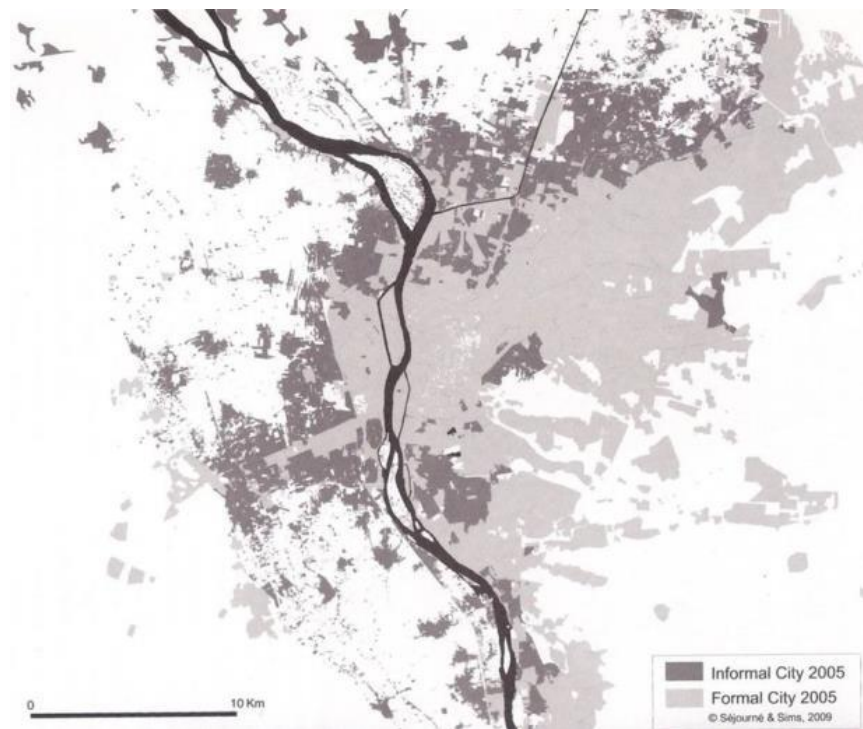


Figure 3.9 Map showing formal city and the informal periphery (source: Sims, 2010)

3.2.3 New Desert Towns

The policy of creating modern desert towns around the capital was the government's solution for the extensive increase in population and to counteract the phenomenon of informal urbanisation (see Figure 3.10) (Stewart, 1996). The political commitment to developing the eastern and western deserts of Cairo dates back to the Sadat's development plan following the success of the 1973 War. In this sense, the new towns aimed to 'attract population, create an industrial base, and attract public and private investments which matched the economic Open Door Policy (Sims, 2010, p.74). The New Towns also represented the way through which Sadat pursued his dream of modernizing Cairo (see Hobson, 1999). The New Towns Program launched in 1977 and was implemented by the New Urban Communities Authority (NUCA) of the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Development (Sims, 2010).



Figure 3.10 New Desert Towns (source: Sims, 2010)

In the 1970s, Sims (2010) points out that the idea of new towns in the desert generated considerable excitement among urban planners and city officials as it was expected that in these new desert towns the uncrowded, organised and modern Egypt could be established. According to Sims (2010),

'Desert cities represented the planner's ultimate dream of a total blank sheet of paper, where town layouts would be constrained neither by topography nor existing urban realities. Concepts of low residential densities, separation of land uses, green belts and integrated neighbourhoods could be pursued with a vengeance.' (p.75)

The physical layouts of the new towns have similar features. Residential areas are designed so that almost 60 percent of land is dedicated to open space, green areas, wide streets and boulevards (Sims, 2010). Residential blocks and streets layout conform to the western model of street hierarchies. Commercial activities are limited to shopping nodes centred within the neighbourhood block and central to every new town, exists a commercial node or a spine as well as government offices (see Figure 3.11). Industries and warehousing are restricted to zones far from residential quarters. The modern planning norms accurately adopted in the new towns do not match the Egyptian urban culture that excels at diversity and compactness (Sims, 2010).

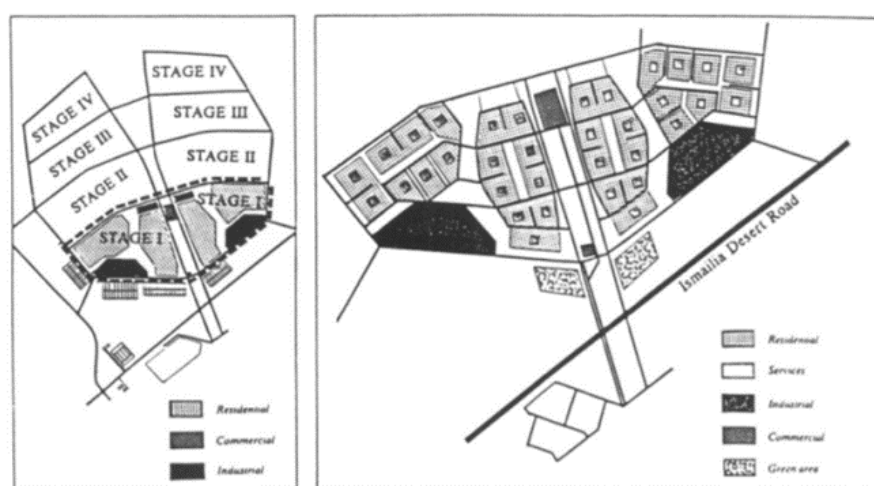


Figure 3.11 The 10th Ramadan city growth plan and land uses, it is one of the very first implemented desert towns (source: Hegab, 1985)

The concept of new towns was based on constructing self-sufficient towns at a desert location far enough from the existing urban poles (Stewart, 1996). The census taken in 1986 revealed that the residential population of the new towns was significantly low. The combined population of the first four desert towns was insignificant 1.1percent of Greater Cairo's population at the time. The state continued to pour investment into subsidized public housing 'creating more and more workers' housing estates' (Sims, 2010, p.79). Although the state investments in the new towns have been considerable with more than 500,000 public housing units in the eight new towns, a significant amount of these units, more than 50 percent, was vacant or closed (Sims, 2010). The initial program of new towns intended for the working class had entirely failed to achieve its aims, housing only 30,000 inhabitants instead of the initial plan of accommodating one to two million inhabitants (Denis, 2008). Denis (2008) describes the new towns as ghost towns that remained pitiful and soulless concrete structures.

There are different factors that have discouraged Egyptians, especially those residing in informal neighbourhoods, from moving to the new towns. Although the government's public housing programs aimed at those of 'limited income', these towns do not offer the kind of housing and livelihoods that would encourage them to relocate (Stewart, 1996; Denis, 2008). According to Sims (2010) small business sector which generates at least 40 percent of jobs in urban Egypt is almost excluded from the new towns. In the new towns it is prohibited to open retail shops, workshops, repair shops and kiosks which would generate a lot of livelihood opportunities (Sims, 2010). The modern planning norms also fail to generate the social patterns that would sustain these informal businesses. Planning the new towns is detached from the socioeconomic needs of the people they were intended to house. Another significant obstacle in the development of Cairo's new towns is the poor transport services to the city central areas (Elgendy, 2013). This is beside that the housing units are poorly located and only could be accessible by private cars which are hardly affordable for a low-income family (Sims, 2010).

Subsequently, there was a shift in the concept of new towns from attracting the working class through the construction of low cost housing blocks to a much more capitalist mode of urban development (Denis, 2006). Large pieces of desert lands were sold to private developers at very low prices (Ibrahim, 2014). The aim was to bring some revenues to finance further development holding on to the dream of urbanising the desert and the redistribution of the population throughout the city (see Sims, 2010). Gated compounds, mega malls and upmarket subdivisions were launched (Elgendy, 2013). The real estate boom led by the private sector in the 1990s and the early 21st century changed the urban landscape of the new towns (Denis, 2008). Currently, dozens of luxurious gated compounds, golf courses, amusement parks, private universities have burgeoned along the desert fringe attracting urban elites and slowly de-densifying the centre of the city (Elgendy, 2013).

3.3 Neoliberalism and Socio-Spatial Polarization

Cairo is a prime example of the urban inequalities that the UN-Habitat has been warning about in the Third World metropolises where rich neighbourhoods and gated residential communities often exist in close proximity to poor informal settlements that lack basic services. As formerly discussed, since the 1970s, the spatial

expansion and the restructuring of the city of Cairo has been attributed to a hegemonic neoliberal economic paradigm creating new urban spaces and transforming the older ones (Adham, 2005). Although modernization attempts and adopting western ideals created urban disparity, the more recent neoliberal permeation has transformed the urban landscape significantly in terms of socio-spatial polarization (Bayat, 2012). Urban polarization is manifested equally in the emergence of luxurious spaces catering the wealthy elites, as also in the proliferation of a multifaceted informality phenomenon exhibited in more than one hundred informal settlements, informal livelihood activities and the encroachment of the less fortunate into the streets and public spaces as alternative venues for survival (Bayat, 2012). The neoliberal paradigm started in Cairo with Sadat's open door policy to the more recent implementation of the International Monetary Fund's structural adjustment program legitimating the privatization and the commodification of land (Bayat, 1996). In this sense, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are considered to be the main tools through which the ideology of neoliberalism has been promoted and policed (Adham, 2005, p.21). According to Mitchell (2002), 'the main impact of the neoliberal economic reform has been concentrating public funds into a few hands of powerful and prosperous financiers and entrepreneurs' (p.282). This forms a new class of profiteers, where in Cairo they gained extra power through alliances with the successive governments officials usually accused of corruption or involved in special business networks (Adham, 2005). Moreover, the neoliberal impact on the urban landscape intensifies particularly under authoritarian states with highly centralized urban governance that hardly allows local residents to voice their needs (Bayat, 2012; Dorman, 2013; Ibrahim, 2014; Boegart, 2018)

The geographer Rushdi Said (1996) carried out a study after the implementation of the structural adjustment programs in the 1990s on the different categories of population's relation to the GDP. Rushdi points out that 86 percent of the Cairenes live in dismal conditions and receive only 26 percent of the GDP. These percentages are manifested in the mobilization of people for more than fifty years creating urban enclaves reflecting the intensification of the socioeconomic inequalities in Greater Cairo where the urban gap between the rich and the poor has continued to widen. The following section discusses the different urban forms of exclusion and the manifestations of the neoliberal ideology on the dynamics of public spaces.

3.3.1 The Emergence of ‘Capital Spaces’

Under the neoliberal paradigm, new sealed-off private environments emerged, purporting to be public spaces, associated with a boom in service, consumerism and entertainment industries (Adham, 2005). These bounded spaces have different urban forms that reflect not only the consumption culture of those who can afford it, but also attributed to a desire to express an elite lifestyle escaping the polluted metropolitan environment (Abaza, 2004; Adham, 2005; Bayat, 2012). These capital spaces could be mega shopping malls, international luxurious hotels, gated compounds or public spaces regenerated and managed by corporate entities for private interests. The privatised public spaces are seen by many scholars as having a drastic impact on social segregation. This is because the rise of these spaces has changed the function of cities ‘from being places of social reproduction to places of market-oriented production; and from being places of managerialism to places of entrepreneurialism’ (Adham, 2005, p.25). Harvey argues that the neoliberal ideology has transformed the urban space to function as what he calls ‘surplus-capital absorption’ to describe a site in the pursuit of profitability rather than serving the public needs (Harvey, 2010, p.26).

It is worth noting, as a counterargument to the former critique, that there has been a general tendency among scholars of criticizing and exaggerating the impact of the neoliberal ideology on public spaces extrapolating the extreme cases of socio-spatial segregation and forming sweeping universal arguments against the contemporary forms of public spaces (Carmona and Wunderlich, 2013). Nevertheless, although being aware of this counterargument, Cairo could be one of those extreme cases manifested in highly controlled environments, physically, economically and socially isolated with intensive securitization. Mona Abaza, a professor of sociology in the American University of Cairo, criticized these elite spaces describing them as ‘monitored by private security forces and advanced technology to protect them against the ‘barbarians’ outside’ (Abaza, 2004). Moreover, the neoliberal-led spatial expansion has been attributed with significant unevenness in providing urban services. For example, an incident that triggered a lot of rage in 2007 is that the state was allocating scarce resources such as water to rich gated communities to irrigate golf courses, while millions of Egyptians were suffering from the insufficiency of clean drinking water (Ibrahim , 2014).

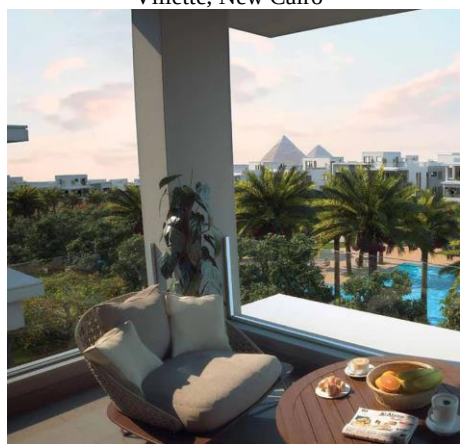
Despite the different forms of these capital spaces from an urban perspective, different scholars have found important similarities between these emerging spaces of consumption especially in Cairo. Whether a mall, a gated residential compound, a theme park, or some other development type, they all benefit from the deterioration of the surrounding public environment through the establishment of an alternative ideal (Adham, 2005). Moreover, these spaces are promoted by promising a social class distinction and further marketed by stigmatizing the everyday life in the city with its social dangers (Bayat, 2012; Moufid and Ashour, 2019). For example, gated complexes have evocative names representing luxurious distinctive lifestyles such as Beverly Hills, Utopia, Gardenia, Qatamiya Heights, and Dreamland which have been mushrooming along the desert fringe (see Figure 3.12) (Denis, 2008). Adham (2005) argues that these new urban spaces ‘enforce codes of behaviour to uphold utopian imagery which gives them their economic and symbolic value’ (p. 25). Capital spaces in Cairo represent intensified socio-economic inequalities or what Edward Soja (2000) terms as ‘metropolarities’ referring to ‘the multiple axes of differential power and status that produce and maintain the socioeconomic inequalities’ (p.265).



Villette, New Cairo



Lake View, New Cairo



Pyramids Heights, Sixth of October



MountainView, Sixth of October

Figure 3.12 Collection of photos from real-estate ads of new gated communities (source: Egypt Real Estat Hub website)

In a similar vein, the urban developments in the centre of the city have been based on megaprojects such as shopping malls, office buildings and International hotels which have been done through what Harvey calls 'accumulation by dispossession' (see Harvey, 2004). Bayat (2012) defines the dispossessed as the inhabitants with insecure tenure rights that the state pushes away of the city centre to hand high value lands to corporations. The state also follows the typical policy of gentrification where the lower classes are gradually dispossessed by the 'invisible force of high prices and inhospitable social ecology' (Bayat, 2012, p.112).

3.3.2 Informality as a Way of Life and Resistance

The liberal economic reform has increased the number of people that can be called 'urban marginals', 'urban disenfranchised' or the 'urban poor', which led to an explosion in the range of their activities (Al-Sayyad, 2004, p.9). Bayat (2000) points out that although these populations have been economically exploited and socially stigmatized, they are active in their own way to ensure their survival. Castells (1983) argues that this represents an everyday struggle for unprivileged grassroots aiming for social and economic transformation. The millions of people who depended on state provisions and subsidies had to depend on themselves to acquire the basic necessities of life (Bayat, 2002). As a form of resistance to the overwhelming economic and social changes, less fortunate people have seen in the urban informality a survival strategy on different levels (Al-Sayyad, 2004). Urban Informality is not only expressed in informal settlements or illegal economy but also it relies greatly on outdoor public spaces where grassroots use as alternative places for work, sociability, entertainment and recreation (Bayat, 2012). Moreover, poorer families have been forced to deploy more family members like women and children to enhance the family income which is also usually based on outdoor informal economy (Bayat, 2012).

Different forms of outdoor public spaces, whether in the centre of the city or in the informal settlements, have been seen as an asset for economic livelihood and social reproduction (Bayat and Denis, 2000). Since most of the dwellings in the informal settlements are too small and insufficient to accommodate their spatial needs, the inhabitants have no choice but to extend their daily lives to the outdoor spaces, alleyways, street, open spaces and rooftops (Bayat, 2012). This could be also the case in many formal public housing neighbourhoods that were not designed to fit the needs

of the target low-income families. In the centre of the city, vibrant areas are also seen as having potential for informal economic profits, where the sidewalks, in-between spaces and green areas are flooded with street vendors, café seats and displays of goods. Moreover, people in need have seen in the seemingly abandoned, unnoticed, or underutilised plots of land opportunities and breeding grounds for social and economic empowerment (Bayat, 2000, 2012).

Furthermore, the unprivileged groups of people have been expanding to include many of the middle-class earners which suffered from a relative decline in their wages, since the economic growth has no longer been feeding into the middle-class income growth. Poverty has spread among young educated people with professional and social skills such as teachers, government employees and intellectuals where ‘informal life has thus become a facet of educated middle class existence’ (Bayat, 2012, p.114). Low income and middle-income families were forced to live the life of the poor so that they live in informal settlements and depend greatly on informal outdoor economy extending informalities to working class public housing (Bayat and Denis, 2000; Bayat, 2012). Accordingly, Bayat (2012) points out that ‘the neoliberal ideology expands and deepens the informalization of lifeworlds, of which outdoor life is a key attribute’ (p.112). Cairo’s public housing projects built in different times since the 1950s have been suffering from either profound neglect or dereliction which made them dilapidated structures differing a little from informal housing that could be even less flexible in expansion and use (Bayat, 2012).

Differing from the conventional forms of activism, the ‘urban poor’ are purposefully stretching their heavy presence into streets and outdoor public spaces as a form of repossession of what they have dispossessed or what Bayat (2012) calls ‘survival by repossession’. The informal practices represent a dialectic of individual and collective actors that are more oriented towards action and practice rather than protesting (Bayat, 2000). The informal actors build shelters, work, function, and stroll in the streets looking for livelihood opportunities, all of which represent instances from the ordinary everyday life. Thus, informality becomes a way of life and a continuous resistance to the hegemonic norms by simply everyday actions (Bayat, 2012). These informal actors are in continuous struggle as they are constantly faced with opposition from the authorities, either using physical barriers such as fences, barbed wires and walls or through security forces that displace informal occupiers, remove or demolish their goods in many cases. Nevertheless, these oppositions never got rid of these

informal actors completely as they always return to the streets or their former locations. This is why Bayat calls the informal actors ‘quiet rebels’ and ‘passive networks’ to describe their ‘non-movement approach’ of survival (Bayat, 2000).

The heavy presence of the working classes in the outdoor spaces, left-over plots of lands and back alleys has contributed to the escape of elites under the threat of real and imagined crime restricting the movement of the rich (Adham, 2005; Bayat, 2012). Wealthy elites would feel like outsiders or strangers so that these occupied spaces turn out to be neither strictly public nor private navigating ‘between a legally inclusive status and an exclusive appropriation of their use’ (Bayat, 2012, p. 116).

3.4 Cairo’s Post-Revolutionary Master Plan for Urban Development

In order to situate an alternative paradigm in urban practice, it is important to understand the conventional development approach adopted in Cairo. As formerly explained, Cairo’s formal urban development has always been based on grand master planned projects detached from the critical problems evident on the ground. Despite the repeated failures of the conventional top-down planning and urban development paradigm, it is still dominant on the scene shaping the government’s vision for the future (Ibrahim, 2014). This section focuses on the current urban development plan represented mainly in the futuristic vision of Greater Cairo 2050 promoted by the Egyptian government and is currently under implementation. Subsequently, the relationship between the formal and informal is addressed in the current urban development strategies.

3.4.1 Cairo 2050, the New Capital and the Restructuring of Cairo

Cairo 2050 is a state-led grandiose urban development scheme, planned by the government’s planners and their consultants, that aims to transform Cairo into a super-modern, high-tech, green, and connected city that is globally competent and can stand shoulder to shoulder with the metropolises in the world’s most advanced countries (Sims, 2010). It is inspired by global city masterplans such as Abu Dhabi 2030, Singapore 2050 and Tokyo 2050 with their iconic glass skyscrapers and landscaped freeways and promoted within the broader discourse of eco-cities and smart cities (see Watson, 2014b).

The Cairo 2050 plan emerged around 2007 in the time of President Mubarak and is still adopted and further developed after the Egyptian revolution in 2011. It was formally presented by the General Organisation of Physical Planning (GOPP) under the aegis of the Ministry of Housing, Infrastructure and Urban development with an extremely optimistic proposal for what Cairo would look like in the year 2050 (Shawkat, 2016). The government planners presented what Sims (2010) describes as ‘rosy design’ restructuring Cairo’s cityscape involving significant reforms that can hardly materialise without fierce social resistance (Elgendy, 2013; Shawkat, 2016) (see Figure 3.13). For example, the main features of Cairo’s 2050 are huge green parks both in the deserts as well as in historic cemetery zones and the Nile islands (Elgendy, 2013). Downtown will be completely gentrified and historic areas will be transformed into open air museums (Elgendy, 2013). New business parks are to be created on the sites of poor neighbourhoods and huge office towers and hotels will be erected along the Nile (Elgendy, 2013). Informal parts of Cairo will be removed or decongested by creating green corridors passing through the main informal settlements (Tarbush, 2012). The Cairo 2050 plan proposed demolishing large segments of the existing urban fabric, displacing thousands of families to the deserts and selling the lands to investors (Ibrahim, 2014).



Figure 3.13 Cairo 2050 futuristic vision (source: GOPP)

The new administrative capital megaproject, approximately 45km to the east of Cairo, was announced in line with the Cairo 2050 plan. The model of the planned new capital first appeared at the Egypt Economic Development conference in 2015 as a panacea for the urban ills of Cairo and a gateway of its bright future. It represents the government's driving force to reboot the struggling economy and bolster the image of the city (see Figure 3.14).



Figure 3.14 The model of New Capital at the Egypt Economic Development conference in 2015
(source: www.independent.co.uk)

The new capital is supposed to span 700 sq. km, which makes it seven times larger than Paris, and is intended to house a total of seven million people. The plan shows a region of high-rises and residential buildings as well as a 'government district', all designed around a central 'green river' which is a combination of open water and vast greenery, described to be twice the size of New York's Central Park. Foreign embassies are also encouraged to relocate, and businesses are expected to move to a prestigious central business district of 20 skyscrapers (Michaelson, 2018). Moreover, the plan includes a parliament, a supreme court, a presidential palace, an airport and an opera house (see Figure 3.15).



Figure 3.15 The Plan of the New Capital (source: www.theguardian.com)

Khaled El Hussein, the spokesman for the Administrative Capital for Urban Development (ADCD), the company overseeing the project, believes that ‘Cairo isn’t suitable for the Egyptian people. Without any specific masterplan, it has started to become ugly. There’s no humanity’ (El Hussein quoted in Michaelson, 2018). He points out that one of the main objectives of the project is to control the network of empty buildings in prime locations in the centre of the city when relocations to the new capital take place. These vacant buildings will then be under the operation of the same company responsible for constructing the new capital. When relocation happens, the future of the former premises of ministries and embassies mostly situated on prime locations central Cairo remains uncertain. EL Hussein points out ‘We have no plan as to how to invest in these buildings, but we will fix it and figure it out...maybe we can make them into hotels.’ (ElHussein quoted in Michaelson, 2018).

As formerly mentioned, designing and implementing a new capital for Cairo has happened several times in the history of Cairo as the medium to establish the success of the new regime. It has always led to further deterioration of the existing city receiving less attention and maintenance. Since the 1970s, Dorman (2013) argues that successive governments failed to engage with the actual existing city and instead of providing sufficient shelters and services for ordinary people, they supported urban development approaches that mostly benefit the elites and upper income groups. Moreover, adopting aesthetically appealing masterplans inspired by western ideals and the lack of public participation has never led to a clearly visible urban development. This is evident in the long history of the failing satellite cities in the desert attracting only a few residents (Denis, 2008). Currently, desert cities mostly

cater for the high-end segments of the Cairenes. Glass towers, vast lawns, water features and trimmed topiary are luxurious features that stand in severe contrast with the deteriorated urban quality of life experienced by many of the Cairenes (see Watson, 2014b). Furthermore, the design is not even well adapted to the desert. The new capital will drain Cairo's much needed resources of water and energy to make it function (Sims, 2010).

3.4.2 Situating the Formal/Informal Relationship in Cairo's urban Development Master Plan

The discourse of wiping urban informalities remains the basis of current urban development programmes. Informal areas and activities are still presented by policy makers as dirty and unsafe, which is the same stigmatizing narrative inherited from the previous governments. Informal settlements in different parts of the city are described as wasting high value lands that can bring huge economic returns (Ibrahim, 2014). Elgendy (2013) argues that the strategies of urban development clearly lack a deep understanding of the social structure and the needs of Cairo's inhabitants, which was one of the reasons that led to the explosive growth of the informal city in the first place. Elgendy (2013) argues that Cairo 2050 is one of the severe examples emphasizing that policy makers are still unable to understand the logic behind the urban informality phenomenon, thus, unable to provide possible solutions to deal with informality in its different forms.

Even the informal everyday activities prevailing in the outdoor public spaces of Cairo are significantly vulnerable as they are under the mercy of the municipal and neighbourhood head's campaigns of removal and displacement (see Nagati and Stryker, 2013). Informal actors constantly struggle over the control of public space, nevertheless, they establish strong social networks in the streets not only because of their powerful resistance but also due to what Dorman (2013) describes as the state's neglectful rule especially in the times of severe economic downturns. Moreover, according to Khaled Abdelhalim, the cofounder of Takamol, a foundation for integrated urban development and the professor of public policy in the AUC

'By leaving the people to build or organize their markets informally, the government is able to accuse them of violating laws at any time. It is an indirect way to control as well as a way to reduce people's demands and

expectations of quality services, since they are informals.’ (Abdelhalim quoted in Hamilton, Kardoush, Ansari et al., 2012, p.36).

The Egyptian uprising in 2011 contributed to an extensive growth of urban informalities. Although the phenomenon of urban informality has existed before the revolution, new modes of informality emerged taking advantage of the vulnerability of the state and the political vacuum during and directly after the revolution (Nagati and Stryker, 2013). The absence of law enforcement especially in the few months after the revolution resulted in an explosive growth of different informal urban interventions. These could be small or temporary, such as street vending, graffiti or sidewalks encroachments, or big and longer term such as illegal structures or expansions that could not be easily removed by the return of law enforcement (Nagai and Stryker, 2013). Although, in general, the authorities might turn a blind eye to such practices, to impose order some of these interventions were actually demolished when the state regained its strength, alongside white washing graffiti, tighter security and forced removal of street vendors (Rabie, 2016). Nevertheless, demolishing the overwhelming numbers of informal interventions that happened around the time of the uprising was impossible, therefore some informal structures were formalised a few years later on the condition of paying a penalty for violation.

Although being aware of the significant scholarship that presents informal areas of the Global South as populated by heroic entrepreneurs glamorizing the urbanism of the subaltern, this research does not intend to celebrate or romanticize informal practices (see Duneier, 1999; De Soto, 2000). Rem Koolhaas’ study is another example of celebrating urban informality in the city of Lagos and appreciating the self-organised emancipatory zones of the subaltern (Godlewsiki, 2010; Koster and Nuijten, 2016). Nevertheless, not all informal activities are safe, innovative or empowering; some could be hazardous, unsafe or even unfair, when the powerful actors of the community mute the voices of the most vulnerable (see Holston, 1998; Loukaitou-sideris and Mukhija, 2016).

As explained earlier, this discussion aims to explore the potential of the interplay between the formal and the informal as they can co-exist in the same urban territory where the ordinary spaces of everyday life become the places where they may intersect (see Mehrotra, 2003; 2008; Loukaitou-Sideris, and Mukhija, 2016). This understanding represents a renewed approach to spatial design where the desired

urban interventions engender new socio-spatial configurations; involving entanglements of the formal and informal (see Koster and Nuijten, 2016). Moreover, instead of bulldozing informal settlements and displacing inhabitants, small-scale and incremental improvements at the neighbourhood level capitalising on local assets and opportunities might have a far reaching transformative effect contributing to the urban development of the city at large (Al khani, 2012).

The relationship between the formal and the informal in Cairo remains oppositional, where the planning authorities in Cairo continue to deal with spaces and activities as either formal, legal and organised, or informal, illegal and disorganised. An alternative vision is to explore how urbanism can be restructured to provide solutions for uncertain social and economic conditions along the continuum between the formal and the informal (Lutzoni, 2016).

3.5 The Rise of an Alternative Mode of Practice

The years following the Egyptian uprising in 2011 have been characterised by rapid political changes accompanied by grassroots and different public spheres activism. The revolution has empowered the Egyptians who felt ownership to public spaces and streets ‘increasing the number of voices calling for the “Right to the City” and demanding more social justice in our urban development policies and practices’ (Ibrahim, 2014, p. 239). The Egyptian society as a whole has been witnessing massive mobilizations triggering public debates on our urban problems and the future of our cities proposing renewed, creative and constructive approaches to urban development. It is worth noting that some of these mobilizations started in the years preceding the uprising indicating heated urban activism that could have contributed to the revolution in the first place (Ibrahim, 2014).

These mobilisations have formed networks of researchers, architects, designers, community activists, NGOs, artists, students and local residents in different neighbourhoods that engaged in collaborative, tactical and situational urban interventions (Nagati and Elgendy, 2012). These projects could be seen as urban innovations that were able to dissolve boundaries and overcome barriers between public authorities, local communities, professionals and other interested stakeholders to execute novel ideas in urban practice and development (see Elazaazy and Zaaza, 2017).

It is necessary to note that this brand of urban interventions, although surged after the Egyptian uprising indicating a new mode of practice, is seen by different scholars as a continuity to earlier counterhegemonic waves of urban actions in Cairo (Nagati and Elgendy, 2012; Ibrahim, 2014). These precedent actions were initiated either by ordinary citizens or professionals that have been striving for an alternative paradigm of urban development rather than the conventional top-down urban master planning. Alternative urbanism, manifested in these emerging urban interventions, has been preceded by people-centred urban initiatives advocating for incremental locally tailored urbanism that inspired the Cairene public debate on urban practice and development over the years (Ibrahim, 2014).

The following section discusses how the idea of alternative urbanism has evolved in the Cairene context specifying several initiatives and pioneers supporting the idea in essence over the years. This is discussed along with explaining current mobilizations rebranding this legacy representing a renewed mode of urban practice that is based on coproduction softening the binaries of formal-informal, planned-unplanned, and temporary-permanent.

3.5.1 The Legacy of an Alternative Practice

This section discusses the legacy of the alternative practice in Cairo with relevance to the involved actors. First, it discusses the work of the professional Egyptian architects and urban designers who are described by Ibrahim (2014) as ‘swimming against the tide trying to establish a new alternative practice that is more socially engaged, environmentally sensitive, and deeply rooted in Egyptian culture’ (p.242). Secondly, several urban interventions initiated by international organisations are discussed explaining how they attempted to improve the quality of life of the less fortunate people with participatory locally tailored projects. Subsequently, some citizen-led urban interventions that involved repurposing left over or derelict spaces are discussed clarifying how the initiators were able to find different funding opportunities and obtain the required approvals from local authorities. The urban attempts that are discussed in this section do not fit precisely the concept of alternative urbanism as established in this study, nevertheless, these urban practices represent the earlier strains of this movement in Cairo.

The work of the Egyptian pioneers of architecture in the mid twentieth century; Hassan Fathy (1900-1989) and Ramses Wissa Wassef (1911-1974) are seen by

different observers as marking an important transition towards alternative urbanism (see Ibrahim, 2014). Hassan Fathy, in his book *Architecture for the Poor* (1973), explains his revolutionary ideas in the context of his most well-known project, New Gurna, the town he designed to accommodate poor villagers. Although formally assigned by the Egyptian Department of Antiquities at the time, he used this opportunity to endorse ideas of providing socially and economically sustainable public housing that was built in cooperation with dwellers, receiving advice and help from professional architects and craftspeople (Awan, Shneider and Till, 2011). The villagers were trained to build their houses by their own hands with mudbricks where each house was unique to its family. Awan, Scheinder and Till (2011) argue that the New Gurna project illustrates what is possible without involving real estate developers, banking and construction industries. Fathy's career was regarded as a threat to commercial building interests and since the New Gurna project, he faced difficulties in gaining commissions affecting massively his career (Awan, Shneider and Till, 2011).

Similarly, Ramses Wissa Wassef, an architect and professor of art and architecture, conceptualized and designed modern dwellings adapted from rural vernacular architecture and 'worked with people as his partners not as recipients of his wisdom' (Cairobserver, 2012). He built an art centre in 1951 to teach young villagers how to create their own art and tapestries and teach local people the traditional art of building domes and vaults using local materials to establish a new Egyptian vernacular style. The centre is still active today consisting of workshops, exhibition spaces, and mud brick residential buildings (Ibrahim, 2014). The work of both Fathy and Wassef has been inspiring architects, designers, community practitioners, researchers and urban activists reconnecting human and social meanings with urban design and planning (Ibrahim, 2014).

Other important urban interventions are the projects initiated by international development agencies such as the 'Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit – the German Development Cooperation' (GIZ) and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC). The GIZ launched a programme in 1998 for participatory urban development in Manshiet Nasser, one of the informal settlements in Cairo, which subsequently expanded and evolved into the 'Participatory Development Programme in Urban Areas' (PDP) (Ibrahim, 2014). The PDP is the result of cooperation between the GIZ, the German Financial Cooperation Developing Bank

(KFW), as well as the Egyptian Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities, local NGOs, and the Governorates of Cairo, Giza, and Alexandria (Ibrahim, 2014). The PDP is one of the successful synergies between informal actors, governmental bodies and NGOs both on the local and the international level. The PDP concept as stated on its official website is to ‘come up with a holistic methodology that promotes the implementation of participatory methods during the upgrading of informal areas’ (PDP, 2018). These kinds of urban interventions contribute to providing public services and basic infrastructure as well as help alleviate poverty, however, they require massive budgets, funding resources, staffing and administrative capacities for this to happen. While these interventions rework the boundaries between the formal and informal practices within a participative inclusive framework, they do not match exactly the idea of alternative urbanism of being small scale, cost effective and quickly implemented. However, they are regarded as significant steps towards establishing an alternative practice and urban development approach.

A similar project was launched by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) in late 1997 to revitalise al-Darb al-Ahmar district of old Cairo which had been deteriorating significantly despite its central location, strong socio-economic networks, and considerable number of historic buildings (Ibrahim, 2014). The project turned a rubble dump into a park that worked as a catalyst for urban development, rehabilitated more than hundred houses in the surrounding area, restored and reused many public and historical buildings, established health and education programmes and created over 700 job opportunities (Rashti and Stino, 2001; The Aga Khan Trust for Culture, 2004; Ibrahim, 2014) (see Figure 3.16) The Trust was able to find other donors, such as the Egyptian-Swiss Development Fund and the Ford Foundation, who generously supported the physical and socio-economic rehabilitation activities (Bianca and Siravo, 2005).



Figure 3.16 Al-Azhar park area before and after implementation (source: AKTC)

The work done by GIZ and AKTC were large-scale comprehensive upgrading projects with generous funding resources. While the long-term changes these projects were able to effectuate still need to be examined over time, they do not indicate typically the transformative potential of alternative urbanism being small-scale, short termed and usually restricted with tight budgets. Nevertheless, they represent a milestone towards an alternative practice empowering people in need who although did not initiate any of these projects, they identified their problems and decided on what needed to be done (Ibrahim, 2014).

Besides the international agencies' initiatives, the 1990s and 2000s witnessed other initiatives led by architects, artists and cultural activists. The architect Salah Zaki launched the Cairene Houses Rehabilitation Project in al-Darb al-Ahmar which started as a personal initiative that then evolved to rehabilitate a group of late 19th and 20th century architecturally significant houses funded by AKTC (Ibrahim, 2014). Zaki's approach was different than the mainstream conservation of old buildings, as it depended mainly on the inhabitants' social patterns or what he called 'lived spaces' so that the residents were fully engaged in the process. (Abdelmonem, 2012). Another significant initiative was by the architect Mohamed El Sawy in 2003 who transformed a garbage dump space under the Fifteenth of May bridge on Zamalek Island into an arts and cultural centre 'El Sawy Cultural Wheel'. The project was initially intended to work as a temporary insertion under the overpass on the Nile riverbank, and shortly after the implementation, it was successfully and permanently established as it became a bustling hub and hangout venue for Egyptians, foreign residents, and visitors, as well as regarded as an important tourist destination in the heart of the capital (see Figure 3.17) (Ahmed and Kamel, 2013). The centre works as an

alternative art space independent from formal art institutions providing wider community access to arts and cultural activities. Its mission as stated on the official website is that ‘ElSawy Culture Wheel values human beings without any kind of classification. All visitors are treated equally regardless of their social, official, and economic status.’ The left over space under the bridge has been transformed into a public space and a cultural node for the diverse classes of the society catalysing the development of the whole area.



Figure 3.17 The transformation of the derelict space under the bridge into a public space and a cultural node providing wider community access to arts (source: www.culturalwheel.com)

Similarly, two independent art spaces are produced by individual initiatives of passionate artists, the Town House Gallery, which was an abandoned old factory that was transformed into one of the most significant art spaces in downtown Cairo; and Artellewa which is a number of art spaces and workshops located in Ard El Lewa, a densely populated informal area located between two of Cairo’s largest informal areas, Imbaba and Boulak El Dakroul. Due to scarce public spaces in Ard El Lewa, vacant ground floors and rooftops were transformed into community art workshops blurring the boundaries between the public and the private.

All of the mentioned projects whether based on individual or collective efforts overlap with the idea of alternative urbanism. Although the projects vary in scale, amounts of funding and technical support, they all remained exceptions to the mainstream advocating for community-oriented locally tailored interventions. These urban interventions followed a more realistic, incremental and inclusive approach towards urban development building on existing opportunities and assets (see

Ibrahim, 2014). Finally, these projects were able to dissolve the boundaries between local authorities, communities NGOs or other interested stakeholders (see Figure 3.18).

3.5.2 Establishing an Alternative Practice

Several factors contributed to mobilising and establishing an alternative urban practice in Cairo. As previously mentioned, the Egyptian uprising was a major catalyst opening a window for change to be implemented on the ground. The revolution induced civic activism where people started to explore the boundaries of collective action (Ibrahim and Singerman, 2014). During the absence of law enforcement in the early days of the uprising, not just every neighbourhood in formal and informal areas but nearly every street or even block created ‘popular committees’ or community groups that dedicated themselves to protecting the lives, property, and safety of the residents (Bremer, 2011). Bremer (2011) argues that the formation of thousands of block-level groups empowered citizens and had a lasting impact on civic engagement and collective action. As a result, thousands of various citizen-led practices took place that ranged from the temporary repurposing of streets and open spaces to the provision of public services (see Bremer, 2011; Nagati and Elgendi, 2012; Nagati and Stryker, 2013; Ibrahim and Singerman, 2014).

Many streets and public squares turned into venues for arts-based activism where self-organised pop-up art exhibits, performances and movie screenings took place attracting a wider public audience. Moreover, local communities carried out physical improvements in the built environment at the neighbourhood-level such as cleaning, street paving and positioning of street trees. Not only this, but also there were cases when popular committees successfully negotiated with the local district authorities to provide services. One of the prominent examples was in the densely populated area of Muhandasin, namely Mit Uqba, where the popular committee collaborated with the local authorities and the community realizing a long-stalled expansion of natural gas lines in addition to the repaving of nine alleyways in a cost effective manner (Ibrahim and Singerman, 2014). Similarly, another striking example was the construction of a highway exit where informal on and off ramps were built to give access to one of the informal areas, al-Mi‘timidiya, that had no linkages to the Ring Road (Elgendi, 2013).

It is necessary to note, as explained earlier, that informal urban practices took place in different parts of the city at an unprecedented pace during that time. The absence of law enforcement admitted a wide range of different informal urban practices, from street vendors occupying public spaces to physical interventions on highways and illegal construction on state-owned land (Elgendy, 2013). As the informal urban practices started to dominate the formal city, Nagati (2018) highlights the importance of negotiating a middle ground through design interventions. He adds that adopting a progressive urban practice and a democratic approach to urban intervention is necessary to uphold the public good (Nagati, 2018).

Besides grassroots activism, the interaction between urban planners, activists, rights groups, researchers, and local communities around that time prepared the scene for alternative urban actions shifting away from the conformities of conventional urban planning and development models (Ibrahim, 2014). As a result, several protagonists of alternative urbanism started to establish and transform the idea into tangible professional entities, research platforms and online blogs (see Ibrahim, 2014; El Azzazy and Zaaza, 2017) (see Table 1) (see the timeline of the alternative practice in Figure 3.18).

Table 1 Alternative urban practices and online platforms (source: author based on Ibrahim, 2014; El Azzazy and Zaaza, 2017).

Professional Private Enterprises	Research Platforms and Online Urban Blogs
◦ Takween Integrated Community Development (2009) ◦ DK Shehayeb Consult ◦ Cairo Lab for Urban Studies , Training and Environmental Research, CLUSTER (2011) ◦ Megawra – the Built Environment Collective (2011) ◦ Takamol Foundation for Sustainable Development (2012)	◦ Shadow Ministry of Housing (2008) ◦ Madd Platform (2011) ◦ Cairo from Below (2011) ◦ Cairo Observer (2011) ◦ The Egyptian Urban Action Initiative (2012) ◦ 10 Tooba (2014)

Another factor that contributed immensely to the proliferation of alternative urbanism was the global financial crisis in 2008. As much as it upsurged the idea of alternative urbanism in Europe and North America, it similarly led to many professional architects, urban designers and artists putting the paradigm of alternative urbanism into practice. This was not only because of austerity policies, insufficient resources or limited budgets, but also due to the fact that many professionals lost their jobs as a

result of the shutdown of major real estate operations in the Gulf and Egyptian markets (Ibrahim, 2014). Alternatively, many young professionals looked for job opportunities in community-related urban development projects. Moreover, the phenomenon intensified after the uprising in 2011 for ethical considerations where Ibrahim (2014) argues that

‘the real estate market in Egypt slowed down even further following the eruption of various corruption scandals related to real estate transactions supported by the Mubarak regime. From an ethical point of view, this crisis forced a lot of practitioners to rethink the role of real estate business in Egypt, the need to reform this practice, and their professional role to support the neediest sectors of the society who have long been neglected’(p.252).

This multifaceted situation directed an increasing number of professionals, especially young graduates and artists, towards alternative urban development projects or shifting the career to community related practices (Nagati and Elgendy, 2012; Ibrahim, 2014). Accordingly, several parallel practices incorporating networks of professionals having multidisciplinary backgrounds intended to make up for the deficiencies of the existing institutions by providing an alternative innovative vision for urban development. The post-revolutionary mobilizations also triggered initiatives by international organizations such as the UN-Habitat or GIZ to organise events bringing together several Egyptian institutions, decision makers, civil society representatives, scholars and experts, and private sector companies ‘to build a policy dialogue platform to shape Egypt’s future urban agenda’ (El Azzazy and Zaaza, 2017, p. 63). Although, these events are criticized for being ceremonial more than effective, they offer a platform for networking and building connections opening collaboration possibilities (El Azzazy and Zaaza, 2017).

Although, as discussed earlier, urban development in Cairo remains largely dependent on large scale top-down planning, the alternative practice in Cairo took place through different arrangements with local authorities. In some cases, they partnered with the local government using a win-win approach, or depended on certain government officials that were more open to urban social innovations and could back up the process (El Azzazy and Zaaza, 2017). In other cases, the initiators of these interventions had to ‘infiltrate through cracks’ in the formal system (El Azzazy and Zaaza, 2017, p.61). El Azzazy and Zaaza (2017) call this process ‘Urban Trojan’ which works like a Trojan horse or a computer Trojan. They explain that ‘Trojans

deceive the system to allow them infiltrate without being detected. Then, they start to spread while opening back doors for others to enter the system' (El Azzazy and Zaaza, 2017, p.75). Other initiators of these initiatives believe that compromises must happen and that these interventions take place when communities' aspirations and development needs coexist, rethinking the apparent opposition between top-down action and alternative urbanism (see Nagati, Stryker and Mustafa, 2013; Kamvasinou, 2015).

These mobilizations were the impetus of collaborative micro-projects sweeping through Cairo led by professionals in the fields of architecture, design, planning, and arts, either acting on their own initiatives, not necessarily conforming to professional norms, or assigned by communities, NGOs and in fewer cases local governments and corporations. Within these spatial interventions, innovative design tactics are employed where the projects blur the lines between public art, architecture, design charrettes, and public participation and often act as laboratory for research and experimentation (Walter, 2013). Most of these projects are financially supported by crowdfunding, donations or foreign development agencies. In many projects, the involved professionals work voluntarily or not for profit to support local communities. The aim is not only to create improvements in deteriorated built environments but to empower local communities and build the capacity of inhabitants socially and economically to develop and sustain their own solutions to urban problems (Ibrahim, 2014).

Although many of the alternative practice entities are private sector enterprises, they are not founded primarily for profit. Karim Ibrahim, the cofounder of Takween, one of the aforementioned professional entities, is uncertain about the future of these initiatives in Cairo. He argues

‘For how long can these entities and professionals continue this practice before they are financially exhausted and psychologically burnt out? And finally, how can these entities and professionals get their efforts recognized beyond the closed professional circles, conferences, events and academic publications?’(Ibrahim, 2014, p.263)

The alternative practice in Cairo advocating for small, locally tailored, and collaborative modes of intervention is still striving thanks to the urban activists involved in such processes whether they are professionals or local residents. Although most of these projects were officially sanctioned, they required lengthy negotiations

with local government officials. In many cases, activists struggle to obtain official approvals which usually cause significant delays and their projects remain under the threat of cessation at any time.

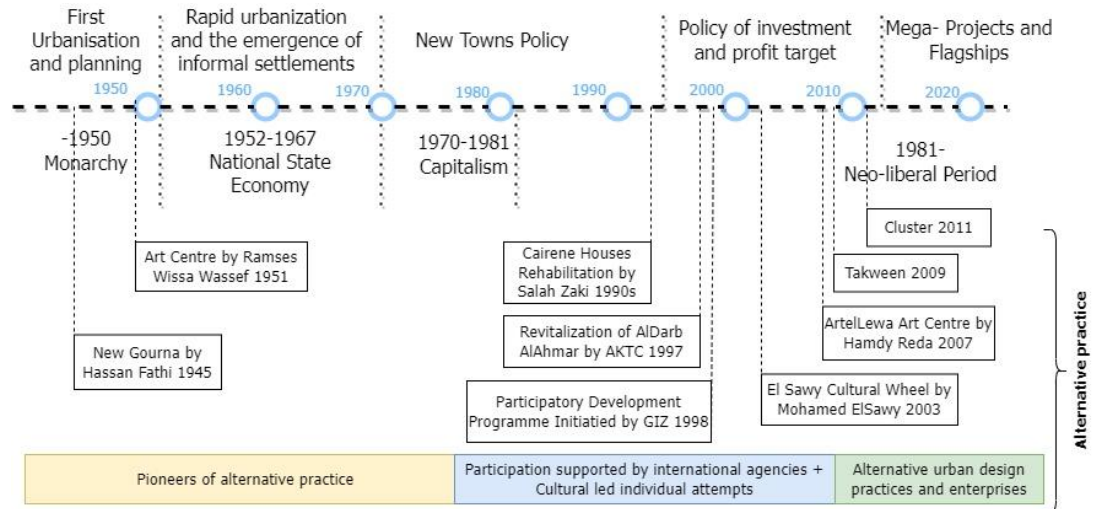


Figure 3.18 Timeline of the Alternative Practice in Egypt (source: author)

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter situates the concept of alternative urbanism in Cairo. As explained earlier in the study the concept of alternative urbanism is reframed delineating a new mode of urban intervention that is based on coproduction between professionals and local communities. To understand how this alternative mode of practice can offer transformative possibilities in an expanding city like Cairo, it was essential to comprehend how Cairo got to where it is now with its formal and informal development and segregated urban enclaves. Understanding the growth of Cairo in the past half century is important to set the context of the study, identify the specificities of Cairo as a neoliberal city, and trace the effects of top-down planning on the Cairene cityscape. Implementing neoliberal megaprojects has created urban disparity and socio-spatial polarization (Adham, 2005).

The neoliberal paradigm in Cairo is not only manifested in gentrifying prime areas in the centre of the city, or the emergence of exclusive capital spaces catering for the elites accompanied with forms of surveillance and physical fortressing, but also in the proliferation of different forms of urban informality. Urban informality in Cairo has

become a way of life and resistance to the hegemonic neoliberal order manifested in more than a hundred informal settlements, informal economy and the encroachment of people into the streets and public spaces as alternative venues for survival (Al-Sayyad, 2004; Adham, 2005).

The metanarrative of Cairo's 'three cities in one' provided a lens to diagnose Cairo's problematic localities with different challenges and possibilities. Within the multi layered urban core of the city there are different contrasting socioeconomic and morphological patterns existing in close proximity. Decaying or deteriorating inner city spaces on high value lands are contested due to the competing interests between the rich and the poor; and between private interests and local people. Dense informal settlements at the periphery are functioning despite the serious environmental problems and the lack of infrastructure and public services. Although informal settlements require costly and time consuming comprehensive urban upgrading programs, small interventions repurposing spaces for community use in such compact informal areas lacking the tiniest open space might enhance life-work patterns and have a large effect with little means. The extent to which such 'alternative spaces' can effectuate real or significant change still demands further empirical investigation on the long term. The official policy towards informal areas remains largely dependent on bulldozing and relocating inhabitants to remote public housing in the new desert towns. Currently, desert towns have mostly turned into a significant number of gated compounds, megamalls and theme parks (Adham, 2005). Nevertheless, the neighbouring low income state built neighbourhoods still suffer from negligence and insufficient public services. The modernist design of these neighbourhoods, separation of land uses as well as the poor transport and other public services made working classes prefer living in informal settlements (Sims, 2010). Many neighbourhoods in the desert towns that accommodated evicted and relocated families from different informal settlements are continuously deteriorating, differing a little from informal neighbourhoods only having more fragmented communities and less flexible dwellings (see Bayat, 2012).

The three cities of Greater Cairo suggest different case studies for the study. This is not to argue that solutions could be generalised or replicated, but varying case studies help investigate the potential of the alternative modes of intervention in several contexts having different morphological, socioeconomic, and geographic characteristics. The potential of the alternative paradigm in urban development is

emphasized by understanding the shortcomings of the mainstream urban development in post-revolutionary Cairo. The urban development in Cairo is based on wiping informality in its different forms, while continuing to support grandiose projects mostly benefiting the elites and foreign investors (Dorman, 2013). Clearances of informal settlements and relocations of inhabitants take place without offering adequate alternatives. On the other hand, the state is directing the majority of its resources to a 'new capital' in the desert where the Cairo 2050 plan and the new administrative capital are typical materialisations of top-down master planning that mostly benefit international investors (Sims, 2010; Ibrahim, 2014; Watson, 2014b).

The Egyptian uprising has been a catalyst that triggered collective urban interventions reclaiming and revitalising local urban spaces for the communities. Not only this, but the alternative practice has been established in Cairo through small professional enterprises such as Takween, Megawra and CLUSTER incorporating networks of professionals having multidisciplinary backgrounds adopting this new collaborative approach of intervention. These activists/professionals usually do not wait for clients but in many cases act on their own initiatives, find funding opportunities and collaborate with communities in small upgrading projects. Following the work of these entities, that have been mostly recognized in academic and urbanists' networks, suggested several case studies of coproduced spaces in the past few years. The next chapter sets criteria for selecting the case studies and a methodology for investigation.

Chapter 4:
Research Design and Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design and explains the methodology developed to investigate how alternative urbanism contributes towards transforming and reshaping local spaces in the Cairene context. The chapter starts with discussing the philosophical underpinning of the research, my positionality as a researcher and its influence on the research process. The following section explains the adopted methodological approach as a qualitative research based on multiple case studies coupled with quasi-ethnographic techniques and mapping spatial practices. Following that, the rationale of selecting three case studies to address the research questions is explained revealing the process of selection and introducing each case study.

The above is followed by discussing the analytical frames that guided the empirical study informed by both the theoretical foundations and the contextual dimensions discussed in the previous chapters. Moving on to the sources of data available within the case studies, the chapter discusses the employed methods, mainly direct observations, semi structured interviews and reviewing documentary data, used to carry out the investigation and the data gathering process. Mapping spatial practices is also explained as a visual method employed to demonstrate the dynamics of use of the ‘alternative spaces’ generated over time as a result of the interventions. The chapter ends with how the data was analysed and finally the conclusion wraps up how each research question affected the research design.

4.2 Philosophical Stance and Researcher Positionality

As discussed in previous chapters, the rubric of alternative urbanism is articulated in the literature associated with a strong set of claims regarding its transformative potential (Brenner, 2015). There are two broad interconnected arguments underlie the existing conceptualisations of alternative urbanism. The alternative practices are regarded as processes empowering local communities with subversive qualities against hegemonic neoliberal-led urbanism, besides being a regeneration tool with a catalytic effect. These arguments integrate different aspects ranging from socially progressive views, emphasizing social processes imbedded in everyday life, to being more pragmatic focusing more on alternative solutions for positive change under the conditions of austerity (see Madanipour, 2017). Taking these two aspects as a point of departure for investigation, the research opened a dynamic inquiry to elucidate both

the social aspects and the material aspects as well as the interaction between both, the study adopts an intersubjective stance or what Groat and Wang (2013) describes as the middle ground of the continuum between constructivism at one end and positivism/post positivism at the other end. The intersubjective perspective assumes that knowledge is framed by understanding the sociocultural setting, where people's actions and interpretations of meaning are situated in the wider social or historical context (Groat and Wang, 2013). De Balbian (2017) argues that intersubjectivity lies beyond both subjectivity and objectivity highlighting the intersubjective relations between individuals as well as between individuals and objects situated in a certain culture or subculture. He adds that intersubjectivity has become important in qualitative research and studies of lived experiences pointing to ways in which members of the same community can share, or partially share, understandings and experiential meanings, transcending individual subjectivities (De Balbian, 2017). Groat and Wang (2013) point out that

‘In contrast to the objective segment of the continuum, the intersubjective perspective assumes that it is neither possible nor necessarily desirable for research to establish objectivity within a value-free stance. Rather, researchers recognize the significance of values and meaning in framing the goals of the research and/or interpreting the results. And in contrast to the positivist paradigm, causality is assumed to be just one of many possible relations or interactions within the phenomena under study’ (p.78)

Similarly, as discussed in Chapter Two, the theoretical orientation of the study relates the alternative mode of practice to the theory of coproduction and the concept of differential space, where Lefebvre's concept brings together both the subjective and objective understandings of space. As explained earlier, Lefebvre introduces the ‘lived space’ as a bridging concept between the pure idealism of the conceived space and the pure materialism of the perceived space. Adopting an exploratory approach, the theoretical foundations of the study, drawing on the work of Lefebvre, particularly the concept of differential space and the theory of coproduction, helped create analytical directions to ground the empirical study. The investigation process remained inductive and flexible which also helps clarify the difference between what could be initially intended and what actually happened (the analytical aspects are explained later in this chapter).

My role as a researcher and how it affected the investigation process was examined. During the fieldwork, my Cairene identity helped create a familiar persona within the

research setting. Sharing identity, language and experiences with the study participants has the potential to offer original interpretations of situated alternative modes of production of space (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). My insider position enabled me to observe nuances in the use of spaces which might not be perceivable for a complete outsider. I easily interacted and engaged with local communities with no language barrier which privileged me with better approachability and a deeper understanding. By engaging in deep conversations with the informants, reflecting on their desires, perceptions and frustrations regarding the intervention and the space produced, thematic correlations were made in relevance to the research questions. My interpretations of verbal and non-verbal cues grounded in a quasi- ethnographic approach facilitated a comprehension that can be a source of knowledge in itself (see Ratner, 2002) (The rationale of undertaking a quasi-ethnographic approach is explained in the following section).

Despite the above, engaging with different neighbourhoods implied relating as a partial outsider to different communities with varying socioeconomic backgrounds. Thus, my reflections on the different physical contexts of the case studies, in terms of prior assumptions, familiarity with the urban area and its people, were considered and articulated within the investigation process. Cuff (1992) argues that the outsider position and observations have the potential to balance insiders' perspectives. My insider/outsider position was investigated reflectively while employing the different methods to understand how this position allowed me to blend into the context without upsetting the social setting, engage in meaningful conversations, participate in activities or even observe passively. Penetrating the social life of a community and conducting interviews can be intimidating. To overcome this challenge, I contacted the professionals that were part of the projects to introduce me to the local community. Some of them offered to accompany me during the interviews to help encourage more people to participate in my research and answer my questions. Nonetheless, I tried to reconnect with the interviewees away from the watchful eyes of the professionals to make sure they were not avoiding criticism or negative experiences in the presence of the professionals involved in the projects. Spending extended time in the spaces under investigation also helped to build trust between us which encouraged them to speak their minds freely.

4.3 Methodological Approach

4.3.1 Qualitative Research, Case Study Rationale and Quasi-Ethnographic Approach

The study adopts primarily a qualitative research methodology. The qualitative approach was adopted in order to grasp meanings, perceptions and motives regarding the intervention process, roles of actors and involved power relationships as well as the lived experiences and perceived benefits produced as a result of these interventions (see Yin, 2009). This is because qualitative research is most appropriate to investigate a situation in its particular context or to understand a phenomenon when the boundaries between this phenomenon and its context is blurred (Baxter and Jack, 2008). According to Merriam (2002) the qualitative research is suitable when the researcher's inquiry is concerned with the experiential dimension within a specific context. The qualitative inquiry is suitable for this research in order to understand the circumstances of the intervention and answer questions like 'how' and 'why' about the design process, roles of involved actors, power relationships and the nature of the emerging benefits (see Yin, 2009). Moreover, as explained earlier, exploring the transformation process of the produced space as a result of the intervention requires investigating people's social construction of space through their social interactions, memories and generated patterns of everyday use. The desires, perceptions, challenges, conflicts and frustrations of the involved actors throughout the process uncover the entanglements of power relationships and its effect on the actual change happening in comparison to the initial intentions of the different stakeholders. Programmed activities and spontaneous improvisations were observed and examined to determine the actors controlling the emerging spatial patterns and the beneficiaries of the produced spaces. Patton (1985) describes qualitative research as

‘an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting- what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives like, what is going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting...the analysis strives for depth of understanding’ (p.1).

The qualitative inquiry is suitable to deal with investigating the produced space regarded as a 'lived space', drawing on Lefebvre's theory of production of space where multiple meanings and varying perceptions are constructed through different social relations, power relations and spatial patterns that are continuously in flux. This means that there is no one agreed upon interpretation or measurable truth that could be revealed; instead plausible correlations were drawn in relevance to the specificities of the context (see Merriam, 2002). Thus, the nature of the qualitative inquiry, described by Mason (2002) as 'exploratory, fluid and flexible, data driven and context sensitive' (p.24), fits well with the nature of the exploratory investigation required for this research.

The research adopted the case study rationale as it allowed in-depth multifaceted investigation of a contemporary case in its real time setting where the selected cases were studied from different perspectives through using multiple sources of evidence over time (see Yin, 2009). According to Yin (2009), 'a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in its real time setting, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' (p.13). Believing that the contextual conditions are significant in explaining the process and the outcome of the urban intervention, a case study rationale was adopted especially because the manifestations of transformation, as explained earlier, needed to be addressed and 'traced over time rather than mere frequencies or incidence' (Yin, 2009, p.7).

The research was designed based on multiple case studies to primarily compare the different processes, outcomes and transformation manifestations arising from the different small spatial interventions in the different physical contexts. Multiple case studies of small-scale urban interventions initiated to address problematic localities in Cairo were selected representing different opportunities and challenges in relation to their existing spatial potentialities, sociocultural and economic forces. Juxtaposing the situated different interventions would help illuminate the transformative properties, the conditions of success, and the limitations of the alternative mode of intervention in relation to the existing discourse in the literature and the theoretical orientation of the study.

Moreover, relying on multiple case studies would help draw more convincing conclusions, grounded in rich empirical evidence, creating a more robust and reliable

research than single case studies (Baxter and Jack, 2008; Yin, 2013). Each case was treated as discrete so that case-by-case in-depth empirical analyses were carried out to understand the collaborative design intervention as well as the tactics and strategies applied involving different stakeholders within specific contextual circumstances. The manifestations of transformation of each case study were traced. Subsequently, comparative readings were done based on juxtaposing the transformation of the selected cases in order to study how the different contexts (physical, sociocultural and economic) and the different stakeholders influenced the process, the outcome and the transformative effect of the intervention.

Employing an ethnographic approach was crucial in this study to understand the relationship between the space and its people and provide first-hand accounts on the social construction of particular settings (Merriam, 2002). It was found important to experientially engage with the different urban settings in order to better understand local conditions. Ethnographic research acknowledges the cultural uniqueness of the material setting and its people which ‘cannot be understood apart from the social and economic institutional forces that continuously influence actors, nor can the interpretation of symbolic meaning be divorced from these forces’ (Lawrence and Low, 1990, p. 492). This also requires understanding the historical background of the urban setting and how it evolved within specific sociocultural context. Ethnography is suggested to provide a depth of understanding that other approaches to investigation might lack. (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982). Ethnographic qualitative research is also justified when comparing similar phenomena in different contexts. The objective of ethnography in this case is to ‘compare constructs generated from one phenomenon in one setting to a comparable phenomenon in another setting’ (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982, p. 33). As explained earlier, investigating alternative urban interventions in relation to the different physical and socioeconomic contexts is one of the objectives of the research. Investigating the dynamics of transformation as a result of interventions situated in different urban contexts helped reveal the extent to which the social/cultural forces and the power relationships within these different contexts had affected the process and the transformation of the produced spaces.

As ethnographic research requires the immersion of the researcher for a prolonged time as an observer within the material setting to be investigated, this research adopted what is described as quasi-ethnographic techniques given the constrained time frame of the study which is distributed over multiple case studies (see

Mounajjed, Peng and Walker, 2002; Murtagh, 2007). Pure ethnography might require the researcher to ‘live’ in one setting for months and sometimes years (Merriem, 2002). Thus, quasi-ethnographic case studies were carried out embedded in five fieldwork periods: August-September 2017, April 2018, July-August 2018, April 2019 and August-September 2019. I started the fieldwork by immersing myself into the everyday activities of the different communities. This phase included taking tours in the area, engaging in casual conversations and attending programmed events. Later field work in 2018 and 2019 included extended observations of the sites of the interventions as well as mapping the activities that emerged in these spaces. This was carried out in addition to conducting semi-structured interviews with diverse stakeholders. The research methods are discussed in detail later in this chapter.

4.3.2 Selection of Study Cases

In view of all the above, the selection of case studies took place taking into consideration the three main urban entities of Greater Cairo, the formal urban core, the informal periphery and desert towns, drawing on the seminal work of David Sims (2010) in his book ‘Understanding Cairo: The Logic of a City out of Control’. The metanarrative of Cairo’s ‘three cities in one’, as discussed in the previous chapter, provided a lens for understanding the problematic localities in Cairo (see Figure 4.1). According to Elgendy (2013), ‘Cairo is now composed of three parallel cities, each representing an isolated system, with a different social, cultural and economic structure’ (p.6). The first city is the ‘formal urban core’ which is defined by Elgendy as the ‘original multi-layered capital along the Nile Valley, with its heterogeneous fabric and diverse communities’ (p.6). ‘The informal city’ is basically composed of urban sprawls along the formal city periphery, built illegally on agricultural and state-owned lands to accommodate low-income families and immigrants from the countryside, who could not find affordable housing in the centre of the city (Sims, 2010). Finally, ‘the Desert City’ was originally constructed by the government as a solution for the rapid growth of population in the form of New Towns with huge state housing stock on the eastern and western deserts on the outskirts of Cairo (Elgendy, 2013). Eventually, large pieces of land in the desert city were sold to investors turning into a collection of gated communities, mega malls and parks mostly catering for the elites (Sims, 2010). Selecting collective design interventions within the three different urban entities within Greater Cairo, the formal, informal and desert cities and reading the three contexts in relevance to each other would help obtain convincing empirical

analyses of alternative urbanism. This helped identify the situated potential and shortcomings of the intervention from the perspective of the different interest groups, and clarify the different roles of the involved actors ranging from those on the outside to those who are in power and their influences in the different physical, sociocultural and economic contexts.

However, to avoid overgeneralisation, it is necessary to note, as explained earlier in the study, that these three entities are not necessarily homogeneous from within, conveying varying and complex layers of growth in the successive planning systems in Egypt. There are informal deteriorated pockets in the inner-city areas of Cairo, which were formed in-between old and new developments. Statistically, these informal pockets are insignificant in relevance to the explosive expansion of the informal settlements at the urban fringes (Sims, Sejourne, and Shorbagi, 2003) There are also deteriorated sections in the old city core of Cairo, but these areas are considered formal in the sense that they were built conforming to laws and subdivisions existing at the medieval time (Sims, 2010). Moreover, as explained earlier, urban informality in Cairo is not confined to informal settlements, as grassroots have seen in urban informality a survival strategy and a form of resistance to the overwhelming economic and social changes arising mainly from the neoliberal economic reform (Al-Sayyad, 2004). Informality is manifested greatly in outdoor public spaces, which grassroots use as alternative places for work, sociability, entertainment and recreation (Bayat, 2012). Street vending, public space occupations and sidewalk encroachments are some examples of such informality.

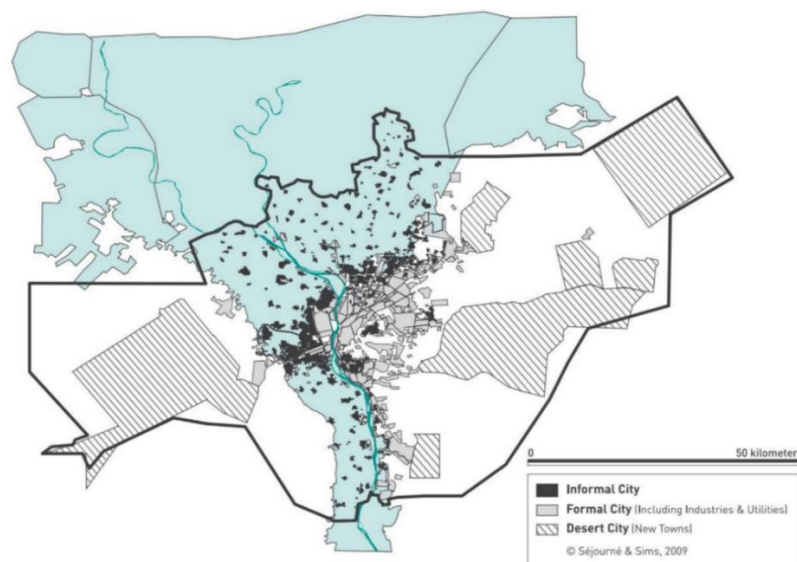


Figure 4.1 Map showing the three urban entities of Greater Cairo (source: Sims, 2010)

Accordingly, the first phase of selecting the case studies was based on looking for small collaborative urban interventions between professionals and local communities that aimed to reclaim and enhance local spaces for the public within the three urban entities in Cairo, particularly urban interventions in inner city deteriorated areas, urban interventions in informal residential settlements on the periphery and urban interventions in low income state housing in deprived areas in the new desert towns. A single case study from each context (three in total) allows in-depth and empirically rich investigation and is more feasible in terms of time (see Yin, 2013; Willis, 2014). Conducting three in-depth case studies across the three geographical entities, each with different challenges and potentials, ensures that the research remains reasonable in scope resulting in a more robust study.

As mentioned earlier, the scope of the empirical study is limited to collective, purposeful and sanctioned urban interventions that intended to improve the urban quality. The selection process narrowed down the interventions to include only collective actions of actors having a level of expertise (urban designers, architects, planners) working with local communities as long as they acted without authority or centralized direction. This is to endorse the concept of alternative urbanism as a nuanced approach to urban design, that redefines the role of professionals and allows local communities to be coproducers. Thus, the selected initiatives are the ones claiming inclusive process and action, optimizing good intentions behind the intervention and ensuring that actions are mobilized for the common good and public benefit. Nevertheless, the real change that has been happening on the ground was investigated, relying on the perceptions of the different involved stakeholders besides my own observations and reflections, identifying the difference between initial intentions and actual change.

To ensure the reliability of the investigation, case study selection criteria was set. The chosen case studies were only urban interventions that took place within the last ten years. Ten years' time is not too long or too short to investigate the case before the intervention, throughout the process, and the outcome after the intervention, as well as its long-term impact. Moreover, the chosen urban interventions are only the ones implemented in little used spaces, left over spaces, abandoned buildings or vacant lands. Although alternative urban practices can take place anywhere (street closures, squares, sidewalks, etc.), this is to limit the factors affecting the transformation, thus correlating the effect to its most probable cause. Also, these examples are helpful in

investigating how alternative urbanism could transform wasted lands or problematic settings to opportunities without waiting for clients or a strategic formal development.

Seven potential case studies were found matching the criteria (see Figure 4.2 and Table 2). As explained earlier in the study, the alternative modes of intervention are often discussed in the literature in relevance to urban city centres, drawing on the creative city discourse, as an approach to maximise the city's attractiveness to be a centre for business, investment, tourism and living. Accordingly, among the potential case studies in the inner-city areas, the passageways initiative in downtown Cairo provides a useful case study that helps investigating an intervention in a central district, a contested space between the rich and the poor, private interests and local community interests, and street vendors and shop owners.

On the other hand, in order to investigate the potential of the alternative mode of intervention in deteriorated and deprived areas, two urban interventions were identified fitting the criteria in informal settlements and one in a deteriorated low-income state-built residential area in the new desert towns. Among the two interventions fitting the criteria in the informal periphery, the one reclaiming the space located underneath the ring road for the public is found more suitable for this research as the implementation took place in 2016, while the other project finished in 2017, allowing more time to investigate the transformation of the space on the long term and the impact of the intervention on the whole area. Three case studies were thus selected: the passageways project in downtown Cairo, Omar Ibn ElKhattab's space underneath the ring road in the informal settlement of Ezbet Khayrallah; and the meet and play space in the desert town of Sixth of October (see Figure 4.3).

The first fieldwork period in August-September 2017 was also essential in the case study selection process, where multiple potential sites, onsite observations and initial investigations took place, for logistic matters such as checking the accessibility to data and the cooperation of the different actors involved in the urban intervention. Moreover, the three aforementioned case studies were selected not only because they fit to the pre-set criteria but also very much driven by interest in the cases themselves as they gained positive reputation in the media and the academic networks within Cairo.

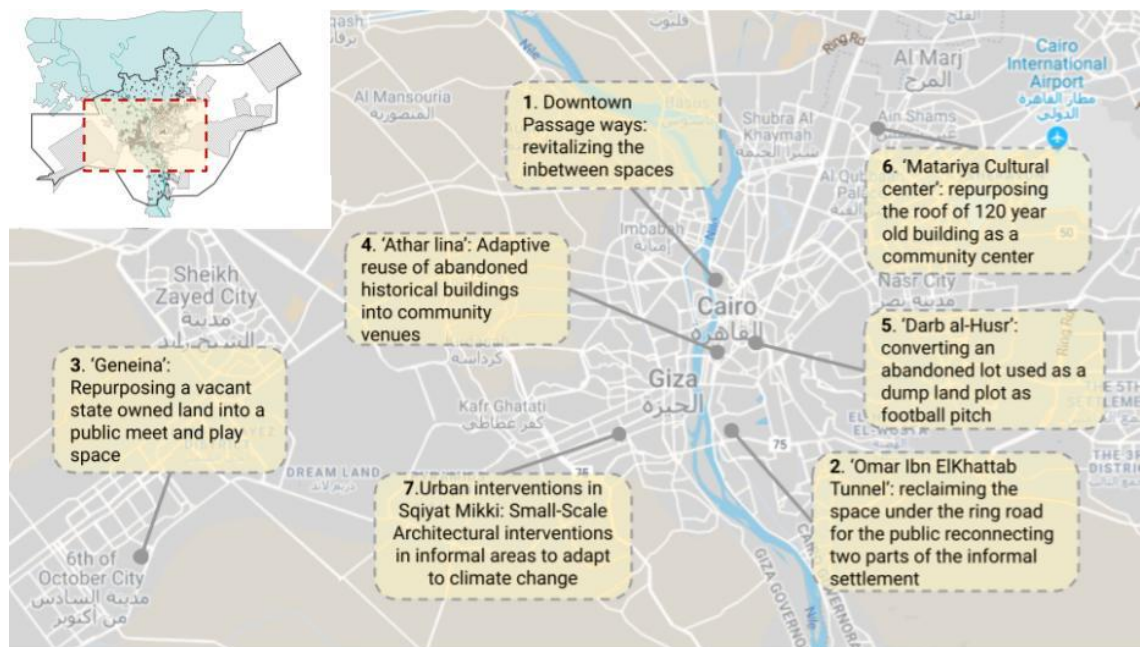


Figure 4.2 Locations of Potential Case studies (source: author using google maps)

Table 2 Potential case studies (source: author)

	Downtown passageways	2015	In-between buildings	Revitalizing the in-between spaces in Downtown Cairo
Urban Core	Athar Lina	2014	Abandoned historic building	Reusing an abandoned historical building as a community centre
	Darb Husr	2013	Dump land	Converting an abandoned lot of land that was used as a dump into a football pitch
Informal Periphery	Omar Ibn Elkhatab tunnel	2016	Little used space	Reclaiming the space under the ring road for the public reconnecting two parts of the informal settlement
	Matareya Cultural centre	2014	Abandoned historic building	Repurposing the roof of 120 year old building as a community centre
	Sqiyat Mikki Urban interventions	2017	Public open space	Inserting shading elements and green walls
Desert Towns	Geniena	2014	Vacant land	Repurposing a vacant state-owned land into a public meet and play space

It is necessary to note that the case studies chosen from the different geographical contexts do not cover all problematic localities within Cairo or can offer solutions that can be typically replicated in different conditions, as these interventions are particular to their setting. Nevertheless, these examples represent rich empirical evidence that

could be learned from, contributing to a nuanced understanding of alternative urbanism. I do not aim to romanticise the impact of these urban interventions, and instead the study aims at providing convincing analyses in relevance to the discourse of alternative urbanism (see LeCompte and Goetz, 1982). The three case studies represent three ‘alternative spaces’ generated through coproduction within different physical, sociocultural and economic contexts and involving different stakeholders from public and private sectors and third sector organisations interested in the urban interventions for different reasons. The conclusions and empirical evidence drawn from the case studies were used in the end to reflect on the concept of alternative urbanism and its potential in urban transformation with reference to the contextual specificities of the cases.

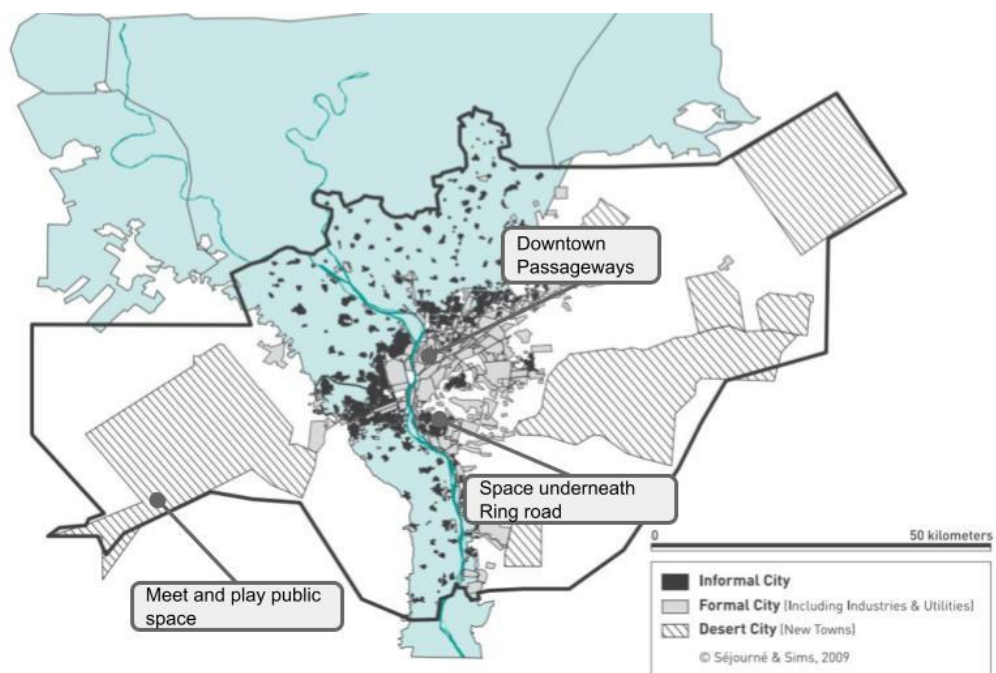


Figure 4.3 Map of Cairo highlighting formal, informal and desert cities and case studies locations (source: author adapted from Sims, 2010)

4.3.3 Introducing the Selected Case Studies

The first Case study is an urban intervention in Downtown Cairo (in the formal urban core) which started as an academic coursework in one of Cairo Universities. The idea of the academic project was to propose urban solutions to revitalise the pedestrian passageways in-between buildings as alternative spaces for developing the old and decaying core of Cairo (see Figure 4.4)



Figure 4.4 Map of Downtown Cairo showing street network vs pedestrian passageways in-between buildings (source: author adapted from Nagati, 2018 and Sims, 2010)

The university professor Omar Nagati took the initiative to implement the idea on the ground in two passageways (known as Kodak and Phillips passageways) as an experimental project. Within a limited budget and through the mediation between diverse stakeholders, the intervention included physical redesign of the passageways, temporary exhibitions, concerts and independent film screenings (see Figure 4.5) (Nagati and Stryker, 2016).



Figure 4.5 Philips and Kodak passageways (source: CLUSTER)

The second case study is the ‘Geneina’ which is a public space and a playground designed and implemented on a vacant state owned land in one of the desert towns, the City of Sixth of October. This urban intervention aimed to provide a public space to ‘meet and play’ in a low income neighbourhood that suffered from low quality and poorly maintained open spaces. The area includes state-built housing units

accommodating Egyptian families that were evicted from various random areas in Cairo as well as Syrian, Sudanese and African refugees. The project was initiated and funded primarily by UNHCR (UN Refugee agency), which partnered with Takween to implement the project. The idea of the project was to upcycle waste materials and available local resources into playing elements which the local residents and the children along with volunteers built with their own hands (see Figure 4.6 and Figure 4.7) (Ayman et al, 2015).



Figure 4.6 The Geneina project during implementation (source: Takween ICD)



Figure 4.7 Local children playing in the Geneina space (source: Takween ICD)

The third case study is in one of the informal neighbourhoods, namely Ezbet Khayrallah in the city periphery. It started as an initiative to reclaim the space underneath the ring road for the public reconnecting the two parts of the neighbourhood that were divided by the construction of the Ring Road (see Figure 4.8).



Figure 4.8 Omar Ibn ElKahtab Tunnel before intervention (source: Takween ICD)

The project was initiated by Takween Integrated Community Development, an urban development and social private enterprise encompassing seven young urban activists who have different professional backgrounds: architecture, urban planning and community/social development. The idea of reclaiming the tunnels was necessary after several protests blocking the ring road were triggered by the death of a child who was trying to cross the road to reach the other part of the neighbourhood. The project was funded by the Switzerland Embassy in Egypt and was logistically supported by Cairo Governorate and a number of local NGOs in Ezbet Khayrallah (see Figure 4.9 and Figure 4.10) (Ibrahim and Mannoun, 2017).



Figure 4.9 Community members in the tunnel
(source: author)

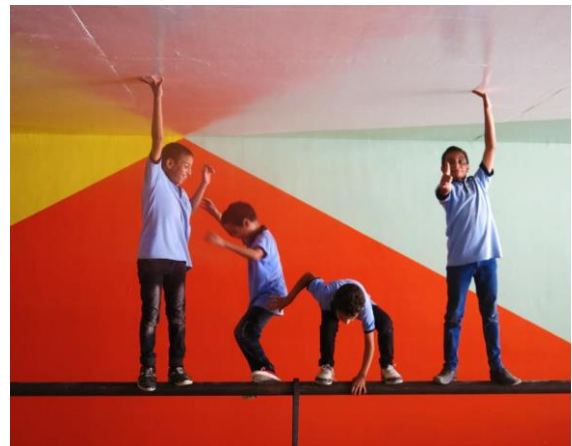


Figure 4.10 Children playing in the tunnel
(source: Takween ICD)

4.4 Exploratory Framework

As discussed earlier in the study, drawing on Lefebvre's concept of differential space and the theory of coproduction, the transformational trajectory of alternative spaces was discussed as well as the possible challenges and implications were clarified. Accordingly, a framework for analysis was derived in this section to ground the empirical investigation of the three case studies. This was done through identifying analytical directions based on the theoretical foundations of the study to interrogate the process and the outcome of the intervention clarifying the qualities that give 'alternative spaces' a potential for positive returns on the urban environment and on local communities (see Figure 4.11). I addressed three lines of investigation to interrogate the case studies. First, I explored the 'lived space' and the spatiotemporal experience produced as a result of these interventions and continuously reproduced over time in terms of use, appropriation or management. Second, I scrutinized the

different roles of actors, negotiations and conflicts between the different actors using or managing the space. Last, I looked for the wider transformative impacts which include social, spatial or economic benefits or whether the intervention has triggered chain reactions learning from the initiative elsewhere. These theoretically grounded aspects of investigation guided the methodological approach, data collection and analysis.

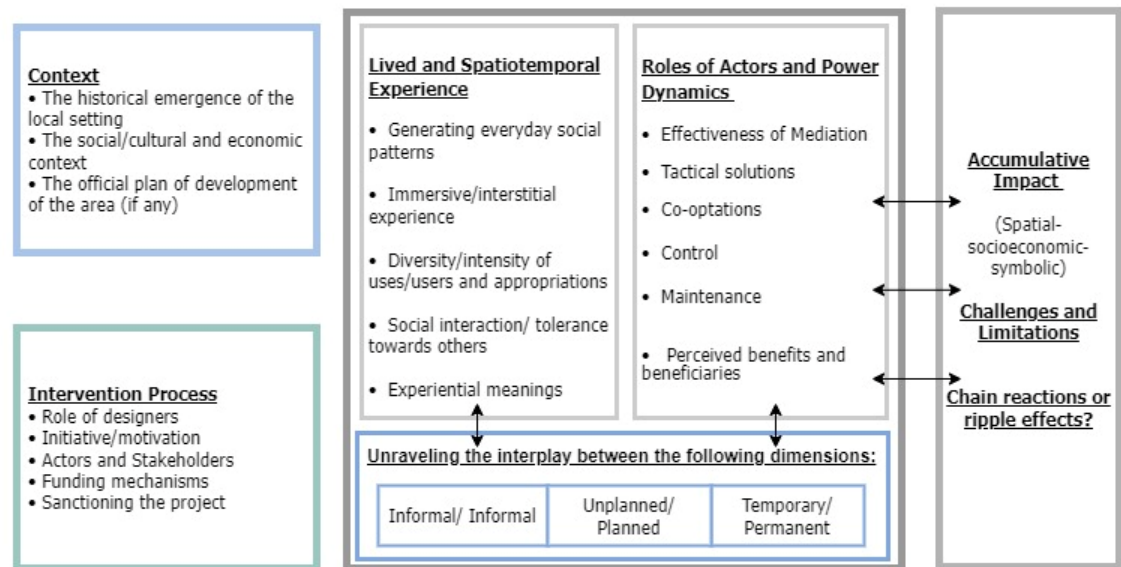


Figure 4.11 Exploratory Framework (source: author)

4.5 Methods and Sources of Evidence

The case study strategy allows exploring the cases from different perspectives relying on multiple sources of evidence seeking convergence of data which supports the reliability of the research findings (Berg and Lune, 2004). Yin (2009) points out that using multiple sources of evidence creates a database for the case study and a chain of evidence that reflects the quality of the research and the validity of the research outcomes. According to Yin (2009), ‘no single source has a complete advantage over all the others. In fact, the various sources are highly complementary’ (p.101). Baxter and Jack (2008) argue that employing multiple sources of evidence helps explore the case through a variety of lenses which contributes to a better understanding of the phenomenon. This is highly desirable especially when addressing a contested urban space mediating between different and sometimes conflicting interests. The sources of evidence employed in this research are: direct observations, semi-structured

interviews and reviewing documentary data. Concurrently, the spatial practices generated in the spaces were mapped.

4.5.1 Direct Observations

On-site observations are considered a significant source of evidence in this study. This is because the observational evidence allows the researcher to understand how the space is socially constructed and how it is appropriated by different groups of users. The observations traced the manifestations of the interplay between the formal and the informal practices as well as the planned activities and the spontaneous everyday activities. I looked for social patterns, diversity of use, and contestation or conflicts over use. The observational evidence provided an understanding of how the different stakeholders and the power relations have influenced the use and management of the spaces.

Observations allowed reflexivity to happen comparing my assumptions and prior perceptions to what has been really happening on the ground as an effect of the intervention. Accordingly, my experiences and my interactions with people in the three different areas were articulated and acknowledged. My role as an observer fluctuated during the field visits between a pure observer and a participant observer interacting with people or attending events happening in the space. On-site observations were planned to be stretched over the three years period of the study (2017-2019) where intensive fieldwork was done during the second and third years.

During the five periods of fieldwork, the three case studies were observed alternately. This was done in order to observe differing behaviours at different times of the year as well as the changes happening in the space during the different visits and its impact on the people on the long term. Since the visits were made at different times, observations happened at different weathers which affected the spatial patterns and the use of space. Also, observations took place in both the weekdays and weekends, spending at least two hours on each visit but at different times of the day. Observations were recorded carefully using field notes and on maps showing the spatial activities generated in the spaces and the people engaged in them with respect to location, age and gender. This created a series of activity maps illustrating space/time samples for the different case studies augmented with images conveying the different social encounters and the manifestations of change or development whether socially or spatially. Observations were also used as a basis for other

methods, where some issues related to observed activities or behaviours were further addressed during interviews.

4.5.2 Mapping Spatial Practices

To capture the dynamics of everyday life and the generated social patterns within the produced spaces of the three case studies, the research adopted tools of environment-behaviour research, particularly influenced by the mapping methods of Jan Gehl (1987) in his *Life between Buildings*. More recent work by Vikas Mehta (2009) and Yasser El-Sheshtawy (2013b) continues this tradition. Mapping spatial practices was used to demonstrate everyday social patterns as well as the intensity and diversity of use/users in the space over time. The mapping process produced visual texts that aimed to contribute to a better understanding of the social dynamics constructed in the produced spaces (see Low, 1996). The produced maps demonstrated programmed events, spontaneous encounters, temporary appropriations or permanent alterations. They helped examine the supposition that the produced space, which was formerly either a decaying little used space or an empty lot, has transformed to be a generator of social narratives and diverse practices. A space that might have been a problematic setting physically and environmentally before the intervention could turn into the ‘living room’ for the local community and its source of pride. In other words, mapping was employed to materialise the invisible dimensions experienced in the spaces under investigation.

Maps of uses and traces of movement paths were created for each case study. Based on observational data, four maps were developed for each space during the four fieldwork periods in 2018 and 2019. Each map evolved by superimposing different space/time snapshots for the space recorded across three days stretched over each fieldwork period (four snapshots and ten movement traces were recorded each day). Every map does not represent one actual moment experienced in the space, but they illustrate aggregate spatial practices generated by the intervention (see Psarra, 2016), or what Golzari and Sharif (2011) call a ‘spectrum of invisible moments’ embedded in everyday life.

However, due to the dynamic and ephemeral nature of these spaces, there were some unique appropriations that I missed. Thus, in order to gain a broader understanding of the dynamics of use over time, a timeline for the intervention process and the produced spaces was created for every case study relying on personal interviews and

secondary sources of data. The timelines included a list of the events and appropriations that took place which was used to augment the maps.

4.5.3 Open Ended Semi-structured Interviews

Interviews are essential and significant sources of case study information (Yin, 2009). Interviews were used in this research to capture the experiences, perceptions and feelings of the actors involved in the intervention process and in the use of the spaces produced as a result of the interventions (see Weiss, 1994). The method of inquiry in the three case studies is based on semi-structured interviews with open ended questions. This is because semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to gain a deeper understanding of the interviewees' perceptions and experiences about the space. Semi-structured interviews are also flexible so that questions are adapted to suit the interviewee's background knowledge. Open ended conversations allow the respondent to feel more comfortable to talk and reveal hidden aspects about the process or the space.

Four groups of interviewees were selected: participants in the intervention from the local community and users of the space, professionals or activists with a level of expertise (urban designers, community development practitioners), local officials involved in the intervention, and finally, the funders supporting the projects. Interviews with local community members were conducted on site. Interviews with designers, residents, NGO and municipal officials were conducted and audio recorded although in several interviews audio recording was not possible as some of the local residents did not feel comfortable to speak freely with a recording device. In this case, notes were handwritten during the interview.

The first group of interviewees, which are participants from the local community and users of the produced spaces within the three case studies, were recruited based on several factors. Spending extended hours on site helped in identifying key actors, for example, shopkeepers of the shops surrounding the space, residents in nearby buildings, street vendors, everyday passers-by or individuals maintaining the space. Attending programmed events happening in the spaces, for example, helped encountering key actors using, appropriating and benefiting from the space. The initial on-site observations helped generate an initial list of interviewees from local communities for each of the case studies. Selecting the participants from the local

community was also informed by interviews with professionals involved in the project, revealing some potential informants that had key roles in the intervention process and later in the use of space. During the first period of fieldwork in 2017, the first list of interviewees was made who referred me to other participants generating a snowball effect. The interviewing process continued until saturation was felt, that was when responses became repetitive. Through interviews with participants from the local community I aimed to discover:

- The role the local community has played in the production and transformation of space (redesigning the space, decision making process, volunteering, funding, using and managing the space).
- How the urban intervention has been affecting the users' experience in the space or if the intervention or the spaces provided further benefits or opportunities.
- The perceptions, feelings and meanings attached to the space.
- How the space is embedded in the everyday life of the residents or users.
- The challenges and the conflicts experienced throughout the process or the use of space.
- The inclusiveness of the space and if some users or spatial activities are viewed as not welcome.
- The ripple effect of the urban intervention or learning from the project and repeating similar initiatives.

Through interviews with professionals involved in the intervention, I aimed to discover:

- The role of professionals in the process (design, leadership, mediation, organising events).
- How inclusive the design process was and in what ways they believed the approach of the intervention is different from mainstream approaches.
- How the power relations between the stakeholders affected the design or the use.
- Satisfaction and frustrations throughout the process

- What kind of challenges they faced in mediating between the different interests, obtaining authorization from local authorities and finding funds and sponsors for the project.
- How the project was formally sanctioned or approved

Based on other interviews, key persons were identified supporting the intervention, mainly developers or business owners. These interviews were helpful to understand the power relationships and the influence of powerful actors in the decision-making process, design or physical alterations, use or management of the produced space. Accordingly, within these interviews I aimed to discover:

- The motivation behind funding the project.
- How they benefit from the space
- How they influenced the design process, use or management of space.
- The challenges or conflicts that happened over the use of space.
- Their perception on the impact of the space on the local community and the area.

As mentioned earlier the three case studies or projects are sanctioned in terms of obtaining official permits from the local authorities. The rationale behind supporting these interventions needed to be understood and how this support was manifested and influenced the process and the space produced. Through interviews with government officials or local authorities, I aimed to discover:

- The role the local government played throughout the intervention process or in maintaining and regulating the spaces.
- The nature of the interaction between local officials and the local community throughout and after the implementation.
- Their perception on the impact of the intervention.

4.5.4 Documentary Data (Secondary Sources)

The gathered documents include: booklets about the projects published on online digital platforms by the professional teams involved in the projects; news video clips and articles appearing in the mass media; the projects' webpages on NGOs websites; and online blogs dedicated for Cairene urban issues. These kinds of documents

usually provide partial data as they represent the perceptions of the professionals involved in the projects. Nevertheless, according to Yin (2009) ‘the most important use of these documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources’ (p.103).

Documentary information was collected to help unpack the multidimensional context of each case study. For example, different documents, mostly available through internet searches were useful to identify the stakeholders involved in each intervention, the narrative and the process of intervention and how it was initiated, motivated and funded. Also, the documents provided information about the legality of the project and the level of support provided by local authorities. Also, because the addressed case studies included temporary practices with unpredictable timeframes, some of the data was generated based on these secondary resources. Documentary information such as online websites and blogs also gave an initial impression of how the publics use the space and how they feel about the ‘alternative space’ under investigation. This type of data was also helpful in refining the research questions and selecting the case studies.

Another significant importance of documentary data is to understand the historical emergence of the different spaces under investigation and their cultural, economic and political context and how this historical dimension affected the dynamics of the intervention. Contextualising the forces that shaped the area historically reflected on understanding the conflicts, experiential meanings and the utilization patterns in the produced spaces. In this sense, I also relied on newspapers, books and novels providing data on the broader cultural and political context of the public life and the formal processes of the material production in the area wherein the intervention took place.

4.5.5 Data Analysis

As mentioned before, To analyse the data, an exploratory inductive approach was used. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argue that ‘the much preferred way to analyse the data in a qualitative study is to do it simultaneously with data collection.’ (p.197). In this sense, the analysis process started after the first fieldwork period in August/September 2017. Data was categorized into three main categories informed by the theoretical framework and the literature. The first category focused on the intervention process, the role of the designers, how the project was initiated, funded

and sanctioned. This category also included how the process of mediation between the different stakeholders took place and how it affected the decision-making process and the design outcome. The second category focused on the lived and spatiotemporal experiences associated with the spaces. The third category included the roles of actors and power dynamics involved in using, regulating, maintaining the spaces.

The analysis required a long interaction with the data that involved coding the data and categorizing the data into themes that could answer the research questions of the study guided by the theoretical framework discussed earlier in the study (see Merriam and Tisdell (2016)). The themes provided explanations about the case study and answered ‘how’ the interplay between the formal and informal, the planned and unplanned and the temporary and permanent was materialised in these small-scale interventions. The analysis process revealed the accumulative impact of the intervention and if the interventions have been effectuating transformation whether socially or spatially. The process also revealed limitations that were relevant to the power relationships and the socioeconomic and cultural context of each case study. The themes were synthesised accompanied by thick descriptions, photographs and maps.

Although each case study was treated as discrete through in-depth empirical investigations, the dynamics of transformation of the three case studies were juxtaposed and read in relevance to each other. Reading across the different case studies revealed the potential and limitations of the interventions in relevance to different socioeconomic contexts and the involved distribution of power as well as the regulatory planning and governance framework.

4.5.6 Ethical Considerations

Several ethical considerations were necessary as the methods employed in this research determined close work with participants during extended observations, mapping and interviews. In addition, fieldwork included immersing myself in some of the activities people took part in. It was important to protect the participants and make sure no participant was put at risk as a result of these methods. Before conducting any of the interviews, participants were informed about my identity and the purpose of the research, and how the recordings or notes from the interview may be used. The use of recording devices was made explicit at the outset of the interviews, although in cases

when individuals were not comfortable with being recorded, note-taking was utilised instead.

Participants were informed that participation was completely voluntary, and this point was made clear before starting any of the interviews. Informed consent was sought from interviewees, and their confidentiality was fully respected. Respecting the anonymity of the respondents helped raise the responsiveness of the participants and encouraged them to speak more freely. However, in some situations, it was difficult to obtain consent from all participants especially when conducting observations in public settings. In these cases, I tried to coordinate with key actors in the setting such as NGO workers or shop owners who were made aware of the research activities.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the relationship between the research questions, the research design and the developed methodological approach. Accordingly, it bridges the literature review, the theoretical foundations, the methodology and the empirical chapters of the research.

The principal question of the research is: “What is the transformative potential as well as the limitations of alternative urbanism in the Cairene context?” In order to answer this main question several questions evolved; the first question is: “What are the main characteristics that define alternative urbanism as a new mode of practice that challenges conventional urban intervention approaches?” This question represents a theoretical contribution not only providing an overarching definition for this domain of action that goes by many names in the literature, but also a theoretical framework was adopted to reframe alternative urbanism as a nuanced urban design approach. Accordingly, alternative spaces are believed to be produced that do not conform to the conventional practice in terms of scale, timeframe, funding, patterns of use and the ways through which local communities are involved in the design and control of space.

In order to situate the study in Cairo, I started by exploring and tracing the different modes of growth of Greater Cairo that has quadrupled in size in the last fifty years including the continuing growth of the formal core of the city, the emergence and explosive expansion of the informal city and the crafting of the modern desert city beginning in the late 1970s. This was necessary to understand the problematic

localities within Cairo and the impacts of the modernist top-down urban planning paradigm and neoliberal-led urbanism on the Cairene urban landscape. The contextual dimension is essential as a starting point to investigate the impact of the alternative practice in Cairo manifested in the emerging small collaborative urban interventions that proliferated in the city particularly after the Egyptian uprising in 2011. Accordingly, an exploratory framework was developed for investigating the impact of these interventions based on the theoretical foundations and the specificities of the physical setting.

In view of the above, three more empirical questions evolved to contribute to the main research question of the study, which were answered based on extensive fieldwork in Cairo. These questions are “How can the alternative mode of practice reshape the role of urban designers and planners?”, “In what ways and to what extent can the alternative mode of practice transform local city spaces?” and finally “how do the physical, socioeconomic context and the power relationships involved in the intervention influence the process and the transformation of space?”. Based on three case studies located within the three different urban entities in Cairo (the urban core, the informal periphery and the desert new towns), the three research questions were explored empirically by employing the aforementioned methods. Juxtaposing the transformation process of the three produced spaces and their impact on their wider context revealed the actual change happening as a result of this alternative mode of intervention in comparison to the initial intentions with respect to their socioeconomic context and the roles of the involved actors.

Chapter 5:
Case Study 1 - Downtown Passageways

5.1 Introduction

This chapter scrutinizes how the concept of alternative urbanism, as defined earlier in the study, is manifested and applied in one of the most significant central areas in the cityscape of Cairo, namely Downtown Cairo. It investigates how the spatial interventions that took place in 2014 in a project that is known as ‘Downtown Passageways’ have been causing change to the urban environment and to the local community. In other words, the transformation of the produced spaces since implementation is discussed clarifying the limitations of such alternative approach in relevance to the context.

In order to investigate how the alternative approach has been shaping and reinterpreting public spaces in downtown Cairo, it is essential to understand the specificities of these public spaces with respect to the local socio-economic life, the competing interests of the different stakeholders and the manifestations of the rapidly changing political climate in the past few years. The social production of urban space and the symbolic experience of users cannot be understood in isolation from the historical emergence of the urban setting and the socioeconomic formation of the public realm. This requires starting with unpacking the multidimensional context of the case study which is crucial to understand the challenges faced throughout the process of intervention and in using the spaces. This is also essential to clarify how the alternative approach of intervention is different from conventional approaches of intervention in downtown Cairo.

It is also important to begin the empirical investigation with understanding how the project was initiated, implemented, funded and officially sanctioned and who were the actors and how they were engaged in the process. Following that, based mainly on observations, semi-structured interviews, mapping spatial practices, I followed three lines of investigation guided by the theoretical foundations discussed in Chapter Two. First, I explored the lived and spatiotemporal experience generated as a result of these interventions and how the spaces changed over time in terms of use, meaning and management. Second, I scrutinized the different roles of actors, challenges, negotiations and conflicts between the different stakeholders over the redesign, use or management of the spaces. Last, I looked if the intervention triggered chain reactions learning from the initiative elsewhere.

5.2 Unpacking the Contextual Specificities of Downtown Cairo

The uniqueness of Downtown Cairo for the Egyptians cannot be explained without understanding the historical significance of the setting which has profound effects on its everyday public life and the social experience in its public spaces. Downtown Cairo has not only been the urban centre of the city, with major cultural, commercial, administrative and political activities but also it is a standing symbol of the glory of its past represented by exquisite historical architectural styles, elegant public squares and wide boulevards. However, the area has been steadily deteriorating which changed the character of downtown in the eyes of the Cairenes and created public nostalgia towards its golden age. Moreover, it has witnessed unprecedented movements since the 2011 Egyptian uprising, which added a layer of complexity to the use and meaning of its public spaces. Besides the tension that arises from being the urban centre of the city with different competing interests, heritage assets, businesses and touristic attractions, downtown Cairo has gained after the revolution a national symbolic meaning of resistance, urban activism and political expression. Considering all these factors, the case study starts with briefing major historical transformations of downtown Cairo and its ongoing morphosis that have affected the urban landscape and created contested spaces between conflicting interests. In the following section, I briefly unpack these contextual specificities under four subtitles: Historical Emergence and Transformations of Downtown, Pre-revolutionary Downtown, The Tahrir Square Effect: Downtown in Flux, and Urban Development Approaches in Post-revolutionary Downtown. As previously mentioned in the methodology of the study, I relied frequently on my reflections as a Cairene who is very familiar with the area.

5.2.1 Historical Emergence and Transformations of Downtown (1863-1980)

The area was originally established in the late half of the nineteenth century along the lines of Haussmann's Parisian model of wide straight boulevards and connected squares as an attempt by Khedive Ismail to modernise Cairo, then became a cosmopolitan and an elitist city centre during the British colonial rule. While it was where both foreign and national elites lived as well as an area of upscale businesses and entertainment establishments, it remained heterotopic attracting publics from all over the city (Ryzova, 2015). Many middle-income Egyptians came to downtown to enjoy its social life and leisure facilities or simply wander and window shop (Ryzova,

2015) Much has been written about the history of downtown in the colonial era describing this time as the golden age for downtown and its urban landscape and architecture to have a distinctive European look (Sims, 2010).

A steady decline took place throughout the second half of the twentieth century which started in post-independence years in the fifties and intensified in the seventies. The establishment of the Republic of Egypt in 1952 marked a major shift in the social fabric of downtown caused by the state's ideological shift from a monarchy to a socialist state (Awatta, 2015). Since then, state investment in downtown decreased especially with the economic war related challenges facing the country and the political ambition of leaving the centre and expanding to the East and West of the city (Awatta, 2015). Moreover, the political nationalist attitude during that era saw the urban and architectural product of downtown area to be 'foreign and reminders of the colonial monarchical epoch' (Elshahed, 2007, p.57). Perceived then as irrelevant to the national Egyptian heritage, the area was not worthy of maintenance (Elshahed, 2007). Also, in order to stabilise social standards and empower tenants, rent freeze laws were established in the fifties. Such laws led to the deterioration of many buildings on the long term as maintenance requirements exceeded monthly paid rents (Attia, 2013). Many leased apartments were abandoned, and the renters moved out while keeping their apartments locked up empty not even bothered to pay their extremely low rents (Attia, 2013). This started a transformation in the identity of downtown from an elite and upscale area to where average low- and middle-income Egyptians live and work, with the proliferation of small shops, affordable goods, street vendors and traditional cafes (Awatta, 2015).

The open-door policy, introduced in the seventies, which is explained in Chapter Three, has massively impacted the socioeconomic life of downtown. Opening the Egyptian economy to global capital flows, has created social divide and what Ryzova (2015) calls 'selective prosperity'. More prosperous inhabitants and a growing bourgeoisie class preferred to move to new developments in other central higher end neighbourhoods away from old established centres (Elshahed, 2007). The new neighbourhoods offered a new modern lifestyle that downtown had lacked starting to be associated with lower socio-economic life (Salama, 2009). Although downtown remained a place for quality shopping and leisure activities in the seventies and eighties, the black market flourished in the area associated with the expansion of consumer culture, especially after two decades of war related austerity (Ryzova,

2015). The centre of the city was in general suffering from negligence where most of the state resources after the 1973 war were directed towards crafting satellite towns in the eastern and western deserts (Elgendy, 2013).

5.2.2 Pre-revolutionary Downtown (1981-2010)

The deterioration of the urban landscape of downtown Cairo continued and over the course of time, downtown area became a breeding ground for informal economy, street vendors and illegal encroachments into the streets and public spaces. Informal actors constantly struggle over the control of public space, as they are always under the threat of the municipal 's campaigns of removal and displacement.

Well before the uprising of 2011, downtown Cairo for many middle- and upper-class Egyptians has been associated with chaos, crowdedness and deteriorated urban quality (Ryzova, 2015). Businesses, elites and privileged families have long abandoned downtown and moved to neighbouring upscale areas and more recently to newly established satellite towns. A few years before the revolution, only twenty percent of downtown apartments were populated and less than five percent were used for residential purposes while the ground floors were saved for retail, the rest were mostly old offices in poor condition (Shafie, 2016). Downtown Cairo has begun to lose its role as an urban centre and instead there were many other influential centres in the city that have attracted foreign investors and created commercial, residential and financial hubs. Mourning the ruin of downtown and nostalgic longing for its past has become a common rhetoric in the public discourse in the 2000s (see Ibrahim, 1998; Aswani, 2004; Elkadi and Kerdany, 2006; El-Sheshtawy, 2013a).

Despite the years of deterioration, downtown occupied significant place in the Egyptians collective memory. Downtown Cairo was still a favourite hangout destination and a centre for shopping for high school teens and youth in the eighties and early nighties, which was slowly replaced by extravagant malls far from the centre of the city. While walking in the bustling streets of downtown my experience was usually loaded with mixed feelings, the rich social possibility and human interaction as well as struggling to avoid street vendors and their goods blocking sidewalks. Nevertheless, visiting downtown remained somehow interesting for people who have the passion for its sense of place and public life that is a combination of what is traditional and touristic surrounded by architectural landmarks with exciting historical narratives shared among people. Moreover, traditional coffee shops and

restaurants in its pedestrian narrow passageways have attracted their own publics from different classes. Despite the general decline of the cultural scene in downtown since the seventies, the nineties and 2000s witnessed the emergence of diverse independent cultural activities in the area.

5.2.3 The Tahrir Square Effect: Downtown in Flux (2011-2013)

The Egyptian revolution in January 2011 and the political events in the following two years have had unprecedented effect on the urban landscape in downtown Cairo. A new mode of citizenship and public culture has emerged when thousands of Egyptians from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds flooded to Tahrir square in downtown Cairo to voice their demands for freedom, social justice and having a dignified life. Starting from Tahrir square and extending into numerous streets and public spaces all over the country, Egypt witnessed unparalleled demonstrations in recent history which led to end the presidency of Mubarak and his regime. The protestors occupied Tahrir square for eighteen days, where not only violent public confrontations with the police forces took place, but also the square was a venue for creative artistic production, public performances and cultural debates. After the first few days of occupying the square which faced fierce resistance from the state authorities, it turned into what many have called ‘urban utopia’ that I witnessed myself through several encounters in early February 2011 (see Salama, 2013) (see Figure 5.1). The autonomous square led an example in self-organisation and democratic action, where collective recycling projects, clinics, arts exhibits, martyrs’ memorials, prayer areas, toilets and trash collection were taking place in impressive harmony.



Figure 5.1 Occupying the Tahrir Square and the surrounding streets during the eighteen days of the revolution (by Pater Mcdiarmid, source: Washington Post)

Along with the above, new modes of informality emerged taking advantage of the state vulnerability and the political vacuum during and after the revolution (Nagati and Stryker, 2013). The absence of law enforcement forces specifically in the few months after the revolution admitted an explosive growth of different informal urban interventions. These could be small or temporary, such as graffiti or sidewalks encroachments, or big and long term such as illegal structures or expansions that could not be easily removed by the return of law enforcement (Nagai and Stryker, 2013). Some of these interventions were actually demolished by the authorities when the state regained its strength and others were formalised a few years later on the condition of paying a penalty for violation.

This urban fluidity garnered academic attention, where Omar Nagati and Beth Stryker in their article 'Archiving the City in Flux' (2013) analysed the patterns of spatial informal development which happened in different parts of the city at an unprecedented pace during that time. Regarding downtown area, the most remarkable informal urban intervention was street vending occupying sidewalks and other public spaces. It took place through the accumulation of small but quick urban practices (Nagati and Stryker, 2013). Mobile vendors, after years of suffering from marginalisation, claimed their right to the city in a controversial way. Public spaces turned into a marketplace where racks of clothes, food stalls, tea stands, souvenir kiosks and accessories could be found everywhere.

If street vending and encroachments into public spaces were part of the urban experience before the revolution, the phenomenon became overwhelming as clashes started to take place between mobile vendors, shop keepers and property owners. Shop owners extended the display of their goods into sidewalks. Also, the owners of coffee shops and restaurants arranged seats and tables in open spaces and sometimes into roads blocking vehicular flow (see Figure 5.2). The collapse of the formal order led to the fragmentation of the public into multitudes advancing their exclusive claims to public space (Nagati, 2018). Negative responses to this phenomenon started to be raised in the media and among the wider public describing the situation as unbearable paralyzing the centre of the city.



Figure 5.2 Informal Encroachments overtaking sidewalks and extending into roads blocking vehicular flow (Source: Nagati and Stryker, 2013)

On a different level, the Tahrir square effect has contributed to the flourishing of the art and cultural scene in downtown. The revolution encouraged people to share experiences, skills and ideas creating collectives of artists, activists and underground performers, which were facilitated through social media platforms. The streets and public squares turned into venues for self-organised pop-up art exhibits, performances and movie screenings (see Figure 5.3, Figure 5.4). A broader audience was attracted to street arts and graffiti as well as attending and participating in cultural and art events where a new relationship was created between artists and ordinary people. Independent art spaces flourished and other vacant apartments and shops were leased for art related purposes.



Figure 5.3 Public Spaces turned into arts venues with a broader audience than Institutional art spaces and private galleries (by Sherif Gaber, 2011, source: ibraaz.org)



Figure 5.4 The proliferation of revolutionary Graffiti on Downtown Cairo walls
(by Basma Hamdy, 2013, source: jadaliyya.com)

After another wave of protests on 30 June 2013, that led to a major change of the political regime, security forces have been present intensively in downtown streets and public spaces, particularly Tahrir square to restore order and maintain political stability. The rapid political events added layers of complexity to the public realm, representing a battle over the use, meaning and function of public spaces.

5.2.4 Urban Development Approaches in Post-Revolutionary Downtown Cairo

The 2011 revolution triggered different approaches in developing Downtown Cairo adopted by the state and the private sector.

State-led Urban Development Approach

After almost three years of political turmoil (2011-2014), the urban development plans and approaches of the former regime resurfaced in the official discourse. A futuristic plan is adopted, which is particularly more nostalgic towards Downtown's historical *belle époque* with an intention to promote tourism. This has led to giving more attention to restoring architecturally significant facades and cleaning up 'undesired' uses/users and activities such as street vendors. Emphasis on physical issues would transform the area to an open-air museum catering for tourists and elites, but detached from downtown existing communities. The state's plan of 'museumifying' downtown started to be manifested in fresh coats of paint on old

buildings, whitewashed graffiti, painted sidewalks, a massive flag in the middle of Tahrir Square, as well as tighter security, restricted car parking and the forced removal of street vendors (Rabie, 2016) (see Figure 5.5, Figure 5.6). All the manifestations of the aforementioned urban fluidity declined. Malsin (2015) argues that the state intended to create ‘revolution-free downtown’, removing not only street vendors, but also whoever they considered as ‘troublemakers’ such as activists and artists. This created some tension between the authorities and community-led arts and cultural initiatives which eventually forced many to end. While, in general, it is a positive change that the state started to be interested again in developing downtown Cairo, its approach lacks community engagement and disregards the public urban experience.



Figure 5.5 The Tahrir Square and surrounding streets in post-revolutionary Cairo (by Mohamed Abd El Ghany, source: Washington Post)



Figure 5.6 Forced removal of mobile vendors from downtown streets in August 2014 (source: CLUSTER)

Private Sector-led Urban Development Approach

National insurance companies and the private sector were interested to support the refurbishment of the area under the guidance of Cairo Governorate. Real estate developers are a bit different in their approach particularly Al-Ismaelia real estate company, which is a major stakeholder owning more than five percent of downtown. Karim Shafie, the cofounder of Al-Ismaelia points out in a press interview with Mada masr (2015) that he believes in a more modern approach to development positioning downtown Cairo among the major urban centres in the world, reclaiming its lost place in global competitiveness. To them, this could be done in part by bringing into downtown one segment of the society that has been mostly ‘excluded’ for a long time from the area which are those of privileged economic background (Rabie, 2016).

Al-Ismaelia supports creative industries in downtown such as independent art spaces, street performances and art festivals. It also has been working on buying and renovating abandoned cinemas and theatres; and leasing vacant properties for start-ups and small businesses. The private sector is capitalising on the positive impact of the revolution on downtown Cairo as it had a marketing campaign like effect for the area within Cairo introducing downtown to enthusiastic younger generations who discovered its ‘charm’ (see Rabie, 2016).

5.3 The Passageways Project and the Role of Designers as Mediators and Facilitators

The passageway’s project represents a different vision in developing Downtown area. This vision is characterised by trying to find a common ground between the government, the private sector and local communities. The intervention took place in two passageways, Kodak and Philips, in the area. CLUSTER (Cairo Laboratory for Urban Studies, Training and Environment Research), which is an urban design practice based in one of Downtown’s main streets, enabled the collaboration between the local community, Al-Ismaelia real estate company and the local government. The intervention was not confined to physical alterations but also included temporary cultural events and arts exhibits with the collaboration of artists and independent cultural centres. The following section focuses on the process of the intervention from conception and funding to decision making and implementation. All stages of the

project demonstrate the crucial role designers played as mediators and facilitators of partnerships between stakeholders that were unlikely to happen otherwise.

5.3.1 Conception, Project Initiation and Stakeholders

In the few months after the revolution, the initiative originally emerged as an academic coursework in one of Cairo Universities as part of an urban design studio led by the university professor, architect and planner Omar Nagati. (Nagati, interview, April 2018). The aim of the academic project was to propose realistic and creative urban solutions to revitalise the pedestrian passageways in-between buildings of downtown area as alternative spaces for developing the old and decaying core of Cairo. Nagati, with the curator Stryker, founded CLUSTER and decided to turn the academic coursework into practice (Nagati, interview, April 2018).

As discussed earlier in Chapter Three, the few critical years following the revolution witnessed the emergence of an alternative mode of professional practice. Community aligned activist professionals in urban design, planning and arts collaborated and established platforms and firms positioning themselves differently in relation to the formal planning system. CLUSTER is an example of these professional entities which was established primarily driven by an interest in downtown urban issues. This was confirmed by CLUSTER's cofounder.

‘I would say nine out of ten projects in CLUSTER are self-initiated, no one knocked on the door and asked for it. There is no client. We make the client, and we create the project and look for funds, and get approval. Design may be number ten in our priorities. We spend a lot of our time like 80% doing negotiations and getting approvals and about 20% is for technical work’ (Nagati, interview, April 2018).

This shows the crucial role of designers and planners, not only as technical experts, but also as mediators and facilitators of change. With regards to Downtown area, CLUSTER's approach is based on ‘trying to find a common ground between the government, the private sector and local communities’ (Nagati, interview, April 2018). Although the Egyptian revolution is associated with fearless confrontations and oppositional activism, it also brought activists who, while being keen to support less powerful underserved groups, are ‘against demonising private investors’ (Nagati, interview, April 2018).

CLUSTER's designers proposed the concept of ‘in-betweenness’ as an alternative framework for urban development, referring to a variety of spatial gaps between

buildings (see Figure 5.7). In-between spaces take different forms in downtown Cairo ranging from passageways, commercial arcades and setbacks to courtyards, dead end streets and pedestrianised zones, representing an urban typology that is less visible from the main arteries of downtown and the official public domain, allowing a more vibrant everyday urban life (Nagati and Stryker, 2016). The idea focuses on the local experience as the designer explained:

‘Without compromising security or traffic, the passageways can accommodate creative possibilities nurturing the local everyday experience. Experiencing downtown through its passageways is more pleasant away from the busy main streets and squares. The passageways do not just represent an urban typology but a state of in-betweenness and tolerance. I see the in-between spaces as a metaphor of the transition period to a better quality of urban life that we sought to have after the revolution.’ (Nagati, interview, April 2018).

The Passageways project started with extensive mapping activities for downtown’s passageways, fundraising attempts and engaging with a whole range of stakeholders including street vendors, shop owners, residents, real estate developers, local authorities and civil society organisations (Nagati, interview, April 2018). As previously discussed, while the interventions were not typically oppositional or subversive, they are opportunistic taking advantage of what could be achieved or afforded to them. While CLUSTER had a broader vision of revitalising downtown area as a whole through its passageways and in-between spaces, they do not have the capacity, power or resources to implement the whole idea. Nonetheless, they were willing to implement their approach partially, which is also aligned with the experimental dimension of alternative urbanism discussed earlier in the study.



Figure 5.7 Map of Downtown Cairo showing street network vs pedestrian passageways in-between Buildings (Source: Nagati, 2018)

The opportunity came for CLUSTER when a foreign Danish organisation (DEDI) provided a fund to regenerate Cairene public spaces after the revolution. Two passageways, Kodak and Philips, were proposed by CLUSTER as a pilot project to use this fund as a main resource, but also managed to raise small amounts of money from local shop owners, landlords and a real estate developer (see Figure 5.8) (Nagati, interview, April 2018). CLUSTER collaborated with DEDI and held a workshop including Egyptian and Danish university students and artists who were split into groups for a week. The workshop meetings were held in a vacant shop overlooking one of the passageways owned by Al-Ismailia Company for real estate in support of the project. The participants engaged with shop owners, landlords and residents to co-design the passageways, where each group suggested a different design. The workshop ended with a competition, where a jury of urbanists and artists picked the designs to be implemented with respect to local needs. This stage of the project included approval in-principle of the design concept by the Deputy Governor and his team (Nagati and Stryker, 2016).



Figure 5.8 The location of Kodak and Philips passageways (source: author using Google Earth)

The passageways project endorsed the tactic of negotiation between the interests of the stakeholders (see Figure 5.9). Mediation between the different actors in the context of Downtown Cairo in general is challenging as there are conflicting interests on the street level between shop owners, street vendors and property owners. Interviews revealed that the fear of gentrification was a major concern among the local community especially with the involvement of a big real estate company in the project. Several community members voiced their concerns with statements like ‘they do not want us to be here, if they can, they would move all of us and renovate the area’ (Philips PW - Participant 1, interview, April 2018). While gentrification is a risk that is associated with tactical and temporary urbanism in general as discussed in Chapter Two, CLUSTER team had another point of view as highlighted by the cofounder.

‘We do what we call ‘urban diplomacy approach’ to mediate between actors. There are stakeholders who tried to hijack the project, but I believe the smart thing to do is to see what the agenda of the other parties is and use it to develop a common ground. What is the other alternative, you do nothing? I see there is a very big space between fully fledged gentrification like what happens in New York for example, and doing nothing. Many buildings in downtown are flooded with sewers. If there is an earthquake many of these building will collapse, so we cannot sit and do nothing.

Even a very simple act like painting a window for example, people would worry about gentrification! This is not right!'. (Nagati, Interview, April 2018)

Despite these concerns, the role of the designer described by Nagati as an 'urban diplomat' in our conversation was crucial to enable the collaboration between seemingly oppositional stakeholders. The designers facilitated a process of negotiation that was necessary for this project to take place, but more importantly, the inclusiveness of the process was an important factor to build the trust, resolve conflicts and reassure people about the integrity of the project.

'The important thing was the harmony between the aspirations of people and what we achieved and that they felt they were part of it - this is very important- they were fully engaged even if not everything they asked for happened, but I was told that they saw me talking to everyone and that we cared and nobody else does that, so because of this they decided to stand with me. It meant a lot to me. To me, the process was more important than the design outcome' (Nagati, Interview, April 2018)

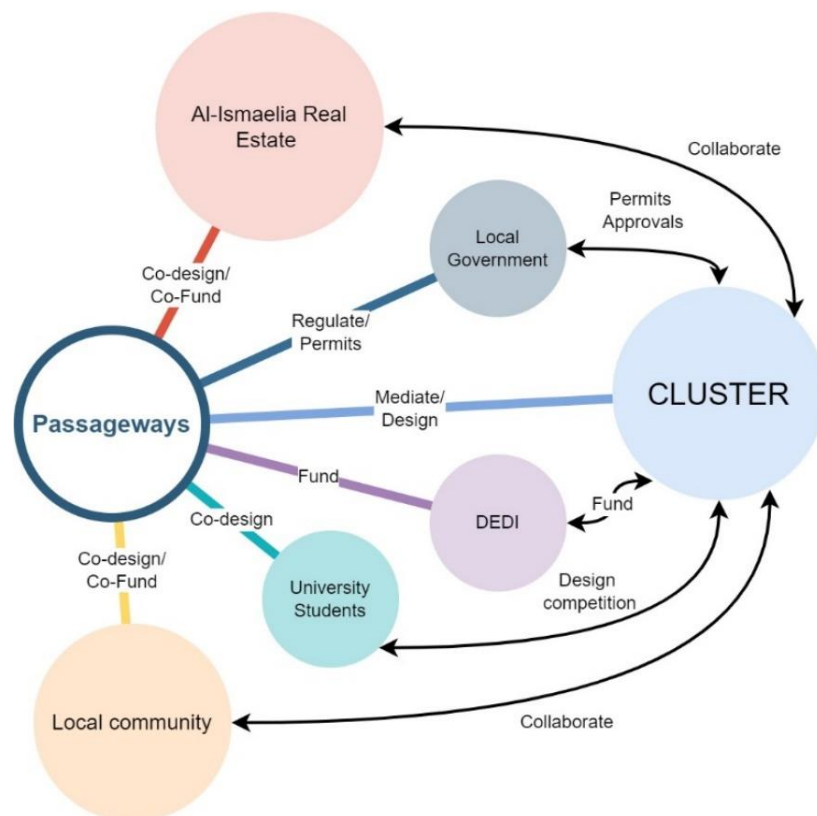


Figure 5.9 Passageways project stakeholders (source: author)

5.3.2 Design Process and Implementation

The two passageways, Kodak and Philips, represented different challenges. Kodak passageway is in a prime location and highly securitized as it lies across from downtown's historic Jewish synagogue and close to multiple banks, which means that security personnel are always present. Before implementation most of the shops overlooking the passageway were vacant, the passageway was mostly underutilised (see Figure 5.10) (Kodak PW - Participant 1, interview, April 2018). Some of the tenants and property owners in the surrounding buildings of this passageway are on the wealthier side, where a few even contributed to fund the project such as Babel Shoe Store, Sarwat Abdel-Shahid Law Firm and the Al-Ismaelia for Real Estate Investment, which owns buildings overlooking the space.

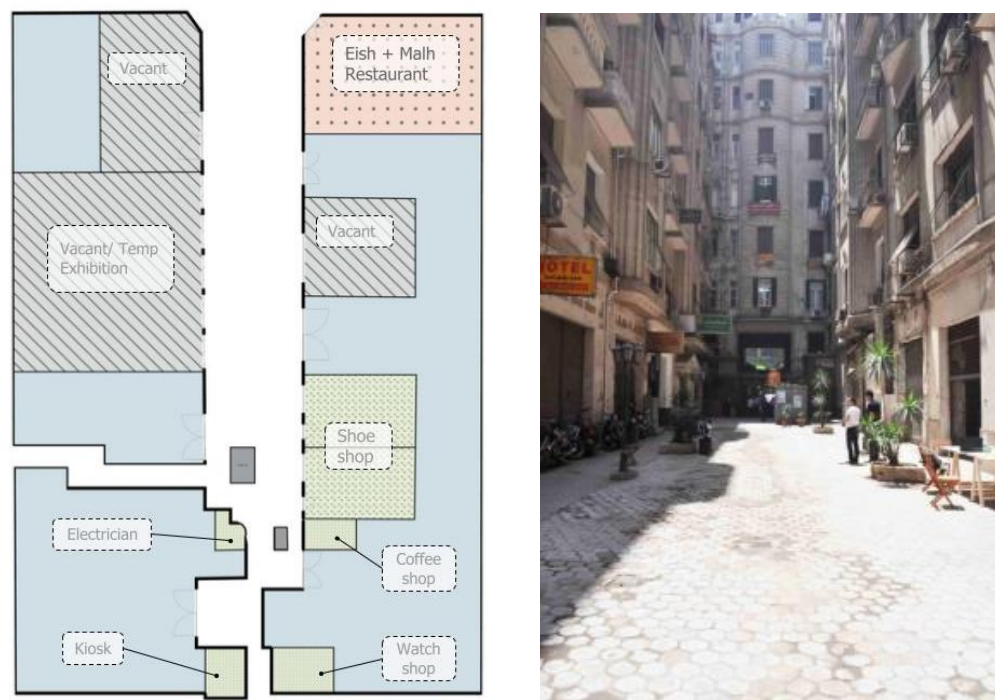


Figure 5.10 Left Kodak Layout before intervention, (Source: author), right Kodak Passageway before intervention (photo by Mohamed Hassan)

In terms of design, the participant architecture students developed a list of ‘dos and don’ts’, based on interviews with the local community and discussions over 3-D models, from which the design elements emerged (see Figure 5.11) (Nagati, interview, April 2018). The redesign involved re-tiling the passageway, incorporating tree planting and gardens. Benches were integrated in the landscape and the existing Parisian-like streetlight fixtures were kept as requested from several locals as a reminiscent of downtown's golden era (see Figure 5.12) (Nagati, interview, April

2018). The vacant shop was appropriated as a temporary exhibition as part of the intervention. Cairo Urban Initiative Platform (CUIP), which is a website created by CLUSTER, describes the passageway as a ‘green oasis’ and a ‘peaceful refuge. It also describes it as ‘a rare opportunity to introduce to this end of Downtown a pop-up gallery space, and to engage art interventions that may serve as a catalyst for urban development and revitalization of surrounding buildings, shops and passageways’.



Figure 5.11 The students’ workshop in Kodak passageway and a vacant shop overlooking the passageway owned by Al-Ismaelia (Source: DEDI)

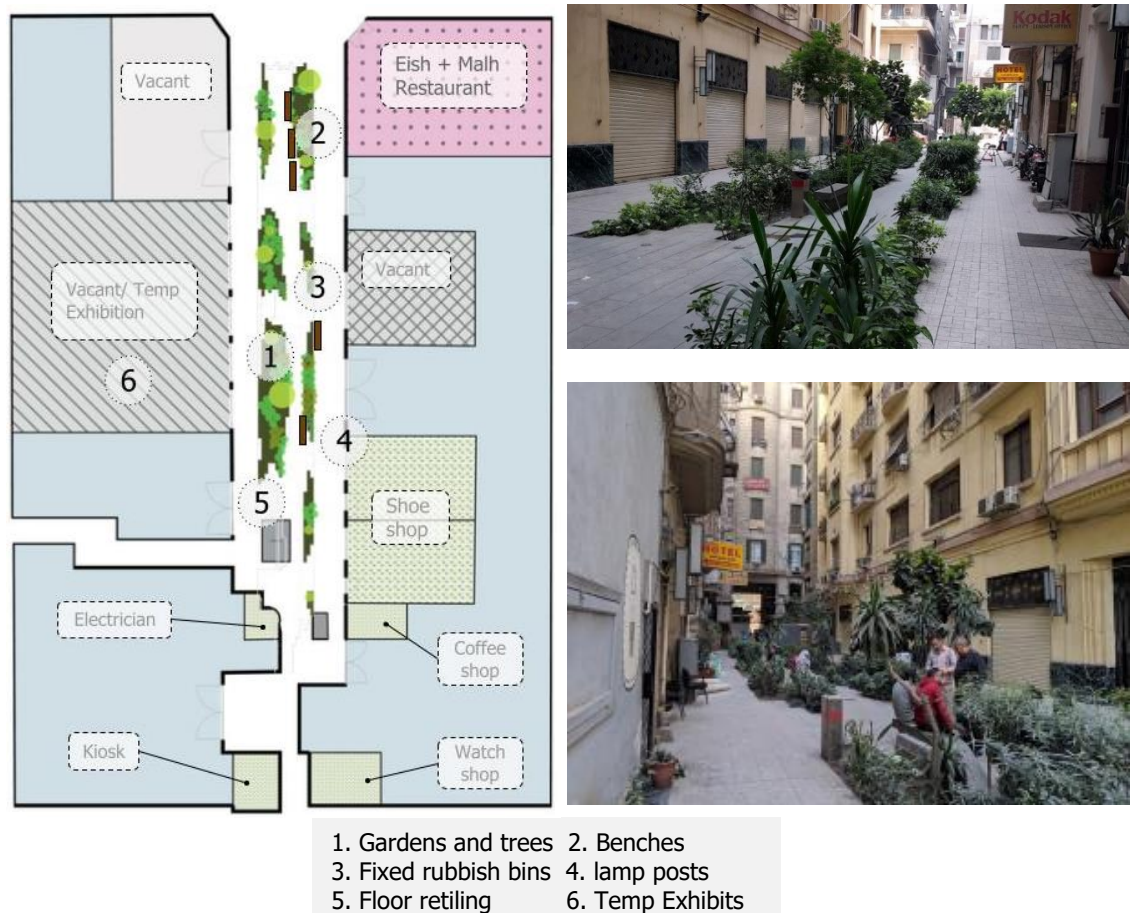


Figure 5.12 Kodak Passageway’s interventions as in 2015 (source: author)

The other passageway, known as Philips after the name of one of its oldest stores, is totally different from Kodak passageway despite their physical proximity. Philips passageway had many of the typical characteristics of downtown in-between spaces including downscale shops, traditional coffee shops and diners with affordable prices (see Figure 5.14). Philips passageway is a left-over space between buildings rather than a designed passageway, so it was suffering from uneven flooring and a lack of proper drainage system, where it often flooded with drainage water (Philips PW - Participant 3, interview, August 2018) (see Figure 5.13). Besides the drainage problem, shop owners and residents complained that the passageway was dark and seemed unsafe for visiting customers especially women and tourists (Philips PW - Participant 3, interview, August 2018).

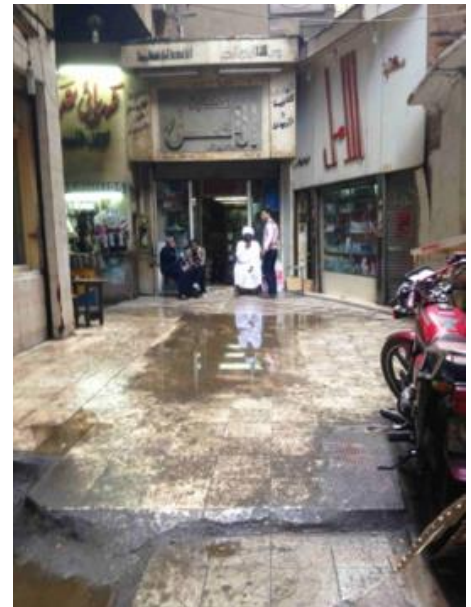


Figure 5.13 Philips passageway before the intervention (source: CUIP)

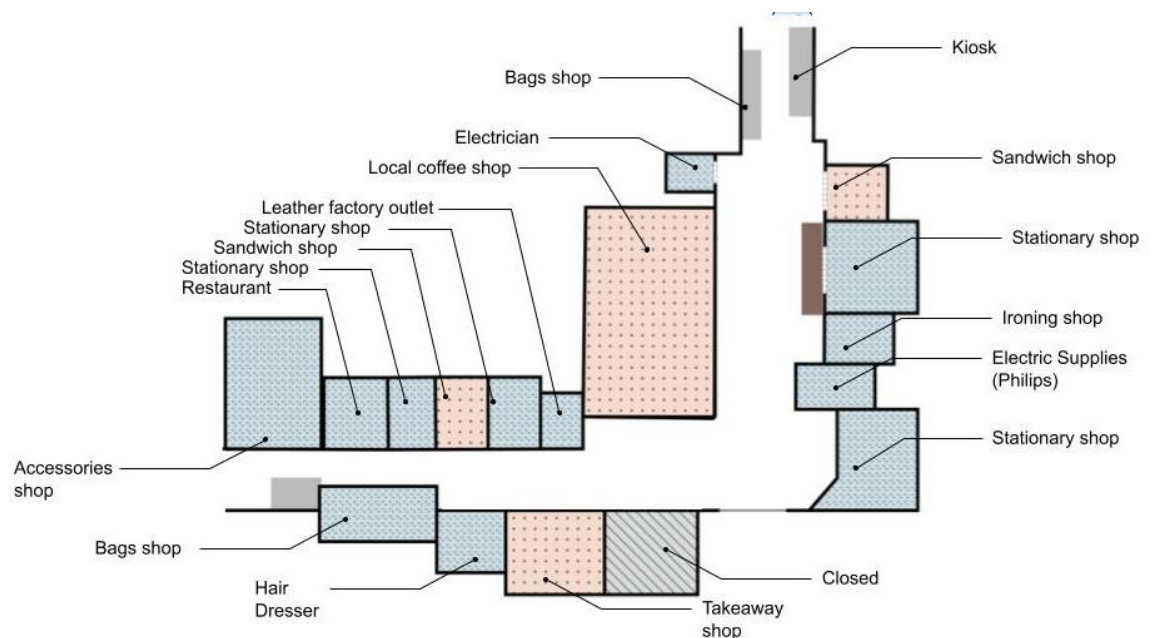


Figure 5.14 Philips passageway layout (source: author)

Philips passageway's community was sceptical in the beginning about the intention of the intervention (see Figure 5.15). Among the local tenants, shop and property owners, only one of the tenants and Philips Company contributed towards funding the project, while Al-Ismaelia company, that also owned the building overlooking the passageway, refused to participate in regenerating Philips passageway the way it did

in Kodak passageway (Philips PW - Participant 4, interview, August 2018). The head of engineering department of Al-Ismaelia Company was quite open that ‘regenerating Philips passageway was not of benefit to the company but revitalizing Kodak passageway was in the company’s plan anyway’ (Ismailia HoE, interview, April 2019). The limited budget curtailed what could be done in Philips. Nevertheless, Philips’ intervention can be viewed as a success in itself, considering that it took place despite the non-cooperation of a business tycoon like Al-Ismaelia company.



Figure 5.15 Students negotiating with local community members in Philips Passageway (source: DEDI)

Constrained by the inadequate funds, only few changes were implemented (See Figure 5.18). CLUSTER team suggested elevating the flooring level of the passageway to avoid flooding as well as installing a simple custom-made apparatus to collect and dispose drainage water at one side of the passageway where the problem was more pronounced (see Figure 5.17) (Philips PW - Participant 4, interview, August 2018). Besides that, the renovation incorporated lighting fixtures to give a safety feeling to the passageway, and an attractive post sign as an entry marquee to invite more people, which was requested by the shop owners (Nagati, interview, April 2018) (see Figure 5.19). A blank wall in the passageway was prepared and painted to

use for film screening events, offering a diversity of uses mixing retail, entertainment, and food (see Figure 5.16) (CUIP, 2017). On the Cairo Downtown Passageways website, Philips passageway is described as a ‘light oasis’ injecting light and life to the previously dark and decaying space.

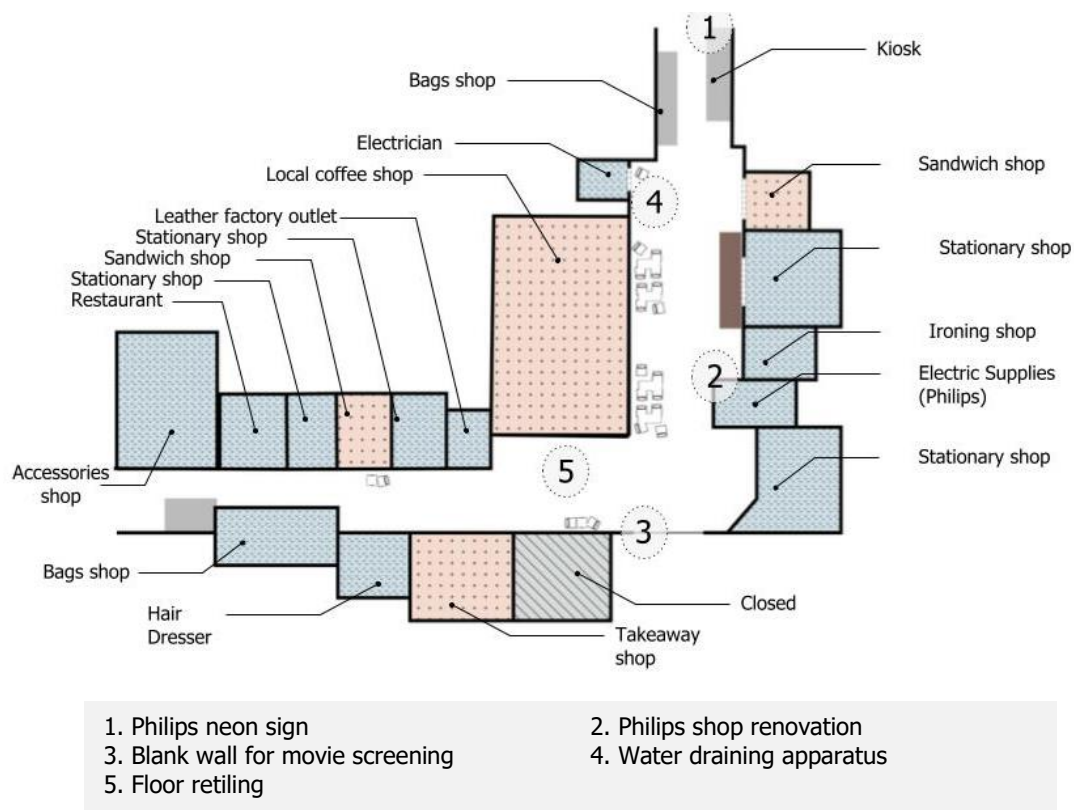


Figure 5.18 Philips intervention (source: author)



Figure 5.17 Apparatus to collect drainage water (source: author)



Figure 5.16 Movie Screenings in Philips Passageway (source: DEDI)



Figure 5.19 An illuminated signpost at the entrance of Philips Passageway (source: DEDI)

Although acknowledging the designers' efforts, the limited intervention in Philips passageway was received with dismay from shop owners and local residents. This was highlighted by several members of the community.

‘CLUSTER did not implement the graffiti mural proposed in their original mock-ups, which I really liked. I know that this was out of their hands as Kodak passageway took most of the money, but it was still disappointing [...] We know that the Al-Ismailia company did not want anything to be done in our passageway’ (Philips PW - Participant 3, interview, August 2018).

Interviews revealed that the community did not easily accept a compromise, and they undervalued solutions that did not meet typical professional standards. Raising the flooring level was just a practical solution as solving the drainage problem would have required reconstructing the decaying infrastructure of the surrounding buildings. A local shop keeper expressed his disappointment, despite alleviating the flooding problem that would not have been resolved without invasive and costly interventions.

‘They did not do much in Philips. They just retiled the floor. Look at the apparatus! I really do not understand! Is this what you learn in faculties of engineering?! It worked for some time and then got clogged’ (Philips PW - Participant 4, interview, August 2018).

Another shop owner blamed Philips' fragmented community, mentioning that the owner of the shop opposite to his place did not cooperate and refused to raise the flooring in front of his shop. He also voiced his concern that Philips Company might

have received preferential treatment from CLUSTER for their financial contribution (Philips PW - Participant 2, interview, April 2018). Some members of Philips community did not seem to trust the crowdfunding process and believed that influence was bought by large financial contributions.

With regards to official approvals of renovating the passageways, CLUSTER was able to formalise their project through a pragmatic tactical approach. CLUSTER team took a few months to acquire the necessary permits where they had to amend or ‘reframe’ the design elements in order to progress the project. For example, municipal authorities objected to integrating benches in Kodak passageway. As a result, Nagati pointed out that ‘the design was amended so that benches would be presented as raised lighting features rather than explicit benches’ (Nagati, interview, April 2018), which was officially approved.

Simple drawings and models that were used to communicate with the community were replaced with what Nagati (2018) describes as ‘commercial-style’ 3D renderings (see Figure 5.20 and Figure 5.21). The project’s narrative was reframed claiming that it is aligned with the authorities’ beautification approach restoring order to downtown after the political instability, while concepts of inclusiveness and diversity were downplayed (Nagati, 2018). Similarly, the project obtained seven approvals from different authorities including electricity, water, traffic, security, and heritage preservation authorities and others, where each time the design was reframed and represented not only to satisfy their technical requirements, but to also to align with the authority’s vision of development (Nagati and Stryker, 2016). Nagati (2018) explains that even the collaboration with foreign organisations was carefully presented as a support for the local municipality under their guidance conforming to the state’s regulations.



Figure 5.20 Kodak passageway redesign in 3D rendering presented to local authorities to obtain official permits (Source: Nagati, 2018)



Figure 5.21 Professional drawings and renderings for the redesign of Philips Passageway presented to multiple local authorities to obtain official permits (source: Nagati, 2018)

Challenges were not only encountered during the decision-making process, but also during construction where the smallest details of the design triggered controversy among the local community that sometimes escalated to threats of sabotaging the project (Nagati and Stryker, 2016). This was confirmed by Nagati who said:

‘The choice of tiles was a subject of disagreement. One of the shop owners threatened to break the floor tiles that he did not like. Even for the things that looked obvious there was contestation. Some

people refused the idea of having benches or seats completely, they did not want young couples to come and sit in the passageway, there is a baggage of negative association with the public that is huge. One threatened to surround these benches with barbed wires, but I convinced him to give the project with its benches one month duration as a test period after which the benches would be removed, which never happened. There are extreme examples of rejection and scepticism, they have seen lots of bad examples before, but gradually people change their minds and collaborate' (Nagati, Interview, April 2018).

On a different level, the bottom-up nature of the project and the exposure of the construction process to the public allowed a wide range of whom Nagati describes as 'interested citizens who were very curious about the details of the design, funding and construction which sometimes extended to giving advice on how to make things better, which caused several delays' (Nagati, interview, April 2018). He mentioned that such continuous engagements with the public slowed down the construction process to avoid alienating the neighbouring communities if they felt that their advice was not taken seriously.

Not only did passers-by's curiosity during construction cause delays, but also the lack of municipal support caused significant problems delaying the process adversely affecting the project. Although CLUSTER obtained official approvals, the municipality did not offer any financial or logistic support. Nagati explained in our interview that the municipality did not provide CLUSTER with the necessary documents regarding the passageways' infrastructure. CLUSTER had to buy expensive maps from the General Survey Authority to help find out some groundwork details, but this was not enough to prevent the workers from hitting a major water pipe in Kodak passageway during construction which caused significant delays and additional repair costs. A couple of shop owners in Philips passageway mentioned this problem as one of the reasons CLUSTER could not do much in their passageway. Moreover, Nagati (interview, April 2019) added that CLUSTER was charged official construction fees, which was not expected to be required when refurbishing an open space for the public.

5.4 Tracing the Passageways' Change over Time

As much as the research seeks to clarify the process of the intervention and the challenges and conflicts that arose during the different phases of implementation, it

also seeks to investigate how the produced spaces have changed over time and what kind of impact the interventions have caused. This inquiry determined focusing on the emerging patterns of social use, lived experiences, efforts of social control or conflicts arising from different groups claims. For this purpose, I spent significant time in downtown Cairo and specifically Kodak and Philips passageways to understand the everyday social life of the spaces. My fieldwork started by taking walks through downtown passageways. Before the intervention, I was already familiar with Kodak Passageway as it is opposite to one of the architectural landmarks of downtown area, the Jewish synagogue. I also visited both passageways directly after the intervention in 2015 driven by interest in the project itself as it gained positive reputation in the academic networks within Cairo. In the fieldwork periods, the passageways were observed three to four days a week (two to three weekdays and one weekend day), every time I spend minimum two hours but at different times of the day. Interviews with the different participants and stakeholders were crucial to understand the perceptions and feelings attached to the passageways over time and their viewpoints and experiences of the change that has been happening since the completion of the project in January 2015.

5.4.1 Mapping spatial Practices

As discussed earlier in Chapter Four, mapping is a method intended to capture the social patterns generated in the space, as well as the temporary physical appropriations or permanent changes happening over time. These maps were based on observations during different fieldwork periods (April 2018, August 2018, April 2019 and August 2019). The social practices in the passageways were mapped through a series of space/time snapshots for the passageways. Each map represents aggregate practices superimposing snapshots of occupation and traces of movement paths.

Based on interviews and online digital material, I developed a timeline for the project and the spaces, Kodak and Philips, to support and complement the generated maps with key events, uses and appropriations during the process and after implementation (see Table 3)

Table 3 Timeline for the process and produced spaces (source: author)

Date	Actors	Action or event
Mar 2014	Developer	First Exhibition to use the Kodak vacant shops space
April 2014	CLUSTER Funder	Design workshop with Egyptian and Danish artists and architects to conceptualize and produce a design scheme for intervention in each passage, incorporating input from the local community.
Aug 2014	CLUSTER	Student interns from 3 Egyptian universities contribute to the design as part of summer internship at Cluster
Sep 2014	CLUSTER	Project officially started
Nov 2014	Shop Owner	Eish & Malh restaurant opens in Kodak
Dec 2014	CLUSTER	Construction work in passageways
Jan 2015	CLUSTER Funder (DEDI) Developer Shop owners	Kodak & Philips Passageway inauguration
Jan 2015	CLUSTER Funder (DEDI) Developer Shop owners	Movie screening projected on the blank wall at Philips
Jan 2015	CLUSTER Developer	Cairo Passageways exhibition in Kodak vacant shops
Jun 2016	CLUSTER Funder Shop owner	Ramadan Iftar in collaboration with DEDI and Eish & Malh at Kodak Passageway
Jul 2016	Developer	Themed decorations to celebrate Eid installed in Kodak
Oct 2016	Developer	British museum's modern Egypt art Exhibition in Kodak vacant shop
Dec 2016	Developer	Christmas themed decorations installed in Kodak
Dec 2017	Developer	Christmas themed decorations installed with special lighting in Kodak
Mar 2018	Developer	Spring Themes decorations with a large swing installed in Kodak
May 2018	Developer	Ramadan themed decoration installed in Kodak
Aug 2018	Developer	Eid Adha themed decorations installed in Kodak
Sep 2018	Developer	Photography Exhibition in Kodak vacant shops
Oct 2018	Developer Shop Owner	'I love Cairo' wooden made out of old wooden doors installed at Kodak sponsored by ABnG
Oct 2018	Developer Funder (DEDI)	'Because I am a father' Exhibition in Kodak vacant shops
Nov 2018	Developer	Cairo Photo week workshops held in vacant shops
Dec 2018	Developer	Calligraphy Exhibition at Kodak vacant shops
Dec 2018	Developer	Christmas decorations installed in Kodak
Jan 2019	Developer Shop Owner	Downtown goes green events with installations in Kodak from recycled materials sponsored by ABnG
Feb 2019	Developer	Photography workshop sponsored by Sony and held in Kodak vacant shops
Mar 2019	Developer Shop Owner	New 'I love Cairo' Installation sponsored by ABnG
Mar 2019	Developer	Cairo Sewer covers exhibition in Kodak vacant shops
Apr 2019	Developer	Interior design exhibition in Kodak vacant shops
Apr 2019	Developer	Downtown shop fronts reimagined exhibition in Kodak vacant shops
May 2019	Developer	Ramadan themed 'I love Cairo' installation in Kodak
May 2019	Shop owners	Ramadan decorations installed in Philips

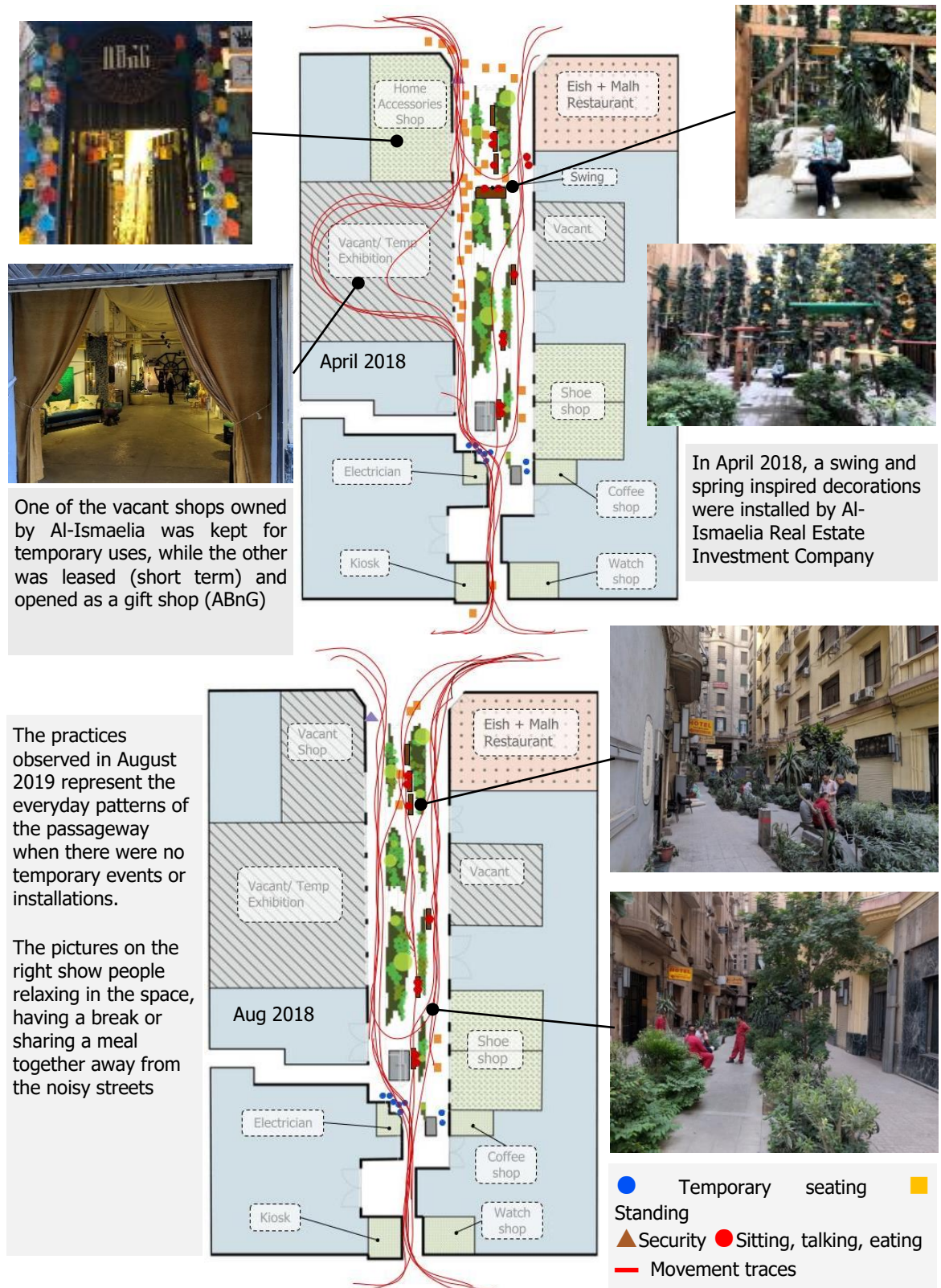


Figure 5.22 Kodak Passageway mapping in April and August 2018 (source: author)

Figure 5.23 Kodak Passageway mapping in April and August 2019 (source: author)

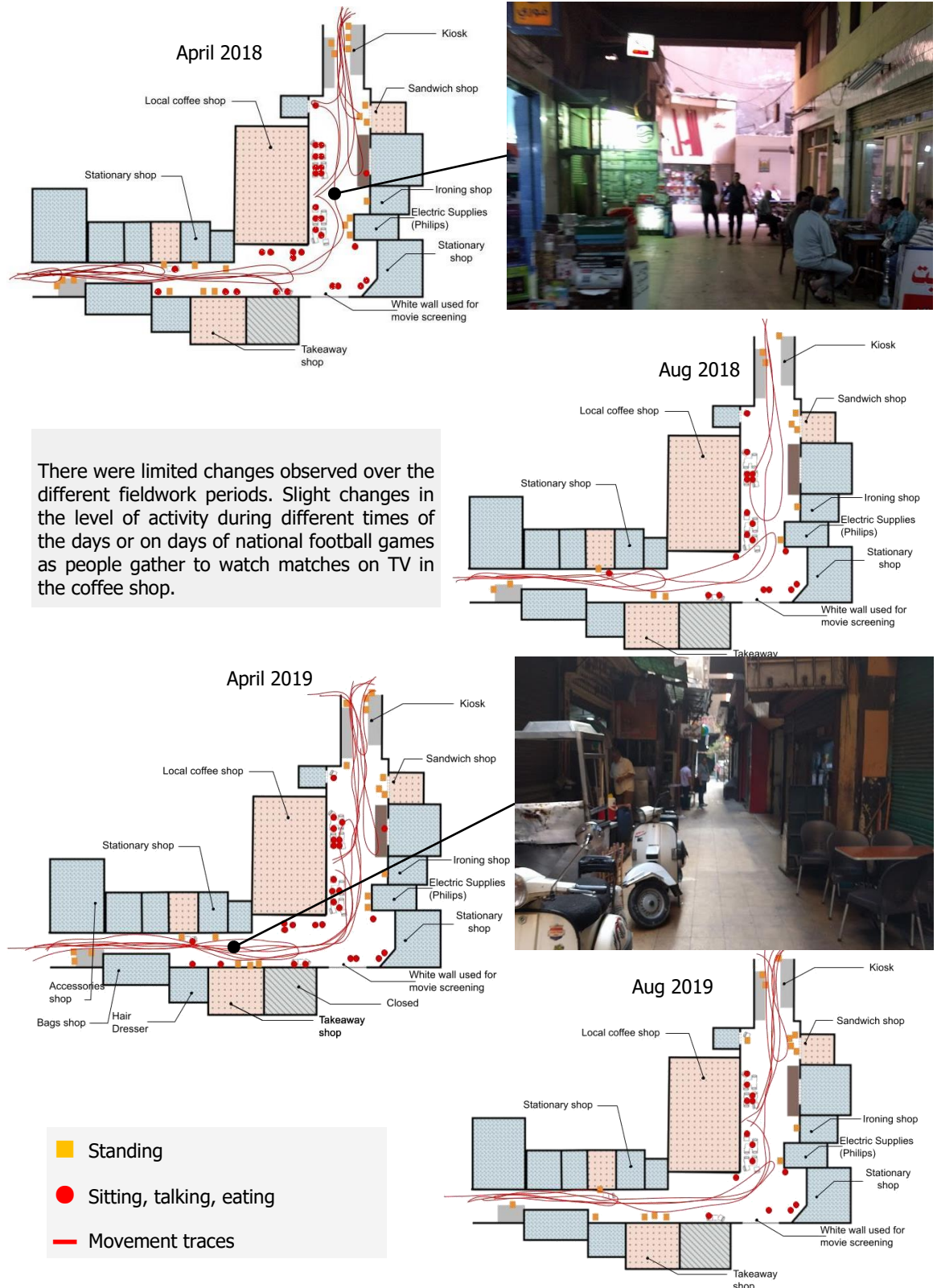


Figure 5.24 Philips Passageway mapping in 2018 and 2019 (source: author)

As demonstrated above in the maps, Kodak passageway was more dynamic and interesting than Philips passageway, where the former was continuously appropriated

encouraging different users/uses. On the other hand, Philips passageway remained mostly unchanged on day-to-day basis with frequent customers, typical uses and everyday familiar passers-by. The reasons for this are explained later in this chapter but in terms of mapping, a fewer movement paths were used to illustrate the social patterns generated in Philips passageway to avoid redundancy.

5.4.2 Exploring the lived and Spatiotemporal Experience

This section examines the passageways in the light of Lefebvre's concept of differential space as discussed in Chapter Two, focusing on the dynamics of the 'lived space' and 'spatiotemporal' placemaking.

Reshaping Everyday Experience and Acquiring Meaning in Kodak Passageway

Based on my observations over the fieldwork periods between 2017 and 2019, Kodak passageway that was formerly underused transformed into a dynamic public space. The design elements that were introduced to the space (benches, plants, flooring, lighting fixtures) seemed to trigger passers-by's curiosity attracting them out of their daily routines. The scarcity of such spaces that are open and accessible to people in downtown Cairo produced 'difference' in the use of space attracting a variety of people. The cosiness of the space with its seats and green landscape transformed the passageway into a mini park encouraging people to visit and linger in the space. The in-between space resonates with the concepts discussed in Chapter Two such as 'everyday space' (Crawford, 2005) and 'loose space' (Franck and Stevens, 2007), as a vital space for nurturing everyday urban experience. People entered the space to explore the attractive interstice and escape the bustling streets.

From what I observed, many users of Kodak passageway were frequent users, usually people working or living in the neighbouring streets and for them the passageway turned into the 'living room' of the area. At different times of the day, doorkeepers sat together and chatted in front of buildings; and waiters, cooks and chefs of the restaurant on the corner take breaks and socialise in the passageway. A shopkeeper explained that she was enjoying spending most of the day in the shop while watching the dynamic life of the passageway and she never got bored (Kodak PW - Participant 1, interview, April 2018). It was quite clear to me that people looked comfortable in the passageway, their pace slowed upon entering the passageway. When members of the local community were asked about their perceptions and experiences of the

passageway, their responses demonstrated good feelings attached to the space. Interviews revealed that there is a link between the proactive engagement of people in the production of space and their experience of the space. Several statements confirm this understanding. An older man explained that he participated during the design and that he was proud of what was done (Kodak PW - Participant 3, interview, April 2018). A local woman who works as a shop keeper, stated that the passageway ‘feels like home’, ‘a nice place to sit’ and ‘one of the scarce seated places in Downtown that you can use without having to order a drink’ (Kodak PW - Participant 1, interview, August 2018). A young woman described the place as ‘well kept, far from the noise of the streets and felt safe’ (Kodak PW - Participant 5, interview, August 2018). Another recognised the significance of the greenery, the cleanliness and the microclimate of the passageway surrounded by buildings where the weather is cooler and shaded most of the day in hot sunny days (Kodak PW - Participant 6, interview, August 2018).

In time, Kodak passageway acquired a new name within the local community ‘*Elgenena*’ which means ‘the garden’, acknowledging the newly introduced greenery (Kodak PW - Participant 3, interview, August 2019). The designer Omar Nagati shared with me an incident that happened a few months after the intervention when a local doorkeeper emotionally hugged him as it was the first time for him to feel welcome to bring his family and spend the day in the passageway on his vacation day (Nagati, interview, April 2018). The incident demonstrated how much the space meant to the local community especially those who were usually marginalised in regeneration projects.

Another substantial consequence of the project was the opening of ‘Eish and Malh’ restaurant around the corner in one of the previously vacant shops, which quickly became one of the favourite restaurants for locals and tourists. (see Figure 5.25). The restaurant is a local business owned by two young female entrepreneurs resident in downtown who were motivated by the passageways project. The passageway attracted like-minded people as their place has been associated with a narrative of activism, especially that the owners support small organic farms and local farmers, which appealed to diverse clientele from different social backgrounds (Kodak PW - Participant 9, interview, April 2019). A home accessories brand leased the shop on the other corner which is owned by the real estate developer with a short-term lease agreement. The coupling of the restaurant and the shop brought to the passageway

crowds of people who congregated and socialised while enjoying the scenery of the historic architectural styles surrounding the space.



Figure 5.25 Eish and Malh Restaurant opened at the corner of the passageway (source: author)

Temporary Installations as Tools of Placemaking in Kodak Passageway

What significantly added to the liveliness and the ‘difference’ in the space are the temporary art installations implemented in the passageway by Al-Ismaelia Company, which collaborated with artists to build a creative city narrative. The temporary elements and collective activities created an ongoing process of placemaking. This created a distinctive immersive experience, resonating with Harris’ (2015) description of pop-ups as ‘spatiotemporal imaginaries’ and platforms for immersing the users in shared experiences. The passageway’s ‘eventization’ worked as differential spacing interrupting everyday rhythms or what Harris (2015) calls ‘evental interstitiality’. The art installations attracted a wide range of users across different age groups and from different social backgrounds. For example, in April 2018, two swings and spring inspired decorations were installed in the passageway by Al-Ismaelia company which was a quite a novelty in Cairene public spaces (see Figure 5.26). The passageway then transformed temporarily into a ‘must-visit spot’ in downtown Cairo, as highlighted by a nearby shop keeper. She explained that ‘abundant numbers of university students specifically came to visit the passageway and had to form a queue to use the swings,

one of them eventually broke.’ (Kodak PW - Participant 1, interview, April 2018). The narrative of creativity was further enforced by the activities of the users of the space and their interaction with the public installations. For example, the scenery intrigued a couple of university students to sit for hours on the seat facing the swing with sketches and pencils drawing the space. The distinctiveness of the temporary installations, whether for seasonal celebrations, artistic expression or entertainment, interrupted the surrounding dominant everyday narratives and aesthetics in downtown Cairo.

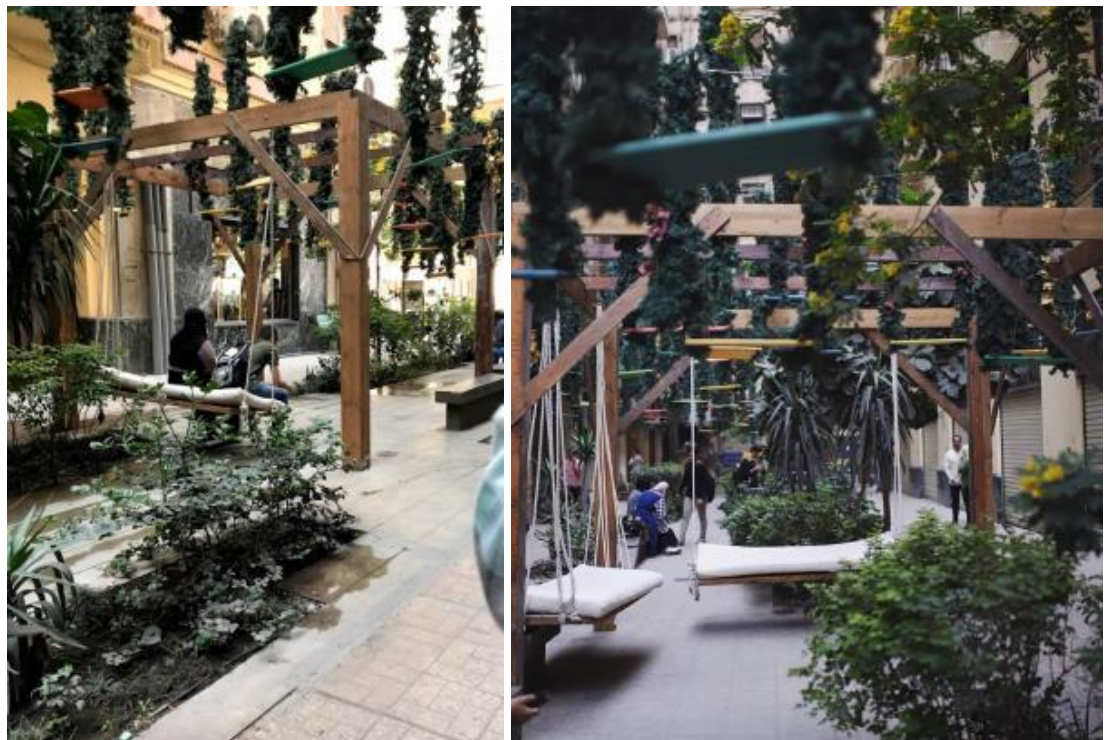


Figure 5.26 Spring inspired decorations and swings were installed in Kodak passageway in April 2018 (source: author)

Among the significant events was a Ramadan community Iftar in the passageway organised by the owners of the restaurant in collaboration with CLUSTER, which brought the community, professionals and representatives from the municipal authorities together (Nagati, interview, April 2018) (see Figure 5.27). This incident could be described as a unique encounter in the passageway or even in Cairene public spaces in general. Communal meals in public spaces are usually organised for charity or to offer food for the poor in the holy month of Ramadan, while this event brought people with diverse backgrounds and from different social classes indicating the influence of such projects on fostering the sense of community.



Figure 5.27 Community Iftar at Kodak passageway (source: CLUSTER)

Exhibitions also took place in the vacant shops surrounding Kodak passageway which attracted a wide range of visitors (see Figure 5.28). Al-Ismaelia Company, owning one of the buildings overlooking the space opened the vacant shops for young artists and early career researchers to exhibit their work to the public for free (Al-Ismaelia Tenants relations manager, interview, April 2019). A young researcher explained her displayed posters with pride and expressed the importance of such exhibitions offering wide exposure of her work outside academic circles (Kodak PW - Participant 10, interview, April 2019). Such creative events produced what William Whyte (1980) describes as ‘triangulation’, creating interesting public encounters that worked as opportunities for social mingling and interaction.



Figure 5.28 Temporary exhibitions taking place in the vacant shops owned by the real estate developer (source: author)

The whole passageway and the surrounding shops have taken on an ‘edgy’ or a ‘cool’ character appealing to many visitors. By time, the vacant shops have transformed into well-known venues supported by significant web presence. The venues attracted established exhibitors and high-end brands but still open free of charge to the public. According to several exhibitors, although perceived as more elite environments, their exhibitions had visitors from various social backgrounds. ‘Everyone is welcome’ said one of the event organisers displaying luxurious pieces of home furniture and decorations. It was common in the opening events of such upscale exhibitions to see celebrities or popular figures invited to the event, which added to the attractiveness and the cool identity the space acquired and the willingness of people to visit the space. The space turned into a favourite hangout for younger adults where at most times there are a few chatting or taking pictures together.

Due to the significant web presence of Kodak passageway, it received recognition in artists’ networks as a pop-up gallery space attracting international artists and volunteers to exhibit their work and participate in the events such as ‘From Rags to Riches’ workshop which continued for a whole month in one of the vacant shops overlooking the passageway. Kodak passageway represented a touristic attraction to the few tourists visiting Cairo. In collaboration with a local design studio, Al-Ismailia Company installed a 3D artwork saying ‘I love Cairo’ as it is a common rhetoric promoting tourism in global cities. The artwork made of recycled materials created a hot spot for pictures taken by both locals and visitors that are usually uploaded on social media platforms attracting more people (see Figure 5.29).



Figure 5.29 'I love Cairo' artwork has created a hot spot for pictures (source: author)

An Enhanced Everyday Experience in Philips Passageway

As discussed earlier, the community of Philips passageway came across initially as being disappointed with the renovations where many elaborated on the difference between what they were expecting and what really happened. After spending more time in the space, visiting the space multiple times and interviewing more people, positive responses started to emerge about the project and the change between the before and after situations of the space. Philips passageway before the intervention was more confined to the use of the neighbouring community but the intervention encouraged wider public use. The foot traffic in the space increased around breakfast and lunch times because of the diners, while the coffee shop was busy most of the time where some locals, particularly the unemployed, spend the whole day especially in the summer. Several members of the community expressed their gratitude towards CLUSTER and Nagati calling him 'our friend'. They were expecting more to happen, but they confirmed they have been receiving more customers, passers-by as well as visitors who heard about the project and sometimes tourists (Philips PW - Participant 7, interview, August 2019). Also, the project encouraged several individual 'beautification' attempts from property owners renovating their shops which helped to attract more customers. A local shop keeper said: 'Yes definitely more people now come. The coffee shop is busier than before for sure. The passageway in general feels

better. No one can deny that' (Philips PW - Participant 7, interview, April 2018). One of the tenants highlighted the difference stating

'Before the intervention the place scared outsiders. I knew we had to do something when about two years ago a tourist was terrified upon entering the passageway and he literally ran away leaving his tour guide who wanted to show him our traditional coffee shops and diners. Therefore, I jumped at the chance. The illuminated signpost- I wanted it - attracted a lot of people as people were curious to see what was new, but the attractiveness of the post mostly faded when it stopped lighting up [...] While the space physically did not change much it has become cleaner and brighter giving a better sense of safety so now it has become more common to see families and women in the coffee shop.' (Philips PW - Participant 3, interview, August 2018).

Limited Social Interaction in Philips Passageway

As mentioned above, the intervention catalysed social interactions but the passageway lacked creating encounters with 'difference' and heterogeneity. Interestingly, the blank wall facing the coffee shop that was prepared for movie screenings was never used except on the inauguration day of the passageways project where two screenings were projected on the wall (see Figure 5.30). One of the coffee shop owners explained: 'CLUSTER used their own projector and removed it at the end of the day. We are happy with our indoor television as customers usually want to watch football matches' (Philips PW - Participant 2, interview, April 2018)



Figure 5.30 The blank wall that was prepared for movie screenings has never been used except on the inauguration day of the project (source: author)

This demonstrates that the success of these interventions is influenced by local aspirations and the extent to which the community is sensitive to differences or flexible to changes. This was highlighted by one of local shop tenants who stated:

I believe that that the coffee shop owners wasted a good chance of improving their business. I even offered to rent the place to take advantage of the opportunity, but they refused. People here are too traditional and hard to convince to implement new ideas. Even the experience of watching the movie on the inauguration day was not very successful, although I enjoyed it a lot myself. The movie did not match the taste of people here. CLUSTER collaborated with Cimatheque which is an independent film centre, and such independent movies usually attract other crowds who might not feel very welcome in our passageway (Philips PW - Participant 3, interview, August 2018).

It is possible that the choice of the movie alienated the users, while other movies could have been more successful. Nevertheless, alternative processes of urban interventions require a certain level of willingness to change as well as to accept others. These alternative projects usually attract underground artists and independent arts initiatives which might not feel appreciated in more conservative environments. Temporary appropriations would not be impactful if they are not aligned with local cultural norms.

5.4.3 Exploring the Roles of Actors and Power Dynamics

The role of CLUSTER as mediating agents was crucial and compromises were necessary for this intervention to happen. However, the nature of the produced spaces regarding how they have been regulated or controlled is critical to determine the potential of such urban practices to cause inclusive transformation and empower local communities. It is important to reach an understanding of how the different stakeholders, conflicting interests and the power relations have influenced the use and management of the produced spaces.

Effective Mediation and Empowered Outcomes in Kodak Passageway

Through a negotiated common ground, the Passageways project allowed the coming together of real estate developers, local authorities, activists and the local community. The coproduction process allowed the inhabitants to share power and responsibility. The project interrupted the dominant neoliberal logic that prioritizes profit-making and instead empowered the local community by being key actors not only during the intervention but also in using, regulating and maintaining the passageway. Interviews

with the Al-Ismaelia company representatives demonstrate that such projects require openness from the side of the developer to support local activism, temporary uses and experimental ideas. As discussed earlier, Al-Ismaelia Company already had the intention to renovate Kodak passageway and create a coffee shop and co-working hub (see Figure 5.31). As there were hurdles in obtaining permits for these uses, they approved of CLUSTER's proposal which opened an alternative possibility for development as well as raising the value of their property and the whole surrounding area while supporting local activism (Ismaelia HoE, interview, April 2019).

In an interview with the head of marketing and communication of Al-Ismaelia Company, she said their team operate under the slogan 'downtown for all' and that their projects in general aim to 'create dynamic spaces that inject life around every corner and enrich the lives of the public through arts and culture' (Ismaelia HoM, interview, April 2019). They promoted this vision in all their community events in Kodak passageway to prove their good intentions which, she confirmed, 'do not contradict with the financial interests of the company' (Ismaelia HoM, interview, April 2019). In the same sense, temporary exhibitions were held free of charge in the vacant shops owned by the company. Short-term rent-free leases were offered to creative local businesses on the condition of implementing pop-up installations in the passageway for the public. For example, in collaboration with the local home accessories brand mentioned earlier, which opened for a year and a half in Kodak passageway, Al-Ismaelia Company launched the initiative of 'Downtown Goes Green' in January 2019 where recycled materials were used in pop-up decorative art in the passageway.



Figure 5.31 A revitalisation proposal for Kodak passageway designed by Al-Ismaelia Company for Real Estate Investment. (Source: Al-Ismaelia for Real Estate)

Not only collaborative design provided a local sense of empowerment, but also creating ‘empowered outcomes’ such as spatial, social and economic gains and continued returns to the actual users. In addition to being a vital social asset, several community members highlighted the role of the passageway in bringing benefits to the area. This was confirmed by one of the workers in the coffee shop who said:

‘These shops on the other end of the passageway have been receiving more customers. My place too and even the restaurant opened and is working well because of the passageway. Passers-by and visitors buy snacks and refreshments from the kiosk at the corner of the passageway and the number of customers rises with the existence of art installations and exhibitions’ (Kodak PW - Participant 11, interview, August 2019).

In time, the space received recognition from the local government, for example it was selected for launching events and exhibitions as one of the key sites to celebrate the International Heritage Day. Also, the minister of Tourism visited the space when it was hosting a photography exhibition around a theme of promoting Egypt to the world.

Collaborative Maintenance and a Degree of Collective Control in Kodak Passageway

Five years after the intervention, Kodak passageway was still in a good condition as it was maintained and kept by the local community. With the help of CLUSTER, a board of tenants, property owners, and businesses was set after the intervention to manage the space (Nagati, interview, April 2018). Although a public space, driven by their sense of ownership, they gathered money monthly for gardening, trash collection, electricity, water and general maintenance. This shows that the intervention provided a learning process that was essential for the inhabitants to maintain the space collectively. Also, some members of the community particularly expressed their gratitude for the role of AL-Isamelia, for example, a coffee shop worker said that ‘they helped maintain the good condition of the passageway by continuously organising events and decorating the space’ (Kodak PW - Participant 11, interview, August 2019).

It is worth noting that the complex redistribution of roles, responsibilities and rights might also create conflicts between people if there is insufficient coordination. To give an example, a couple of years after the intervention one of the property owners renovated the façade of one of the neighbouring abandoned shops to complete the

renovated image of the passageway. This action triggered a violent reaction from the owner of the renovated shop who vandalised the renovated façade of his own shop to express his anger that his permission was not taken (see Figure 5.32) (Kodak PW - Participant 15, interview, August 2019). This incident proves that these initiatives should be motivated by a collective desire otherwise it would be viewed as offensive, threatening the sense of ownership.



Figure 5.32 A shop owner destroyed his own façade as it was renovated without his permission (source: author)

Based on my observations of Kodak passageway, the space was constantly under control, not only because of the buildings' guards and surveillance cameras but also due to the heavy presence of security personnel on site. As explained earlier, this area was already heavily securitised before the intervention due to the presence of banks and historic monuments facing the passageway. At most times, there was a security officer sitting at the corner of the passage which significantly reduced illegal practices or anti-social behaviour in the space. Although this securitization might have prevented some uses/users such as mobile vendors or homeless people, it also provided a sense of safety for families, women, the elderly and people from various social classes to use the space. This was highlighted by the cofounder of CLUSTER 'securitization is a double-edged sword' (Nagati, interview April 2019). Moreover, the head of marketing and communication shared her observations with me about the change in the attitude of the security forces existing in the surrounding area over time. She confirmed 'they got used to people congregating in the space and pausing for

pictures in the passageway where previously using cameras raised suspicions (Ismailia HoM, interview, April 2019). Security forces no longer prohibit use, prolonged sitting or crowding in the passageway. In time, they stopped considering playful activities and social events as among ‘the undesirables’ from a security perspective. This might contribute to a transition towards more official acceptance of vibrant public spaces and more tolerance towards collective appropriations.

CLUSTER took the risk of not obtaining official approvals from the security apparatus when they organised the communal meal in the passageway. The cofounder of CLUSTER, Nagati, pointed out: ‘sometimes we have to take the risk. Although the local municipality was collaborative, the idea was not welcome for security reasons which led to some tension with security personals on site but got resolved quickly’ (Nagati, interview, April 2018). Similarly, the building and tenant relations manager of Al-Ismailia confirmed that they did not seek approvals for the temporary installations in the passageway, but they did not include any physical signs of advertisement for their company in the passageway to avoid legal trouble (Ismailia Tenants Relations Manager, interview, April 2019).

Unsuccessful Collective Action and Internal Conflicts in Philips Passageway

While the process of coproduction during the intervention process was supposed to create a collective sense of responsibility, Philips passageway was impacted by the lack of resources combined with lack of collective will and passivity. This issue was highlighted in my interview with CLUSTER’s lead designer who stated: ‘the problem with this passageway is that there is no collective will, there are around twenty shops and there are lots of issues between them’, moreover, ‘some have old rent contracts and under the threat of eviction, so they are very sensitive’ (Nagati, interview, April 2019). Philips community failed to form a board of owners and tenants similar to Kodak’s one which affected maintaining the space. In our interview, a local shop owner expressed his disappointment as he tried to collect signatures from tenants and other shop owners after the intervention to form an official board but due to the lack of trust among people they refused to sign, and he gave up (Philips PW - Participant 4, interview, August 2018). During interviews several shop owners complained of others’ advancing private interests and not respecting the common good which caused tension among the community. For example, several mentioned the shop owner who refused to raise the floor level adjacent to his shop and have been treating this area as

part of his property, and also mentioned others who have been displaying goods blocking the passage (see Figure 5.33).



Figure 5.33 The kiosk owners have extended displaying goods into the passage limiting visibility and accessibility (source: author)

In addition, internal conflicts took place between members of the local community with different perceptions about utilising the passageway or with those who attempted to appropriate opportunities for their own purposes. This was highlighted by one of the local shop owners who stated:

‘CLUSTER had acquired a temporary permission to use a public electricity outlet for illuminating the signpost for one month duration. When the month ended, the shops needed to form a board of tenants and owners and apply for an electricity meter, but they did not. In addition, some shops used this public outlet for their own shops putting Omar Nagati at risk. The signpost was disconnected, and a police report was filed against CLUSTER for breaking the law. CLUSTER was fined 500 pounds as a penalty for this incident and Nagati paid the penalty of his own pocket’ (Philips PW - Participant 4, interview, August 2018).

Philips passageway demonstrates how in-between spaces are semi-public in character which can affect their usability and accessibility. Although Philips passageway is not heavily securitised, the public space is highly controlled by the owners of the neighbouring shops. One of the shop owners said that the passageway’s community protect it and they do not allow ‘inappropriate behaviour’. He added that they also have surveillance cameras and offered to fast-forward his camera tape for me to see

how safe their space is. As the passageway is full of shops, they also do not allow mobile vendors into the space especially those selling stationary items with the presence of three stationaries in Philips passageway.

5.5 Accumulative Impact of the Passageways Project

The themes above indicate a spatial, socioeconomic and symbolic impact as well as highlight limitations. Five years post-intervention, it is possible to evaluate the accumulative impact within the produced spaces or whether the intervention triggered chain reactions learning from the initiative elsewhere. The passageways case study demonstrates the transformative potential of alternative spaces and processes in a longer-term perspective with reference to its local context. Based on the analysis in the previous section, this section illustrates and reviews the case study through the theoretical concepts discussed in Chapter Two, which also guided the analysis. It then discusses the accumulative impact of the project and explores its wider ripple effects.

5.5.1 Passageways as ‘Alternative Spaces’

This section revisits the overarching theoretical framework of the research as discussed in Chapter Two using the Passageways case study. The themes in the previous section provided explanations about how the interplay between the formal and informal, the planned and unplanned and the temporary and permanent was materialised in these small-scale interventions. In addition, the dynamics of the project are reviewed through the theoretical lenses of ‘differential space’ and ‘coproduction’ (see Figure 5.34)

Formal/Informal -Developing a common ground between diverse stakeholders -Infiltrating through cracks in the formal system (e.g. presenting seats as raised lighting features to obtain permits)	Planned/Unplanned -Small-scale intervention/incremental approach - Focusing on in-between spaces away from the official public domain. -Open collaborative design	Temporary/Permanent -‘Eventizing’ the passageway and vacant shops / collaborative appropriations (programmed temporary exhibitions, art installations, music concerts, film screenings and communal meals)
		
Differential Space • Everyday Lived Space • Spatiotemporal Placemaking • Kodak: turned into a dynamic space nurturing lived experiences through habitual everyday practices as well as differential space-time appropriations attracting a wide range of people across different age groups and from different social backgrounds allowing them to mingle and interact. • Philips: limited intervention due to lack of funds. Although enhanced daily experience, the produced ‘difference’ was not sustained due to a gap between the intervention and local aspirations.	Coproduction • Mediation and Tactics/Strategy • Empowerment • Kodak and Philips’ local people were key actors who collaboratively designed and funded the intervention. • Kodak’s community collaboratively organised events and appropriated the space. They also maintained it, where a board of tenants was formed to facilitate the process. The passageway is viewed as a local asset with a positive impact on the community • Philips’ community could not sustain the improvements mainly due to lack of funds	

Figure 5.34 Passageways as ‘alternative spaces’ (source: author)

5.5.2 Spatial-Socioeconomic-Symbolic Impact and Limitations

The common rhetoric associated with alternative urbanism regarding achieving large effects with little means requires further clarification. Considering the various challenges and constraints, it is important to highlight why this project is different

from other mainstream renovation projects and how it could even surpass the predominating costly and more aesthetically appealing market-led interventions from the local viewpoint. Before embarking on such discussion, it is essential to clarify some of the limitations regarding the design outcome and if it would encourage socio-economic activities and public engagement. For the redesign of Kodak passageway to be officially approved, it went through cycles of alterations where the outcome looked at the end more like a mainstream landscape project. With the exception of introducing seats to the space that were approved only because they were presented as lighting features, nothing was approved that would encourage public use or appropriation. For example, during my interview with the designer, Nagati, he said that they were not allowed to insert public screens for the public or any element that would cause public crowding (Nagati, interview, April 2019). It was also not approved for the restaurant to have an ice-cream outlet for the passageway's users. No commercial activities in any form were allowed to be practiced as part of the intervention (Kodak PW-Participant 8, interview, April 2019).

In an interview with an official in the local municipality, he stated that the Downtown area is too congested and would not bear such uses (Central Cairo Gov. Official 1, interview, April 2019). He explained that the area is historically significant and applying strict land use regulations is necessary in this context to preserve the existing heritage assets (Central Cairo Gov. Official 1, interview, April 2019). The problem with this argument is that it ignores the cultural and socio-economic dynamics of the local community and how such interventions can improve local living conditions. The indifference of the local government to the needs of the existing communities is a typical problem in historic areas in Cairo (see Elshahed 2007; Williams, 2006; Ibrahim, 2014).

Another constraint was to redesign these spatial gaps to cater for the public but to keep their original function as passages which also offer accessibility to the entrances of the buildings and the shops. In my interview with the head of engineering department of Al-Ismaelia Company, he said that they had to change the design proposal of Kodak passageway to enlarge the tiled access path to the building and shops owned by the company at the expense of the garden (Ismailia HoE, interview, April 2019). Similarly, physical change in Philips passageway was minimal, due to the limited funding. As the intervention was carried out within a legal framework mediating between stakeholders having conflicting interests, there were limits to what

could be done, in addition to the constraints generated by the spatial specificities of such urban typology.

Considering the limitations above, although the design outcomes are simple and did not necessarily promote public appropriation on the long term, both spaces still had a positive impact on the lives of the community on the long term. Thanks to the role of designers who acted as mediators and facilitators, the initiative gathered people around common goals that would serve local needs rather than prioritizing profitmaking practices. Despite the small spaces, minor physical alterations and tight budget, the intervention had a positive effect in Kodak and Philips passageways with varying degrees of spatial and socioeconomic impacts. The interviews also revealed that the intervention created a sense of empowerment and wellbeing among the members of the local community.

Kodak passageway transformed from an underused and heavily securitized space into a dynamic space nurturing local lived experiences. The project created an open dialogue among participants creating a sense of community and attachment to the place which did not exist before. The inclusive process, where diverse stakeholders including low-income groups in the area were engaged in the decision-making phase, created ties among the wider community of downtown area. Kodak passageway gained a positive reputation especially in the arts, activists and cultural networks within the city. The project paved the way for inclusive social events and themed set ups. The passageway, temporary uses of vacant shops and the opening of the restaurant generated a mixture of social and economic activities. The intervention produced socially dynamic and lively public space creating a suitable urban environment for social interaction. The initiative empowered the local community promoting values of inclusiveness, diversity and equity where people across different age groups and from different social backgrounds gathered around common interests overcoming preconceived barriers. The small urban intervention represents an alternative to top-down imposition of change and a shift towards the coproduction of space where uncommodified public spaces are generated that are not solely controlled, regulated and maintained by the state or the private sector.

The project also altered the negative perception of Philips passageway and encouraged several individual renovation initiatives. Several participants mentioned the significant effect of cleanliness and good lighting on the everyday social life of

the space. While Philips community were not satisfied with the minimal physical changes, they still confirmed experiencing a better sense of safety which attracted more customers and increased foot traffic. Nevertheless, it is essential to highlight a hindering factor that was noticeable within Philips community, which is the fragmentation of the community and lack of collective will. Low-income groups have long been marginalised and victimised which caused trust issues and enclosed communities.

What significantly added to the value of the Passageways project are the symbolic meanings attached to the intervention process, which empowered local communities by being key participants in this change as well as preserved their right to use and manage the produced spaces. Alternative to predominating regeneration projects, the project engaged marginalised groups to enhance the use and quality of deteriorated environments without pushing away the poor or prohibiting everyday improvisations.

5.5.3 Wider Ripple Effects

One of the potential promises of alternative urbanism is to trigger chain reactions and further interventions catalysing further development in a long-term perspective. The passageways project itself was an experimental pilot project that was done with the hope of an incremental implementation of the idea. Several upgrading projects of pedestrianized streets in Downtown implemented by the Cairo Governorate in partnership with the private sector learned from the passageways project. Nagati explained that these projects constituted stakeholder board meetings which do not usually take place within the state projects (Nagati, interview, April 2019). Nevertheless, it seems that the engagement of stakeholders did not take place as effectively as in the passageways project. For example, according to Attia et. al. (2017) the regeneration of the Alfi pedestrianized street was not well received or cherished by local community as it re-established the control of the state over public space. Based on empirical evidence, Attia et al. (2017) argue that

‘although the launching of the project was announced by the governor in the street, the locals felt that they were not part of the decision-making, nor were they aware of the process beforehand; nor were they informed about it in due time to allow any form of effective participation’ (p.9).

Similarly, the pedestrianization of the Shawarbi street in the Downtown area was not successful where most of the shop owners and visitors were not satisfied with the

street design including paving, shading, sitting areas, uses, and accessibility (see Kamel et al., 2020). These unsuccessful projects prove that although pedestrianisation schemes might seem beneficial to the local community they had an adverse impact due to the lack of participation in the decision making and design process. Several members of the local community echoed the same perspective focusing on the importance of the local input for such projects to be influential. One of the community members criticised the choice of the pedestrianised streets and mentioned other streets that could have been more appropriate and effective (Philips PW - Participant 4, interview, August 2018). Another participant expressed his frustration about the wasted opportunities that could have been possible if the passageways project was scaled up and adopted by the state (Philips PW - Participant 4, interview, August 2018). One of the local tenants explained that the intervention triggered some attempts by the local community to clean, plant and beautify other passageways, however, in his view, the positive impact on the overall area of downtown could have been significant if similar interventions were implemented through collaboration with the local government mainly to get better funding (Kodak PW - Participant 11, interview, August 2019).

Despite CLUSTER's attempts to start a second phase for the passageways project, they were not included in the state-led projects. Nagati expressed his frustration for the lack of institutional support and recognition. Although CLUSTER received a bronze prize from the Cairo Design Award in 2017 for the landscape design in Kodak Passage, he considered this award dealing with CLUSTER's project as a mainstream landscape project as an 'understatement to what the project was about' (Nagati, interview, April 2019). CLUSTER also collaborated with Al-Ismaelia for real estate company a few times only as the designers wanted to keep their neutral position within the community and avoid being viewed as prioritizing financial interests over local needs (Nagati, interview, April 2019).

This is not to say that the project lacked the awaited ripple effect as the temporary appropriations, local maintenance of the spaces, short leases of vacant shops and opening of the restaurant all could be considered among the chain reactions of the initiative. However, other renovation projects did not adopt CLUSTER's alternative approach. It is essential to clarify that the passageways initiative itself was mobilised and facilitated within a context of public activism in post-revolutionary Cairo. The idea started to materialise when there was more acceptance of initiatives that were not

part of the official plan. The involvement of an international organisation in funding the project gave it legitimacy that eased and formalised the process. With the scarcity of such funding opportunities, replicating the idea would be much more challenging.

5.6 Conclusion

The passageways project provides a useful case study that helps investigating interventions in a central historic district, a contested space between the rich and the poor, private interests and local community interests, and street vendors and shop owners. The passageways project although emerged as a form of activism took on a more mainstream character seeking official approvals and possible partnerships with the private sector. Not only did CLUSTER or the professional designers initiate the process but their role acting as facilitators and mediators between the different interested stakeholders was crucial for this intervention to take place inclusively. The process provided an opportunity for wider participation that does not usually happen in mainstream projects. Beyond participative consulting, they co-designed the spaces and contributed with their resources, knowledge and skills. CLUSTER adopted the tactic of negotiation or what Nagati calls ‘urban diplomacy approach’ to attain a common ground between local authorities, private investors and local communities. Compromises were inevitable which created limitations to what could be done, besides the constraints imposed by the limited budget and the short-term action plan characterising such projects.

The requirements of sanctioning the project placed significant constraints on the design. Kodak’s redesign went through cycles of alterations so that the outcome looked more like a simple mainstream landscape project. Other than introducing seats to the space that were approved only because they were presented as raised lighting features, the space did not include flexible/adaptable elements to promote public appropriation on the long term due to land use constraints. Also, due to the limited funding and the resistance of the developers to revitalise Philips passageway, only minor renovations were attainable compared to the initial design intentions. Nevertheless, both spaces still had a positive impact on the lives of the community. Despite the involvement of real estate developers in revitalising Kodak passageway, the local community retained control and ownership over the space. The process gathered people around common interests serving local needs and aspirations rather

than exclusively benefiting the developer. The project opened communicative channels among participants fostering a sense of community and attachment to the place. With regards to Philips, even with the minor changes, it meant a lot to the local community for the intervention to take place despite the resistance of business tycoons.

The study found out another limitation to this kind of interventions that was specifically evident in Philips passageway regarding the influence of the sociocultural background of the participants. Philips' conservative community did not show much tolerance towards underground arts and experimentation which made them more reluctant to collective action to support the idea. Despite the potential of film screenings in the space, Philips community found the initiative alienating. I argue that the problem was not in the idea of screening movies itself but in the nature of independent movies that was not well received. I also argue that Philips' community, that has long been victimised by the neoliberal paradigm associated with a culture of individualism and competition, might have trust issues among each other and towards outsiders weakening their solidarity. Perhaps Philips passageway needed more time and effort from the side of CLUSTER to build trust and promote social cohesion, which was not sufficiently provided given the limited time of the project. Philips' example also shows that sometimes there could be a gap between the activists' approach and the sociocultural context of the intervention which needs to be addressed to avoid alienation.

Chapter 6:
Case Study 2 - The 'Geneina' Meet and Play Space

6.1 Introduction

Unlike the previous chapter dealing with one of the significant historic central areas in Cairo, this one examines applying the concept of alternative urbanism in a relatively new social housing project in the Sixth of October City, one of the satellite modern desert towns to the west of Greater Cairo. The chapter investigates how the urban intervention of the Geneina project that took place in 2014 has caused change to the low-income neighbourhood, popularly known as Masakin Uthman and to the local community. ‘Geneina’ is a public space and a playground collaboratively designed and implemented on a state-owned vacant plot of land within one of the central areas of Masakin Uthman. Besides the playing elements, the project included paving, seating and vegetation. The intervention involved diverse stakeholders representing a partnership between professional designers, international organisations, an active local NGO, local residents and the local government entity under which Masakin Uthman falls. The neighbourhood accommodates Egyptian families that were evicted from various random areas in Cairo as well as Syrian, Sudanese and African refugees. The project is examined as a catalyst for change and if it triggered other urban improvements in the deprived area suffering from negligence and insufficient public services.

In order to investigate the impact of the Geneina project as an alternative approach of intervention, it is essential first to understand the contextual specificities of the neighbourhood with respect to the local socio-economic dynamics. The historic emergence of the urban setting is crucial to understand why the neighbourhood was known to be riddled with problems indicating the challenges faced throughout the process of the intervention. The empirical investigation was twofold. The first is regarding the initiative and how the project was implemented, funded and officially sanctioned, and who were the actors and how they were engaged in the process. The second focuses on the change over time and the nature of the produced space and how it has been used, regulated and maintained since its implementation given its do-it-yourself ethos. The impacts beyond the physical space were explored which include any social or economic gains, or whether the intervention has triggered further interventions creating a positive ripple effect.

6.2 Unpacking the Contextual Specificities of Masakin Uthman

6.2.1 Historical Emergence

Masakin Uthman is one of the many inadequate public housing projects in the new desert towns under the New Communities Urban Authority (NCUA) that did not achieve what it was intended for. Such projects are a materialisation of the top-down government housing policies and modernist design ideas detached from its future residents' needs (see Ibrahim, 2014). Masakin Uthman housing was originally constructed as part of the National Housing Project (NHP) that aimed to provide half a million housing units within six years through seven different programs within which was Masakin Uthman (Tadamun, 2015). The NHP, initiated in October 2005, was a result of a presidential campaign promise of the former president Hosni Mubarak during Egypt's first multi-candidate presidential election of September 2005 (Shawkat, 2014). The housing project started under the the 'Awla bi-l-Ri'āya' (the Most Care-Worthy) program, which was described by the Ministry of Housing then as a project provided for citizens that were in need, or who could not afford to make down payments such as workers in the industrial zones (Tadamun, 2015). Protocols with the NCUA were signed to provide small housing units (40-42m²) big, and residents were to be allocated the units for up to five-year lease terms (New Urban Communities Authority, 2019). Masakin Uthman housing blocks stretch alongside Al-Waḥat Al-Baḥariyya road in an isolated location in close proximity with the Sixth of October cemetery and other low-income housing estates (Tadamun, 2015) (see Figure 6.1).

Nevertheless, Masakin Uthman housing took a different turn due to a number of factors. The first was a tragic incident in 2008, in which a rockslide occurred in El-Dweiqa, a slum area in Muqattam, that took the lives of hundreds of Egyptians. The crisis prompted the authorities to establish an institutional body, the Informal Settlements Development Facility (ISDF), to be responsible for financing slums redevelopment programs in order to avoid similar tragedies (Eissa, Abdel-Moneim and Lasheen, 2016).

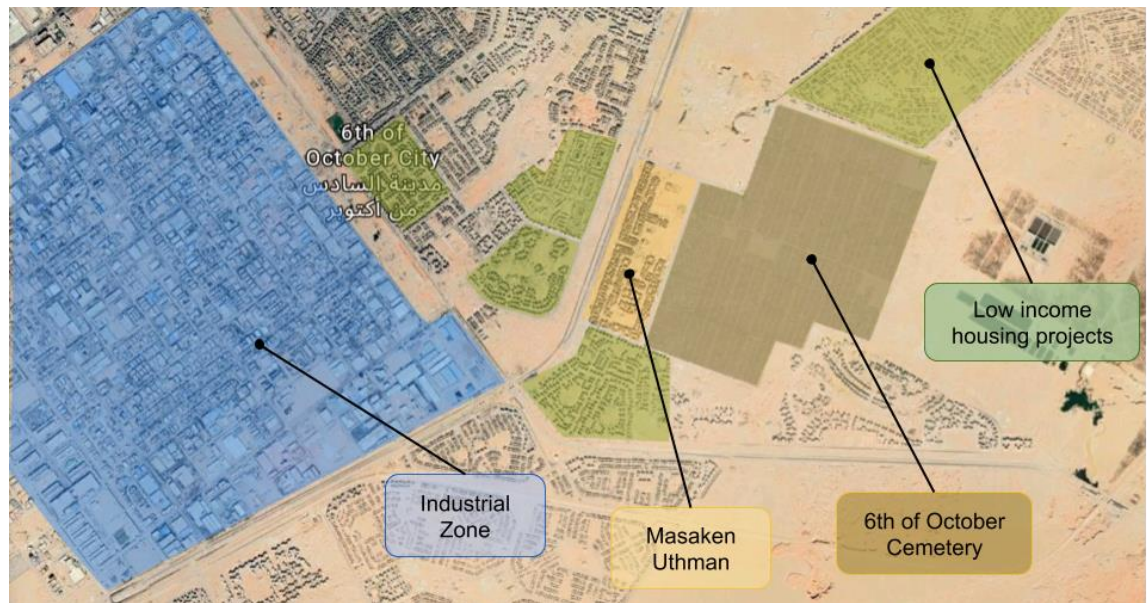


Figure 6.1 Location of Masakin Uthman in relation to other areas in Sixth of October New Desert Town (source: author using Google Earth)

Currently under the authority of the recently founded Ministry of Urban Renewal and Informal Settlements (MURIS), the ISDF developed classification schemes to differentiate between unsafe and unplanned areas within informal developments, mainly to identify life threatening areas that require immediate eviction and relocation (Tadamun, 2015). Thus, Masakin Uthman represented a temporary solution for the government to accommodate thousands of families that were displaced from different unsafe hazardous areas. By that, the neighbourhood started to house diverse populations and residents that came from different informal areas in need of affordable housing. Similarly, the affordable area was convenient for refugees where faith-based organisations arranged housing for them (Tadamun, 2015).

It is necessary to note that unlike the previous case study in the centre of the city, I had little acquaintance with the neighbourhood before the intervention. As a resident in Sixth of October City I only got to see Masakin Uthman buildings at a distance from the highway (see Figure 6.2). The desertedness of the neighbourhood and its proximity to the cemetery gave it a negative perception. However, as the area started to gain reputation for the Geneina project, the neighbourhood seemed less intimidating and more interesting to visit.



Figure 6.2 Masakin Uthman housing blocks from Al-Wahat al-Bahariyya Road (source: author)

6.2.2 Challenges and Hardships

The first thing I noticed upon entering the area is the uniformity of the six-story buildings varying only in façade colour, a typical feature in modernist design (see Figure 6.3). The setting is formed of groups of tightly packed blocks separated by wide passageways or vacant land plots that were supposedly intended for communal uses, but in reality they were filled with garbage and sewer flooding. Some in-between spaces were used by the residents as makeshift home extensions for the small insufficient units or as stalls for street vending (Tadamun, 2015). The neighbourhood was suffering from problems of failing infrastructure differing a little from informal neighbourhoods, only having more fragmented communities and less flexible dwellings.



Figure 6.3 The modernist design of Masakin Uthman Housing (source: author)

Beside that the housing units are poorly located and could only be accessible by private cars which are hardly affordable for low-income families, the area lacks public transportation, and the residents depend mainly on minibuses and ‘tuktuks’ (Tadamun, 2015) (see Figure 6.4). Moreover, the neighbourhood suffers from poor quality of education and health care. There is only one school with a limited number of teachers that only started functioning in 2017 and many of the neighbourhood’s children had to cross a high-speed road to get to the other closest school (Geneina - Local NGO Director, Interview, April 2018). Also, there is one health care unit but insufficiently equipped. The residents rely on charity health campaigns visiting the area as well as the efforts of an active local NGO, namely Shaarawy Foundation for Development (SFD) that was established after the uprising of 2011.



Figure 6.4 Tuktuks are a common feature in the neighbourhood (source: author)

The residents suffer from the lack of employment opportunities and the available jobs are short lived and insecure. As most of the residents were displaced from their original living and working places, many lost their livelihood sources (Geneina - NGO activities manager, interview, April 2018). To earn their living, some had set up small businesses in the ground floor blocks or kiosks in the visible areas within the neighbourhood. Others sought employment opportunities in the neighbouring malls or factories such as workers, cleaners, and security personnel (Tadamun, 2015).

In addition to all the above crippling problems, the director of community programs of SFD explained that the residents' sense of insecurity is one of the major hardships in the area. Most of the families relocated from other unsafe informal areas to Masakin Uthman on a short-term lease agreement, and they are living under a constant feeling of uncertainty because of the unsecured tenure (Geneina - Local NGO Director, interview, April 2018). Moreover, he added that the lack of policing and the desertedness of the area led to the existence of thugs and drug dealers, which made residents feel unsafe (Geneina - Local NGO Director, interview, April 2018).

Investigating the transformative effect of the 'Geneina' project has been more challenging with the existence of all these problems. This case study is an example of how a small-scale intervention, intended to provide a public space for the community, would make a positive change in such problematic urban setting.

6.3 The Geneina Project and the Role of Designers as Mediators and Facilitators

This section focuses on the process of the intervention from conception and funding to decision making and implementation. All stages of the project demonstrate the crucial role designers played as mediators and facilitators of the process. Without their efforts, it would seem that the project was unlikely to happen, especially that it involved using a state-owned land that was not designated to be used as a playground.

6.3.1 Conception, Project Initiation and Stakeholders

The project was initiated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2014 due to the presence of a large number of Syrian refugees as the conflict in Syria was entering its fifth year at the time. According to the Syrian Refugees Emergency Needs Assessment Report (2013), a safe play area for the children was one of the most important issues that was highly prioritized by the inhabitants. UNHCR collaborated with Takween Integrated Community Development (Takween ICD), a small professional enterprise, to develop an idea to address this problem. As mentioned earlier in the study, Takween is one of the professional entities founded in 2009 advocating for an alternative practice that is more realistic, locally tailored and incremental, building on existing opportunities and assets. Takween's team started the process by having introductory meetings with the Sixth of October City Administration (CA) supported by the UNHCR (Ayman et al., 2015). Nevine Akl, the cofounder of Takween, explained that they also sought to engage the already involved stakeholders with Masakin Uthman with an intention to complement the ongoing efforts in the area made by local and international non-profit organisations, namely Shaarawy Foundation for Development (SFD) and CARE Egypt (Akl, Interview, April 2018).

As the main aim of such intervention was to empower residents, create community ties and a sense of belonging to the area, the idea of co-creating and co-constructing the play space elements emerged (Akl, interview, April 2018). For this purpose, Takween partnered with the architect and primary school teacher Renet Korthals Altes, the founder of Make Space 4Play, to co-design and implement the play space in collaboration with the local community (Akl, interview, April 2018). The main concept of the play space is based on low-cost interventions where children and their communities would upcycle waste materials and available local resources into playing

elements that they could construct with their own hands. Not only does the idea emphasise the understated right of children to play but it also ‘promotes inclusiveness by providing a space accessible to all regardless of their nationality in which they can meet and interact bypassing assumed divisions’ (Akl, interview, 10 April 2018).

With regards to funding the project, two funding agencies were involved supporting the UNHCR. The first is Kuwait Responds which funded the design and implementation (Ayman et al., 2015). In general, Kuwait has donated generously to the UNHCR’s operations to ease the suffering of the forcibly displaced Syrians. The other funding agency is the German Cooperation which funded the DIY implementation workshops as part of the ‘Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit – the German Development Cooperation’ (GIZ) programs for development (Ayman et al., 2015) (see Figure 6.5).

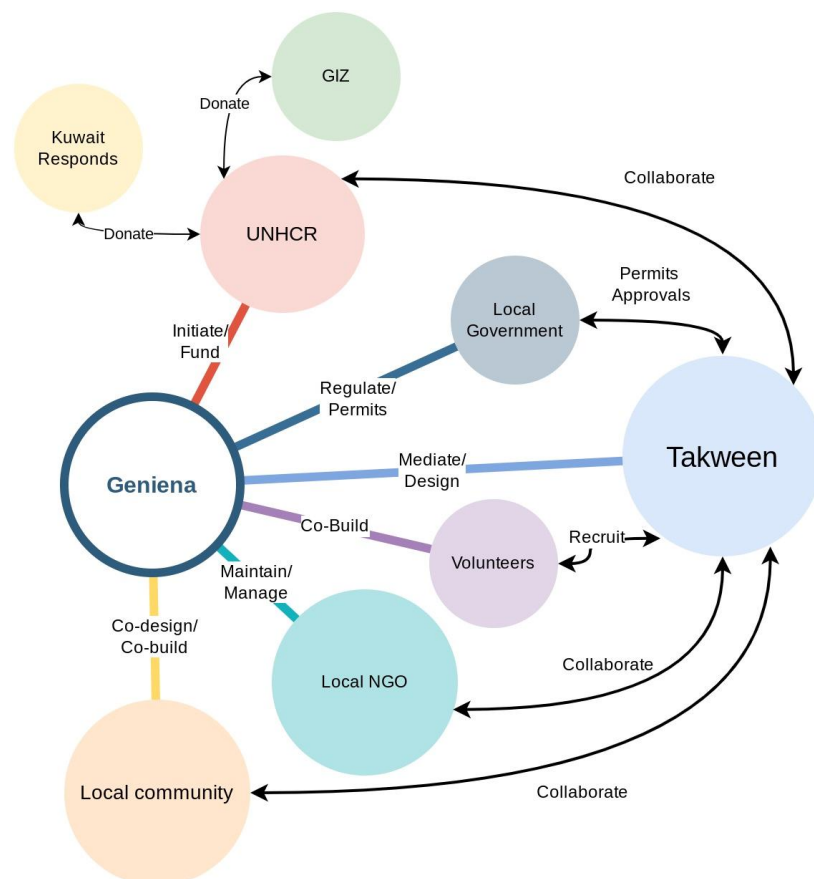


Figure 6.5 Geneina project stakeholders (source: author)

6.3.2 Design Process and Implementation

The design process started with two public events and art performances that were arranged in the two alternative sites proposed for the project, which were helpful for Takween team to blend in and get familiarised with the area and the possible conflicts. Temporary activities worked here as part of the design process that induced activism and facilitated decision-making. Nevine Akl, the cofounder of Takween, explained that these events were essential, as well as home visits and guided tours to reach the most vulnerable groups (Akl, interview, April 2018). Afterwards, participatory design sessions were conducted that included mainly the children and women, during which the features of the space were created including the details of the playing elements (Ayman et al., 2015). Nevine emphasized the role of the inhabitants throughout the process, from site selection to construction. For example, she explained that:

‘although we initially thought a space in-between buildings would be a suitable location for the play space, we changed the site to a central plot of land within the public facilities zone in response to the residents preference. They preferred the central location as it would protect the playground from being taken over by any groups. The spacious vacant land in the centre would also allow future growth’ (Akl, Interview, April 2018).

The selection of the project’s site resonates with the concept of ‘acupuncture’ as the location of the intervention is crucial to ‘stimulate improvements and positive chain reactions’ (Lerner, 2014, p.1). Not only the location of the project was selected by the inhabitants but also, they envisioned how it may expand in the future. Interviews with local women revealed that that idea of integrating a football pitch was proposed to separate women visually from youth and men using the football pitch, which would make them feel more comfortable to use the play space with their children. Takween team helped meet the privacy needs of women and conceptualised the inhabitants’ ideas developing a design proposal to obtain official permits (see Figure 6.6). The director of community programs of the local NGO explained that

‘the residents envisioned the play space integrated into a larger recreational area including a football pitch for older children and youth as well as a communal centre for social and cultural activities. Also, submitting a larger development scheme to the local authorities helped convince them to approve the project’ (Geneina - NGO activities manager, interview, April 2018)

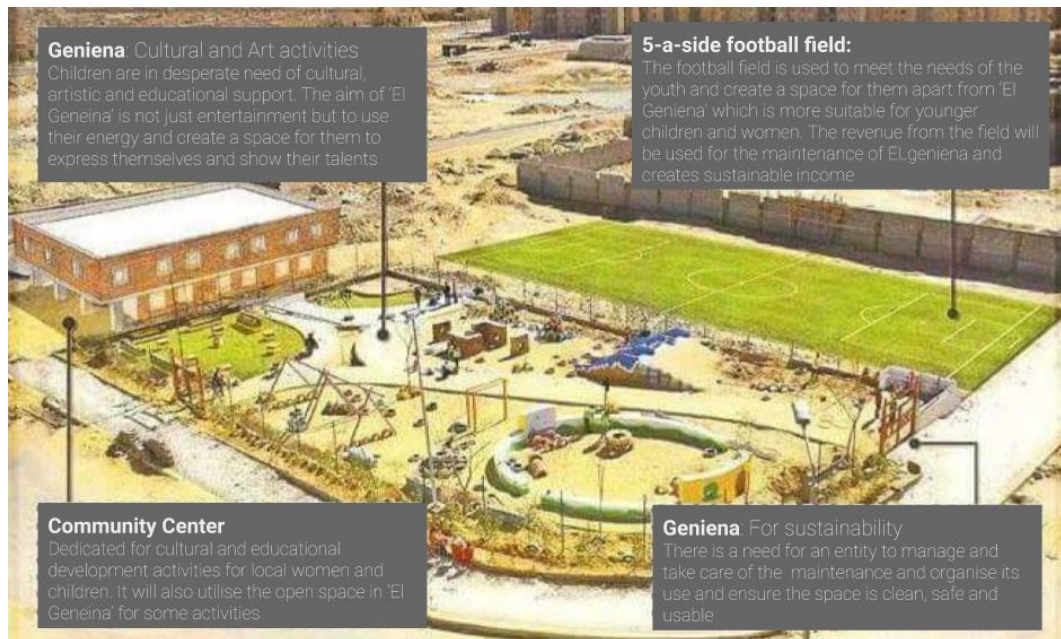


Figure 6.6 The future vision of the area delivered within the Geneina Project (source: Takween ICD)

With regards to the design of the play space itself, the children were asked to draw and create physical models and miniatures of the playing elements using clay, coloured pins and toothpicks (Akl, interview, April 2018) (see Figure 6.7). To mediate between the needs and preferences of different genders and age groups of the children, the layout of the play space was divided into zones incorporating various types of play elements (a toddler area, a zone for challenging playing elements preferred by boys (such as climbing walls and mazes), and a zone for elements that involve repetitive movement preferred by girls) (Ayman et al., 2015) (see Figure 6.8). The children also emphasised the importance of having an area for their mothers or families to accompany them, thus various seating options were placed in different locations in the playground for families to gather while they monitor their children (Akl, interview, April 2018). To provide the space a diversity of possibilities, two zones with stepped theatre and seats were considered mixed use for local appropriation (Akl, interview, April 2018). The natural topography of the vacant land with different ground levels was used to accentuate the zones of the playground instead of costly invasive changes to the landscape (Ayamn et al., 2014).

As the sense of safety was one of the concerns of the local community, the residents wanted to surround the entire site with a fence to create a controlled environment. Nevertheless, to allow visual connectivity, the designers reached a compromise by

using a mesh fence and plantations instead (Akl, interview, April 2018). The children chose the name of their playground; they called the project ‘Geneina’ which translates as the garden (Geneina - Local NGO Director, interview, April 2018).



Figure 6.7 Children participating in the co-design workshops (source: Takween ICD)

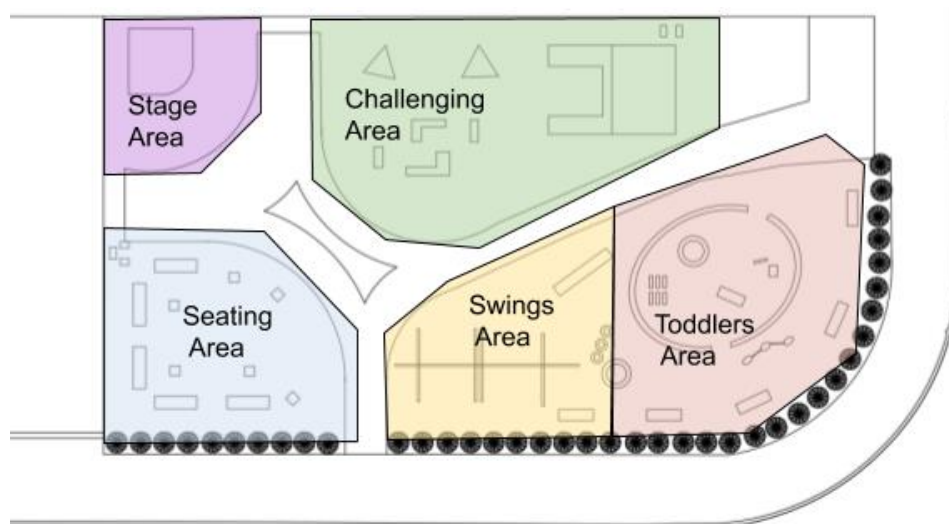


Figure 6.8 The different zones incorporating various types of play elements generated from the participatory design sessions (source: author adapted from Ayman et al., 2015)

Although the local authorities were supposed to act as a partner in the project, interviews revealed that local officials were not flexible and did not facilitate the process. While coproduction processes require a different kind of authority that is not imposed from above (Whitaker, 1980), local authorities kept managing in the usual authoritarian manner. The designers played a crucial role where the tactic of

negotiation with the City Administration was necessary to authorise the project on a state-owned land. The cofounder of Takween stated:

‘sanctioning the project was not an easy task. It required several meetings in the Sixth of October Administration in order to obtain all the necessary approvals. The land is owned by the City Administration and the officials were not flexible at all. This is the case in nearly all our projects, we spent a lot of time negotiating with the officials.[..] In the end there were some design limitations due to the restrictive land use regulations. For example, the residents wanted to incorporate a shed into the playground which was not approved as high or massive structures were not allowed.’ (Akl, interview, April 2018).

Similarly, the City Administration did not permit the construction of a stepped seating area separating the playground from the area designated for the football pitch that the mothers requested for privacy (Ayman et. al., 2015). Moreover, an official report was filed during implementation against Takween for building a thick masonry border at the corner of the playground that was intended to surround the seating area (Geneina - Local NGO Director, Interview, April 2018).

Despite these hurdles, not only this intervention gave the City Administration the credit of being a partner in the project, but also the project provided a cover for its failure to provide such services. Takween’s booklet, published on online platforms to document the project under the title ‘Geneia in Action’, describes the local government as the ‘owner and the main partner’ (Ayman et. al., 2015). According to Nevine Akl, the cofounder of Takween, engaging the local authorities in such interventions is ‘not only important for sanctioning the project but also partnering with them helps provide better sustainability opportunities after the withdrawal of the initiators’ (Akl, Interview, April 2018).

The implementation process of the playground not only creatively engaged the local community, but also allowed interested citizens to take part by adopting an open-source approach. Through Takween social media platforms, construction workshops were announced requesting students and young professionals from multi-disciplinary professional backgrounds (Figure 6.9). Small fees were charged to partially cover for the different workshops costs. Three workshops were organised: i) tyres upcycling; ii) low-tech construction; and iii) colouring Geneina. Expert designers moderated the

first two workshops, while a group of students from the Faculty of Fine Arts called Colouring a Grey City were outsourced for the third workshop (Ayman et al., 2015).



Figure 6.9 Workshops announcement on social media platforms (source: Takween ICD)

The final design of the play elements was not entirely finalised before the implementation phase, instead it was left to change in response to the possibilities arising during construction (Akl, interview, April 2018). The design approach resonates with the concept of coproduction, where Wolf and Mahaffey (2016) argue that coproduction implies a dynamic design process that is not dominated by designers and does not determine fixed outcomes. The main idea was to show the participants the possibility to construct fun playing elements using recycled materials that are not only affordable but also durable, easy to construct and safe for children use (Ayman et al., 2015). Nevine Akl, the cofounder of Takween, highlighted that 'the elements were designed by the children themselves and their drawings and models were important' (Akl, interview, April 2018). Mostly, the play elements were based on various arrangements of tyres that were painted, assembled and installed on site (Mourad, interview, April 2018) (see Figure 6.10). Children were also taught to

construct simple play elements so that they can replicate in spaces in between buildings and other parts of the neighbourhood (Akl, interview, April 2018).



Figure 6.10 The children participating in the construction of the playing elements using recycled tyres (source: Takween ICD)

As for the low-tech construction workshop, the participants sought the help of a technical consultant in the field of sustainable building technologies to train the participants to design and implement the ‘rammed earth’ building technique (Ayman et al., 2015). By using local materials, different soil mixtures were used to construct four rammed earth walls of the maze, which is one of the main play elements of the playground, where the children participated in preparing and mixing the soil and in the whole process of construction (Akl, interview, April 2018) (see Figure 6.11).

The last phase of implementation was colouring the Geneina. Bright and joyful colours were used to paint the entrance walls, the slides and the sides of the toddler area. The participation of children did not only intend to create a sense of ownership towards the space but also prepare the children for expected maintenance needs (Ayman et al., 2015). On 1st February 2015, the opening event of the Geneina took place with the attendance of representatives from the City Administration, UNHCR, the funding agencies, Takween team and the workshops participants (Geneina - Local NGO Director, interview, April 2018).



Figure 6.11 Local children participating in construction (Source: Takween ICD)

6.4 Tracing the Geneina's change over Time

As mentioned previously, the research seeks to investigate how the produced spaces have changed over time and what kind of impact the interventions have caused. This inquiry determined focusing on emerging patterns of social use, lived experiences, efforts of social control or conflicts arising from different groups claims. Within a significantly deprived context and deeply rooted problems, the influence of such small urban intervention of a simple playground might not be significantly noticeable when visiting Masakin Uthman. Nevertheless, tracing the change through mapping, interviews and observations revealed the potential of such approach to cause a positive impact and the conditions that were necessary for it to happen as well as exposed its limitations.

6.4.1 Mapping Spatial Practices

As mentioned earlier in the study, mapping is a method intended to capture the social patterns generated in the space, as well as the temporary physical appropriations or permanent changes happening over time. These maps represent different patterns of aggregate spatial practices observed during the different fieldwork periods. In order to understand the gradual change of the area, in addition to interviews, I also returned to old google earth images to trace the physical change over time (see Figure 6.12).



Figure 6.12 Tracing change over time (source: author using Google Earth)

Based on observations for extended periods of time during the different fieldwork periods, the socio-spatial patterns in the produced spaces are mapped through aggregating a series of space/time snapshots of the produced spaces as a result of the intervention. In the four intensive fieldwork periods, the playground and the more recently implemented football pitch were observed three days a week (two weekdays and one weekend day), every time I spent minimum two hours but at different times of the day. Observations were recorded on maps showing the spatial activities generated in the space and the people engaged in them so that a single map is created for every period of fieldwork in 2018 and 2019 by transferring and merging a sequence of snapshots of occupation and traces of movement into one map (see Figure 6.14).

Due to the dynamic and ephemeral nature of these spaces, there were unique temporary programmed events that I missed. Based on interviews and online digital materials, I created a timeline for the project and the produced spaces with the different uses and appropriations since implementation to support and complement the generated maps (see Table 4). Also, a map for the Geneina and the surrounding area is illustrated in the following section to provide context on the changes that took place after the intervention (see Figure 6.13).

Table 4 The timeline of the process and the produced spaces with key events and appropriations
(source: author)

Date	Actors	Action or Event
Mar 2014	Local NGO Designers Community	Community event to clean the location and surrounding area
Apr 2014	Designer Local NGO Community	Workshop with local community organized by Takween and local NGO
May 2014	Designers Local NGO Funder Community	Puppet making workshop – involving Takween, UNHCR, local NGO and local community
Jun 2014	Local NGO Funder	‘Oota Hamra’ performance on the Day of the Refugee in the location of the project
Dec 2014	Designers Local NGO Community	A series of workshops in cooperation with local residents to build many of the features of Geneina using local resources and recycled materials
Jan 2015	Designer	All construction work completed at El-Geneina
Feb 2015	Designers Local NGO Funders Government	Opening event with a puppet show by ‘Hekayat Baladna’ and the children
Jul 2015	Designers Local NGO Government	Dr. Laila Iskander, Minister of Urban Renewal and Informal Settlements visits EL-Geneina
Feb 2016	Local NGO Funder Community	Alzohoor Carnival, art and drums show by children
Mar 2016	Local NGO	Orphans Day event
Jun 2016	Local NGO Community	Football tournament in the football field
Jun 2016	Local NGO Community	Turning the playground into affordable clothes marketplace
Jan 2017	Local NGO Corp CSR	Renovation of football pitch adding synthetic grass funded by Raya and the launch of the football academy
May 2018	Local NGO Community Funder	UNHCR organized multinational football tournament for refugees
May 2019	Local NGO Community	Several community <i>iftars</i> either in the adjacent vacant land or in the street.

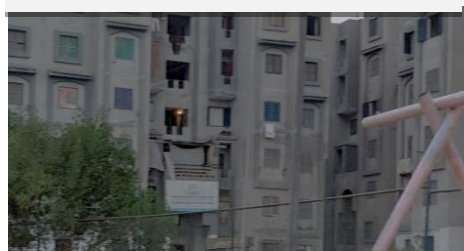
The football pitch was a follow-up project, the local NGO had to raise funds from other sources to execute it with the help of the local community. They created a football academy which attracted people from outside the neighbourhood.



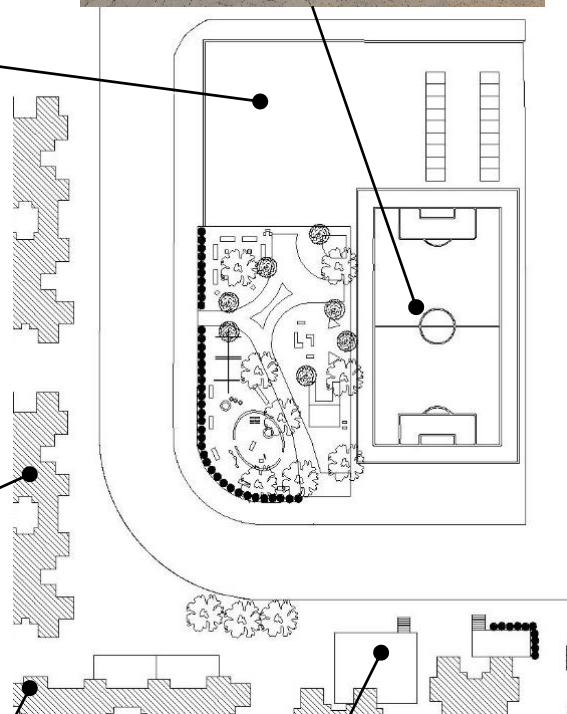
Stalls were built in the vacant land as a temporary market, but the local community and the NGO is planning to build a community centre in that space



The residents spend extended time in the Geneina even during late night hours to escape their small and poorly ventilated flats



The NGO moved its office to be next to the Geneina to help manage it and to be closer to the new node of social activities.



Shops and coffee shops opened or expanded after the intervention

Figure 6.13 Geneina project and surrounding area (source: author)

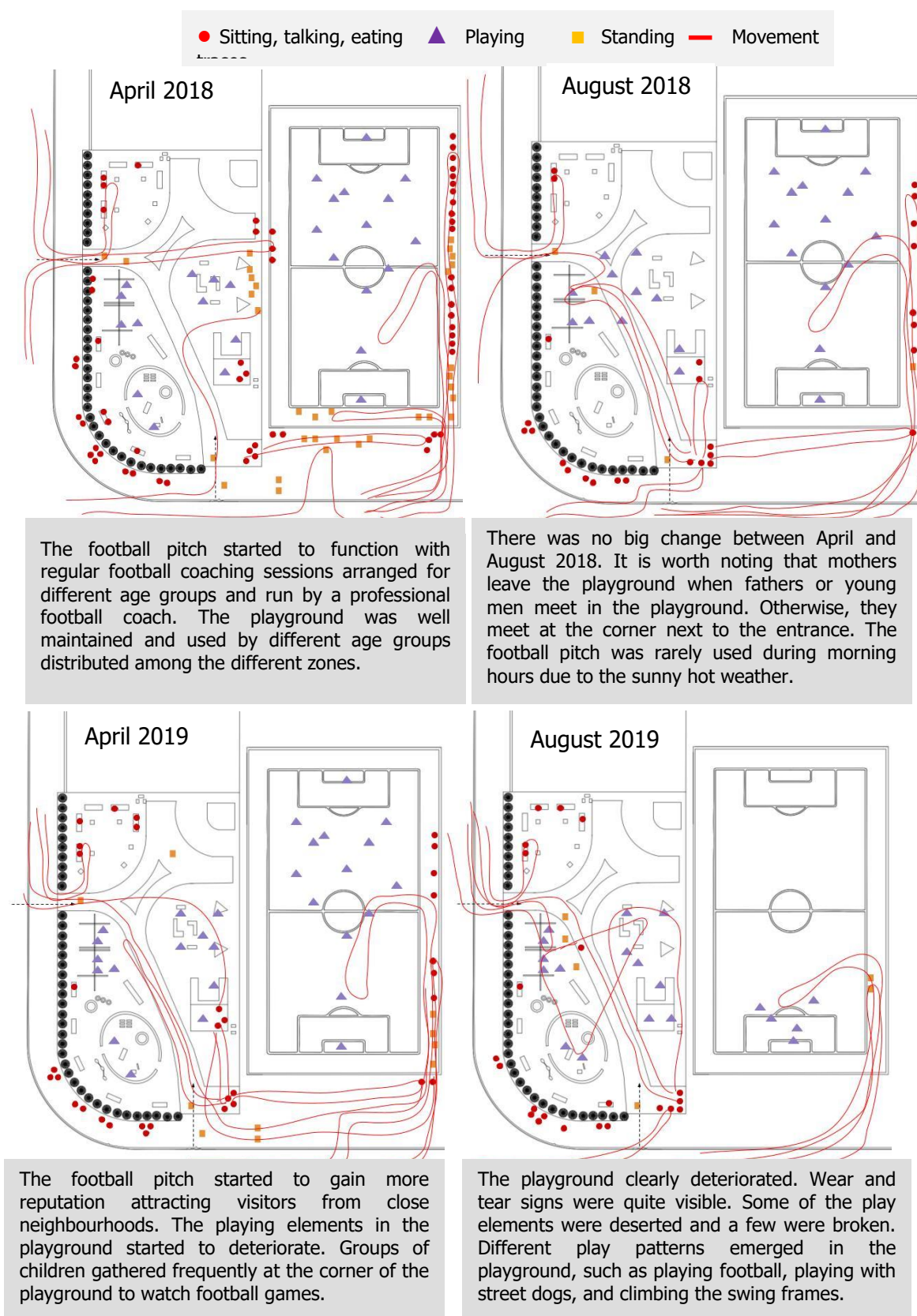


Figure 6.14 Geneina spatial mapping (source: Author)

6.4.2 Exploring the Lived and Spatiotemporal Experience

Understanding the life course of the produced spaces is crucial to investigate the potential of such DIY approach compared to the more conformative and carefully designed traditional play areas. The investigation relates to the change of the physical setting as well as the social everyday life of the neighbourhood.

Generating Everyday Social Patterns and Experiential Meanings

During my first fieldwork period to Masakin Uthman in August/September 2017, which was almost two years after the intervention, I was able to see the significance of the Geneina in the everyday life of the local residents. Although the neighbourhood was still clearly suffering from infrastructural problems, the outdoor quality of the area surrounding the project clearly improved compared to the rest of the neighbourhood. The Geneina transformed from a dull vacant land to an active hub of life for the diverse communities who live in Masakin Uthman.

After the Geneina intervention, children and youth started using the sandy vacant plot next to the playground for sport activities and playing football for about a year until the local NGO (SFD) managed to find a funding source (Geneina - Local NGO Director, interview, April 2018). The Geneina project supported a stronger community and more collaborative practices with the help of the local NGO that was crucial in this case study to sustain activism and activate further interventions. SFD got funding from Raya Company as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to implement the football pitch with the local community. The NGO director explained that ‘it was a dream come true, you have got to see the children’s eyes light up when they were helping with installing the football turf’ (Geneina - Local NGO Director, interview, April 2018).

The play space and the surrounding area created a centre for the neighbourhood and a node for activities that that did not exist before. While this zone was officially designated for public services, the whole land was empty until the implementation of the project in 2014. Interviews revealed that the ‘Geneina’ became deeply rooted in the everyday life of the inhabitants, resonating with what Hou (2010) describes as ‘smaller yet grander’ public space. The spaces played an important role in supporting collective action and offered what Crawford (2005) describes as an ‘everyday space’ shaping daily life and generating meaningful spontaneous encounters and experiences.



Figure 6.15 A panoramic view of the playground taken in August 2017 (source: author)

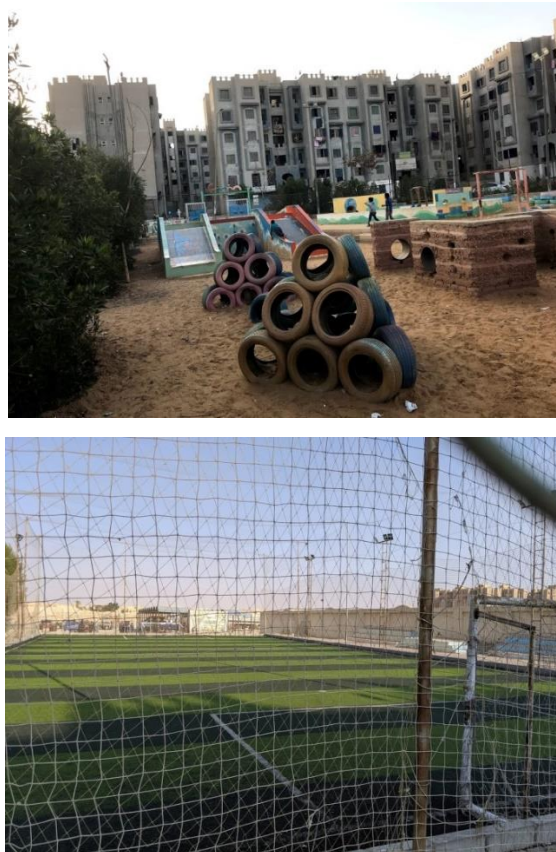


Figure 6.16 The playground and the adjacent football pitch after two years from the intervention (source: author)

Several interviews linked their involvement in the intervention process to their experience of the space and the neighbourhood as a result. The DIY process, the collaborative construction activities and the open design process shaped the local experience of the space. As Wolf and Mahaffey (2016) argues such spaces produce ‘difference’ as they are not dominated by expertise or those who have the knowledge and power. One of the local mothers stated:

‘My son spends more time in Geneina than at home. He participated in the construction of the Geneina and painting the tyres. It was a

really nice time. He would spend the whole day over there if he could. I do not know what he could have done without it.’ (Geneina - Resident 8, interview, August 2019).

Another mother explained that the intervention process created ties between people which made the area more ‘liveable’ (Geneina - Resident 1, interview, April 2018). The same meaning was echoed by the local NGO director who said:

‘You do not know how much it means to the children to be able to create such a space, they designed it, constructed it and named it. It is not just a playground; it is a space they created themselves and they are proud of it and care about it so much. You should see how the children were happy when the German television visited the playground and conducted interviews’ (see Figure 6.17) (Geneina - NGO activities manager, interview, April 2018)



Figure 6.17 The German national Television visiting the project (source: SFD)

The presence of people in the same physical setting is not enough to create a meaningful place, but what important here is how the Geneina supported everyday activities and offered prolonged opportunities for meaningful social practices. Several interviews revealed that people did not spend as much time in the outdoor spaces before the intervention due to the poor quality of streets and public spaces. The collaborative design became more meaningful through the daily use of the space and

the social activities that emerged in the area. In addition, the active use of the playground and the surrounding area created a sense of safety through what Jacobs (1961) describes as ‘effective eyes on the street’. This was highlighted by a local mother who said:

‘I did not want to leave my children in the streets as they were not safe but now, I feel comfortable to leave them in the Geneina while I finish housework. We go together in the evenings as well, and sometimes we meet neighbours [...] We have our spot in the Geneina that we like to use’ (Geneina - Resident 3, interview, August 2018).



Figure 6.18 Project location before and after the intervention (Source: SFD)

Not only the spaces were used for playing but they became the ‘living room’ of the area. Mothers usually gathered at the corner of the playground and chatted while their children played together. It was also very frequent to see young children playing in the Geneina while their mothers watched them from their windows. In the summer, more people and children spend the evenings in the Geneina and sometimes stay till late night hours to escape their poorly ventilated flats (Geneina - Resident 2, interview, April 2018). The NGO administration assistant and local resident explained that ‘the housing units are very small and overcrowded with large families and the

Geneina gave people the opportunity they needed to spend more time outdoors' (Geneina - NGO admin, interview, August 2018). The keeper of the football pitch remarked that they keep the gates of the playground open all night in the summer, but they close it during winter nights 'to protect it against misuse' knowing that the Geneina could be used by thugs or criminals (Geneina - NGO admin, interview, August 2019).

Youth and children became more active in the community. One of residents said that the children learned a lot during the construction process and showed me the flowerpots they created with old tyres to beautify the building entrances overlooking the playground (Geneina Resident 3, interview, August 2018). Moreover, an amateur group of boys and girls was formed to run the playground theatre with the help of the NGO team.

Immersive Experience as a catalyst for Social Interaction

The Geneina can be viewed as an embodiment of the concept of 'spatiotemporal immersion' described in the literature as an alternative way of producing space-time (Harris, 2015). The tactile engagement and playful interactions during implementation and afterwards in using the space immersed the local community in shared sensory experiences. The spaces enabled face-to-face encounter and interaction. The zone of the Geneina created what Crawford (2012) describes as juxtapositions with the urban environment unsettling the perceptions of space and opening possibilities of transformation. The colourful play elements and the surrounding planted trees stood in contrast with the greyness and dullness of the uniform housing blocks. The process and the elements of the design altered the very harsh urban situation of the neighbourhood in the eyes of the local inhabitants. This was highlighted in several interviews with the community members. For example, a local resident explained:

'This is an example of what we can do together when we are given the chance. Look at what we have done. This is the work of all of us. We are going to build the cultural centre as well. This school was not here until very recently. Nothing was here. This whole area was empty. We now have a beautiful place that people come to visit from nearby areas' (Geneina - Resident 2, interview, April 2018).

The intervention provided a landscape for events. After the intervention, gatherings and social events were organised in the Geneina, the football pitch and the vacant land next to them. Not only the play space was important but also the construction of

the pavements enhanced the quality of the outdoor public space and created better connectivity throughout the area. The pavements around the Geneina were sometimes used as a sitting area where people would bring chairs and tables, drink tea together while watching the street. The collaborative intervention created a ‘lived space’ that is continuously in flux through the continuous use and appropriation of the local community. The coproduction of space does not end by the end of the collaborative design process as the space continuously evolves in response to local needs.

The location of the NGO office changed after the intervention to be in one of the buildings overlooking the Geneina. Collaboratively, communal meals were organised, extra-curriculum activities for children and traditional craft workshops for adults took place as well as football training and competitions were arranged between young teams from nearby areas. The urban interventions brought visitors to the area and created networks with other neighbouring communities, which started to change the neighbourhood’s negative perception. Not only this, but the produced spaces contributed significantly to improving the wellbeing of the inhabitants. The NGO worker remarked:

‘We have a football coaching school where regular sessions take place for different age groups in the pitch. It is run by a professional football coach, who is also a local resident. These spaces have saved many children and adolescents from dropping out school, money begging and dealing drugs. Many of these children now have ambitions to play for a professional football club. (see Figure 6.19). (Geneina - NGO activities manager, interview, August 2018).



Figure 6.19 local children’s football practice (source: author)

The Geneina and the football pitch were also appropriated several times for different uses responding to the needs of local people, which further increased shared experiences and social interactions. The football pitch was used as a wedding venue for a resident couple (Geneina - Resident 4, interview, August 2018). The Geneina was used as a market space for affordable clothes for local residents, where the playing elements were used as display stands. The unconventional playing elements did not prescribe a certain use for the space but encouraged not only creative play, but also creative appropriations. (see Figure 6.20) The NGO raised the walls of the fence at one side of the playground to create a reading corner and the children painted the walls, for which previous attempts to seek official permits were rejected by the City Administration (Geneina - Resident 4, interview, August 2018).

Although these dynamics created a suitable environment for social cohesion; some women, being more conservative, expressed their concerns about opposite-gender interaction. Moreover, several mothers were concerned in our interviews about the prospects of harassment while using the playground. They preferred the playground to be used only by mothers and children and to segregate the playground and the football field based on gender. Mixed-gender interaction in public spaces is not a widely accepted cultural value in Masakin Uthman. This demonstrates the negative impact of the restrictive land use regulations that hindered accommodating the privacy needs of the local women. The design originally included a semi-enclosed and shaded area in the corner of the Geneina that was intended for women's use and appropriation. It is worth noting that local people were planning to raise a shed without seeking official permits. This confirms that people continuously coproduce spaces by formal and informal appropriations and that the intervention process contributed to skilling the marginalized community to shape their own living environment.



Figure 6.20 Social practices taking place in the playground and adjacent areas (Source: SFD)

In the last two fieldwork periods in April and August 2019, some changes were noticeable in the neighbourhood. The play elements were clearly worn out and some were broken and missing. Interviews revealed that this deterioration was linked to the relocation of many of the original participants in the design and construction of the Genenia, including most of the Syrian refugees who left due to the short-term tenancy arrangements in the neighbourhood. The local NGO director highlighted how this had a negative impact on the Geneina.

Many children who used to consider themselves the owners of the playground had moved, and new families were relocated to the neighbourhood who did not share the same feelings towards the Genenia. It is still very important as it helps children to settle in easily especially those who did not have a similar venue in their previous neighbourhoods [...] However, it is hard for newcomers to experience it in the same way as the people who were here and experienced it during implementation (Geneina - Local NGO Director, interview, August 2019).

Interviews with the residents confirmed that people who did not participate in the DIY process did not share the same feelings about the space. This was highlighted in interviews with newly relocated residents. For example, one of the mothers expressed her dissatisfaction with the primitive play elements as her children ‘got bored of the quite basic design’ (Geneina - Resident 5, interview, September 2018). Another mother said that her children would have preferred funfair rides and games stalls but repeatedly stressed that it was ‘better than nothing’ (Geneina - Resident 6, interview, September 2018). The symbolic value of such space is greatly affected by the involvement in the DIY process and the proactive engagement and interaction throughout the project.

6.4.3 Exploring the Roles of Actors and Power Relationships

Although UNHCR initiated the project specifically to improve the life of Syrian refugees and the communities hosting them, the project was characterised by thinking beyond refugee-host community dynamics. Within the already fragmented community, social tensions were multidirectional due to the intra-group power structures worsened by the official marginalisation and inadequacy of quality public services. Takween designers acted as mediating agents protecting the project against co-option during decision making, design and implementation, but the nature of the produced spaces regarding how they have been regulated, controlled or managed is

critical to determine the potential of such urban practices to cause inclusive transformation and empower local communities. Important here is to reach an understanding of how the different stakeholders, conflicting interests and the power relations have influenced the use and management of the produced spaces.

Community Controlled Spaces and Risks of Co-optation

The Geneina spaces are collectively managed and regulated by the local NGO with the help of the local community. The director of the local NGO assured that since the opening event of the Geneina project that was attended by representatives from the City Administration, the local government did not participate in funding, maintaining, or safeguarding the spaces. While the process of coproduction entails retaining local 'control and ownership over the continuous management and reproduction of the space' (Wolf and Mahaffey, 2016, p.62), the official abandonment of the area had serious implications. The Geneina was exposed to several co-optation attempts by inhabitant groups manifesting the power imbalance within the neighbourhood.

The first attempt was by a local nursery owner who arranged a party for the nursery children and their parents exclusively in the playground; moreover, she closed the gates, catered a buffet and demanded fees for entrance. The local NGO director was keen to stress that the NGO protected the playground against privatization in such case and in general they ensure the accessibility of the public at all times. The NGO protected the playground from two other transgressive co-optation attempts by local thugs and drug dealers. One of them involved a serious conflict which was reported to the police that collected both the NGO director and the transgressor to investigate. It is worth mentioning that a large number of community members gathered to testify in support of the NGO director to reclaim their playground back. In our interview, he emphasized the role of the local people and the children in protecting the Geneina.

‘The children protect the Geneina. They report to me any suspicious behaviour. A thug once closed the gates and prevented people from entering, one of the children came to me crying and said: It is my Geneina, I constructed it myself and no one would take it from me’
(Geneina - Local NGO Director, interview, April 2018).

Another conflict happened when an elite member of the Rotary club intended to arrange an opening event for the football pitch and invite a key figure in the local government without acknowledging the efforts of the local NGO or the people in creating the space (Geneina - NGO activities manager, interview, August 2019). This

was viewed locally as an attempt to ‘hijack the project’ (Geneina - NGO activities manager, interview, August 2019). This was significantly highlighted in an interview with the director of the local NGO.

‘Despite all what we did for this place to come into being, the lady just called me to arrange an opening event for them to come and take all the credit. They were trying to hijack the project. We decided to withdraw from organising this event. It was unsuccessful. People were not happy with their presence which led to an uncontrolled chaos causing the visitors to flee the area’ (Geneina - Local NGO Director, interview, August 2019)

Similarly, the tension with the City Administration was doubled when the local authorities decided to use the vacant plot of land adjacent to the playground and football pitch as a market space (Geneina - Local NGO Director, interview, August 2019). In the exact same spot the local residents desired to have a community centre which was incorporated in the incremental vision delivered within the Geneina project, market stalls were installed (see Figure 6.21). The market never functioned as the idea faced significant resistance from the local NGO and the residents. Furthermore, a local resident explained that they were willing to extend the playground into this vacant land to provide more social spaces for the elderly even without seeking official approvals until building the community centre becomes possible (Geneina - Resident 7, interview, August 2019). The NGO team were actively looking for ways to fund and authorise the community centre (Geneina - Local NGO Director, interview, August 2019).



Figure 6.21 The vacant plot of land adjacent to the playground and football pitch (source: author)

The role of the NGO is undeniably significant in managing and safeguarding the spaces especially with the deficiency of law enforcement and the abandonment of the area. This shows that a strong network of local actors is important for coproduction processes to be effective ensuring collective control and continued activism responding to new opportunities on the long term.

After several conflicts in the area, the NGO fitted a surveillance camera to monitor the playground and the football pitch. A local resident was appointed by the NGO as a security guard for the playground to protect it against drug users. The NGO regularly trimmed the foliage bordering the playground to provide more visibility and a better detection for suspicious behaviour, given that the playground had been used several times for hiding and using drugs (Geneina - Resident 7, interview, August 2019). These actions were found important helping the local community, especially mothers and children, to feel safer. This sense of safety encouraged more people to use and appropriate outdoor spaces further. Mothers were open to me about how this sense of safety affected their use of the playground. One of the mothers said:

‘This area became safer compared to before. At least the zone of the Geneina is full of people. The NGO and the camera helped a lot [...] In the beginning I asked the designers if we can make the playground a controlled area with membership or entrance fees to eliminate misuse or bad behaviour, but I now think that it is nicer that the Geneina is used by everyone. At least, we can do things together and no one would feel sad for not using it’ (Geneina - Resident 8, interview, August 2019).

This shows that these projects promote values of equity and inclusiveness which helped support collaborative acts and common aspirations among diverse groups. This also confirms that the collective control of the area, intensification of use and collaborative activities can provide a sense of safety and trust in a problematic setting like Masakin Uthman. The same meanings were echoed by another local resident who said:

‘Despite the fact that the neighbourhood is not entirely safe, the zone of the playground, the football pitch and the surrounding streets are under control. When people misuse the Geneina, we try to stop them or report to the NGO. I am sure after building the community centre, the area would be better.’ (Geneina - Resident 4, interview, August 2018).

Collaborative Maintenance and Sense of Ownership

With regards to maintaining the Geneina, the UNHCR funded the maintenance of the playground for two years after the intervention. Within these two years, professional maintenance work was done a couple of times by Takween. After the two years, technical maintenance was hardly provided. The local NGO director argued that ‘after the Syrian refugees left the area, the UNHCR has not been as keen to support the project’ (NGO director, interview, April 2019). After Takween stopped helping with the maintenance, the local people and the NGO took the maintenance matter into their own hands. At first, the NGO appointed a local resident to maintain and clean the playground regularly which was usually helped by local children (Geneina - Resident 9, interview, September 2019). In the two to three years after the intervention, the children helped keep the place clean especially those who participated in the project. It seems that the signpost installed in the playground by Takween after the intervention with some encouraging messages such as ‘we have built it and we will maintain it’ corresponded with the feelings of the children towards the space (see Figure 6.22)



Figure 6.22 Signpost installed by Takween (source: author)

signpost installed in the playground by Takween after the intervention with some encouraging messages such as ‘we have built it and we will maintain it’ corresponded with the feelings of the children towards the space (see Figure 6.22)

Later on, as the NGO started to be short on funds, it became more challenging for the local community to meet maintenance costs regularly. Depending on local people to maintain and clean the playground was not enough at most times especially that many of the families who participated in constructing the space had left. Newly relocated families were not as keen on the Geneina, and according to a local resident, ‘they sometimes mistreated the play elements.’ (Geneina - Resident 10, interview, September 2019).

The lack of resources proved to be a major challenge in sustaining the quality of DIY spaces. Similarly, the lack of funds impeded replicating the idea in several areas. One of the residents highlighted this issue and explained that ‘local people are really struggling to make ends meet. They do not have the luxury to maintain their own flats

let alone the playground and other public spaces' (Geneina - Resident 9, interview, September 2019). Similarly, the director of the local NGO explained:

'It is very hard for people to commit to these projects when they are struggling financially. The football pitch has been well kept compared to the playground as it is only accessible when booked and paid for, so it covers the required expenses including the salaries of a football coach and a dedicated place keeper [...] People are excited about the community centre as it might create some livelihood opportunities for them.' (Geneina - Local NGO Director, interview, August 2019).

Despite the relative low cost of maintenance of the DIY play space and the fact that it is the only public space available to the local community, it was hard to keep up with the regular need of repair. The DIY playing elements were not durable enough to endure heavy use for a long time without regular maintenance.

Geneina as a local Asset

The spaces provided the local community with a sense of 'commons' involving shared assets and interests (see Bradley, 2015). Moreover, the collaborative acts that emerged between diverse groups after the intervention are viewed as manifestations of social empowerment. The produced spaces fostered social ties and created a sense of community that did not exist before. Interviews revealed that this intervention contributed significantly to the inhabitants' wellbeing not only for creating a more close-knit community but also for providing much needed public spaces and a better sense of safety in the neighbourhood streets.

The Geneina became a focal point for the community attracting many visitors sometimes even from outside the neighbourhood. The increased traffic was a catalyst to the commercial activities around the Geneina creating livelihood opportunities as shops, cafes and restaurants opened around and near the play space. The play space provided an outlet, a safe social space that the community lacked and desperately needed, but the financial and commercial benefits elevated further the value of this intervention. The concentration of use in the Geneina zone and the surrounding buildings added to the liveliness of the neighbourhood (see Figure 6.23). Several interviews revealed that the Geneina was perceived as a local asset and that the collaborative intervention is associated with continued returns to the local community. In this respect a local resident explained:

‘Lots of these recreational areas are working because of the Geneina and the football pitch. There are times when this area is busy especially when we arrange football tournaments. People from neighbouring areas come to spectate the games or come with friends or family playing in the tournaments (Geneina - Resident 2, interview, April 2018).

This confirms that the spaces generated a variety of social and economic transactions through direct exchange and interaction between diverse groups. As Baily (2010) argues, that coproduction processes increase people’s resources and bring real benefits on both the individual level and the community level contributing to building more cohesive and integrated communities. This in turn can help trigger further interventions in response to common aspirations and needs. When the opportunity arises, the experience of success encourages the community to work towards more synergetic outcomes (Ostrom, 1996). This was echoed in the words of the local NGO director who stated:

‘Yes, the recent changes created some livelihood opportunities for the residents but most importantly the interventions gave them some hope for an improved future. We are now looking seriously into the possibility of authorizing and building the community centre that was part of the people’s initial idea that emerged in collaboration with Takween’ (Geneina - Local NGO Director, interview, August 2019).



Figure 6.23 Small businesses such as cafeterias, diners and children games spaces opening in the area (source: author)

6.5 Accumulative Impact of the Geneina Project

The investigation themes above are indicators of an accumulative spatial and socioeconomic impact as well as reveal important limitations. This case study demonstrates how and to what extent this approach of intervention can cause a positive change in a deprived context that suffers from inadequate services and poor infrastructure. The context challenges the potential of alternative urbanism and small-scale interventions in a low-income neighbourhood riddled with problems. Based on the analysis in the previous section, this section illustrates and reviews the case study through the theoretical concepts discussed in Chapter Two, which also guided the analysis. It then discusses the accumulative impact of the project and explores its wider ripple effects.

6.5.1 Geneina as an ‘Alternative Space’

This section revisits the overarching theoretical framework of the research as discussed in Chapter Two using the Geneina case study. The themes in the previous section provided explanations about the dynamics of the alternative approach of intervention manifesting the interplay between the formal and informal, the planned and unplanned and the temporary and permanent. In addition, the potential of the project is reviewed through the theoretical lenses of ‘differential space’ and ‘coproduction’ (see Figure 6.24).



Figure 6.24 Geneina as an Alternative Space (source: author)

6.5.2 Spatial-Socioeconomic- Symbolic Impact and Limitations

In a vacant land originally designated for public facilities, the project was envisioned, designed and constructed through a coproduction process initiated by non-state actors. With the official indifference towards local needs, the DIY playground was a solution

that engaged the local community for improving the liveability of their area. Although it is small and low-cost, the urban intervention of the Geneina paved the way for further interventions such as the football pitch and the community centre. The spaces played a vital role in the social and economic life of Masaken Uthman where the everyday life of the inhabitants revolved around the spaces and the facilities that evolved gradually in the area after the intervention.

The produced spaces created livelihood opportunities for the local community, not many though to reduce poverty or effectuate economic revitalisation. Nevertheless, I argue that the DIY process and the produced spaces strengthened the resilience of vulnerable groups to cope with issues of displacement and enhanced their wellbeing and capacity to make a living in a more socially sustainable environment. What significantly added to the impact of the project are the symbolic meanings attached to the space, otherwise the playground might be wrongfully perceived as a mere children playground with amateurish aesthetics. It meant a lot to the local community for the intervention to take place in spite of the official abandonment to the area. Despite their vulnerability, they were able to coproduce a meaningful space for all to use and enjoy.

One of the important impacts of the intervention is contributing to the wellbeing of the inhabitants and building a strong mutually supportive community. The initiative empowered local communities by being key players in the process promoting values of inclusiveness, diversity and equity where people across different age groups and from different nationalities and social backgrounds gathered around common interests overcoming preconceived barriers. The spatial design of the playground itself provoked free creative play and flexible zones for appropriation encouraging different amateur art groups to come to perform and engage with the community in the playground spaces.

A tangible physical change was noticeable not only as a result of transforming a vacant land to a playground with colourful play elements, trees and tiled sidewalks, but also due to the existence of the football pitch, cafeterias, activity spaces and NGO offices that emerged after the intervention. Compared to the physical conditions of the rest of the neighbourhood, the quality of the area of the playground, football pitch and surrounding buildings improved. This means that further similar small

interventions in several locations in the neighbourhood could have created an overall gradual transformation.

The play elements had clear signs of wear and tear after five years of heavy use. As the used materials were low cost and mostly recycled, they were not durable to be the only meet and play space in the area. After the UNHCR stopped maintaining the space, the low-income community could not afford to take the matter into their own hands. They might have the skills, time and human capacity but not the funds.

There are limitations of the alternative approach in making a far-reaching socio-economic and spatial impact, most of which are relevant to the contextual specificities of Masakin Uthman. The neighbourhood offers only a transient stability for displaced families, as residents are continuously on the move not only because of the insecure tenure, but also for their dissatisfaction with the isolated urban setting and the inadequate public services. The possibility of effectuating significant transformation decreases as the social cohesion, community empowerment and autonomy created throughout the process are counterbalanced by the problematic setting. Another important limitation stems from the indifference of the local government that did not sufficiently support the project or maintain the spaces and in general failed to fulfil local needs. The City Administration official explained that the lack of capacity and resources is a strong hindering factor (City Administration official, Interview, April 2019). In this sense, I argue that the transformative potential of this approach of intervention can be significantly scaled-up if adopted in parallel with infrastructural and community services upgrading.

I argue that the transformative potential of the intervention is mostly unleashed by the social interaction during the process itself which helps build the social capacity of the community providing participants with the needed skills to work collectively to maintain the space and initiate other interventions. However, in order to achieve long term sustainability it could have been helpful if the intervention was realised in conjunction with implementing socioeconomic programmes that aim to raise family incomes and strengthen the economic capital of the neighbourhood.

The investigation revealed that the role of the local NGO was pivotal throughout the process and afterwards during the everyday use of the space. With the lack of official attention, it played a significant role in managing, maintaining, safeguarding and protecting the produced spaces against co-optations. There is always a risk that local

community members or groups would co-opt the spaces to suit their own means as demonstrated in the examples discussed earlier. The power hierarchies within the neighbourhood might lead to excluding the most vulnerable especially in a deprived area where low-income groups have long been marginalised.

6.5.3 Wider Ripple Effects

As mentioned earlier, there has been a limited ripple effect as a result of the intervention manifested in the few developments surrounding the playground rather than affecting the wider context of the neighbourhood. Nonetheless, building the football pitch and the collective efforts that took place after the intervention to appropriate and maintain the spaces as well as to organise social events are considered important positive ripple effects of the intervention. Further transformation is still possible when implementing the community centre. The likelihood of implementing the community centre became higher due to the serious attempts by the local NGO to sanction the project and find funding opportunities. The intervention provided a process of learning that is essential for the inhabitants to initiate other interventions, particularly to make decisions collectively, formulate clear requests and negotiate with local authorities. After realising the football pitch, the local community and the NGO are more encouraged to achieve the whole original vision delivered within the Geneina project. According to several residents, the community centre is expected to have a considerable impact on the local community.

The idea of the DIY meet and play space was not replicated within the neighbourhood. Other than small decorative plant pots made from recycled and painted tyres, the local community did not attempt to apply what they learned during the DIY process in other locations in the neighbourhood. The vulnerability and deprivation of the inhabitants was found to be hindering further actions. This kind of collective action can be induced but not easily sustained within precarious urban environments.

Moreover, the impact of such projects would be much bigger if they received enough support from the local government. When I asked an official in the City Administration about the requirements of replicating the meet and play idea, she said that the involvement of a charitable body, such as the UNHCR, is necessary for the process to be legally possible, particularly in order to designate a state-owned land for a similar service (City Administration official, Interview, April 2019). Not only the

local officials need to stop resisting such projects but also the local government needs to support and facilitate the process.

6.6 Conclusion

The chapter examined the ‘Geneina’ project, a small urban intervention that took place in 2014 to provide the neighbourhood a meet and play space, that was collaboratively designed and implemented using local recycled materials, on a state-owned vacant plot of land. The extent to which such alternative process and produced space can effectuate positive change was demonstrated. Unlike the previous case study in the urban centre of the city with different competing interests, heritage assets, businesses and touristic attractions, this case study demonstrated the potential of small-scale interventions in a low-income neighbourhood riddled with problems.

The ‘Geneina’ project showed that the role of professional designers acting as mediating agents between the local authorities, the local NGO and the local community was significant to facilitate a coproduction process. Engaging the local NGO was crucial not only to complement the ongoing efforts in the neighbourhood but also to provide better sustainability opportunities for the space. In collaboration with the inhabitants, the local NGO played a vital role in managing, maintaining, and safeguarding the space. The success of such projects on the long term is linked to creating a network of local actors that have the capacity to sustain activism and respond to opportunities.

Within the context of deprivation, the meet and play space effectuated a spatial and socioeconomic positive impact. The urban intervention improved the liveability in the area and strengthened the resilience of vulnerable groups to cope with issues of displacement relieving some of the everyday stress on the inhabitants. Although small and low cost, the urban intervention fostered social ties and created a sense of community that did not exist before. The ‘Geneina’ space paved the way for further interventions such as the football pitch and the community centre, and helped create a node for social and economic activities. It became a local asset encouraging the emergence of markets, cafeterias, entertainment centres in the surrounding buildings which added to the liveliness of the neighbourhood. Not only the produced spaces played a vital role in the social life of Masakin Uthman, but also created some livelihood opportunities for the residents where the everyday day social and economic

life of the inhabitants revolved around the spaces and the facilities that evolved gradually in the area after the intervention.

Despite the above, the research found out that the project was important but not sufficient. The social cohesion, community empowerment and autonomy created throughout the process were not enough to create significant chain reactions due to the lack of resources. Another limitation was regarding the role of the local City Administration. Although the City Administration was meant to be the main partner in the project, not only did the local officials delay the sanctioning process, but also they did not play an active role in the life course of the space or facilitate similar experimental initiatives. There is a general lack of supportive regulations to advance such initiatives allowing alliances between citizens, civil society organizations and governments. Empowering communities through co-production at the neighbourhood level is necessary to maximise the transformative potential of alternative urbanism.

Chapter 7:
Case Study 3 - Ezbet Khairallah Underpass Project
(Omar Ibn Elkhattab Tunnel)

7.1 Introduction

Unlike the previous case studies dealing with interventions in formally planned urban areas in Greater Cairo, this one examines applying the concept of alternative urbanism, as defined earlier in the study, in one of the largest and most densely populated informal neighbourhoods, namely Ezbet Khairallah, located at the city periphery. The area that is a home for about 750,000 families was originally an empty rocky plateau until the mid-seventies when migrants from Upper Egypt and Delta, coming to Cairo to look for work, claimed the state-owned land and built their own homes from stones available on site (Tadamun, 2013). The informal area grew incrementally starting off without roads, infrastructure or any basic services entirely self-sustained and self-managed (see Sims, 2010). Despite the residents' continuous struggle to introduce some essential services such as water and electricity, the area suffers from poor infrastructure, deteriorated public spaces, precarious buildings as well as serious environmental problems and poor connectivity to the rest of the city.

Additionally, the construction of the Ring Road in the 1990s had a profound negative impact on the neighbourhood dividing it into two parts after the demolition of hundreds of existing houses (Waly Centre, 2015). Not only this, but despite the immediate proximity between the elevated highway and the buildings of Ezbet Khayrallah, the Ring Road did not provide access to the communities alongside it denying the right of residents in informal areas to connect with the formal city (see Nagati and Stryker, 2013). This situation resulted in a contested border between informal neighbourhoods and the Ring Road, or what is described by Nagati and Stryker (2013) as the 'formal/informal interface' manifested in concrete walls and illegally built stairways and ramps giving access to the road. Moreover, in Ezbet Khayrallah the Ring Road created below it unused and unsafe areas in addition to five tunnels in a very poor condition.

Omar Ibn ElKhattab tunnel is one of the Ring Road underpasses that was frequently used by the local community despite its very poor condition. This led to a number of fatal accidents that occurred whenever the underpass was flooded by sewage water (Bakry and Nouredin, 2011). The situation was very serious to the extent that people sometimes avoided using the tunnels altogether preferring to cross the elevated highway risking their lives to reach the other part of the neighbourhood (Ibrahim and Mannoun, 2017). The idea of the project was to reclaim Omar Ibn Elkhattab

underpass for the local community not only as a safe link to the rest of the neighbourhood but also as an alternative public space for a neighbourhood that suffers from a lack of good quality open spaces (Akl, interview, April 2018).

The intervention started as an initiative from Takween Integrated Community Development (Takween ICD), a small professional enterprise, that implemented the project between May 2015 and August 2016 using a fund from the Embassy of Switzerland in Egypt (Office for International Cooperation) receiving logistic support from Cairo Governorate and a number of local NGOs (Akl, interview, April 2018). As mentioned earlier in the study, Takween is one of the professional entities founded in 2009 advocating for an alternative practice that is more realistic, locally tailored and incremental, building on existing opportunities and assets.

The investigation of the case study was twofold. The first is regarding the initiative and how the project was implemented, funded and officially sanctioned and who were the actors and how they were engaged in the process. The second focuses on the change over time and the nature of the produced space and how it has been used and maintained since implementation. I also looked for wider transformative impacts beyond the physical space which included social and economic benefits or whether the project has generated further interventions creating a positive ripple effect.

It is necessary to note that my knowledge of the everyday life of Ezbet khayrallah was minimal before the intervention. My familiarity with the area was limited to being a user of the Ring Road that made not only Ezbet Khayrallah visible to the highway commuters but also uncovered to the public the immense scale of the informal residential growth. The long neglected informal city that did not even exist on maps till the 1990s was exposed by the construction of the Ring Road (Elgendy, 2013). Thus, since then, informal areas have started to receive more attention not only from the media but also from researchers, practitioners and civil society organisations (Nagati and Stryker, 2011).

7.2 Unpacking the Contextual Specificities of Ezbet Khayrallah

In order to investigate the role of the underpass project as a catalyst for positive urban change, it is essential first to understand the contextual specificities of the neighbourhood with respect to local challenges and socio-economic dynamics. The historic emergence of the urban setting is crucial to understand the challenges faced

throughout the process of intervention, as well as the potential of such micro intervention to cause change in an area known to be riddled with physical and environmental problems in addition to the continuous tension with the government.

7.2.1 Historical Emergence

As mentioned above, Ezbet khayrallah that is popularly known now as Ezba has developed primarily as a result of migration from various rural areas to the core of Cairo in search of job opportunities which started in the seventies (Waly Centre, 2015). Moreover, the proximity of the neighbourhood to the centre of the city made it a good alternative for the increasing population that could not find affordable housing (Shehayeb, 2009). The state-owned lands were squatted piece by piece to meet the high demand of the new settlers so that the Ezba has developed organically over time extending now over an area of 480 acres or two square kilometres densely built with very narrow unorganised roads and ambiguous public spaces (Tadamun, 2013). As the case in many informal areas, the streets, lanes and building layouts were determined through negotiation among settlers, the operations of informal markets and the common need for access and circulation (see Sims, 2010).

The conflict between the residents of Ezbet Khayrallah and the government regarding land ownership started after the former president Anwar El Sadat issued a Republican Decree in the early seventies allocating the land to a public sector development company to build new housing units (Tadamun, 2013). However, the land was left unused for years until the newly arrived migrants settled on it when it was nothing but a desert plateau, inhabited by poisonous insects and reptiles (Tadamun B, 2013). Although the informal housing phenomenon was initially ignored, the Governorate of Cairo (GOC) issued executive decrees to remove all building violations on the state-owned land. There were many eviction attempts which led to several confrontations with the residents of the Ezba especially after the government started to evacuate and demolish the houses built by the inhabitants. As the government did not provide them with alternative housing, the residents continuously rebuilt their destroyed homes. Consequently, numerous conflicts took place between the local community and the government, among which was a serious confrontation in 1982 in the face of security forces that came to Ezbet Khayrallah to implement a demolition order (Tadamun, 2013). The local resistance succeeded in preventing the security forces from

implementing the order when the women of the Ezba created a human shield obstructing the path of bulldozers forcing them to retreat (Khalil, 2019).

Under the constant threat of eviction and demolition, the residents organised themselves to take legal action and claim their land rights where they filed the first lawsuit in 1984 in order to own the land under the homes they had constructed (Waly Centre, 2015). Although the case stayed in court for almost fifteen years, the Supreme Administrative Court's final verdict allowed the residents to buy the land from the state in order to be the official owners, nevertheless, the court order has not been implemented (Tadamun, 2013). Despite the continuous struggle of the residents to acquire legal ownership of the land, ownership issues have not been resolved where landlords pay the governorate 7% of the land's value annually for using a state-owned land. (Tadamun, 2013).

Along with the above, the residents of Ezbet Khayrallah engaged in collective action and raised funds to introduce essential services and infrastructure such as electricity, water and sanitation. At first, residents managed illegally through self-help efforts to buy water pipes and electricity cables and in doing so, they managed to coordinate with the governorate, water and electricity companies and at a later stage with the district to provide street paving and lighting (Tadamun, 2013). As the case in many informal areas, prior to parliamentary elections, candidates use their connections with politicians and officials to facilitate the necessary authorisations to install such services as an attempt to win residents votes (Tadamun, 2013). Civil society organizations also played an important role and supported the residents to provide some facilities.

The devastating earthquake that hit Cairo in 1992 led to a significant increase in the population of the Ezba (Waly Centre, 2015). Hundreds of families were left homeless after their houses were destroyed by the earthquake in the neighbouring areas, and with no other choices offered by the government they settled in Ezbet Khayrallah and other informal areas. The state could not provide enough alternative housing for all earthquake sufferers which led to a sharp rise in the residential density of the informal settlements on the city periphery (Shehayeb, 2009).

As mentioned earlier, the construction of the Ring Road in the late 1990s was a crucial turning point for the neighbourhood (see Figure 7.1). On one hand, the Ring Road divided the neighbourhood into two parts connected with tunnels; while on the

other hand, it increased real estate values in the area. Thus, when the state compensated the families, whose homes were demolished during the road construction, they repurchased new properties in the same neighbourhood (Waly Centre, 2015). After the completion of the Ring Road, the area became a hot spot for investment by informal contractors (see Elgendy, 2013). Moreover, they started to be keener to build high quality blocks to further increase the value of their properties (Tadamun, 2013).



Figure 7.1 The construction of the Ring Road in the late 1990s divided Ezbet Khayrallah (source: Google Earth)

Another critical incident took place in 2008 when a rockslide occurred in El-Dweiq, a slum area in Muqattam, taking the lives of hundreds of Egyptians (Tadamun, 2015). The crisis prompted the authorities to establish an institutional body, the Informal Settlements Development Facility (ISDF), to be responsible for financing slums redevelopment programs to avoid similar tragedies (Eissa, Abdel-Moneim and Lasheen, 2016). The ISDF developed classification schemes to differentiate between unsafe and unplanned areas within informal developments, mainly to identify life threatening areas that require immediate eviction and relocation. The ISDF examined Ezbet khayrallah and indicated that a number of buildings on the plateau's edges were unsafe and strongly recommended eviction and relocating the inhabitants to alternative housing in remote areas (Tadamun, 2013). The enforced displacement process created conflicts between the residents and the state. It is worth noting that many of the evicted residents that relocated to new housing projects in the desert towns on the city outskirts have returned to Ezbet Khayrallah or nearby informal areas subletting their new allocated units (Tadamun, 2013).

Ezbet Khayrallah has become since then a subject of competing interests from developers and government planners. This was evident in the Cairo 2050 plan, the strategic urban development vision of Cairo previously discussed in detail in Chapter

Three, that emerged as a concept in 2008 with a futuristic vision for Cairo, wiping 5.5 km² of existing urban fabric including sections of Ezbet Khayrallah to make room for investment projects (Ibrahim, 2014). If implemented, this plan would have led to the eviction of almost half a million inhabitants from low-income inner-city areas or informal areas on the city periphery.

Another proposed project was published on the website of the ministry of investment to develop the whole area of Fustat, covering a part of old Cairo including Ezbet Khayrallah, and turn it into a significant tourist attraction. The unique location of the neighbourhood makes it a sought-after real estate investment. Being on a plateau overlooking old Cairo, the view from the rooftops of Ezbet khayrallah is remarkable where the citadel and the pyramids are clearly visible from miles away. The neighbourhood is also close to Coptic Cairo, which is an important touristic destination with its historic religious sites, monuments, and museums (Tadamun, 2013).

After the uprising of 2011, successive governments followed the same policy of displacing residents from informal settlements and building new housing projects in remote desert areas separating people from their social network, sources of livelihoods and employment opportunities (Tadamun, 2013). For example, in 2013, the Minister of Housing announced a plan to build 44 new cities all over the country between 2013 and 2052 (Ibrahim and Singerman, 2014). Moreover, the General Organization for Physical Planning funded a new plan to develop the Fustat area that includes demolishing major parts of Ezbit Khayrallah to create tourist facilities like hotels and resorts for the Fustaṭ Park and a spa resort (Tadamun, 2013).

Although the Cairo 2050 plan paused for a few years after the revolution, a revised plan resurfaced in the official discourse that is referred to as the 'Greater Cairo region Strategic development plan' still revolving around the main aim of modernizing Cairo and countering informal urbanisation (Ibrahim, 2014). In 2016, the government started a five-year project to either demolish or upgrade unsafe areas and relocate 850,000 people living in informal settlements (Farouk, 2020). Although according to the ISDF strategy that is announced on their website, the priority is given to in-situ development and keeping residents in their home areas, the government spends on new housing communities a lot more than on upgrading existing areas (Tadamun, 2015). For example, in 2015/2016 the government budgeted EGP 33.2 billion for the

New Urban Communities Authority investment in new cities, while the former Ministry of Urban Renewal and Informal Settlements had a budget of EGP 0.6 billion that same year (Tadamun, 2015).

7.2.2 Challenges and Hardships

Like many other informal areas, Ezbet khayrallah suffers from a poor quality of roads, inadequate infrastructure, unregulated construction and poorly ventilated dwellings. The Ezba has been specifically known to have two major issues, the lack of adequate potable water and sanitation networks (Tadamun, 2013). Despite some successful community-based projects in collaboration with the government and sanitation companies to provide sanitation services, the self-help infrastructure networks have been insufficient. What made the situation more complicated is the rocky terrain on which Ezbet khayrallah is built on, which makes it difficult to drill deep enough to install pipes, therefore, most of the networks had to be at shallow depths making them more prone to damage and affecting their performance (Tadamun, 2013).

The poor sewage networks had a huge negative impact on the environment and the quality of life in the area, for example, in 2012, a sewage pipe exploded flooding different areas of the neighbourhood and as a result, the drinking water supply was contaminated with sewage (Ezba - Resident 4, interview, September 2017). The recurring drilling to install or repair underground infrastructure had left the streets in a very poor condition with uneven paving and trip hazards. According to a local inhabitant in the Ezba, the streets of the neighbourhood were sometimes not safe to the extent that parents were discouraged from sending their children to school and people found difficulty to get to work (Ezba- Resident 4, interview, September 2017). Such poor street network has prevented access for ambulances and fire services.

Moreover, as waste disposal and garbage collection has been one of the most critical lacking services in the area, like most of other informal settlements. Garbage keeps accumulating in the streets and open spaces until residents have no choice but to dump it on the Ring Road in order to force the officials to remove it to avoid traffic problems (Ezba - Resident 8, interview, September 2018). In addition to the poor quality of streets and outdoor areas, they are almost void of trees, greenery, and street lighting.

One of the shared characteristics between informal neighbourhoods, that is prominently problematic in the Ezba, is the lack of green or public open spaces. Due to the scarcity of land and the growing population, the built-up residential density in the area is very high and there is very little space left for public use, which is mostly streets, narrow laneways, and left-over spaces between buildings. Despite the very poor condition of such spaces, which are mostly community managed and maintained, residents rely on them significantly not only for access and movement but also as alternative spaces for work, sociability, and recreation (see Bayat, 2012).

Another major problem in Ezbet khayrallah is that it is subdivided into entities falling under four different administrative districts which complicate service delivery in the neighbourhood (see Figure 7.2) (Tadamun, 2013). The four districts have limited budgets, and the informal neighbourhood has not been a priority to any of them, where each considers the other three to be more responsible to fund any necessary interventions (Ibrahim, 2018). The administrative divisions have affected the efficiency of local service provision especially due to the difficulty of holding responsible parties accountable between the different districts. (Tadamun, 2013).

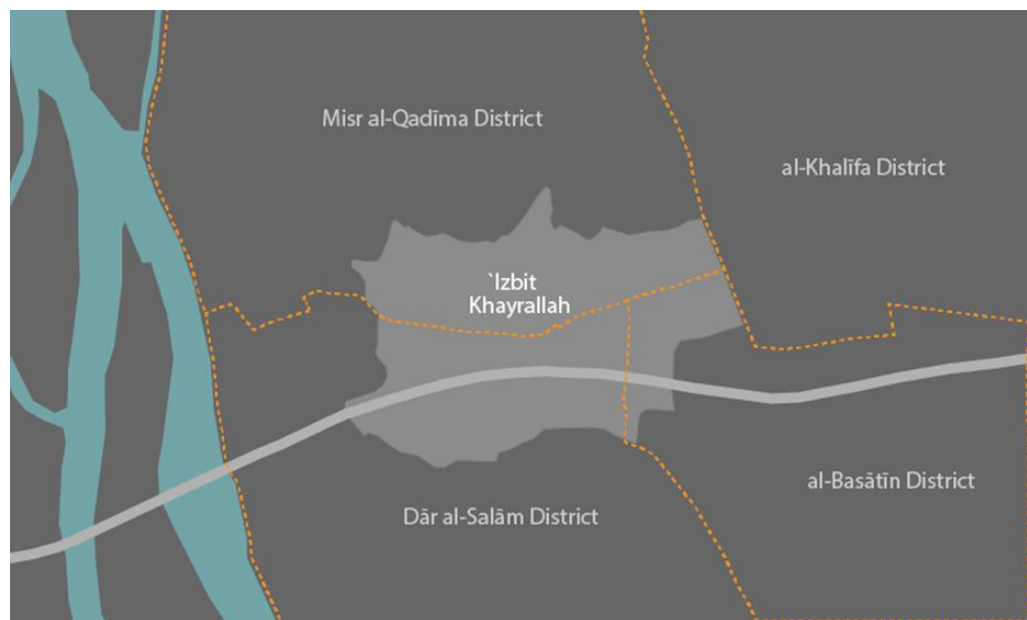


Figure 7.2 Ezbet Khayrallah is subdivided into entities falling under four different administrative districts (source: Tadamun, 2013)

The neighbourhood has been suffering from a significant connectivity and accessibility issue. As mentioned earlier, the local community have no formal access to the highway causing difficulties in commuting to schools, jobs, and other services in the city. Throughout the years the residents have created informal access points to

the neighbourhood by constructing stairways linking the area to the Ring Road which generated informal transportation hubs. As the Ring Road divided the neighbourhood into two parts connected by five tunnels distributed along the road, it was difficult for the residents to get from one part to the other especially that the tunnels were in a very poor condition. Moreover, as most of the services in the area, including the neighbourhood's only school, are in the northern part, so residents of the southern part must cross the underpasses if they wish to use these services (Akl, interview, April 2018) (see Figure 7.3).



Figure 7.3 Access points from Ezbet Khayrallah to the Ring Road
(source: Ibrahim and Mannoun, 2017)

The context of isolation, official neglect and extreme deprivation has created a concentration of poverty, unemployment, and crime within the neighbourhood.

(JICA, 2011). Nevertheless, a considerable proportion of the residents are employees or self-employed, where many residents are educated, many of whom are engineers, doctors, and lawyers; there are also craftsmen, workers, and workshop owners (Tadamun, 2013). Such socioeconomic diversity has been an important factor contributing to the different community-led upgrading efforts, providing the ability and capacity for self-help.

Another significant challenge is the exclusion of the residents from the social spheres of the city and the stigma attached to informal settlements (see Elgendy, 2013). The media and the official rhetoric had an influence perpetuating a negative stereotype about residents of informal areas portraying them mostly as degenerate individuals. Not only did this rhetoric lead to social exclusion but also justified for the wider public forced evictions and eradication policies. This also has created a fundamental lack of trust within the neighbourhood in local authorities and formal approaches of development.

7.3 The Omar Ibn Elkhattab Tunnel Project and the Role of Designers as Mediators and Facilitators

This section focuses on the process of the intervention from conception and funding to decision making and implementation. All stages of the project demonstrate the crucial role designers played as mediators and facilitators enabling a project that aimed to reintegrate the informal neighbourhood into the city.

7.3.1 Conception, Project Initiation and Stakeholders

The project started in 2015 as an initiative by Takween. After the uprising of 2011, Takween team started to get engaged with the community of Ezbet khayrallah attracted to the stories of activism and struggle in the neighbourhood that started in the 1980s which received attention from the wider public, researchers and urbanists (Akl, interview, April 2018). Kareem Ibrahim (2018), one of the founding partners and CEO of Takween, points out that the ability of the neighbourhood inhabitants to organise themselves for more than fifteen years to build a strong case against the state to stop evictions and gain access to title their lands was particularly remarkable, especially that it was done only by local inhabitants without the involvement of international aid agencies or foreign activist groups.

The first collaboration between Takween and the local community was a few months after the 2011 uprising, where they implemented an initiative to renovate the facades of five houses in Ezbet khayrallah. Although Takween is a social enterprise, through cross-subsidy mechanism, Takween funded the project using low cost environmentally friendly materials in collaboration with the local community who contributed to the renovation costs and some also volunteered in the painting process (Ibrahim, 2014). Ibrahim (2014) argues that the initiative aimed to show that a little investment can reintegrate such neighbourhoods into our city and shift the negative image promoted by the media. The houses that were painted were chosen to be visible from the Ring Road to draw attention to the project (see Figure 7.4). The initiative was successful and received wide attention which encouraged another foundation to fund a similar project a few months after implementation and requested Takween to replicate the experiment in Manshiet Nasser, another large informal neighbourhood in Cairo (Ibrahim, 2014).



Figure 7.4 The painting initiative of Takween to renovate the facades of five buildings in Ezbet Khayrallah (source: Takween ICD)

In an interview with Nevine Akl, the cofounder of Takween, she explained that this small intervention helped build trust between Takween team, local activists and community groups, as well as gave credibility for a small professional entity like Takween to discuss upgrading projects and possible partnerships with the local

authorities (Akl, interview, April 2018). As the poor condition of the tunnels underneath the Ring Road was a major problem in the area, especially after several fatal accidents occurring whenever the tunnels were flooded with sewage water, the tunnels were seen as a priority by residents as well as by local authorities in the upgrading discussions (see Figure 7.5). Accordingly, Takween's second project in the neighbourhood was to reclaim one of tunnels for the public as a pilot project. According to Nevine Akl, the aim of the project was to develop a design solution as an upgrading intervention in one of the five tunnels so that it would be replicated by the authorities or other local organisations (Akl, interview, April 2018).



Figure 7.5 Omar Ibn Elkhatab tunnel before the intervention
(source: Takween ICD)

The project was supported by the Embassy of Switzerland in Egypt (Office for International Cooperation) as part of the longstanding development cooperation agreement between Egypt and Switzerland that extends for more than forty years. The embassy of Switzerland's Office for International Cooperation offers grants to support development projects in several fields, among which urban and spatial

development, environmental upgrading, and socio-economic resilience of vulnerable groups, contributing to empowering local communities (SECO, 2017). The Embassy works with state institutions, civil society organisations and the private sector as well as supports small and medium-sized enterprises towards implementing effective participation. The project also received logistic support from Cairo Governorate, Misr el Qadima District, as well as several local NGOs.

After settling on the project idea and finding a source of funding, Takween team, with the assistance of a group of interns, conducted a participatory action research to identify the problems facing each tunnel and the needed interventions that could be implemented. In our interview, Akl explained that:

‘spending time with the local community and understanding the existing activities involving the tunnels and the public spaces surrounding them was very important to choose which tunnel would be more influential on the local everyday life. Initially, the officials were keen to renovate another tunnel, but we convinced local officials to select Omar Ibn Elkhatab tunnel based on the needs of the local community where this tunnel would be extensively used by children and mothers going to and from nearby schools as well as it is the closest to the metro station that is frequently used by residents’ (Akl, interview, April 2018).

This resonates with the concept of ‘everyday urbanism’ (Crawford, Chase and Kaliski, 1999), where the intervention was intended to reclaim elements of the everyday life of the local community. In an ‘acupunctural’ manner, the intervention intended to create a significant improvement in the residents’ quality of life by enhancing their relationship with the formal city (see Lerner, 2014). Moreover, residents believe that the poor condition of this particular tunnel, which was frequently flooded with sewage water, was the main reason of several fatal accidents happening on the Ring Road (Ezba - Resident 1, interview, September 2017). Months before the uprising, a young local boy was killed while crossing the highway on his way to school which triggered protests blocking the Ring Road fuelled by anger and hopelessness (Almasryalyoum, 2011). The selection process of Omar Ibn Elkhatab tunnel was based on a workshop conducted by Takween to discuss their research with the different stakeholders (residents, local NGOs, and representatives of Cairo Governorate) (see Figure 7.6).

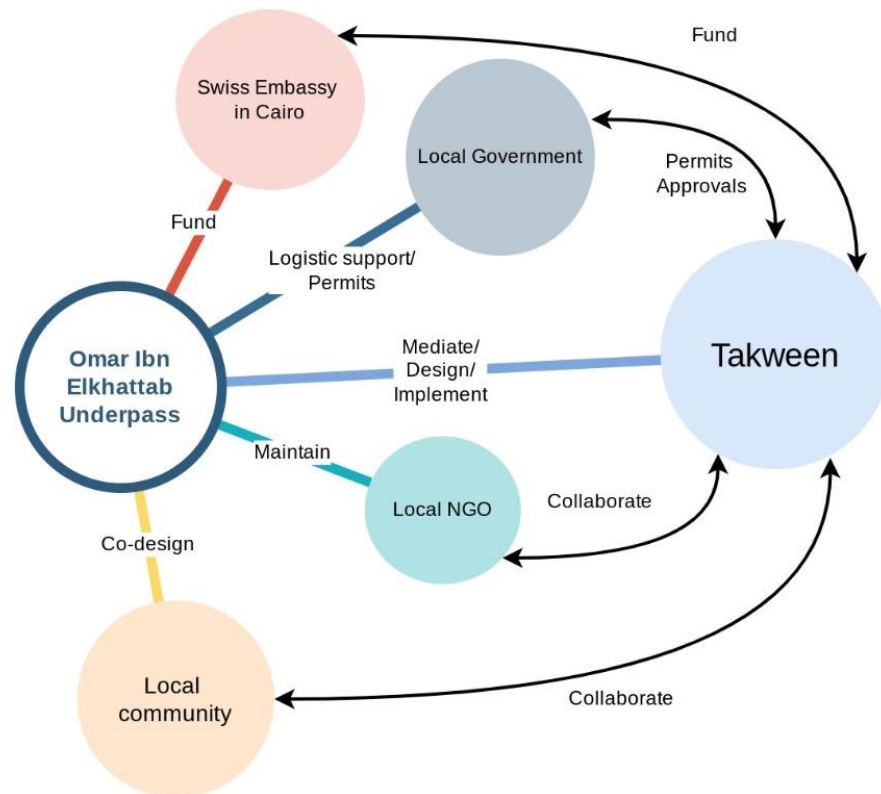


Figure 7.6 Underpass project stakeholders (source: author)

7.3.2 Design Process and Implementation

The design was based on several on-site participatory workshops arranged by Takween team with community members, local children, NGOs and Cairo Governorate representatives. The designer, Akl, emphasized the role of the local community in the design especially those who are working or living near the tunnel, as they were keen to attend the workshops and actively contributed time and effort (Akl, interview, April 2018). A physical model was used by Takween team to communicate ideas and design solutions with community members (see Figure 7.7). The workshops were followed by public presentations engaging more residents and other stakeholders to give feedback on proposed solutions (Akl, Interview, April 2018).



Figure 7.7 Co-design workshops (source: Takween ICD)

As mentioned earlier, the main problem was the sewage overflow, which was severe in this particular tunnel due to the deformed road surface and the surrounding topography as the lowest point in the area was at the centre of the tunnel (Akl, interview, April 2018). Whenever the sanitation network got clogged, which happened frequently, sewage water used to accumulate inside the tunnel preventing vehicles and people from passing through. According to Nevine Akl, the sewage problem was challenging and required a large-scale intervention for it to be completely fixed, however, ‘small and localised’ solutions were suggested to help overcome this problem in the short term until otherwise is possible (Akl, Interview, April 2018). The design solution was ‘tactical’ in the sense that it was intended to be ‘short-term’ and ‘cost effective’, but at the same time it was expected to cause a big improvement in the quality of the inhabitant’s quality of life. Engaging the local community in all stages of the intervention from conception to implementation also resonates with the tactical approach of intervention. Takween team believed that local engagement was crucial for the success of the project and for it to create a bigger positive impact (Akl, interview, April 2018).

Modifying the tunnel floor levels, so that water accumulates at the southern end of the tunnel instead of its centre, and providing a raised sidewalk with an adequate width were simple realistic solutions for residents to pass the tunnel safely in cases of sewage overflow (Ibrahim and Mannoun, 2017). Moreover, Takween team suggested providing a chamber for water drainage at the southern end of the tunnel being the lowest point after intervention to collect accumulated water. As these were not drastic alterations, the sewage leak was expected to occur even after the intervention due to the improper sewage system design and construction as well as the system’s

inadequate capacity (Akl, interview, April 2018). However, these sewage overflows can be reduced by proper maintenance, therefore, as part of the intervention the involved participants decided to modify the levels of the covers of five manholes along the sewage line near the tunnel to facilitate future maintenance done by the government (see Figure 7.8) (Takween, 2017).

Interviews with local residents revealed the community did not easily accept a compromise, and that they initially undervalued solutions that did not meet typical professional standards. Several residents explained that they expected fixing the roots of the sewage problem when professionals became involved, however, they confirmed they trusted Takween. This was highlighted by a local resident who said:

‘We are used to fixing things in our own way, so the quality was not really good but it works [...] The tunnels problem was a very serious problem and we were desperate for it to be fixed. We did not want them to be fixed for a couple of days and then get back to how they were. [...] we trusted the engineers, they were keen and in the end we chose what to do together.’ (Ezba - Resident 2, interview, September 2017).

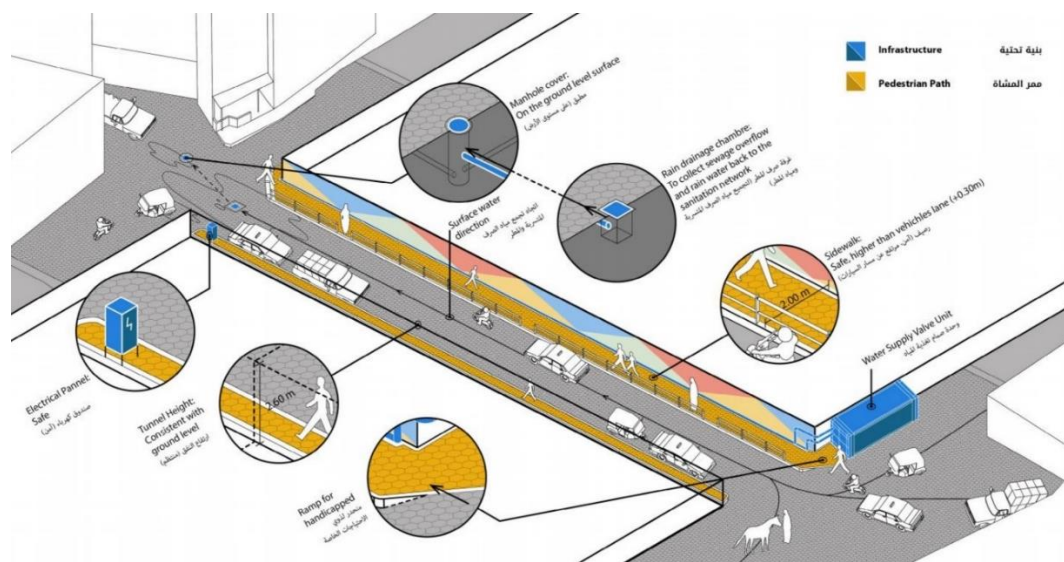


Figure 7.8 The underpass pilot project (source: Takween ICD)

Among the other identified problems were the unfinished narrow sidewalks, lack of paving and lighting, in addition to looking shabby, crammed with domestic solid waste and dilapidated kiosks (Takween, 2017). The sidewalks inside the tunnel were almost dysfunctional and the pedestrian and vehicular movement inside the tunnel were not separated. To enhance safety, the design included two elevated sidewalks on either side of the tunnel, one of which is wide enough for two people to walk comfortably side by side (Ibrahim and Mannoun, 2017) (See Figure 7.9). Moreover, a

ramp was provided to allow access for all. As an additional safety factor, a handrail was provided separating pedestrians from vehicular traffic. In an interview with Akl, she argued that the sidewalk before the intervention was almost overtaken by street vendors and the tunnel was not wide enough for intense street vending activities, which was a point of controversy among the different stakeholders. Initially, existing street vendors inside the tunnel were against removing their kiosks and their goods that had been blocking the sidewalk, which triggered disputes among the local community during the decision-making process (Akl, Interview, April 2018). She asserted that ‘one of the biggest challenges that faced the project was building consensus among the views of the local community, NGOs, and local authorities.’ (Akl, interview, April 2018).



Figure 7.9 Side walk before and after the intervention (source: Takween ICD)

To provide a sense of safety, adequate public lighting was installed inside the underpass. Akl mentioned that although this seemed like a minor modification, they

were keen to install durable lights that are not easy to damage or break even if they were more expensive (Akl, Interview, 2018). She explained that before the intervention whenever lights were installed, they were intentionally damaged by thugs to take control of the area. She stressed that in this case it was important to choose the cost-efficient option rather than the low cost one to have the desired effect in the longer term (Akl, interview, April 2018).

Not only did the intervention aim at reconnecting the two parts of the neighbourhood, but also aimed at upgrading the public open spaces along the Ring Road, which were in a very poor condition. Before the intervention, open spaces facing Omar Ibn Elkhattab tunnel on both sides were little used and accumulated with garbage, and the stairs to the ring road alongside the tunnel was hazardous without a banister or a handrail on either side. As part of the pilot project these public spaces were cleaned and tiled with the same heavy-duty tiles used in the tunnel, and a banister was installed at the side of the stairs (see Figure 7.10) (Takween , 2017). Signage elements were introduced which, with the colourful fresh paint, gave the public space and the passage a sense of formality that contrasted with the decaying setting.



Figure 7.10 Staircase to the Ring Road before and after the intervention (source: Takween ICD)

In our interview, Nevine Akl argued that there were two important aspects in the design process for the intervention to have the intended impact (Akl, interview, April 2018). The first was related to the function of the tunnel which involved creating a safe passage for vehicles and pedestrians especially women and children, refurbishing the tunnel and the surrounding public spaces; and most importantly finding technical solutions for the sewage overflow. The second aspect of the design was related to

‘how this tunnel could be transformed into a meaningful public space’ (Akl, interview, April 2018). Akl believes that not only engaging the community including local children in the design workshops was very important, but also the local participation in painting a mural on the walls of the tunnel, which was a significant feature of the design, would fuel a sense of pride and ownership towards the space from her point of view (see Figure 7.11). The mural resembles the neighbourhood and its residents, and was led by a Cairo-based artist, Azza Ezzat. Heavy duty paint was used to last longer while colourful and reflective paints were chosen to enrich the visual experience and provide a sense of safety (Akl, interview, April 2018).



Figure 7.11 Painting the mural in collaboration with the community (source: Takween ICD)

The artist Azza Ezzat documented the different phases of painting the wall mural on one of her social media platforms. She also mentioned some of the interesting conversations that took place with the local community as examples representing a variety of reactions throughout the process. The idea of drawing the neighbourhood as a wall mural was mostly welcomed by residents who expressed gratitude to the lead artist, however, a few found it quite peculiar. In my interview with Akl, she stated that some members of the community stated that they prefer drawing ‘something that looks nicer’ on the walls, but those feelings quickly changed to satisfaction during implementation. As the mural depicted local everyday life activities and specific architectural characteristics in the neighbourhood, the community took pride to identify themselves or their buildings painted on the wall

and started to take pictures in front of different areas of the mural shortly after its execution (Akl, interview, April 2018).

Despite the collaboration of the local community in the painting process, they did not participate in the mural design itself. Ezzat explains that initially there were parts of the mural that were supposed to be left for local children to paint and draw freely, which did not turn out well as children wrote their initials and phone numbers on the wall instead. As a result, residents expressed their disappointment and requested removing the children's 'free artwork' (see Figure 7.12).



Figure 7.12 The free artwork of children (source: Azza Ezzat)

Although professional site engineers, building constructors, electricians and plumbers carried out the construction work, the local community was engaged and helped out throughout the implementation process. A local resident was keen to mention in our interview:

‘We tried to help them as much as we could, even local children were trying to assist during construction. We also made them tea and served them juice from a local juice shop. They spent a lot of time with us.’ (Ezba - Resident 3, Interview, September 2017).

The whole project took over a year, from May 2015 to August 2016, which is more than expected for a small intervention. Ibrahim and Mannoun (2017) argue that this was due to some obstacles during the design and implementation process, the most prominent of which was reaching consensus on design among the different stakeholders and resolving disputes among residents that interrupted construction activities on several occasions. Construction was also interrupted by repeated sewage overflows that caused considerable delays (Ibrahim and Mannoun, 2017).

A few months after completion of the construction work, on 9th November 2016, a formal opening event took place with the attendance of representatives from the local government and the Embassy of Switzerland, Takween ICD team and the local community including children (Takween, 2017) On the opening day, a presentation and a tour were led by Kareem Ibrahim, the cofounder of Takween.

7.4 Tracing Change of Produced Spaces in Time

As mentioned previously, in addition to understanding the dynamics of the intervention process, the research seeks to investigate how the produced spaces have changed over time and what kind of impact the intervention has caused. This inquiry determined focusing on emerging patterns of social use, lived experiences, efforts of social control or conflicts arising from different groups claims. Within a significantly deprived context and deeply rooted problems, the influence of such small urban intervention might not be significantly noticeable when visiting Ezbet Khairallah. Nevertheless, tracing the change over time through mapping, interviews and observations revealed physical changes as well as experiential aspects representing the potential of such interventions to cause a positive impact and the conditions that were necessary for it to happen.

For this purpose, I spent significant time in the neighbourhood specifically to understand the everyday social life of the produced spaces. My fieldwork started by getting off on the highway and going down the same staircase residents use to reach Ezbet Khayrallah. I had a walk through the neighbourhood particularly the area surrounding the tunnel. As mentioned earlier, I was not familiar with the area beforehand, so I was aware of the implications of being an outsider. I took some time to establish trust within the area, introducing myself whenever possible to members of the local community. I contacted local NGO members and one of them offered to accompany me during one of my early tours. During the intensive fieldwork, observations were recorded on maps. Interviews with the different participants and stakeholders were crucial to understand the perceptions and feelings attached to the underpass and the produced public spaces over time and their viewpoints and experiences of the change that has been happening since the intervention in 2016.

7.4.1 Mapping Spatial Practices

As mentioned earlier in the study, mapping is a method intended to demonstrate everyday social patterns as well as the intensity and diversity of use/ users. Based on observations during the different fieldwork periods in 2018 and 2019, the maps were generated so that each map represents aggregate utilization practices superimposing snapshots of occupation and traces of movement (see Figure 7.13). To augment the maps, a table was created highlighting the key events that took place from the start of the project (see Table 5).

Table 5 The timeline of the process key events (source: author)

Date	Actors	Action or event
May 2015	Designers Community	Design phase begins
Aug 2015	Designer Local NGO Community	Traffic and user group analysis across the five tunnels
Nov 2015	Designers Local NGO Community	Community workshops with local residents
Aug 2016	Designers Community	Project implementation and construction is complete
Oct 2016	Artist Community	artist Azza Ezzat completes the mural with local participation
Nov 2016	Designer Funders Government NGO	Inauguration ceremony attended by government officials and Swiss ambassador
Feb 2018	Government	Cairo Governarate announces renovation the remaining 4 tunnels with funding from France

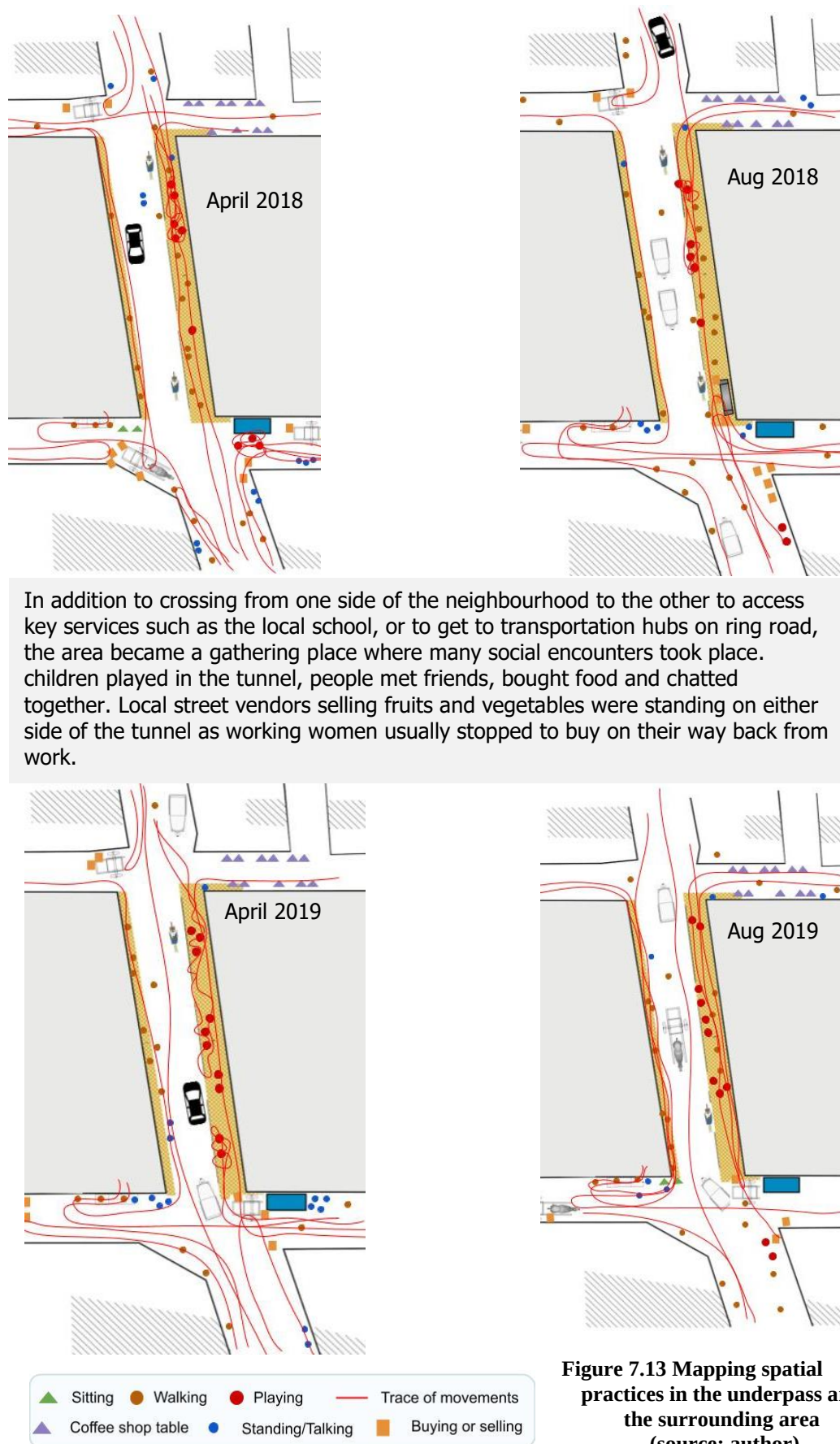


Figure 7.13 Mapping spatial practices in the underpass and the surrounding area (source: author)

7.4.2 Exploring the Lived and Spatiotemporal Experience

Understanding the life course of the reclaimed spaces is crucial to investigate the transformative potential of such approach of intervention which relates to the change of the physical setting as well as the social everyday life of the neighbourhood. Before embarking on that investigation, it is necessary to note that this project is not seen as a typical adaptive reuse of a disused underpass as the function of the tunnel as a passage from one part of the neighbourhood to the other is not only essential but lifesaving. Nevertheless, this is not merely a process of refurbishment, the process of the intervention is claimed to turn the tunnel from a dark unsafe and unpleasant place into an alternative meaningful public space.

Everyday Social Patterns and Experiential Meanings

During my first fieldwork period to Ezbet Khayrallah in August/September 2017, which was almost a year after the intervention, my first impression of the tunnel is that it was still in a very good condition; its vibrant colours and fresh look was attractive standing in contrast with the unfinished look of the neighbourhood buildings. At that time, it was the only tunnel of the five that was ‘professionally’ renovated. I was able to see how the tunnel is deeply rooted in the everyday life of the local community. As the area lacks adequate public spaces and play areas, the tunnel represented a ‘possibility space’ enabling unexpected uses (see Bromberg, 2010). Not only did it return to be the main path connecting the neighbourhood, but also it turned with the surrounding area into a community hot spot. The intervention provided a landscape for the space to become ‘loose’, supporting diverse activities and social patterns (see Franck and Stevens, 2007).

During observations, it was clear to me that the area became a gathering point where many social encounters took place. On the everyday level, several social patterns emerged that created possibilities for social interaction. I could see children meeting before or after school playing football inside the tunnel which was possible due to the low vehicular traffic. Although it was not intended, children spent hours in the tunnel playing on the metal railing installed on the edge of the footpath (see Figure 7.14). I argue that the colourful and child friendly design of the tunnel in addition to the participation of the children in the decision making, implementation and execution of the mural had strengthened the relationship between children and the space.

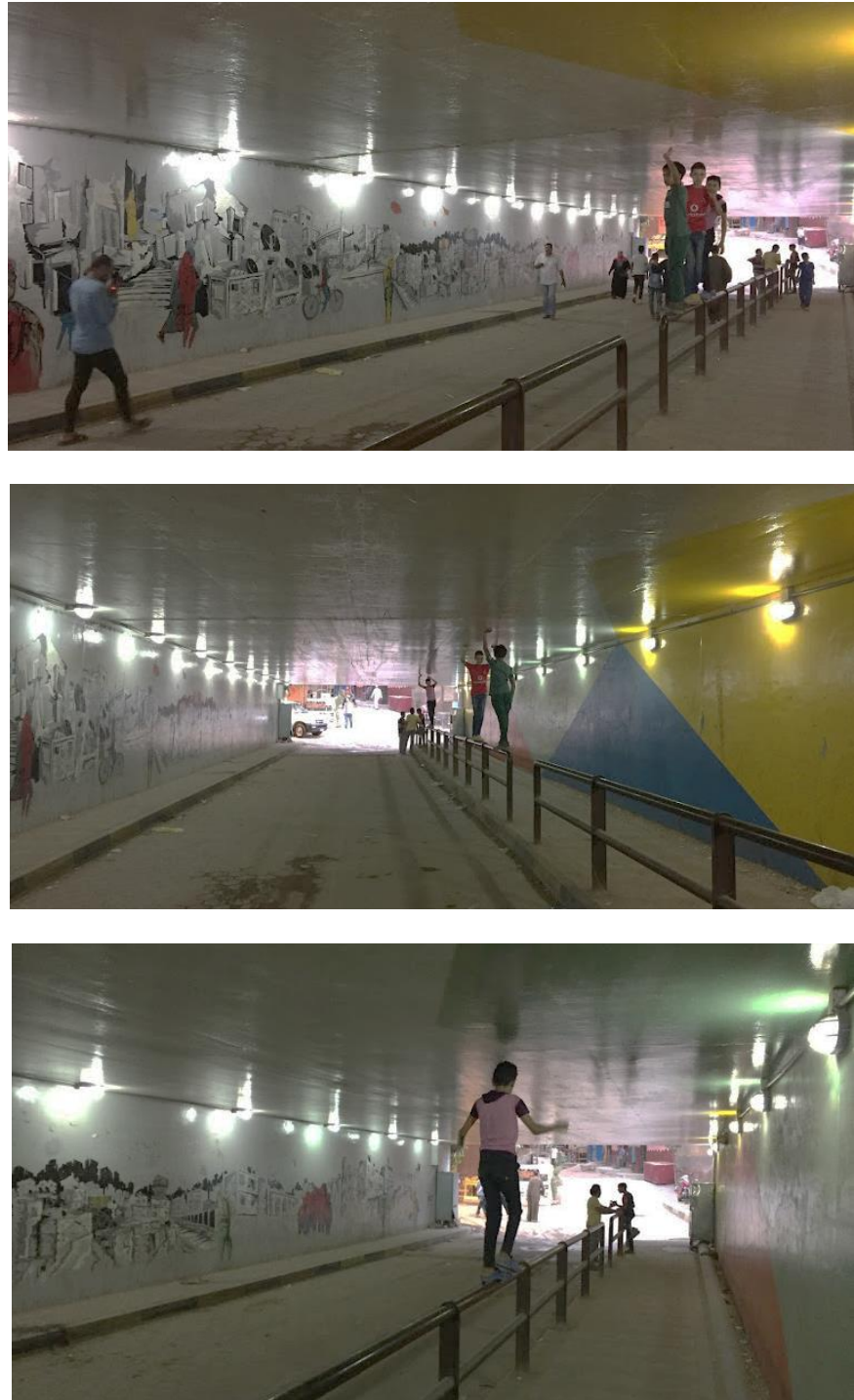


Figure 7.14 Local children playing in the underpass (source: author)

Along with the above, I could see that the tunnel generated everyday social dynamics that were not possible before the intervention. As an ‘everyday space’, it accommodated and supported everyday activities (see Crawford, Chase and Kaliski, 1999). Due to the lack of quality outdoor spaces, the space was viewed as an alternative public space. A wooden table was placed next to the tunnel exit and used as a bench by local people. The nearby coffeeshop owner increased tables numbers and placed them next to the tunnel exit. Local street vendors were standing on either

side of the tunnel in the afternoon and sold fruits and vegetables on carts as working women usually stopped to buy on their way back from work as well as mothers who stopped after picking up their children from school or nursery. Every day a few hours before dark, a couple of food carts peddlers selling locally made sweet pastries stood at one end of the tunnel which attracted people enlivening the space (see Figure 7.15). It was very common to see people running into each other in the tunnel, some briefly greeted each other while others were comfortable to hold very long conversations in the space. This ‘looseness’ emerged when people recognised the possibilities inherent in this area after the intervention and adapted the spaces to the local everyday needs (see Franck and Stevens, 2007).



Figure 7.15 Open spaces along the ring road at the exit of the underpass (Source: author)

Interviews with the local community highlighted how the collaborative intervention was linked to people’s experience of the space which became a source of emotional stimuli. This was highlighted by one of the local residents who said:

‘Yes I was here when this space was done, it was a mess before and we had to cross the road [...] look how it changed completely! It looks great! It was an achievement and we feel proud of it’ (Ezba - Resident 6, interview, September 2017).

A local woman expressed her feelings and the impact of the sense of safety and inclusion on her and her overall wellbeing saying: ‘I use the tunnel every day, it is much safer now. This area was always dark and dangerous, it turned into a safe, clean and beautiful place [...] I feel better just by knowing that I do not have to face this challenge every day’ (Ezba - Resident 3, Interview, September 2017). Another woman echoed the same thoughts saying:

‘The most important thing is safety. I had two relatives in my family who died in car accidents. We had to cross the Ring Road and risk our lives. I believe that such projects help a lot and I feel grateful someone had finally thought about us [...] Our people did a lot of things, but they cannot do everything.’ (Ezba - Resident 1, Interview, September 2017).

Her words also indicated that the intervention created a feeling of inclusion appreciating the external support for the marginalised community. A local NGO worker explained the reasons behind the diversity of uses in the tunnel believing that the intervention improved the liveability of the area and the quality of life saying:

‘People here do not have open spaces for recreation. They are desperate. It is nice to have an appealing place for people to enjoy and children to play [...] This is beside health, safety, and environmental benefits. It certainly improved the quality of life of the community as a lot of people use this tunnel every single day.’ (Ezba - NGO Worker 1, interview, April 2018)

The impact of the tunnel on the everyday life and the wellbeing of the inhabitants was a repeated theme during interviews. Residents used the tunnel to access services in the other part of the neighbourhood, get to work, school and transport nodes. In this sense, the tunnel reintegrated marginalised and vulnerable groups into society opening opportunities for a better future.

A street vendor selling fruits and vegetables nearby the tunnel said that the intervention was crucial for street vending practices to thrive in the area. He mentioned that he always stayed in the same spot even before the intervention but due to the poor environmental situation, sewage flooding and piles of garbage in the area, people rarely had bought from him as the general atmosphere was not encouraging and his goods were always covered with flies (Ezba - Resident 4, Interview, September 2017).

Inducing an Interstitial and Immersive Experience

Several inhabitants expressed how the intervention played a role in changing their own perception about their neighbourhood and its future. In an interview with a local woman, she told me that it meant a lot to her to see people admiring the neighbourhood and taking the initiative to improve it (Ezba - Resident 1, interview, September 2017). Another remarked that drawing the area's buildings on the wall made her see and appreciate the beauty in the details of the neighbourhood. She added 'I feel good and want to beautify my place as a result. I regularly clean in front of my house, and I added plant pots for decoration' (Ezba - Resident 7, Interview, September 2017). One of the participants pointed out that painting the mural was a very joyful event, describing it as an experience that he had never expected to take place in the Ezba (Ezba - Resident 6, interview, September 2017). Another resident mentioned that her daughter used to be ashamed of where she lives as it was very unclean, smelly and full of garbage, but her feelings changed as she became proud to have participated in the project (Ezba - Resident 3, interview, September 2017).

Spatially, although small and the design outcome itself is simple, the intervention created what Margaret Crawford (2012) describes as a juxtaposition with the urban setting which had the potential to alter the existing perception of the area and invigorate an idea of what it can be. The mural transcended the limits of the physical space and created a unique spatial experience inviting people to visit and linger in the underpass.

The mural immersed people in shared experiences , which echoes Harris'(2015) argument on how immersion can support attentiveness to the particularities of place, fostering the community's sense of identity and place. A feeling of validation and acceptance is evident in the words of a local street vendor who expressed a sense of belonging to the area that started to reintegrate into the formal city. He was keen to show me the drawing of himself and the pushcart he owns on the wall mural (see Figure 7.16) and said:

'I am an old man and have lived here most of my life. I am glad I saw this project happening. It had a great impact on our lives.[..] We sometimes have visitors that come from outside the Ezba to have a look and take pictures like you.' (Ezba - Resident 4 Interview, September 2017).



Figure 7.16 Section of the mural showing one of the residents and his cart (source: Azza Ezzat)

Despite the above, the mural effect started to fade later as during my visits in 2018, there was a physical deterioration in the tunnel and the mural painting started to show signs of degradation (see Figure 7.17). In 2019, there was a significant physical deterioration in the tunnel. The mural was written over, damaged and chunks of plaster had fallen off. Nevertheless, residents still appreciated the intervention and the impact on their everyday life three years after implementation despite the physical deterioration. For example, a local tuk-tuk driver said: ‘I use this tunnel every day. The project was very important to us. We cannot live without it. We used to cross the high-speed road which was dangerous.’ (Ezba - Resident 9, Interview, September 2019). However, the tunnel became somehow less popular in the area, as several residents I asked were not keen to talk about their experience or feelings about the space. They kept deviating from the subject and talked about other serious problems in the Ezba like garbage collection and inadequate health and education services.



Figure 7.17 The underpass and the mural showing signs of degradation two years after the intervention (source: author)

7.4.3 Exploring the Roles of Actors and Power Dynamics

During the intervention process, Takween team acted as mediators and tried to create balance of power between the different stakeholders. According to Nevine Akl, the cofounder of Takween, the decision-making process aimed at empowering the local community, which is much more than the typical approach of participation which at best may allow for presenting state plans to people. As mentioned earlier, the project as an idea, design and implementation was based on localised knowledge coming from the field produced in collaboration with inhabitants, researchers, professionals, and representatives from local authorities. Kareem Ibrahim the cofounder of Takween, argues:

‘It is also a knowledge that focuses on action: it leads inhabitants to deeper knowledge of themselves and to formulate clear requests to the public authorities. It makes it possible to take better decisions’
(Ibrahim quoted in UN-Habitat, 2016)

In this sense, the nature of the produced spaces and how they have been maintained or regulated is critical to determine the potential of such urban practices to empower local communities.

Collective Control and Intracommunity Power Dynamics

The upgraded spaces regulated collectively by the local community. This led to a degree of contestation in the area due to conflicting interests and the intracommunity power dynamics. There were several attempts shortly after the intervention by street vendors to overtake the pavement again, but residents did not allow them. A local woman street vendor confirmed that saying:

‘I really hope I can put my pushcart inside the tunnel instead of outside. I will feel safer if that happens, but people will not allow me. Whenever I tried before, people refused to leave me alone. I wish someone can help me open a kiosk on the pavement so that no one could kick me out.’ (Ezba - Resident 5, interview, September 2017).

Although street vendors are an integral part of the local economy, their presence inside the tunnel is a controversial issue as explained earlier. Although such projects, in general, seek to support vulnerable low-income groups, in this case occupying the pavement and blocking the pedestrian right of way was against the public interest. In my interview with Akl (2018), she explained that Takween team tried to raise the local awareness that the tunnel is not a suitable space for kiosks or intense street vending practices as they will likely jeopardize the safety of the community. She added, however, that they were keen to clarify during co-design workshops that residents should retain control and ownership over produced spaces and that they have the right to appropriate them according to their needs.

This project differed from typical tactical urban interventions in Europe or North America which are mostly based on injecting informal uses, many of which are street vending practices to enliven wasted spaces. In this case, the opposite happened by creating order and a sense of formality within the informal decaying setting. However, street vendors were not excluded from the process, and street vending was not rejected altogether, for example, during the opening event of the tunnel, a mobile tea cart was parked inside the tunnel which served the local community and visitors. This was acknowledged and documented in a booklet, that was published online by Takween about the project, as part of the welcomed temporary activities that emerged directly after the intervention (see Figure 7.18). Despite that, later, based on several interviews with street vendors, residents prevented several street vendors from staying inside the tunnel to protect the tunnel from returning to its previous situation.



Figure 7.18 Tea cart (source: Ibrahim and Mannoun, 2017)

This collective efficacy provided a sense of security. Although there is a profound lack of police presence in the Ezba in general, according to several residents and NGO officials, antisocial behaviour, and harassment declined after the intervention in the vicinity of the tunnel. As offenders look for locations near major highways, where they can easily escape, a strong social fabric is crucial for safety. Not only reclaiming a dysfunctional space and installing sufficient lighting provided a sense of security, but also fostering social ties and enlivening the area added to the number of effective ‘eyes on the street’ (See Jacobs, 1961). A local street vendor explained that ‘this spot became no longer a favourite spot for troublemakers or intimidating activities as it used to be’ (Ezba - Resident 4, interview, September 2017).

Collaborative Maintenance and Lack of Resources

During the first year after the intervention, residents were keen to clean the space regularly and protect it against misuse. The local community, especially those who live or work in proximity to the tunnel, funded maintenance work when needed and some volunteered to clean and collect rubbish. A local street vendor who owns a pushcart at one end of the tunnel said, ‘we take care of that area, clean it regularly and prevent anyone from ruining the wall painting’ (Ezba - Resident 3, interview, September 2017). Another street vendor mentioned that she planted some trees for shading next to the tunnel, she watered them regularly and removed rubbish inside the tunnel on a daily basis (Ezba - Resident 5, interview, September 2017). Not only this, but several residents mentioned that the efforts of cleaning and beautification extended to other areas in the neighbourhood.

In an interview with an official in the Informal Settlements Development Facility (ISDF), he mentioned that after Takween's intervention, there was no budget allocated for regular maintenance. However, he explained that they only intervene if problems occurred (ISDF official, Interview, September 2019). He mentioned that the fund they received from the Swiss embassy was used up to upgrade the tunnel which he believed to be a very successful project, thus, they tried to replicate it to upgrade the other four tunnels when they received another fund from the French agency and the European office (ISDF official, Interview, September 2019). Unfortunately, maintenance was not seen as important as new upgrading projects and all resources were channelled in that direction.

It is necessary to note that my visits in 2018 and then later in 2019 proved that it was difficult for people living and working in such poor conditions to have long term commitment to the produced spaces. Lack of proper maintenance in addition to the inevitable natural dilapidation of the spaces led to rapid physical deterioration that became more visible every year. The local community did not have the skills to restore the mural. Not only this, but based on my observations in August 2019, which was almost three years after implementation, the spaces were obviously neglected with piles of fly-tipped rubbish. The mural had been sprayed upon with black paint by a local construction broker to advertise his business (see Figure 7.19). Moreover, one of the street vendors who used to stay outside the tunnel was displaying his goods blocking the pavement. This was something the community refused to allow several times shortly after the intervention (see Figure 7.20).

In an interview with a local street vendor, although it was clear to me that there was some vagueness among residents in understanding the involved responsibilities, he explained the challenge saying: 'Most people here are too busy earning their own living. Everyone minds his own business in order to survive. Tell me who can bear all these responsibilities!' (Ezba - Resident 4, interview September 2017) It is necessary to note that among the interviewees there were inhabitants who were unaware of the project process or details despite living in the area during the time of the intervention in 2016. Despite Takween's attempts to engage more people, some residents were not particularly active and lacked involvement with their neighbourhood. The willingness to intervene on behalf of the common good is an important factor in the success of such projects on the long term.



Figure 7.19 The mural after three years from the intervention (source: author)



Figure 7.20 Street vending practices started to remerge in the underpass (source: author)

7.5 Accumulative Impact of the Project

The themes above are indicators of an accumulative spatial, socioeconomic and symbolic impact as well as highlighting limitations. This case study particularly demonstrates the potential of such approach to create a considerable positive impact in a context that lacks basic necessities of life. The context challenges the potential of alternative urbanism and small scale interventions in an informal neighbourhood. Based on the analysis in the previous section, this section illustrates and reviews the case study through the theoretical concepts discussed in Chapter Two, which also guided the analysis. It then discusses the accumulative impact of the project and explores its wider ripple effects.

7.5.1 Omar Ibn Elkhattab Tunnel as an ‘Alternative Space’

This section illustrates the tunnel and surrounding area as ‘alternative spaces’ drawing on the theoretical framework of the study discussed in Chapter Two. The themes in

the previous section provided explanations about how the interplay between the formal and informal, the planned and unplanned and the temporary and permanent was materialised in these small-scale interventions. In addition, the dynamics of the project are reviewed through the theoretical lenses of ‘differential space’ and ‘coproduction’ (see Figure 7.21).

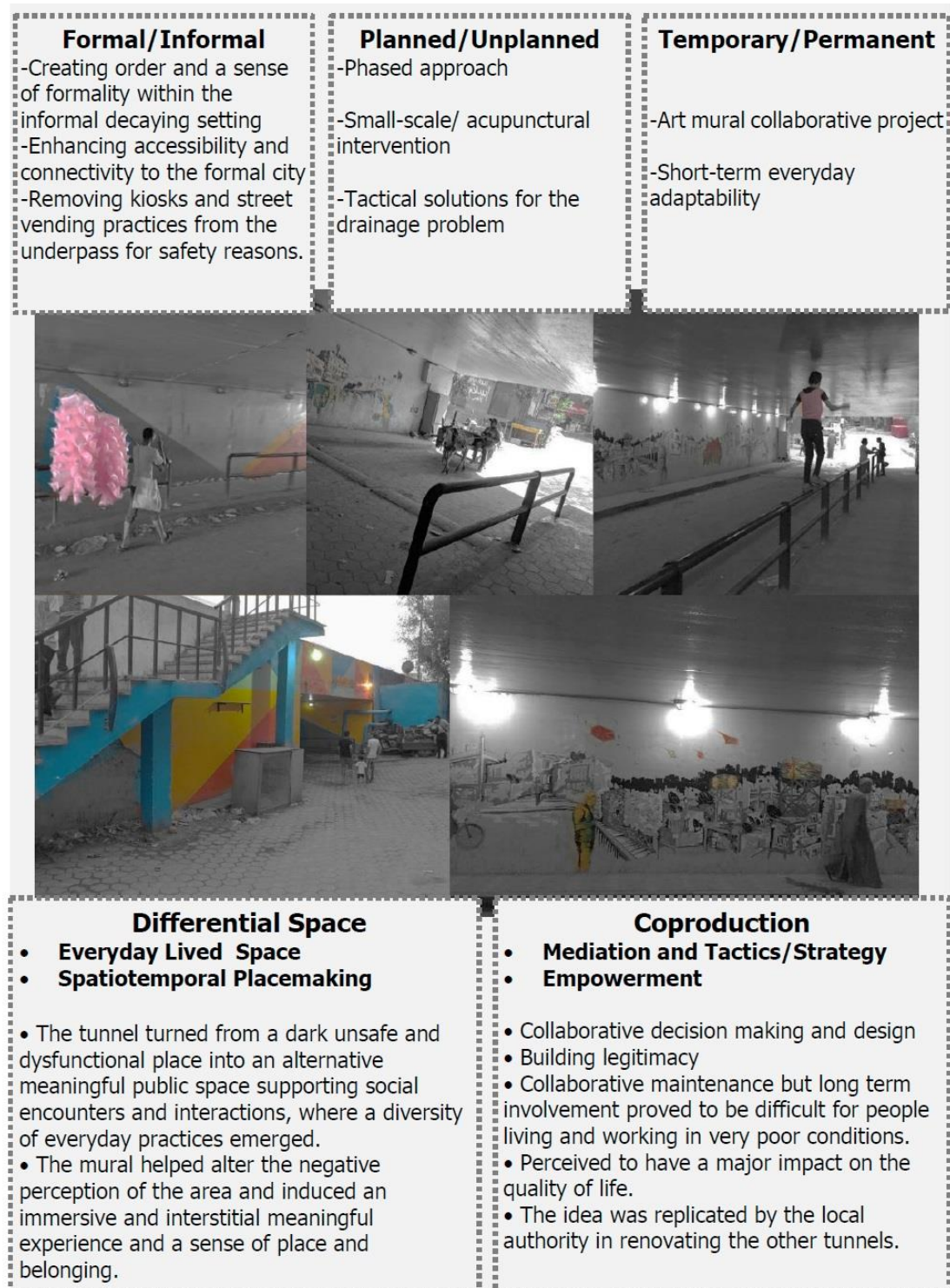


Figure 7.21 Omar Ibn Elkhatab Tunnel as an Alternative Space (source: author)

7.5.2 Spatial-Socioeconomic-Symbolic Impact and Limitations

Differing from the typical reclamation processes associated with the concept of alternative urbanism that mainly involve indeterminate wasted spaces, the original function of the tunnel was reclaimed. Nevertheless, the space was not limited to being a properly functioning underpass for vehicles and pedestrians despite the necessity of such purpose. The nearly ‘dead space’ transformed into a socially significant public space. This is not only due to the scarcity of such spaces in the neighbourhood but also due to the empowering process of the intervention initiated by Takween as a step for people to acquire their right to the city. Despite the small-scale intervention, it had the influence to create a positive impact on the local environment, health, safety, accessibility to services, wellbeing, livelihoods of residents and the quality of life in general. In an acupunctural manner, the intervention, and its location, was carefully chosen in collaboration with the community to have far-reaching effects. Within a self-built neighbourhood, the element of authorization, legitimacy and external funding transformed the capacity of ordinary people.

Although not a typical public space in terms of design, the produced space provoked feelings of safety, comfort, and joy within the harsh environment of the neighbourhood. Separating the pedestrian and vehicular flow and providing a relatively wide pavement was not only important for safety but allowed a range of activities to happen in the underpass.

The coproduced space and the surrounding area became a venue for socializing and playfulness. The spaces played a vital role in the everyday life of the inhabitants. As the tunnel lies on the main route many residents use almost every day, it created a social hub generating patterns of use, fostering community ties and creating a sense of belonging to the neighbourhood. Although, the intervention was not sufficient to effectuate significant positive physical change on the long term, the upgraded public spaces provided material and immaterial benefits to people’s livelihoods and contributed to their empowerment and wellbeing.

Despite the above, there are significant limitations of such projects in informal settlements. Although the tactical cost-effective solution for the sewage overflow proved to be effective over time, the process of the intervention took much longer than it should. As an urgent intervention, it needed a ‘quick fix’, however the

decision-making process and reaching consensus among all stakeholders bloated the project's timeline. The authorization of the project added a layer of complexity considering the involved power relations, where the local authorities had a predetermined idea of what needed to be done. Moreover, the local authorities did not play an active role in the life course of the space or set supportive regulations to help the local community maintain the space. Another important limitation to the potential of such approach of intervention was sustaining the transformative effect on the long term. Without sustained resources, effective place-keeping proved to be a major challenge especially with the gradual attrition of volunteers and key community members who were actively involved in maintaining the space.

7.5.3 Wider Ripple Effects

In the few months after the intervention there were several beautifications attempts by residents that were done individually and without coordination. During the interview with Nevine Akl, the cofounder of Takween, she mentioned that the intervention inspired one of the residents to clean parts of another tunnel and use the space for his food cart (Akl, interview, April 2018). One of the local NGO workers mentioned that he noticed that the idea of drawing and painting on the houses was more common after the intervention (Ezba - NGO Worker 2, interview, August 2019) (See Figure 7.22). While these attempts did not culminate to create an overall visible change, they indicate a sense of empowerment and a concern for civic spirit, beauty, artfulness, and cleanliness that increased after the intervention. It is worth noting that these actions were triggered by the intervention but did not seem to continue over time or create a lasting effect. It is difficult for vulnerable groups or people who are struggling to earn their living and meet basic necessities of life to commit for a long time and put effort in projects that might not seem urgent or of immediate concern. Building the capacity of local inhabitants and strengthening the social and economic capital of the neighbourhood could significantly scale up the potential of collective action. Recognizing the potential of small urban interventions and socially engaged creative solutions might need time to gain ground and diffuse within communities and vulnerable groups.



Figure 7.22 Example of murals on houses near the underpass (Source author)

In general, as discussed earlier in Chapter Two, one of the promises of alternative urbanism discussed in the literature is to trigger chain reactions and further interventions catalysing positive change in a longer-term perspective. As mentioned previously, the underpass intervention initiated with a long-term vision to upgrade incrementally the rest of the tunnels and the public spaces



Figure 7.23 One of the other tunnels renovated by the local government (source: author)

along the Ring Road. After just over a year after implementation, the government carried out another intervention upgrading the rest of the tunnels as intended, replicating Takween's initiative. However, the upgrade was limited to resurfacing works and painting, copying the same colour scheme and patterns of the first tunnel (see Figure 7.23). It is worth noting that the local community was not involved in the process and many of the residents I asked did not even know which entity carried out the intervention. The project was reduced to replicating the aesthetics of the underpass but not the intervention process. Moreover, the spaces alongside the highway were not included in the interventions which affected the potential of these interventions to work as catalysts for wider improvements.

Although the tunnels became completely functional, they did not create the same diversity or intensity of uses generated in the first underpass. I argue that this is not only because the first tunnel was selected for the potential of its location to have a bigger impact as explained earlier, but also due to the involvement of the local community in the process and the DIY ethos associated with it. The underpass intervention did not create a strong ripple effect. A local official in the ISDF explained that the limited funding is one of the reasons behind that (ISDF official, interview, September 2019). The lack of capacities and resources remains to be a challenge for such projects despite the small-scale and low-cost approach.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter discussed applying the alternative approach of intervention in one of the largest and most densely populated informal neighbourhoods located at the city periphery. The intervention aimed to reclaim Omar Ibn Elkhatab underpass for the local community not only as a safe link reconnecting the divided neighbourhood but also as an alternative public space for a neighbourhood that suffers from a lack of good quality open spaces. As discussed earlier, this project is not seen as a typical adaptive reuse of a disused underpass as the function of the tunnel as a passage from one part of the neighbourhood to the other is not only essential but lifesaving. Nevertheless, this is not a mere process of refurbishment, the intervention is claimed to turn the tunnel from a dark unsafe and unpleasant place into an alternative meaningful public space. The element of authorization and legitimacy within a community self-built informal neighbourhood transcended the capacity of ordinary people. The chapter demonstrated the process of the project since the idea emerged, negotiated, authorised and implemented as well as identified the actors and how they were engaged in the process. Moreover, it traced the everyday life of the produced spaces, the emerging patterns of social use and lived experiences

Observations and interviews proved that a small intervention empowered local inhabitants, responded to local socio-economic needs, improved their wellbeing and contributed to a better quality of life. Mapping the spatial practices demonstrated that a nearly ‘dead space’ transformed into a socially significant public space. Due to the scarcity of open spaces in the neighbourhood, the underpass provided people with an alternative public space provoking feelings of safety, comfort, and joy within the

harsh environment of the neighbourhood. A simple tactical solution, like raising the ground and pavement levels, resolved the serious problem of the tunnel sewage overflow that used to force people to cross the highway risking their lives. Despite being a tactical solution rather than solving the sewage problem from its roots, the solution proved to be effective for more than three years after the intervention.

Finally, the chapter underlines the limitations of such approach. Without sustained resources, effective place-keeping of the produced spaces as well as replicating the idea proved to be a major challenge. Also, novel design ideas might need time to gain ground and diffuse within communities for people to recognise the benefits and trust the worthiness of such small interventions when done incrementally. The participation of the members of the community in the painting process was also not very successful due to the unfamiliarity with the idea. More time could have been helpful to build the needed skills for that activity which would have also helped in restoring the mural afterwards. Moreover, the local authorities, as partners in the intervention, could have played a more active role in the life course of the produced spaces by setting supportive regulations or channelling resources to help the local community maintain the spaces.

Chapter 8: Discussion and Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

This study sought to explore the alternative modes of production of space as an unconventional domain of urban action and a nuanced spatial practice. The study engaged with the set of arguments associated with this alternative approach of intervention in the literature regarding its transformative potential where this community-oriented approach is argued to empower local communities, counteract market-led urbanism producing meaningful and dynamic public spaces catalysing positive change on the long term. Hence, the principal research question is **what is the transformative potential as well as the limitations of alternative urbanism in the Cairene context?** While attending to the development of such spatial practice in the western world, and the corresponding theorisation attempts developed mostly by western scholars, this study opens a further line of investigation situating alternative urbanism in the global South providing empirical evidence drawn from three case studies in Cairo. In doing so, a theoretical framework is adopted, based on which alternative urbanism is reframed as a new mode of practice redefining the role of the designer or the planner, while positioning local communities as co-producers. Drawing on Lefebvre's differential space coupled with the theory of coproduction, the research suggests a trajectory of transformation for spaces produced as a result of these interventions. Subsequently, an exploratory analytical framework is generated to ground the empirical study and interrogate the case studies of coproduced urban spaces in Cairo. The theoretical framework guided the data collection process, and it was critical in analysing the case studies and interpreting the findings.

The aim of this chapter is to read across the different cases, discuss and summarise the key findings of the study in relevance to the main research question and sub questions. Subsequently, recommendations to maximise the transformative potential of alternative urbanism are suggested. Finally, the chapter ends with discussing the contributions of the research to knowledge as well as recommendations for future research.

8.2 Emphasizing the Alternative Dimension Across the Three Case Studies

In order to answer the main research question mentioned above several sub questions evolved; the first of which is: What are the main characteristics that define alternative

urbanism as a new mode of practice that challenges conventional urban development approaches? Chapter two addresses this inquiry discussing the distinctive points at which alternative urbanism deviates from conventional urban development models delineating a new design thinking and spatial practice. The characteristics materialised in the three case study projects in different ways representing different socioeconomic contexts and responding to different opportunities, desires and needs (see Figure 8.1). While the study is based on case-by-case empirical analysis, reading across the three case studies and juxtaposing their specificities demonstrates the dynamics of this approach of intervention with relevance to its physical setting and the power relationships (see Table 6).



Figure 8.1 The three case studies (source: author partially adapted from Google Earth)

Table 6 Reading across the three case studies.

	Case Study 1 Downtown Passageways	Case Study 2 Geneina Meet and Play	Case Study 3 Omar Ibn Elkhattab Underpass
Initiative	Revitalising two passageways in-between buildings	Providing a public space to ‘meet and play’	Reclaiming the space underneath the Ring road for public use
Incremental Vision	Revitalising all downtown passageways as alternative spaces for development	Providing a community centre and sports pitch in the adjacent vacant lands	Reclaiming the other 4 tunnels and public spaces alongside the Ring Road
Initiators	CLUSTER	UNHCR	Takween- local government
Sources of funding	Different sources: Danish Egyptian Dialogue Institute (DEDI), Al-Ismaelia for Real Estate Investment and crowdfunding	Two foreign donors: the German Cooperation (GIZ) and Kuwait Responds	The Embassy of Switzerland in Egypt (Office for International Cooperation)
Actors/ Stakeholders	. CLUSTER . Local community . Al-Ismaelia Real Estate for investment . Local government . DEDI . University students	. Takween . Local community . UNHCR . Local government . Foreign donors . Space for Play . Volunteers	. Takween . Local Community . Local government . ISDF . Graffiti Artist . Funding agency . NGO
Location	The formal City Core	New Desert towns	The informal Periphery
District/area	Historic downtown Cairo	Low-income residential neighbourhood in one of desert towns	Peripheral Informal neighbourhood
Morphology of the area	Originally established in the late half of the nineteenth century along the lines of Haussmann’s Parisian model of wide straight boulevards and connected squares	Groups of uniformly designed blocks separated by wide corridors and sizeable plots	Very dense, developed organically on state’s desert land. The streets, lanes and building layouts were determined through negotiation among settlers
Space of possibility	Little used in-between spaces	Vacant plot of land	Decaying Underpass

Table 6 continued.

Location of ‘acupuncture’	In-between spaces represent an urban typology that is less visible from the main arteries of downtown and the official public domain, allowing a more vibrant everyday experience.	The community chose this plot of land due to its central location as it would protect the playground from being taken over by any groups, in addition that the spacious vacant land in the centre would allow future growth when resources would be available	Providing better accessibility to the highway and the rest of the city. Reclaiming the decaying underpass reconnecting the neighbourhood divided by the construction of the Ring Road. It would make going to school, work and the closest underground station much easier for residents.
Time frame	Sep 2014-Jan 2015	March 2014-Feb 2015	May 2015 - Aug 2016
Involved tactical solutions/ and pragmatic trade offs	As benches were officially disapproved. They were integrated in the design but presented in the official documents as raised lighting features. Any elements that might cause crowding had to be removed. Solving the drainage problem by raising the flooring instead of reconstructing the decaying infrastructure of the surrounding buildings. A simple custom-made apparatus to collect and dispose drainage water was added.	Using environmentally friendly low-cost recycled materials. The open-source approach allowed interested citizens to take part, and volunteers were charged a small fee to help cover workshop costs. Sanctioning the project required altering the design several times. Although residents wanted to incorporate a shed into the playground, it was not officially approved, also a wall intended to create a reading corner was removed during implementation after an official report was filed against Takween.	The sewage overflow of the tunnel is a deeply rooted problem due to the improper sewage system design and construction as well as the system inadequate capacity. Modifying the tunnel floor levels so that water accumulates at the southern end of the tunnel instead of its centre as well as providing a raised sidewalk with an adequate width were simple realistic solutions for residents to pass the tunnel safely.
Creative and temporary processes as design tools	‘Eventizing the spaces and vacant shops’ (programmed temporary exhibitions, music concerts, film screenings and communal meals)	The DIY and recycling process (the playground was based on upcycling waste materials and available local resources into playing elements)	The involvement of street art (a local artist painted a wall mural in collaboration with the residents)

As mentioned above the aim of this table is to demonstrate the dynamics of the approach in relevance to the different processes of interventions. The table shows what is alternative about alternative urbanism exemplified within several problematic localities in Cairo. As mentioned earlier, there are various views surrounding this brand of interventions in the literature articulated under different titles such as tactical urbanism, temporary urbanism or insurgent urbanism, however, they emphasize nuances of the same line of thought. Alternative urbanism is presented in the study as an overarching umbrella term for this domain of action indicating a new mode of spatial practice redefining the role of designers and practitioners as mediators and providing platforms for various stakeholders to participate. The case studies represent community based urban interventions that are not explicitly oppositional or insurgent but are opportunistic and practical taking advantage of arising opportunities to challenge the status quo.

The designers involved in the three study cases adopted a progressive position which was imperative in maintaining an inclusive process enabling local communities to have a more active and empowered role. This understanding echoes Bishop's (2015) argument that the motives and the intentions behind these practices are crucial to preserve the alternative dimension of this approach that represents an opposition to top-down planning systems and market-led urban development approaches. Despite the existing top-down approach to planning and governance, these collaborative interventions were possible thanks to the mediatory role played by designers facilitating the process and empowering local communities. Not only the designers' desire to change the status quo and their capability to seek consensus is important, but also civic engagement and the proactive role played by local communities are among the imperatives of such alternative approach.

Despite some theoretical attempts suggesting interventionist toolkits to activate spaces providing guides to implement projects, such as the City Repair project, Park(ing) day and Better Block (see Lydon and Garcia, 2015), I argue that the alternative approach of intervention is not a predetermined development model or a unitary form of action. I position myself with writers who criticize the drawn generalizations associated with planning ideas across contexts and emphasize the influence of local opportunities, needs, socioeconomic specificities (see Miraftab, 2009; Hou, 2010; Healey, 2012; Watson, 2009; Watson, 2014a). This research sought to investigate the potential of alternative urbanism in the Cairene context which

provides insights from the global South and the Arab region while recognizing and appreciating the diversity of the cities in these regions. The study provides lessons that can be learned from Cairo pointing to important considerations facilitating alternative development approaches in these contexts. These contributions are explained in more detail later in this chapter.

What is important here is not to draw or suggest normative principles for alternative urbanism but to point out the characteristics of such design and planning ideas that open new possibilities for community oriented urban development. As shown in the table, the case studies represent varying mixes of activism, creativity, practicality, ephemerality, experimentation, and participation. Alternative urbanism is different from conventional development in several ways, particularly the scale of the intervention, the timeframe of the process, the roles of the participants, the sources of funding and how spaces are activated, designed and used. Moreover, the three case studies demonstrate how ordinary spaces, whether it is an underpass, a vacant plot land or in-between spaces, were valued as opportunities to nurture local lived experiences, empower inhabitants and build strong mutually supportive communities contributing to a better quality of life.

8.3 The Transformative Potential of the Alternative Approach of Urban Intervention

Drawing on the work of Lefebvre, particularly the concept of ‘differential space’ and the theory of coproduction as a theoretical frame, the study explored the transformative potential of alternative urbanism. The adopted theoretical framework linked the process of the intervention to its anticipated outcome, or what is referred to in this study as ‘alternative space’, generating different lines of investigation which were used to guide the empirical study. In the following section, the findings are discussed demonstrating the transformation of spaces produced as a result of the interventions and their catalytic effect. Emerging and recurring themes were identified signifying socioeconomic, spatial and symbolic impacts as well as pointing to important limitations, all of which were interpreted in relevance to the context.

8.3.1 Emerging Themes

As discussed in the last few chapters, this section underlines the manifestations of development as well as the limitations identified as emerging and recurring themes and subthemes in the three case studies (see Table 7). The themes were generated based mainly on observations, semi structured interviews and mapping spatial practices, all of which were important to substantiate the findings. There are four main themes that emerged across the case studies and within each theme several subthemes were identified which are:

- ***Transient activities acting as tools of placemaking***
 - Inducing an immersive shared experience
 - Catalysing social interactions and increased tolerance (but is affected by local cultural norms)
- ***Alternative spaces shaping and nurturing local lived experiences***
 - Alternative spaces reshaping everyday life and acquiring local meaning
 - Alternative spaces generating diverse uses, activities and appropriations
- ***Designers acting as mediators and facilitators***
 - Mediation and the challenges of power imbalances
 - Tactical design solutions as tools of mediation and negotiation
- ***Local communities retaining an active role in maintaining and regulating alternative spaces***
 - Collaborative maintenance (but long term local engagement is challenging)
 - Collective control and the risk of co-optations
 - Alternative spaces as local assets

Table 7 Reading across the case studies in relevance to the emerging subthemes

	Case Study 1 Downtown Passageways	Case Study 2 Geneina Meet and Play	Case study 3 Omar Ibn Elkhattab Tunnel
Inducing an immersive experience	The coziness of the space with its seats and green landscape transformed Kodak PW into a mini park away from the bustling streets of downtown. Temporary installations and exhibitions created creative encounters. Philips PW lacked the collective will to sustain improvements	The vacant land transformed into an active hub of life. The joyful play elements and planted trees stand in contrast with the greyness and dullness of the uniform social housing blocks.	The tunnel created order and a sense of formality within the informal decaying setting. The mural created a unique spatiotemporal experience inviting people to visit, enjoy and linger in the tunnel.
Shaping everyday life and acquiring meaning	It became an important part of everyday life of the local community, e.g., for leisure, or meeting friends	Heavily used by families every day for leisure and as an open-air living room and extension of their tiny housing units.	Residents use the space to go to work, school or to the other part of the neighbourhood. Also, used as an alternative public space.
Generating diverse uses, activities and appropriations	• Artist-led temporary exhibitions and installations (Kodak only) • Sitting/relaxing • eating/drinking • meeting place • hot spot for pictures.(Kodak only)	• Playing • Open air living room/meeting place • Eating/drinking • studying/reading • Appropriated to hold temporary clothes market	• Used as a playing area for children • Street vending • Meeting place • Daily walking route
Social interaction and tolerance	Kodak PW (attracted a wide range of users across different age groups and from different social backgrounds allowing them to mingle and interact) Philips PW (limited social interaction)	The space acts as a social glue strengthening community ties. However, there is a conservative attitude on opposite-gender interaction	The space created opportunities for different kinds of social interactions.

Mediation and the challenges of power imbalances	Designers acted as mediators in an inclusive decision-making process. However, the design had to be altered to suit the developer's requirements and to obtain official approvals	Designers acted as mediators. They faced challenges in authorising the project which caused delays. Also, the design had to follow strict land use regulations where some of the local needs could not be realized	Designers acted as mediators and they were able to negotiate with the local officials to choose the tunnel that would make a bigger difference in local people's everyday life. However, local officials acted as a client rather than a facilitator
Tactical design solutions as tools of mediation and negotiation	Local people took time to appreciate the opportunistic approach and low-cost solutions. There were also worries over attracting undesirable activities.	Local people engaged in learning recycling and low-tech construction.	the low-cost solutions and the mural choice and aesthetics were subjects that needed time to diffuse within the community
Maintaining the space	• Kodak: A board of tenants was set they gather money monthly for gardening, trash collection, electricity, water and general maintenance. • Philips: they failed to set a board of tenants and there is a lack of coordination to maintain the space.	Local people and NGO co-maintain the space. Takween carried out professional maintenance for 2 years only after implementation. Those involved in the DIY construction have a stronger sense of responsibility but there is difficulty of commitment on the long-term due to lack of resources.	Local people maintain the space. Direct beneficiaries (people who work and live next to the tunnel and were involved in the project) volunteered to clean the tunnel and surrounding area but there is difficulty to maintain the space on the long-term due to lack of resources and loss of local interest
Collective Control and the risk of co-optations	• There is a degree of collective control despite the presence of security personnel, surveillance cameras and buildings' guards. • The developer appropriated the space several times but did not affect the accessibility of the space to all	• collective control with the help of the local NGO that installed a security camera, hired a night guard and frequently trimmed trees for better visibility • The local NGO protected the space from several co-optation attempts by community members.	• Minimal policing or control from outside but the area of the tunnel is perceived to be safer than before due to having more 'eyes on the street' • Conflicts within the community due to misuse.
Local Asset	• Supporting social and commercial activities • businesses growth • real estate development (gentrification concerns)	• Supporting social and commercial activities • Better quality of life and wellbeing • creating livelihood opportunities	• Supporting social and commercial activities • Building legitimacy • Providing material and immaterial benefits to people's livelihoods

8.3.2 Accumulative Impact

The emerging themes clarified above indicate transforming in-between spaces, a vacant land, and an underpass into meaningful places with varying levels of spatial and socioeconomic impact. The empirical study revealed also that the interventions contributed significantly to the inhabitants' sense of empowerment and wellbeing not only for being key players throughout the process but also for creating a more close-knit community and for providing much needed public spaces and a better sense of safety. The interventions contributed to local capacity building and provided a process of learning that is essential for the inhabitants to initiate other interventions, particularly to make decisions collectively and negotiate with local authorities.

Transformed spaces manifest elements of Lefebvre's differential space nurturing local lived experiences (Lefebvre, 1993). The case studies proved that the coproduction process has a positive impact on people's experience of the space. The alternative approach of intervention has the potential to provide 'loose spaces', supporting diverse activities and social patterns (see Franck and Stevens, 2007). This 'looseness' emerges when people recognise the possibilities inherent in these spaces and adapt them to local needs. This positive impact cannot be understood apart from the specificities of the context. It required understanding the historical background of the urban setting, the local sociocultural forces, and the involved power relations, representing diverse opportunities and challenges influencing the process of the intervention and transformation of space.

The findings revealed that microspatial interventions across the diverse physical and socioeconomic contexts of the three case studies were able to create considerable effects with little means. Despite the focus of the urbanists/planners involved in these practices on the inherent transformative potential of the process of the intervention rather than the actual outcome, the outcome of the three urban interventions proved to respond to local social needs, empower the inhabitants and enhance the use and quality of the area to varying degrees. The impact of these projects proved that a series of small-scale urban interventions in an area can culminate to create an overall positive effect. These interventions cannot be viewed as threatening or counteracting the neoliberal paradigm (see Brenner, 2015), but they can be described as Crawford (2012) puts it: 'practices that are not so much anticapitalist, as they are noncapitalist' (p.1).

The following section summarises the impact of the three projects discussed in the case studies.

The Passageways Intervention

As discussed in Chapter Five, although the interventions in Kodak and Philips passageways varied greatly in size due to the lack of funding, both interventions produced socially dynamic and lively public spaces. The project paved the way for inclusive temporary uses, social events and themed set ups in Kodak passageway. It also encouraged several individual renovation initiatives and altered the negative perception people had of Philips passageway. The intervention gathered people around common interests overcoming preconceived barriers. It represents an alternative to top-down imposition of change and points to the potential of the coproduction of space, where uncommodified public spaces are generated in the centre of the city that are not solely controlled, regulated and maintained by the state or the private sector. The increased sense of safety, increased foot traffic, temporary uses of vacant shops and the opening of the restaurant revitalized businesses and commercial activities in the area. Although the design outcomes are simple, both spaces still had a considerable impact on the lives of the local community. It also increased the sense of local satisfaction fulfilling local needs of comfort, relaxation and enjoyment. The effect of cleanliness, good lighting and the strips of greenery was felt by many members of the community.

The Geneina Meet and Play Intervention

As discussed in Chapter Six, the Geneina has transformed from a dull vacant land to an active hub of life for the diverse communities that live in Masakin Uthman. The produced spaces acted as a living room for the area fostering social ties and creating a sense of community. The crowded small homes prompted residents to use the space as an extension of their homes especially in the summer to escape their poorly ventilated flats. The spaces played an important role in supporting collective action and offered what Crawford (2005) describes as an ‘everyday space’ shaping daily life and generating meaningful spontaneous encounters and experiences. In the few years after implementation, the urban intervention expanded to the neighbouring vacant land, where the community and the local NGO built a football pitch and are also planning to design and build a community centre. Moreover, the high usage and the attractiveness of the produced spaces led to the emergence of several small locally

owned businesses, such as shops, kiosks, cafeterias and small entertainment centres in the surrounding area which added to the liveliness of the neighbourhood and created livelihood opportunities. Interviews revealed that the intervention created a sense of ownership and responsibility towards the Geneina. However, it seemed that those feelings were more prominent among those who participated in the DIY process rather than newcomers. I argue, based on interviews, that the DIY process and the produced spaces strengthened the resilience of vulnerable groups to cope with issues of displacement and enhanced their wellbeing and their capacity to make a living in a more socially sustainable environment.

Omar Ibn ELkhattab Underpass Intervention

As discussed in Chapter Seven, although it is a small intervention and the design outcome itself is simple, it created what Margaret Crawford (2012) describes as a juxtaposition with the urban setting which had the potential to alter the existing perception of the area and invigorate an idea of what it can be. The intervention created a sense of order and formality within the informal decaying setting. The produced space provoked feelings of safety, comfort, and liveliness within the harsh environment of the neighbourhood. The project provided simple solutions to resolve serious problems of the underpass that used to force people to risk their lives crossing the highway.

The relatively wide pavement allowed a range of activities to happen in the tunnel in addition to improving safety. Moreover, the wall mural created a unique spatial experience inviting people to visit and linger in the underpass. It became a venue for socializing and playfulness and played a vital role in the everyday life of the inhabitants. As the underpass lies on the main route many residents use almost every day, it created a social hub generating patterns of use, fostering community ties, and creating a sense of belonging to the neighbourhood. The upgraded public spaces provided material and immaterial benefits to people's livelihoods enhancing local work-life patterns and improving their living conditions and their overall wellbeing.

8.3.3 Challenges and Limitations of the Alternative Approach in the Cairene Context

It is important to point out the gap between the actual effect of these interventions and what was initially intended revealing the limitations of this approach situated in the

Cairene context. The research found that, despite the positive spatial and social impact, numerous challenges arose limiting the potential of the intervention and affecting sustaining improvements over time. Challenges are found to be mostly stemming from the unsupportive system of planning and governance and top-down power relationships. The empirical study demonstrates the conflicts, governmental blockages and the general lack of official support and regulations that affected the efficacy of this approach of intervention to cause transformation. The lack of capacity as well as the passivity and indifference of local authorities adversely affected the process of coproduction and state-society engagement. The case studies show that several prerequisites for coproduction were not fully met. Coproduction requires a fundamental shift in the balance of power between governmental and non-governmental actors as well as mutual learning, wide scale networking and strengthening civil society.

While creeping into mainstream planning and development in Europe and North America, the window of opportunity in Cairo for such alternative practices is still narrow largely dependent on foreign assistance, mainly donors and international agencies. In general, foreign assistance is a controversial issue as it is argued to be bolstering the status quo rather than contributing to actual reform (see Finckenstein, 2021). Nevertheless, foreign funding has been crucial for such alternative practices to take place as well as to support civil society organisations. Despite the positive effects of these interventions, foreign assistance has not been sufficient to create the desired impact without policy change and a paradigm shift towards supporting an alternative practice that is based on coproduction. The top-down power relationships have weakened the potential of these initiatives as well as diminished the possibility of applying the approach on a wider scale. The case studies demonstrate that even projects that were supported by foreign funding were enmeshed in bureaucratic struggles complicating the process. Without foreign funding, adopting this approach at the municipal level is also challenging as municipalities do not have the autonomy to raise their own funds or launch concrete projects and are mostly dependent on central government budget allocations (see Sims, 2010).

The study also demonstrates how the authoritarian mindsets of local officials can cripple such projects. Although the local government was an official partner in the projects, not only was the sanctioning process rigid and exhausting, but at times it determined altering the designs suppressing their creative potential. As the local

government organisations do not encourage or facilitate collaborations with community groups, the transformative potential of this approach of intervention remains largely unrealised.

The study also identifies limited resources especially in informal and low income neighbourhoods to be a major challenge. Without sustained resources, effective place-keeping of the produced spaces as well as replicating the idea and the process could not take place. Cultural norms, local priorities and aspirations are identified as important factors that influence the level of proactive engagement of residents. Findings revealed that the success of such projects is linked to creating a network of local actors that have the capacity to sustain activism and respond to opportunities. These challenges are clarified further in relevance to both the power dynamics and the physical and socioeconomic contexts of the intervention in the following sections providing insights drawn from the three study cases.

8.4 The Role of Designers as Mediators and the Power Dynamics between Actors

As discussed earlier in the study, the interventions were highly dependent on ambitious designers, architects and planners, who took these initiatives acting primarily upon their social responsibility. They were not only strong mediators between involved stakeholders that were able to create a common ground between often conflicting or competing interests but also, they were the main driving force behind the interventions in the three case studies. As explained earlier, they maintained a progressive position throughout the process of the intervention striving to change existing approaches and practices of urban development in Cairo.

Establishing professional enterprises like CLUSTER and Takween, small professional firms advocating for an alternative practice, allowed these urban interventions to take a more mainstream character even though they were not part of the predetermined official plan. Although the migration of this alternative approach to arenas of urban design consultancy is criticized in the literature argued to be compromising the inherent insurgent nature of these practices (see Webb, 2018), the position and the motives of the designers are crucial for maintaining an inclusive process challenging the status quo. Omar Nagati, the cofounder of CLUSTER, described the mediation process in the passageways project as an ‘urban diplomacy approach’ and that himself

or the planner acted as an ‘urban diplomat’ who used design elements of landscape such as the bench, tree or lamp as tools for negotiation (Nagati, Interview, 2017). The idea was to reach compromises rather than fulfilling demands or complete satisfaction. He explained that concessions were made in return for rewards, and no one left empty handed from the most vulnerable groups, such as kiosk owners, to the most influential ones, such as businesses owners and real estate developers. CLUSTER team facilitated numerous conversations and an unlikely alliance in a contested urban setting like downtown Cairo between a wide range of stakeholders. As discussed earlier, interviews and observations during the different fieldwork periods done between 2017 to 2019, or after two to four years after implementation, proved that the local community retained control and ownership over the produced spaces despite the involvement of the developer in revitalising the passageway. The process gathered people around common interests serving local needs and aspirations rather than exclusively benefiting the developer.

In a similar vein, the interviews revealed the importance of the mediatory role Takween team played between the state institutions and local communities. Not only did Takween team induce activism, bring people together and voice their needs but also, they were able to adapt the design mediating between local desires and land use regulations. Different from routinized participation which mostly at best may allow for consultations or presenting state plans to people, in both Takween’s projects the local inhabitants selected the site of the intervention, co-designed the space and participated in the construction process to varying degrees. The role of the inhabitants shifted from being users to co-producers challenging the dominance of the more powerful actors in the process. Nevertheless, Akl (interview, 2018) pointed out that seeking partnerships with the local government especially in underserved neighbourhoods was very essential in the playground and the underpass projects not only to facilitate logistic arrangements throughout the process but also to provide opportunities for space sustainability after the withdrawal of Takween team or the initiators of the projects. Furthermore, the element of authorization and legitimacy within a community self-built informal neighbourhood transcended the capacity of ordinary people and empowered them.

The findings also revealed the significant role local NGOs can play during such coproduction processes. As discussed previously, local NGOs acted as facilitators during decision making and implementation in the case studies, however, the local

NGO involved in the Geneina project was particularly effective not only during the process but also afterwards during the everyday use of the space. With the lack of official attention, it played a significant role in managing, maintaining, safeguarding, and protecting the spaces against several co-optation attempts made by local inhabitants. Moreover, the incremental plan of the Geneina project was realised a few years after the intervention due to the efforts of the NGO that managed to find other funding opportunities and keep local people active and committed.

The effectiveness of the coproduction process also lies in creating a balance between the expertise and the local community during the process of knowledge construction (see Till, 2005; Petrescu, Petcou and Baibarac, 2016). The conflict here is that the alternative approach as defined in this study is geared towards short timeframes while seeking inclusive participation and mutual knowledge can complicate the process and make it slower than what was intended. Negotiations between stakeholders stretched the timelines of the three case studies taking into consideration the novelty of the ideas, trade-offs and new synergies often involved throughout the process. As mentioned earlier this problem was included as part of the challenges facing CLUSTER team during the different phases of the passageways project. In addition to the time normally taken to collectively decide on the design, more time was needed even before then to engage people and build trust within the local community especially with them having worries regarding the intention behind the project and the collaboration with the developer. Moreover, unlike state projects or projects for private clients, Nagati explained that the bottom-up nature of the passageways' intervention allowed more members of the wider public to interfere and give CLUSTER team advice on everything even on pure technical issues during construction. This caused serious delays not only due to repeated disruptions but also because CLUSTER team decided to take every idea seriously so as not to make people feel alienated or excluded (see Nagati, 2018).

Similarly, in the underpass and the playground projects the coordination between diverse local groups and local administration officials was described during interviews by involved designers as an exhausting process requiring effort and time. Moreover, creative and innovative activities such as recycling, painting and DIY low-tech building took time to diffuse within the community involving a process of learning and experimenting. Also, the mediation between actors with different financial abilities and different levels of willingness to contribute to funding the

project is challenging as it creates tension and mistrust among the participants. This is exactly what happened in the passageways project, discussed in Chapter Five, when the fear of favouring more powerful actors culminated into a conflict which CLUSTER team had to resolve reassuring people about the integrity of the project. This did not negate the fact that the intervention in one of the passageways was significantly bigger than in the other as it received more funding from the developer and business owners.

In the three case studies, the architects or planners' mediatory role seems to lie at the formal/informal interface. Rather than looking at informal users or practices as a threat that needs to be eliminated, the planners facilitated a process where the formal and informal intersect. While Devlin (2017) differentiates between informality that is born of need and that is born of desire, planners in the three case studies embraced informality in its different forms whether it emerged as survival tactics to meet basic needs or in the form of creative expression or spontaneous practices of everyday life. In this sense, the upgrade approach in the three interventions comprised different levels of formalisation and informalisation creating authentic lived experiences.

Numerous challenges were faced by designers and planners throughout the process. In formal areas (Downtown Cairo and Masakin Uthman), the planners had to deal with a rigid bureaucratic system to sanction and authorize the design and construction conforming to normalized land uses and regulations. Mostly, local officials were reluctant to approve the projects that were not typically and officially planned despite the involvement of international organisations and development agencies which provided support. Such problems are diagnostic of the pathologies associated with top-down dispensation of power and centralised governance. As explained earlier, designs had to be altered several times which led to restricting the uses and the adaptability of the spaces. In response, the designers attempted to find cracks in the system and tactical solutions to work around the restrictions or even take some calculated risks throughout the process. A prominent example of this, as discussed in Chapter Five, was during the sanctioning process of the passageways project when the design was altered in the official documents so that seats were presented as raised lighting features instead of explicit benches as they were not initially approved. Another example was when CLUSTER took the risk of not obtaining official approvals from the security apparatus when they organised a communal meal in one of the passageways of downtown. As the area was intensively securitised, this

situation led to some tension with security personals on site but got resolved quickly due to the support of local officials in the municipality. Nevertheless, across the case studies the strict regulations eventually forbade design elements that could have made the spaces more lively, flexible, and adaptable such as interactive screens in one of the passageways and sheds in the Geneina project.

As part of assessing the successes and the failures of the approach, the perceptions and the reflections of the involved architects, urban designers and planners are crucial. The interviews revealed a sense of frustration among the planners of the three case studies due to the difficulties they had faced during sanctioning and implementing the projects. As discussed in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, adopting this approach of intervention not only required lengthy negotiations causing significant delays but also the projects remained under the threat of cessation at any point during the process. The window of opportunity for such projects remains small as the local institutional environment does not support testing new ideas and there is a lack of support to small entities like CLUSTER and Takween. Kareem Ibrahim (2014), the cofounder of Takween, confirms this and describes the process as a continuous struggle putting those professionals under financial and psychological stress especially that they sometimes work for free to voluntarily support local communities. In the same sense, as mentioned previously in Chapter Five, such professionals try to keep their neutral position and stay true to their principles, so they mostly refuse to participate in projects that exclusively serve neoliberal agendas or mega projects that are imposing change disregarding local needs. As an architect and urban designer myself, I can relate to their experiences of struggle associated with a more socially responsible planning and urban design practice. The pursuit of alternative urbanism proved to be challenging on many levels, one of which is related to the vulnerability of the involved professionals.

8.5 Contextual Influences Involved in Alternative Practices and Coproduction Processes

The three case studies proved the deeply contextual nature of this approach of intervention and showed that the physical, political and socioeconomic context affects the process and the resulting transformation of space. This somewhat contradicts with

the general assumption that ‘tactical solutions could be replicated in different contexts’ (see Gadanho, 2014, p. 23).

As discussed previously in Chapter Two, there are various embodiments of alternative urbanism around the world responding to different problematic settings in different ways. In Europe and North America, the alternative approach of intervention is often linked to small interventions repurposing vacancies and waiting lands generated by the global economic crisis, as well as developing abandoned and deteriorated post-industrial sites and buildings. In the same sense, indeterminate spaces in general are seen as spaces of possibility for development, whether they are vacant lands or ordinary spaces of everyday life such as overly wide streets, underpasses or other little used spaces. Most of the cases addressed in this respect are associated with a narrative correlating alternative urbanism with community initiatives injecting informal and temporary creative uses to activate wasted lands or marginal spaces, or even enliven overly ‘sanitized’ settings (Crawford, 2005; Groth and Corijn, 2005; Oswalt, Overmeyer and Misselwitz, 2013; Nemeth and Langhorst, 2014). In this sense, I argue that alternative urbanism in global North cities is a form of ‘desired informality’, as described by Devlin (2017), which is promoted by western scholars to capture the essence of the traditional humane city (Akl and Kamvasinou, 2019).

In terms of engagement with the state, such practices and coproduction processes in many Euro-American cities are facilitated through institutions that are designed to deliver democratic transformative strategies (see Watson, 2014a). On the other hand, the inquiry here is about the transformative potential of alternative urbanism in Global South contexts where governments are mostly described in the literature as weak and autocratic (see Ben Nefissa, 2009; Watson, 2014a; Bogaert, 2018). In the city of Cairo, as explained earlier, alternative practices and coproduction processes are crippled by centralised governance and top-down decision making weakening state-society engagement. This understanding underlines the influence of the political and institutional context on the potential of alternative urbanism highlighting the differences between the cities of the global North and South. In this sense, this study contributes to understanding the extent to which contexts in the Global South would allow alternative modes of urbanism that require redistribution of power and effective state-society engagement.

The study also sought to investigate the contextual influences involved in alternative urbanism in relation to the existing urban informality in Cairo and its potential to create change for the better. Differing from Euro-American cities, temporary and informal urban practices are dominant and the everyday messy life in the niches and the crannies of the city is not out of norm. The studied cases demonstrate that small urban interventions can embrace existing informality, enhance the use and quality of everyday spaces without sweeping away the poor or prohibiting everyday improvisations. For example, the micro interventions that took place in the informal neighbourhood of Ezbet Khayrallah as discussed in Chapter Seven are evidence of this. The crucial location of the underpass and the surrounding area helped rectify the damage caused by the construction of the highway, reconnect the community, and give a sense of formality and order countering the negative perception of the marginalised area reintegrating it into the city.

As explained earlier in the study, the three case studies offered examples of interventions from different physical and socioeconomic contexts. The urban interventions were selected from the different urban entities of the city of Cairo, the urban core, the informal periphery, and new desert towns, that are established in the seminal work of David Sims (2010) in his book 'Understanding Cairo: The Logic of a City out of Control'. The findings revealed that the physical and socioeconomic context played a key role in shaping how this approach of intervention was applied in each case study which consequently influenced its transformative potential. Yet before embarking on summarising those findings related to the influence of the context, it is necessary to reiterate that these case studies were not chosen as representative samples of their respective aforementioned urban entities. The characteristics of the localised context of each case study cannot be generalised. While these urban interventions dealt with different problematic localities in Cairo, it was not intended to seek revelations applicable across each of the three urban entities. As explained earlier in the study, these three entities of Cairo are not homogeneous from within, conveying varying and complex layers of growth during successive planning systems. The findings confirm that these interventions are particular to their setting yet represent rich empirical evidence that can be learned from, contributing to a nuanced understanding of alternative urbanism.

The physical context proved to be influential on different levels, the first of which is related to the specificities of the location, historical significance, and local assets.

These factors are found to be directly related to the number of interested developers and funding opportunities widening the possibilities of transformation, while at the same time may lead to a more complicated decision-making process due to the competing interests and the involved gentrification concerns. Another constraining factor in historically significant and central areas in Cairo is that they are usually under intense security as well as strict planning and land use regulations.

As previously explained in Chapter Five, public spaces in Downtown Cairo are examples of the above being in the urban centre of the city with different competing interests, heritage assets, businesses, and touristic attractions. While the passageways and in between spaces were seen by CLUSTER as alternative public spaces that are less controlled and less exposed to the official public domain, each passageway still faced various challenges related to power relationships, bureaucratic procedures, and localised capacities. Despite the physical proximity between the two passageways, only one of them was seen as a good potential for investment by a real estate development company and business owners. The intervention in the other passageway was greatly affected due to the limited funding which frustrated participants. These conditions are different from popularized examples of government-led tactical interventions such as the Pavement to Parks program in San Francisco (Litke, 2016). The same idea was copied in more than twenty locations in the city which were carried out as collaborative effort between municipalities, planning and transportation departments and business improvement districts.

In addition to the above the variations in the local needs, priorities and cultural norms proved to be highly influential in the transformative potential of alternative urbanism. Public activism and willingness to intervene on behalf of the common good is an important factor in the success of such projects. This factor is not only important during the intervention process but also afterwards in maintaining produced spaces. As discussed earlier, the case studies proved that it is more challenging for people living and working in very poor conditions to commit to the projects. It is difficult for vulnerable groups or people who are struggling to earn their living and meet basic necessities of life to put time and effort in projects that might not seem urgent or of immediate life-threatening concern. These findings indicate that local capacity building is an important factor that determines the effectiveness of this approach to cause transformation, enhancing the potential of the intervention and the sustaining of improvements over time.

Engaging local communities and building solidarity is challenging, but what makes the projects even more challenging is the novelty of the proposed ideas and tactics. As discussed earlier in Chapter Seven, the idea of making a mural and the choice of drawing the informal neighbourhood details on the wall needed time to be appreciated within the community. The participation of the members of the community in the painting process was not very successful due to the unfamiliarity with the idea. More time could have been helpful to build the needed skills for that activity which would have also helped in restoring the mural afterwards. A more successful process took place in the DIY playground involving workshops for recycling waste materials into playing elements. Novel and creative ideas need time to gradually gain ground within a community, while at the same time the cultural norms of the community should be taken into consideration. A gap between the designers' ambitions and the local cultural norms can adversely affect the intervention. As discussed in Chapter Five, these projects and alternative spaces usually attract underground artists and independent arts initiatives which might not always be welcome in more conservative and traditional communities.

8.6 Recommendations to Maximize the Transformative Potential

There is a great potential in creating the suitable environment for such initiatives to happen and for such interventions to be more fruitful. Moreover, despite the success of the alternative approach to create positive change, numerous challenges arose not only throughout the process limiting its potential, but also afterwards over time which impedes sustaining its transformative effect on the longer term. This section responds to the main challenges and limitations of such approach of intervention mentioned above by suggesting recommendations to expand its potential of transformation.

Despite not being explicitly subversive, adopting this approach remains in Cairo in the arena of resistance and activism in the face of the prevalent neoliberal pressures and top-down imposition of change, rather than a real shift in official planning policy. There is a general lack of supportive regulations to advance such initiatives allowing alliances between citizens, civil society organizations, developers and governments. Therefore, a change of policy is needed in order to guarantee and facilitate more inclusive processes of urban development. As explained earlier, effective coproduction requires progressive power redistribution between governmental and

non-governmental actors as well as redistribution of roles, rights and responsibilities. Through coproduction, inhabitants are empowered to engage proactively with the local government addressing their needs. Effective communication channels, mutual learning between ordinary citizens and professionals as well as wide scale networking and strengthening civil society are all essential factors enabling alternative practices and coproduction.

Empowering communities through allowing co-production and collective governance at the neighbourhood level is necessary to maximise the transformative potential of alternative urbanism. Local governments need to provide the required mechanisms and communication channels to enable the process. The inhabitants and civil society organizations should be provided with the necessary executive power instead of adhering to rigid bureaucracy frustrating local activism. A new mindset is needed at all administrative levels that is not only open to testing new planning and design ideas but also encourages activism and collective action. Creating networks of activists, planners and artists or strong mediating agents are essential to bring forward the possibilities of alternative urbanism. Planning institutions should support and partner with small professional entities like CLUSTER and Takween and give them the flexibility needed for this mode of intervention rather than fitting their projects into preconceived plans and strict land use regulations. Incorporating the alternative urban practice within the official urban development plans and implementing new regulations to facilitate these projects are essential factors needed for such transformative practices to take place. Regulating the involvement of the private sector is also important contributing to local empowerment and inclusive urban development.

Rather than clean sweep planning ideas, the interplay between the formal and informal can provide an alternative approach to urban development. The idea can be attuned to particular areas, whether they are in the centre or in the informal periphery, enhancing the quality of life and lived experiences of inhabitants. From a planning perspective, there is potential in allowing incremental phasing, flexible adaptation and temporary appropriations to take place as part of urban development in the Cairene context (see also Peter Bishop and Williams, 2012; Andres, 2013; Andres et al., 2021). Moreover, a network of spaces at the neighbourhood level could be intentionally left flexible for community appropriations. These spaces have the potential to empower local inhabitants, respond to local socio-economic needs and

contribute to an authentic public realm. Not only this emphasizes an active role for time in planning but also indicates a nuanced approach to placemaking that focuses on temporary appropriations, everyday activities, and DIY events. The three case studies included in this research demonstrate the potential of the interplay between the formal and informal, the temporary and permanent and the planned and unplanned in transforming urban spaces indicating a new mode of practice (see Figure 8.2).

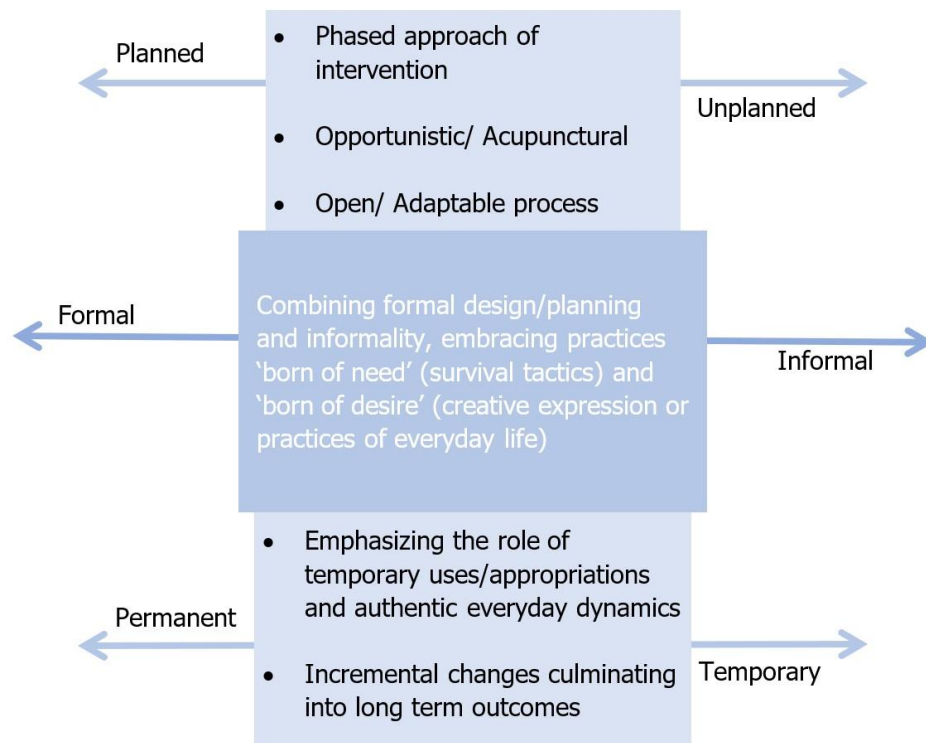


Figure 8.2 Alternative mode of Practice (source: author)

Building on local resources, skills and assets is a key factor in the success of these spaces. However, new creative ideas might need time to gain ground and diffuse within communities. In this case, for the intervention to be successful, capacity building and developing the necessary skills for management and maintenance on the long term should be emphasized during the process. Otherwise, there is a risk that the intervention process would be disconnected from people limiting its transformative potential and their ability to maintain any positive changes.

In this sense, adapting new ideas to local cultural norms is very important instead of replicating ideas and tactics from different parts of the world without giving enough attention to local ambitions and desires. The case studies discussed earlier in the study also proved that the success of these projects to create positive ripple effect depends

on creating a committed network of local actors, as collective appropriations continued responding to new opportunities. The limited resources and capacities remain to be a problem in such approach especially in poor urban settings and low-income neighbourhoods. The study underlines the importance of strengthening the local socio-economic capacity in order to enhance the proactive engagement of residents, maintain forward momentum and sustain positive change over time. Moreover, recognizing the potential of small urban interventions and channelling resources to support these projects would help to maximise their potential. In informal settlements or significantly deprived neighbourhoods, a series of small-scale urban design interventions can augment in situ infrastructural and community services upgrading.

This research does not argue that alternative urbanism can offer solutions for all problematic urban settings, however, the potential of this approach should not be understated. The transformative potential can be scaled up if officially adopted at the neighbourhood level but with keeping the dimension of flexibility needed for such projects to flourish. These interventions are not necessarily a substitute to more integrated and comprehensive approaches to urban development, but these small-scale interventions proved to be influential especially with the lack of resources. They can also complement and work in parallel with participatory upgrading programs that integrate infrastructural, environmental, and socioeconomic interventions.

8.7 Contributions of this Research

This research contributes to the existing literature in several aspects. It responds to the gap between the Northern and Southern bodies of literature that address citizen-led, informal, and temporary urban practices as alternative modes of production of space. It provides a broad overview of these practices and how they have evolved in different parts of the world with different politico-economic contexts and institutional structures. The study clarifies the overlaps and the nuances between the diverse conceptualisations corresponding to these practices and how scholars incorporate them into urban design and planning discourse, with specific reference to their geographical origins. In doing so, a definition of ‘alternative urbanism’ is provided as an overarching frame for this domain of action to help clarify the ambiguity caused by the diversity of the terms and concepts used in the literature. In this sense, the

discussion concurrently dislocates these emerging spatial design and planning ideas, and at the same time situates their applications, arguing against drawn generalisations across different contexts.

As most of the existing body of literature on this subject, as well as the relevant theoretical framework, is embedded in Northern cities, this study inquires how the conceptualisations of alternative urbanism are applied and attuned to the realities of the megacities of the global South. This helps in expanding the context that shapes design and planning ideas and contributes to the academic debate regarding an alternative approach to urban development that is based on coproduction and state-society engagement in the global South cities. The study responds to a gap in the literature as normative thinking on alternative urbanism and state-society engagement is mostly informed by Western contexts, predominantly liberal democratic states (see Watson, 2014a). In this regard, the study highlights the impact of the politico-economic context and the institutional differences between the cities of the global North and South (see Watson, 2014a; Bogaert, 2018). As explained earlier, in the case of Cairo, several prerequisites for coproduction were not fully met which affected the efficacy of the alternative approach to cause transformation. The case studies show that coproduction processes were adversely affected by centralised governance and top-down decision-making where the formal channels of state-society engagement were not entirely effective.

Another contribution of this research is identifying the characteristics of a nuanced approach to urban design that both emerges from and responds to these citizen-led and informal practices, differing from conventional paradigms of intervention. For this purpose, the study explores various interpretations and purposes of informal practices and how they can inform design and planning. The review critically discusses Devlin's (2017) argument differentiating between informal actions of the urban poor in Southern cities or what he calls the 'informality of need', and informal activities celebrated by Northern scholars that are done for convenience, efficiency or creative expression, describing these as the 'informality of desire'. While these categories are valid to describe the purposes of urban informality in general, the problem lies in the implicit assumption that informal practices in Southern cities are only born to meet basic needs, whereas they can also be a form and a manifestation of activism, cultural expression, sociability, or everyday authenticity. While alternative urbanism in Northern studies is mostly associated with desire-based informal

practices (Devlin, 2017), this study focuses on how this approach can embrace existing informality in its different forms, whether born of need or born of desire, acknowledging both the innovative solutions of the urban poor to acquire their basic necessities as well as the liveability of everyday uses and appropriations.

Another contribution of this research is the coupling of Lefebvre's concept of differential space with the theory of coproduction in order to provide a framework for exploring and examining the efficacy of these alternative modes of intervention interpreted through the perspective of urban design. The research suggests that the potential of these modes of intervention lies in the possibility of coproducing differential spaces, explaining what that would imply in terms of design, use, power relationships and roles of actors. For this purpose, the theoretical discussion provides an understanding of differential spaces and coproduction processes beyond the cities of the global North. As explained earlier, it contributes to rethinking the theory of coproduction and state-society engagement from the standpoint of the global South.

Situating alternative urbanism, as defined and established in the study, in Cairo is another contribution of this research where the particularities of Cairo's context yielded compelling cases endorsing and uncovering alternative modes of intervention that lies at the interface between the formal and informal. While a few studies discussed the recent emergence of a new mode of professional practice in Cairo, after the Egyptian uprising of 2011, that is more socially sensitive and participatory, they have not extended their debates in relevance to the concepts and practices discussed in the literature (those related to tactical, temporary, everyday, or DIY urbanisms) (see Nagati and Elgendy, 2012; Ibrahim, 2014; Elazzazy and Zaazaa, 2017). Former studies have not examined the intersection of this practice with the urban movement taking place in many cities across the world or provided empirical evidence on the impact or the limitations of the micro projects proliferating in the Cairene context over the last decade.

The research provides a significant contribution to knowledge by empirically investigating the potential and limitations of this alternative approach of intervention in transforming Cairene urban spaces using three case studies from different problematic localities. Differing from studies that focus only on the process of the intervention, or the ones that are confined to immediate improvements contrasting urban spaces before and after the interventions, this study provides an in-depth

investigation of the process, the design outcome, and the transformation of spaces over time. For this purpose, five periods of intensive fieldwork were carried out between 2017-2019 to trace incremental changes in the course of time. Besides observations, semi-structured interviews and documentary sources of data, the research adopts tools of environment-behaviour research, particularly influenced by the mapping methods of Jan Gehl (1987) in his *Life between Buildings*. Mapping the spatial practices and the traces of movement helps capture the dynamics of everyday life and the generated social patterns in the spaces.

While this study does not intend to suggest distinct set of ideas that can be replicated across Southern cities, it helped identify the potential of such interventions as well as the challenges that restrict their positive impact, providing lessons that can be learned from Cairo and recommendations to maximise the potential and transcend limitations. As explained earlier, the city's central location, rich history and long-standing connections with other countries make it a point of intersection between the East and West, seen by scholars and observers as a laboratory that generates new urban solutions (see Singerman and Amar, 2006). The Egyptian uprising acted as a catalyst not only motivating local inhabitants to participate proactively in making positive change, but also it created networks between ordinary citizens, urbanists, researchers, activists, artists and global civil society actors which helped counterbalance the local top-down system of power to some extent (see also Ibrahim, 2014; Selim 2014; Verdini, 2015). The Cairene case studies provide evidence on how counterbalancing the top-down processes with bottom-up associations, groups and activists helped create openings in the rigid planning system allowing unlikely collaborations and alternative practices take place (see also Verdini, 2015).

This study argues using empirical evidence from Cairo that small-scale urban interventions in crucial locations can embrace existing informality, respond to local needs and nurture the inhabitants' everyday dynamics. The case studies reveal that these interventions not only enhance the liveability of deteriorated settings without imposing change or displacing inhabitants, but also contribute to their wellbeing and empowerment. The approach of intervention is flexible and can be locally tailored with respect to the lived experiences of the inhabitants. The case studies demonstrate how this approach can be attuned to different physical and socioeconomic contexts within Cairo, but not necessarily as a replacement to other urban design practices as

these microprojects can complement other mainstream urban interventions or be a part of a long-term vision.

While Northern studies endorse the idea that this approach of intervention privileges, intensifies or encourages informal practices as they generate vibrancy and liveliness, the Cairene case studies unveil how this approach can work within existing informal settings or areas where informal practices are not out of norm, creating areas of hybridization between the formal and informal. This might include harnessing informalities and building legitimacy in situations when informal practices compromise public safety or when extreme informality manifest itself by advancing exclusive interests instead of the common good (see Bayat, 2002; Nagati, 2018). The alternative approach of intervention is based on considering local conditions of each area or neighbourhood and the needs of its inhabitants capitalising on local assets and socio-economic dynamics. Differing from the precarious informal urbanisation in other expanding megacities, the informal settlements of Cairo exhibit high structural quality reflecting significant financial resources although built without use of formal contractors (see Sims, 2010). Rather than capitalising on the investment capacities of low- and middle-income families, the official policy remains largely dependent on bulldozing informal areas and relocating inhabitants to remote public housing in the desert new towns (Shehayeb, 2009). Formal development has been mostly based on top-down strategies and master planned megaprojects. This led to Cairo getting to where it is now with its formal and informal development and segregated urban enclaves. Bridging the formal-informal divide helps counteract public fragmentation and socio-spatial polarisation, a key feature of the neoliberal city of Cairo, which contributes to building more diverse and inclusive urban spaces (see Bayat, 2012).

The studied projects reveal a nuanced urban design approach that emphasizes an active role for time not only because it is based on small accretions and flexible phasing, but also due involving temporary appropriations, everyday activities, and DIY events as part of the placemaking process. The role of the inhabitants shifts from being users or consumers to doers and co-producers creating a process that lies outside the traditional planner-client relationship dictated by local authorities. This understanding may contribute to reframing urban development as an incremental and flexible process that is based on coproduction. The study demonstrates the crucial role designers and planners can play acting as mediators and facilitators, enabling unlikely collaborations between multiple stakeholders challenging existing power

relationships. It also highlights how their progressive role seeking an alternative approach to urban development in Cairo is important advancing possibilities through empowering and collaborating with local communities.

The limitations of this approach of urban intervention in the Cairene context, discussed earlier in this chapter, is another significant contribution to knowledge. It also provides an empirical basis for illuminating the complex power relationships behind this approach in Cairo. As these initiatives in Cairo are highly dependent on scattered foreign donor efforts rather than a real shift in the planning policy, the study highlights the need for policy change that facilitates alternative urbanism and effective coproduction. This includes progressive redistribution of power between actors and providing more autonomy to civil society organisations. It also includes allowing a degree of uncertainty, informality and temporariness in urban-making processes and placemaking strategies linking urban development with community initiatives and local everyday dynamics.

8.8 Recommendations for Future Research

There are several areas where future research can be suggested. The first relates to alternative urbanism from a transnational perspective where comparing multiple case studies from different cities can provide more insights on the contextual differences. Analyses across different political climates and institutional situations would help in developing a broader understanding of the potential of this alternative approach. Also, comparing alternative urban practices that are initiated by the government to ones that are initiated by the community would open another fruitful line of investigation about the entanglements of power relationships and how this would affect the characteristics of the produced spaces and their transformational potential.

As the study demonstrated the positive impact of small urban interventions on the urban quality of life in a deprived neighbourhood and an informal settlement, further research is needed that focusses on such environments highlighting the variations of local assets, skills and resources as well as challenges. These modes of intervention can be incorporated in in-situ upgrading programs of informal settlements. As the lack of open public spaces is one of the major problems in dense informal areas, reclaiming a series of left over or decaying spaces can lead to a spatial and socio-economic incremental upgrading. This is suggested to be done taking into

consideration local everyday dynamics as well as community ambitions and cultural norms, which proved to be influential in the engagement of residents and sustaining improvements on the long term. It is also worth comparing the potential of these alternative modes of intervention in diverse informal settlements across the megacities of the global South highlighting the different challenges of each setting. The comparative approach would be useful in understanding the nuances of alternative urbanism in relation to urban informality that evolves in response to the different social, political, economic, and cultural environments.

References

- Abaza, M. (2004). Brave New Mall. *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 16-22 September, Issue no. 708. Available from <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/Archive/2004/708/feature.htm> [Accessed May 20 2018].
- Abaza, M. (2013). Walls, segregating downtown Cairo and the Mohammed Mahmud street graffiti. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 30(1), 122. doi: 10.1177/0263276412460062.
- Abaza, M. (2014). Post January revolution Cairo: Urban wars and the reshaping of public space. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 31(7-8), 163-183. doi: 10.1177/0263276414549264.
- Abdelhalim, A. (1985) Transformation in Architecture and Urbanism. In: Evin, Ahmet (ed.) *The Expanding Metropolis: Coping with the Urban Growth of Cairo*. Singapore: Concept Media/Aga Khan Award for Architecture, pp. 43-48
- Abdelmonem, G. (2012). The Practice of Home in Old Cairo Towards Socio-Spatial Models of Sustainable Living. *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, 35-50.
- Abdelmonem, G. (2016). Chase over the Nile: The Social Evolution of riverine landscape in Urban Egypt. In: Siva, C. (ed.) *Urban Planning in North Africa*, Farnham: Ashgate, pp.157-170
- Abu-Lughod, J. L. (1971). *Cairo: 1001 years of the city victorious*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Adham, K. (2005). Globalization, Neoliberalism, and New Spaces of Capital in Cairo. *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, 17, 19-32.
- Ahmed, B., and Kamel, B. (2013). Reclaiming Urban Settings: A Community Based Public Space. *Oz*, 35(1), 8.
- Akl, A. and Kamvasinou, K. (2019). Alternative Urbanism in the Historic City Centre: A Transnational Perspective on Theory and Practice. In: *AESOP Annual Congress Venice 2019*. Universita IUAV di Venezia.
- Al Aswany, A. (2005). *The Yacoubian Building*. Oxford University Press.

- Al Khani, R., (2012). Planning for more inclusive cities. In: *Inclusive Cities in a Global World*, Gothenburg: 56th World Congress 2012, IFHP. Sweden. International Federation for Housing and Planning.
- Albrechts, L. (2013). Reframing strategic spatial planning by using a coproduction perspective. *Planning theory*, 12(1), 46-63.
- Alexander, C. (1977). *A pattern language: towns, buildings, construction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Alisdairi, L. K. (2014). *A Cry and a Demand: Tactical Urbanism and the Right to the City*. Doctoral thesis, University of Washington, Seattle.
- Alovjanović, M. (2012). Being Alternative: Social Embeddedness of Grassroots Sustainability Culture in Berlin. PhD thesis, Central European University, Budapest.
- Al-Sayyid, M. K. (1995). The concept of civil society and the Arab world. *Political liberalization and democratization in the Arab world*, 1, 131-147.
- Al-Sayyad, N. (2004). Informality as a “New” Way of Life. In: Roy, A., AlSayyad, N. (eds.) *Urban informality: transnational perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America, and South Asia*. Lanham, Md. : Lexington Books.
- Al-Sayyad, N. (2011). *Cairo: histories of a city*. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Amin, A. (2011). *Post-Fordism: a reader*. Somerset: John Wiley & Sons.
- Amin, A. (1994). Post-Fordism: models, fantasies and phantoms of transition. *Post-Fordism: a reader*, 1, pp.1-7.
- Amin, G. (2000). *Whatever Happened to the Egyptians? Changes in Egyptian Society from 1950 to the Present*, Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press
- Andres L. (2011) Alternative initiatives, cultural intermediaries and urban regeneration: the case of La Friche (Marseille). *European Planning Studies* 19 (5): 795–811.
- Andres, L. (2013). Differential Spaces, Power Hierarchy and Collaborative Planning: A Critique of the Role of Temporary Uses in Shaping and Making Places. *Urban Studies*, 50 (4), 759–775.

- Andres, L., and Kraftl, P. (2021). New directions in the theorisation of temporary urbanisms: adaptability, activation and trajectory. *Progress in Human Geography*, 45(5), pp. 1237–1253. doi: 10.1177/0309132520985321.
- Andres, L., Bakare, H., Bryson, J. R., Khaemba, W., Melgaço, L., and Mwaniki, G. R. (2021). Planning, temporary urbanism and citizen-led alternative-substitute place-making in the Global South. *Regional Studies*, 55(1), 29-39.
- Andres, L., and Zhang, A. (2020). *Transforming Cities Through Temporary Urbanism: A Comparative International Overview*. Springer.
- Arous, R., (2013) Syrian Refugees Emergency Needs Assessment Report, Cairo. Available from https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/documents/savethechildren_ena_april20131.pdf [Accessed 5 August 2019]
- Ashour, S. (2019). Rebranding Cairo's downtown cinemas: Can performances resurrect abundant heritage?. *Journal of Engineering and Applied Science*. 66. 329-353.
- Attia, S. (2013). Revitalization of Downtown as center for social democracy and sustainable growth. In: *Ecocity World Summit*. Montreal. 2013.
- Attia, S., Shafik, Z., El Halafawy, A. and Khalil, H. (2017) Urban regeneration of public space - Al-Alfi street - Downtown Cairo, *International Journal of Sustainable Development and Planning*, Vol. 12, No. 4, pp.808-818, WIT Press, DOI 10.2495/SDP-V12-N4-808-818.
- Awan, N., Schneider, T., and Till, J. (2013). *Spatial agency: other ways of doing architecture*. London: Routledge.
- Awatta, H. (2015). Whose Downtown is it Anyway? The Urban Transformation of Downtown Cairo between State and Non-State Stakeholders. MSc. The American University in Cairo.
- Ayeb, H. (2011). Social and political geography of the Tunisian revolution: the alfa grass revolution. *Review of African Political Economy*, 38(129), 467-479.
- Ayman, L., Farouk, M., Mannoun, M., El-Masry, R., Refaat, N., Shama, H. and Mourad, M. (2015). Geneina in Action: Designing and Implementing a Public Space

to Meet and Play in Six of October City's Masaken el Awla Bil-riaya (Masaken Othman). Cairo: Takween

Bailey, N. (2010). Understanding community empowerment in urban regeneration and planning in England: putting policy and practice in context. *Planning Practice & Research*, 25(3), 317-332.

Bakare, H., Stevens, S., and Melgaco, L. (2020). Informality and Temporary Urbanism as Defiance: Tales of the Everyday Life and Livelihoods in Sub-Saharan Africa. In: Andres, L. and Zhang, A. (eds). *Transforming Cities Through Temporary Urbanism: A Comparative International Overview*. 231-239, Springer.

Bakry, W. and Nouredin, S. (2011). The people of "Izbat Khairallah" cut off the "ring town" after the death of a child. *Almasry Alyoum*. Available from <https://www.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/125063> [Accessed 4 August 2021]

Barker, P. (1999). Non-plan revisited: Or the real way cities grow: The tenth Reyner Banham memorial lecture. *Journal of Design History*, 95-110.

Bartscheck II, F. E. (2015) The Cluster Effect. *Egypt Today* 15 January. Available from <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/10/2779/The-Cluster-Effect> [Accessed 8 March 2018]

Bassett, K. (1993) Urban cultural strategies and urban regeneration: a case study and critique, *Environment and Planning A*, 25(2), pp. 1773–1788.

Baxter, P. and Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative Case Study Methodology: Study Design and Implementation for Novice Researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 13, 544-559

Bayat, A. (1996). Cairo's Poor: Dilemmas of Survival and Solidarity. *Middle East Report*, 202, pp.7-12.

Bayat, A. (2000). From Dangerous Classes' to Quiet Rebels' Politics of the Urban Subaltern in the Global South. *International sociology*, 15(3), 533-557.

Bayat, A. and Denis, E. (2000). Who is afraid of ashwaiyyat? Urban change and politics in Egypt. *Environment and Urbanization*, 12(2), 185-199.

Bayat, A. (2010). *Life as politics: How ordinary people change the Middle East*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press.

Bayat, A. (2012). Politics in the city-inside-out. *City & Society*, 24(2), 110-128.

- Bayat, A. (2013). The Arab Spring and its surprises. *Development and Change*, 44(3), pp.587-601.
- BEO (2022). Who Owns Cairo? Ownership Analysis. The Built Environment Observatory Available at: <https://marsadomran.info/en/2022/09/2642/> [Accessed 17 October 2022]
- Ben Nefissa, S. (2009). Cairo's city government: the crisis of local administration and the refusal of urban citizenship. In: Singerman, D., (Eds.). *Cairo Contested, Governance, Urban Space and Global Modernity*, 177-197. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press.
- Berg, N. (2012). The Official Guide to Tactical Urbanism, *The Atlantic Cities Place Matters*, 2 March. Available from <https://www.citylab.com/design/2012/03/guide-tactical-urbanism/1387/> [accessed 2nd August 2017]
- Berg, B. and Lune, H. (2004). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*. Boston: Pearson.
- Bianca, S. and Siravo, F. (2005). *Cairo: Urban Regeneration in the Darb Al-Ahmar District: a Framework for Investment*. Cairo: Aga Khan Trust for Culture.
- Bieber, A. (2010). Desires will break out of homes and put an end of boredom and the administration of misery. In: Klanten, R., & Hübner, M. (eds). *Urban interventions. Personal Projects in Public Space*. Berlin: Gestalten
- Bishop, P. and Williams, L. (2012). *The temporary city*. London: Routledge.
- Bishop, P. (2015). From the Subversive to the Serious: Temporary Urbanism as a Positive Force. *Architectural Design*, 85(3), 136-141.
- Bishop, P. (2019). Urban Design in the Fragmented City. In: Roggema R. (ed.) *Contemporary Urban Design Thinking: The Australian Approach*. 71-93, Berlin: Springer
- Bogaert, K. (2018). *Globalized authoritarianism: Megaprojects, slums, and class relations in urban Morocco* (Vol. 27). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Bovaird, T. (2007). Beyond engagement and participation: User and community co-production of public services. *Public Administration Review*, 67, 846–860

- Boyle, D. and Harris, M. (2009). *The challenge of co-production: How equal partnerships between professionals and the public are crucial to improving public services*. London: Nesta.
- Bradley, K. (2015). Open-source urbanism: Creating, multiplying and managing urban commons. *Footprint*, pp.91-107.
- Bremer, J., (2011). Leadership and Collective Action in Egypt's Popular Committees: Emergence of Authentic Civic Activism in the Absence of the State, *The International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law*, 13: 4, December, Available from <https://www.icnl.org/resources/research/ijnl/leadership-and-collective-action-in-egypts-popular-committees-emergence-of-authentic-civic-activism-in-the-absence-of-the-state> [Accessed 1 November 2022]
- Brenner, N. (2015). Is Tactical Urbanism' an Alternative to Neoliberal Urbanism?. *Post: Notes on Modern & Contemporary Art around the Globe*. Available from: http://post.at.moma.org/content_items/587-istactical-urbanism-an-alternative-to-neoliberal-urbanism [Accessed on 10 March 2017]
- Bromberg, A. (2010). Creativity unbound: cultivating the generative power of non-economic neighborhood spaces. In: T. Edensor et al. (eds). *Spaces of Vernacular Creativity: Rethinking the Cultural Economy*. London, New York: Routledge, pp. 214-225.
- Cahn, E. S. (2000). *No more throw-away people: The co-production imperative*. Washington: Essential Books.
- Carmona, M. and Wunderlich, F. M. (2013). *Capital spaces: the multiple complex public spaces of a global city*. London: Routledge.
- Castells, M. (1983). *The city and the grassroots*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Certeau, M. D. (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life*, transl. by S. Rendall. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Chase, J. L., Crawford, M. and Kaliski, J. (1999). *Everyday Urbanism*. New York: Monacelli Press

- Chuangchai, P. (2021). Rhetoric of the Creative City in the Global South: The Case of Bangkok City of Design. In: *The 16th International Conference on Humanities and Social Sciences*. 2021.
- Colomb, C. (2012). Pushing the urban frontier: temporary uses of space, city marketing, and the creative city discourse in 2000s Berlin. *Journal of urban affairs*, 34(2), 131-152.
- Conde, L. and Magalhaes, S. (2004). *Favela-Bairro: rewriting the history of Rio*. Rio de Janeiro: Viver Cidades.
- Courage, C. (2013). The global phenomenon of tactical urbanism as an indicator of new forms of citizenship. *Engage in the Visual Arts*, 32, 88-97
- Crawford, M. (1999). Introduction. In Chase, J. L., Crawford, M. and Kaliski, J. (eds). *Everyday Urbanism*. New York: Monacelli Press
- Crawford, M. (2005). Everyday Urbanism in Mehrotra, R. (Ed.). (2005). *Everyday Urbanism: Margaret Crawford vs. Michael Speaks* (Vol. 1). University of Michigan College
- Crawford, M. (2012). Urban Interventions and the right to the City. *The Architect*, August. Available from <http://www.spontaneousinterventions.org/reading/an-essay> [Accessed 18 April 2017]
- Crawford, M. (2013). Everyday Spaces. In: Larice, M. and Macdonald, E. (Eds.) *The urban design reader*. London: Routledge.
- Cruz, T. (2008). Border tours: Strategies of surveillance, tactics of encroachment. *Indefensible space: The architecture of the national insecurity state*, 111-140.
- Cuff, D. (1992). *Architecture: The story of practice*. Boston, MA: Mit Press.
- Cupers, K. and Miessen, M. (2002). *Spaces of uncertainty*. Wuppertal: Müller und Busmann.
- Davidoff, P. (1965). Advocacy and pluralism in planning. *Journal of the American Institute of planners*, 31(4), 331-338.
- Davis, M. (2006). *Planet of Slums*. London: Verso

- De Balbian, U. (2017). *Types of Intersubjectivity and Alternative Reality Images*. Available from SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2958090>
- De Solà-Morales, I. (1995). Terrain vague. In: Cynthia, C.D. (ed.) *Anyplace*. Cambridge MA: MIT press, 118-123.
- De Soto, H. (2011). The Free Market Secret of the Arab Revolutions. *Financial Times*, 8 Nov.
- Debord, G. (1957). Report on the Construction of Situations. *Situationist international anthology*, Berkeley, California: Bureau of Public Secrets
- Denis, E. (2006). Cairo as neoliberal capital? In: Singerman, D., Amar, P. E., and Amar, P. (Eds.). *Cairo Cosmopolitan: politics, culture, and urban space in the new globalized Middle East*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press.
- Denis, E. (2008). Desert: from ghost towns to forbidden cities. Aglaia Konrad. *Desert Cities, JRP/Rignier*, Zürich, 117-127.
- Devlin, R. (2017). Asking ‘Third World questions’ of First World informality: Using Southern theory to parse needs from desires in an analysis of informal urbanism of the global North. *Planning Theory*, 1473095217737347.
- De Vries, P. (2016). Participatory slum upgrading as a disjunctive process in Recife, Brazil: Urban coproduction and the absent ground of the city. *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, 37(3), 295-309.
- Dixon, T. (2009). Urban land and property ownership patterns in the UK: trends and forces for change. *Land use policy*, 26, S43-S53.
- Dorman, W.J. (2007) *The politics of neglect: the Egyptian state in Cairo, 1974–1998*. Doctoral dissertation, Department of Political Studies and International Relations, School of Oriental and African Studies, London: University of London.
- Dorman, W. (2009). Of Demolitions and Donors, The Problematics of State Intervention in Informal Cairo. In: Singerman, D., (Ed.). *Cairo Contested: Governance, Urban Space, and Global Modernity*. 269-290. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press.
- Dorman, W. (2013). Exclusion and informality: the praetorian politics of land management in Cairo, Egypt. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37(5), 1584-1610.

Douglas, G. (2012). Do it yourself urban design in the help yourself city. *The Architect*. Available from <http://www.spontaneousinterventions.org/reading/an-essay> [Accessed 18 August 2017]

Douglas, G. (2016) The formalities of informal improvement: technical and scholarly knowledge at work in do-it-yourself urban design. *Journal of Urbanism: International Research on Placemaking and Urban Sustainability*, 9:2, 117-134

Dovey, K. (2016). *Urban design thinking: a conceptual toolkit*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Duneier, M. (1999). *Sidewalk*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux

Dwyer, S. and Buckle, J. (2009). The space between: On being an insider-outsider in qualitative research. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 8(1), pp.54-63.

El Shimi, R. (2015). Downtown in-betweens engage in urban development dialogue. *Madamasr*, January 23. Available from:

<https://madamasr.com/en/2015/01/23/feature/culture/downtown-in-betweens-engage-in-urban-development-dialogue/> [Accessed 2 May 2018]

Eissa, D., Abd El-Moneim, N. and Lasheen, E. (2016). Displacement and Appropriation: Documenting the implications of inadequate resettlement policies in Cairo. *RSA Winter Conference*, November 2016. London, UK

El Kadi, G. and El Kerdany, D. (2006). Belle-epoque Cairo: The politics of refurbishing the downtown business district. In: Singerman, D. and Amar, P. (Eds.), *Cairo cosmopolitan: Politics, culture, and urban space in the new globalized middle east* (pp. 345-374). Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.

Elazzazy, M. and Zaazaa, A. (2017) Urban Trojan: Urban social innovations in Egypt between the hands of researchers, the community and public authorities. *PlaNext – Next Generation Planning*. (5): 61-77. DOI: 10.24306/plnxt.2017.05.005

Elden, S. (2004). *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*. London: Bloomsbury.

ELgendy, N. (2013). *The Parallel City, A Proposal for the Re-connecting the Formal and Informal Cities – The Case of Greater Cairo*". Doctoral Thesis. Polytechnic of Milan University.

- El-Husseiny, M. and Kesseiba, K. (2012). Challenges of social sustainability in neo-liberal Cairo: re-questioning the role of public space. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 68, 790-803.
- Elshahed, M. (2007). *Facades of modernity: Image, performance, and transformation in the Egyptian metropolis*. Doctoral Dissertation. Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- El-Sheshtawy, Y. (2013a). City interrupted: modernity and architecture in Nasser's post-1952 Cairo. *Planning Perspectives*, 28(3), 347-371.
- El-Sheshtawy, Y. (2013b). Where the sidewalk ends: Informal street corner encounters in Dubai. *Cities*, 31, 382-393.
- Fabian, L. (2012). The Seduction of Rust: The Aesthetic, Recreative and Transformative Potentials of Industrial Ruins. *Dear*, 2, 40-44
- Fabian, L. and Samson, K. (2016). Claiming participation—a comparative analysis of DIY urbanism in Denmark. *Journal of Urbanism: International Research on Placemaking and Urban Sustainability*, 9(2), 166-184.
- Fainstein, S. (2000). New directions in planning theory. *Urban affairs review*, 35(4), 451-478.
- Fathy, H. (1973). *Architecture for the Poor: An Experiment in Rural Egypt*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Feireiss, L. (2010). 'Livin' in the city: the urban space as creative challenge. In Klanten, R., & Hübner, M. (eds). *Urban interventions. Personal Projects in Public Spaces*, Berlin: Gestalten.
- Ferrell, J. (2001). *Tearing down the Streets: Adventures in Urban Anarchy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Ferreri, M. (2015). The seductions of temporary urbanism. *Ephemera*, 15(1), 181-191
- Finckenstein, V. (2021). *How international aid can do more harm than good: the case of Lebanon*, LSE IDEAS. Available from: <https://www.lse.ac.uk/ideas/Assets/Documents/updates/LSE-IDEAS-How-International-Aid-Can-Do-More-Harm-Than-Good.pdf> [Accessed 2 December 2022]
- Finn, D. (2014). DIY Urbanism: Implications for cities. *Journal of Urbanism: International research on placemaking and urban sustainability*, 7(4), 381-398.

Fischer, B. (2014). A Century in the Present Tense: Crisis, Politics and the Intellectual History of Brazil's Informal Cities. In: Fischer, B., McCann, B. and Auyero, J. (eds.), *Cities from scratch: poverty and informality in urban Latin America*, pp.9-67. NC: Duke University Press. pp. 9-67.

Eickhof, I. (2017). Producing Inequality: Creative Economies in Cairo. In: *Mada Masr*, April 20.

Available from <https://www.madamasr.com/en/2017/04/20/feature/culture/producing-inequality-creative-economies-in-cairo/> [Accessed May 2018]

Evans, P. (1997). Introduction: Development strategies across the public-private divide. *World development*, 24(6), IN1-1037.

Florida, R. (2002). *The rise of the creative class. And how it's transforming work, leisure and everyday life*. New York: Basic Books

Franck, K. and Stevens, Q. (2007). *Loose space: possibility and diversity in urban life*. London: Routledge.

Friedmann, J. (2002) *The Prospect of Cities*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Gadanhó, P., Burdett, R., Cruz, T., Harvey, D., Sassen, S. and Tehrani, N. (2014). *Uneven growth: tactical urbanisms for expanding megacities*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art.

Gehl, J. (1987). *Life between buildings (Vol. 23)*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

Gelvin, J. L. (2018). *The New Middle East: What Everyone Needs to Know*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ghannam, F. (1998). The visual remaking of urban space: Relocation and the use of public housing in "modern" Cairo. *Visual Anthropology*, 10(2-4), 264-280.

Ghannam, F. (2002). *Remaking the modern: Space, relocation, and the politics of identity in a global Cairo*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Godlewski, J. (2010) Alien and distant: Rem Koolhaas on film in Lagos, Nigeria. *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 21.2, 7–20.

- Golzari, N. and Sharif, Y. (2011) Reclaiming space and identity: heritage-led regeneration in Palestine, *The Journal of Architecture*, 16:1, 121-144, DOI: 10.1080/13602365.2011.547022
- Groat, L.N. and Wang, D. (2013). *Architectural research methods*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Groth, J. and Corijn, E. (2005). Reclaiming urbanity: Indeterminate spaces, informal actors and urban agenda setting. *Urban Studies*, 42(3), 503-526
- Hajer, M. A. (1999). Zero-friction society. *Urban Design*, 71.
- Hall, S. (1997). The centrality of culture: notes on the cultural revolutions of our time. In: Thomson, K. (ed.) *Media and Cultural Regulation*, pp. 207-238. London: Sage. Available from: <http://www.henryagiroux.com/links/centrality%20of%20culture.pdf> [Accessed 6 September, 2017]
- Hall, T. and Hubbard, P. (1998). *The entrepreneurial city: geographies of politics, regime, and representation*. Somerset: John Wiley & Sons.
- Hamdi, N. (2010). *The placemaker's guide to building community*. London: Earthscan.
- Hamdi, N. (2013). *Small change: about the art of practice and the limits of planning in cities*. London: Earthscan
- Hamilton, N., Kardoush, D., Ansari, M., Hutchison, M., Jamil, R. R., Al-Sweel, F. and Farooqi, M. S. (2012). Land, legitimacy and Governance in Revolutionary Cairo. In: *Proceedings of a Workshop for the Institute for Research and Debate on Governance IRG*, March 2012, Paris: France
- Harris, E. (2015). Navigating Pop-up Geographies: Urban Space–Times of Flexibility, Interstitiality and Immersion. *Geography Compass*, 9(11), 592-603
- Harvey, D. (1989). *The condition of postmodernity*. Cambridge: Blackwell.
- Harvey, D. (2004). The “new imperialism”: Accumulation by dispossession. *Actuel Marx*, (1), 71-90.
- Harvey, D. (2008). The right to the city. *The City Reader*, 6, 23-40.
- Harvey, D. (2010) *The Enigma of Capital: and the Crises of Capitalism*. London: Profile Books

- Harvey, D. (2012). *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. London: Verso
- Haydn, F., and Temel, R. (2006). *Temporary urban spaces: concepts for the use of city spaces*. Basel: Birkhäuser.
- Healey, P. (2012). The universal and the contingent: Some reflections on the transnational flow of planning ideas and practices. *Planning Theory*, 11(2), 188-207.
- Hobson, J. (1999). New towns, the Modernist Planning Project and Social Justice , The Cases of Milton Keynes, UK and 6th October, Egypt. *Working Paper 108*, Development Planning Unit, University College London,
- Holston, J. (1998). *Cities and citizenship*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Holston, J. (2008). *Insurgent citizenship: Disjunctions of democracy and modernity in Brazil*. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press.
- Holston, J. (2009). Insurgent citizenship in an era of global urban peripheries. *City and Society*, 21(2), 245-267.
- Holtzman, B., Hughes, C. and Van Meter, K. (2007). Do It Yourself ... and the Movement beyond Capitalism. In: Biddle, E., Shukaitis, S. and Graeber, D. (eds). *Constituent Imagination, Militant Investigation/ Collective Theorization*, 44–61. Oakland: AK Press.
- Hou, J. (2010). *Insurgent public space: guerrilla urbanism and the remaking of contemporary cities*. New York: Routledge.
- Hou, J. (2020). Guerrilla urbanism: urban design and the practices of resistance. *Urban Design International*, 25(2), pp.117-125.
- Howkins J. (2001). *The creative economy: how people make money from ideas*. London: Allen Lane
- Ibrahim, K. (2014). Post-Revolutionary Urban Egypt: A New Mode of Practice?. *Égypte/Monde arabe*, (1), 237-266.
- Ibrahim, K. and Singerman, D. (2014). Urban Egypt: On the road from revolution to the state? Governance, the built environment, and social justice. *Égypte/Monde arabe*, (11), pp.101-120.

- Ibrahim, K. and Mannoun, M. (2017). *Pilot Public Space and Environmental Upgrading in Izbit Khayrallah - Cairo*. [ebook] Cairo: Takween ICD. Available at: https://issuu.com/takweenicd/docs/khairallah_booklet_final_113016-shu. [Accessed 5 January 2022]
- Ibrahim, K. (2018). Takween Integrated Community Development, Participatory urban planning... a reality check. *Cités, territoires, gouvernance*. Available at: http://www.citego.org/bdf_fiche-document-1140_fr.html [Accessed 7 September 2021]
- Ibrahim, S., and Ribiere, J. (1998) *Cairo from Edge to Edge*. Cairo: AUC Press
- Iveson, K. (2013). Cities within the city: Do-it-yourself urbanism and the right to the city. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37(3), 941-956.
- Jackson, J. B. (1984). *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*. United Kingdom: Yale University Press.
- Jacobs, J. (1961). *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Vintage
- Jo, S. and Nabatchi, T. (2018). Co-production, co-creation, and citizen empowerment. In: *Co-production and co-creation*, (pp. 231-239). Routledge.
- Kaliski, J. (1999). The Present city and the practice of city design. In: Chase, J. L., Crawford, M. and kaliski, J. (eds). *Everyday Urbanism*. New York: Monacelli Press
- Kaliski, J. (2007). Everyday urban design: Towards default urbanism and/or urbanism by design?. In: Kelbaugh, D. and McCullough, K.(eds). *Writing Urbanism: A Design Reader*. New York, USA: Routledge, pp.115-119.
- Kamel, B., Wahba, S., Kandil, A., and Fadda, N. (2020). Pedestrian mall as an enabler to enhance street life and promote walkability in downtown Cairo. *Journal of Engineering and Applied Science*, 67(3), 565-584.
- Kamvasinou, K., and Roberts, M. (2014). Interim spaces: vacant land, creativity and innovation in the context of uncertainty. In: Barron, P., & Mariani, M. (eds.) *Terrain vague: interstices at the edge of the pale*. New York: Routledge.
- Kamvasinou, K. (2015). Temporary intervention and long-term legacy: lessons from London case studies. *Journal of Urban Design*, 22(2), 187-207.

- Kamvasinou, K. (2017). Short-Term Projects, Long-Term Ambitions: Facets of Transience in Two London Development Sites. In: Hennberry, J. (ed). *Transience and Permanence in Urban Development*, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017, pp.65-84
- Kamvasinou, K. (2019). Documenting interim spaces as 21st century heritage. *AMPS Proceedings Series*, 15(1), pp.92-100.
- Khalil, D.M.S., (2019). *Neoliberal Water Infrastructure, Informality, and the State in Cairo 1952-2017: A Case Study of Ezbet El-Haggana*. PhD, University College London.
- Kipper, R. (2009). Cairo: A broader View. In: R. Kipper & M. Fischer (Eds.), *Cairo's Informal Areas Between Urban Challenges and Hidden Potentials: Facts, Voices, Visions*. Cairo: German Technical Cooperation.
- Kivell, P., (1993). *Land and the City: Patterns and Processes of Urban Change*. London: Routledge.
- Klanten, R., and Hübner, M. (2010). *Urban interventions. Personal Projects in Public Spaces*, Berlin: Gestalten.
- Korayem, K. (1996). Structural Adjustment, Stabilization Policies, and the Poor in Egypt. *Cairo Papers in Social Science*, Vol.18 No.4, p.26.
- Koster, M. and Nuijten, M. (2016). Coproducing urban space: rethinking the formal/informal dichotomy. *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, 37(3), 282-294.
- Landry, C. (2005). Lineages of the creative city. *Research Journal for Creative Cities*, 1(1), 15–23.
- Lash, S. and Urry, J. (1994). *Economics of Signs and Space*. London: Routledge.
- Lastra, A. and Pojani, D. (2018). ‘Urban acupuncture’ to alleviate stress in informal settlements in Mexico. *Journal of Urban Design*, 23(5), pp.749-762.
- Lawrence, D. and Low, S. (1990). The built environment and spatial form. *Annual review of anthropology*, 19(1), 453-505.
- Leary-Owhin, M. (2015). A fresh look at Lefebvre’s spatial triad and differential space: A central place in planning theory?. In: *2nd Planning Theory Conference*. University of the West of England (pp. 1-8).

- LeCompte, M. D. and Goetz, J. P. (1982). Problems of reliability and validity in ethnographic research. *Review of educational research*, 52(1), 31-60
- Lefebvre, H. (1971). *Everyday life in the modern world*. New York: Harper
- Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The Production of Space*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lefebvre, H. (1996). The right to the city. In E. Kofman, E. and Lebas, E. (eds.), *Writings on cities: Henri Lefebvre*, Oxford: Blackwell
- Lehtovuori, P. (2005). *Experience and conflict: the dialectics of the production of public urban space in the light of new event venues in Helsinki 1993-2003*. Espoo: Helsinki University of Technology.
- Lehtovuori, P. and Ruopilla, S. (2012). Temporary uses as means of experimental urban planning. *SAJ – Serbian Architectural Journal*, 4 (1), 29-54
- Lehtovuori, P., and Ruoppila, S. (2015). Temporary Uses Producing Difference in Contemporary Urbanism. *Transience and Permanence in Urban Development*, 47-63.
- Lerner, J. (2014). *Urban Acupuncture*. Washington: Island Press.
- Lin, C. and Hsing, W. (2009). Cultural-led Urban Regeneration and Community Mobilization: The case of The Taipei Bao-An Temple Area, Taiwan, *Urban Studies*, 46: 1317 doi:10.1177/00420908009104568.
- Linn, K. (1999). Reclaiming the sacred commons. *New Village*, 1(1), 42-49.
- Littke, H. (2016). Revisiting the San Francisco parklets problematizing publicness, parks, and transferability. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, Volume 15, p. 165-173
- Loukaitou-Sideris, A. (1996). Cracks in the city: addressing the constraints and potentials of urban design. *Journal of Urban Design*, 1(1), 91-103.
- Loukaitou-Sideris, A. and Mukhija, V. (2016). Responding to informality through urban design studio pedagogy. *Journal of Urban Design*, 21(5), 577-595
- Low, S. (1996). Spatializing culture: the social production and social construction of public space in Costa Rica. *American ethnologist*, 23(4), 861-879.
- Lutzoni, L. (2016). In-formalised urban space design. Rethinking the relationship between formal and informal. *City, Territory and Architecture*, 3(1), 20.
- Lydon, M. and Garcia, A. (2015). *Tactical Urbanism, Short term Action for Long Change*, Washington DC: Island Press

- Lynch, K. (1960). *The image of the city* (Vol. 11). Cambridge MA: MIT press.
- Madanipour, A. (1996). Urban design and dilemmas of space. *Environment and planning D: Society and Space*, 14(3), 331-355.
- Madanipour, A. (2017). Temporary use of space: Urban processes between flexibility, opportunity and precarity. *Urban Studies*, 0042098017705546.
- Malsin, J. (2015). Cairo Street traders squeezed out in push to make city ‘revolution free’. *The Guardian*, 5 September. Available from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/05/cairo-street-traders-squeezed-out-city-revolution-free> [Accessed 12 May 2017].
- Marsh, J. (2015). Citizen-Driven Innovation. Urban Thinker Campus: City as a Service, Palermo, Sicily, Italy. *Youtube*. Available from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y0KiaLhF7QU> [Accessed 25 January 2016].
- Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative Researching*, 2nd ed. London: Sage.
- Mathur, V. N., Price, A. D., Austin, S. A. and Moobela, C. (2007). Defining, identifying and mapping stakeholders in the assessment of urban sustainability. In: Horner, M. et al. In Proceedings: SUE-MoT Conference 2007: *International Conference on Whole Life Sustainability and its Assessment*, 27th-29th June. Glasgow, Scotland.
- Mayer, M. (2007). “Contesting the Neoliberalization of Urban Governance.” In: Leitner, H., Peck, J. and Sheppard, E. S. (eds). *Contesting Neoliberalism: Urban Frontiers*, 90–115. New York: The Guildford Press.
- Mayer, M. (2013). First world urban activism: Beyond austerity urbanism and creative city politics. *City*, 17(1), 5-19.
- McFarlane, C. (2011). *Learning the city. Knowledge and translocal assemblage*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Mehrotra, R. (2003). Static spaces, kinetic places. Public Space in the Mega City of Bombay. *Cities and Market Conference, IFHP World Congress Vienna*, 5–8 October 2003, Vienna
- Mehrotra, R. (2008). Between sanctioned and shadow order. In: Ruby I, Ruby A (eds) *Urban transformation*. Ruby Press, Berlin.

- Mehta, V. (2009). Look Closely and You Will See, Listen Carefully and You Will Hear: Urban Design and Social Interaction on Streets, *Journal of Urban Design*, 14(1), 29-64, DOI: 10.1080/13574800802452658
- Merriam, S. (2002). *Qualitative Research in Practice: example for discussion and analysis*. San Francisco: John, Wiley & Sons.
- Merriam, S. and Tisdell, J. (2016). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. San Francisco: Wiley.
- Merrifield, A. (2006). *Henri Lefebvre: A critical introduction*. London: Routledge.
- Michaelson, R. (2018). Cairo has started to become ugly: why Egypt is building a new capital city. *The Guardian*, 8 May. Available from <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2018/may/08/cairo-why-egypt-build-new-capital-city-desert> [Accessed 1 July 2018].
- Miles, S. and Paddison, R. (2005). Introduction: The rise and rise of culture-led urban regeneration. *Urban studies*, 42(5-6), pp.833-839.
- Milgrom, R. (2002). Realizing differential space? Design processes and everyday life in the architecture of Lucien Kroll. *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 13(2), 75-95.
- Miraftab, F. (2009). Insurgent planning: Situating radical planning in the global south. *Planning Theory*, 8(1), 32-50.
- Mitchell, D. (2003). *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space*. New York, Guilford: Routledge.
- Mitchell, M. (2003) *Rebuilding Community in Kosovo*. Wales: Centre for Alternative Technology Publications.
- Mitchell, M. (2018). The forest and the city: interpretative mapping as an aid to urban practice in sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of Urban Design*, 23(4), 558-580.
- Mitchell, T. (2002). *Rule of Experts, Egypt, Techno-politics, Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Mitlin, D. (2008). With and beyond the state—co-production as a route to political influence, power and transformation for grassroots organizations. *Environment and Urbanization*, 20(2), 339-360.

- Mitlin, D., & Satterthwaite, D. (2012). *Urban poverty in the global south: scale and nature*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Moawad, P. (2020) Temporary forms of Urbanism in Contested Urban Spaces in Lebanon. In: Andres, L. and Zhang, A. (eds). *Transforming Cities Through Temporary Urbanism: A Comparative International Overview*. 231-239, Springer.
- Moser, S. (2019). "Two Days to Shape the Future": A Saudi Arabian Node in the Transnational Circulation of Ideas about new Cities. In: Molotch, H. and Ponzini, D. (eds) *The New Arab Urban: Gulf Cities of Wealth, Ambition, and Distress*. New York: New York University Press.
- Moufid, R. and Ashour, S. (2019). قراءة تحليلية في عمران الخوف دراسة حالة المجتمعات المسورة بالقاهرة. Perusal on Urban Fear Case study of the Gated Communities in Greater Cairo. *Journal of Urban Research*, 33(1), pp.120-130.
- Mould, O. (2014). Tactical urbanism: The new vernacular of the creative city. *Geography Compass*, 8(8), 529-539.
- Mounajjed, N., Peng, C. and Walker, S. (2007). Ethnographic interventions: A strategy and experiments in mapping sociospatial practices. *Human Technology: An Interdisciplinary Journal on Humans in ICT Environments*. Volume 3 (1), pp. 68-97.
- Mounir, J.(2014). *Urban Governance and Participation in Greater Cairo Region*. MSc., Graz University of Technology, Graz, Austria. Accessible from <http://diglib.tugraz.at/download.php?id=576a776d9ce7b&location=browse>
- Murtagh, L. (2007). Implementing a Critically Quasi-Ethnographic Approach. *Qualitative Report*, 12(2), pp.193-215.
- Nagati, O. (1998). *Conflict and reconciliation: on the cultural dynamics in the Cairene public space, Doctoral dissertation*. University of British Columbia.
- Nagati, O. and Elgendy, N. (2012). Ard-al-Liwa Park Project: Towards a New Urban Order and Mode of Professional Practice. Conference Proceedings of: *City to be tamed? Standards and Alternatives in the transformation of the urban South*, Milan, 15-17 November.
- Nagati, O. and Stryker, B. (2013). *Archiving the City in Flux: Cairo's Shifting Landscape Since the January 25th Revolution*. Cairo: Cluster.

Nagati, O., Stryker, B., and Mostafa, M. (2013). *Learning from Cairo: Global Perspectives and Future Visions*. Cairo: Cluster.

Nagati, O. and Stryker, B. (2016). Cairo Downtown Passageways: A framework for Urban Regeneration. In: Stryker, B. and Nagati, O. (eds) *Creative Cities: Re-framing Downtown Cairo*. Cairo: CLUSTER, pp.177-187

Nagati, O. (2018). *From multiple publics to just public: Tactical art and design interventions in Post-revolution Cairene public space*. Cairo: British Council.

Available from:

https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/omarnagati_a4_digital_highres.pdf
[Accessed 1 May 2019]

Németh, J. and Langhorst, J. (2014). Rethinking urban transformation: Temporary uses for vacant land. *Cities*, 40, 143-150.

New Urban Communities Authority (2019). *National Housing Projects*.

Available from

http://www.newcities.gov.eg/about/projects/housing_projects/nationalhousing/default.aspx [Accessed 1 February 2019]

Novy, J. and Colomb, C. (2013). Struggling for the right to the (creative) city in Berlin and Hamburg: new urban social movements, new ‘spaces of hope’?. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37(5), 1816-1838.

Omar, D. (2018) *Urban Growth Management Policies. The rise of New Town Policy to deal with urban growth: The Case of Egypt*. MSc Dissertation, Politecnico di Milano

Ostrom, E. (1996). Crossing the great divide: Coproduction, synergy, and development. *World Development*, 24(6), 1073–1087.

Ostrom, E., Guha-Khasnobis, B., and Kanbur, R. (2006). *Beyond formality and informality. Linking the formal and informal economy*. Oxford University Press, New York.

Oswalt, P., Overmeyer, K. and Misselwitz, P. (2013). *Urban catalyst*. Berlin: DOM publishers.

Overdiek, A. (2017). Fashionable interventions: The pop-up store as differential space. *Organizational Aesthetics*, 6(1), pp.116-134.

- Overmeyer, K. (2007). *Urban Pioneers: Temporary Use and Urban Development in Berlin*, Berlin: Jovis.
- Pagano, C. B. (2013). DIY urbanism: Property and process in grassroots city building. *Marquette Law Review*, Vol. 97, 336-390
- Paraskevas, F. and Adams, R. (2015). *Tahrir Square and Haussmann's Paris: Physical Manifestations of Political Doctrines*. Architectural Association. Available from: https://www.aaschool.ac.uk/Downloads/awards/Frederique_Paraskevas.pdf [Accessed 5 February 2019]
- Patton, M. Q. (1985). Quality in qualitative research: Methodological principles and recent developments. *Invited address to Division J of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago*.
- Peck, J. (2012). Austerity urbanism: American cities under extreme economy. *City*, 16(6), 626-655.
- Petrescu, D., Petcou, C. and Baibarac, C. (2016) Co-producing commons-based resilience: lessons from R-Urban, *Building Research & Information*, 44:7, 717-736
- Porter, L., Lombard, M., Huxley, M., Ingin, A.K., Islam, T., Briggs, J., Rukmana, D., Devlin, R. and Watson, V. (2011). Informality, the commons and the paradoxes for planning: Concepts and debates for informality and planning self-made cities: Ordinary informality? The reordering of a Romany neighbourhood the land formalisation process and the peri-urban zone of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania street vendors and planning in Indonesian cities informal urbanism in the USA: New challenges for theory and practice engaging with citizenship and urban struggle through an informality lens. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 12(1), pp.115-153.
- Purcell M. (2014). Possible Worlds: Henri Lefebvre and the Right to the City. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 36(1)
- Purcell, M. (2002). Excavating Lefebvre: The right to the city and its urban politics of the inhabitant. *GeoJournal*, 58(2-3), 99-108.
- Purcell, M. (2009). Resisting neoliberalization: communicative planning or counter-hegemonic movements?. *Planning theory*, 8(2), 140-165.
- Rabbiosi, C. (2017). Urban regeneration 'from the bottom up' Critique or co-optation? Notes from Milan, Italy. *City*, 1-13.

- Rabie, P. (2016) The Changing Face of Downtown. In: Stryker, B. and Nagati, O. (eds) *Creative Cities: Re-framing Downtown Cairo*, pp. 258-264. Cairo: CLUSTER.
- Randolph, G. F., and Storper, M. (2022). Is urbanisation in the Global South fundamentally different? Comparative global urban analysis for the 21st century. *Urban Studies*, 60(1), 3–25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980211067926>
- Rashed, M. (2015). *Architectural identity in contemporary Cairo*. MSc., Politecnico di Milano.
- Rashti, C. and Stino, M. (2001). *Converting a Derelict Site into an Urban Park. Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme (formerly Historic Cities Support Programme): The Azhar Park Project in Cairo and the Conservation and Revitalisation of Darb al-Ahmar*. Aga Khan Trust for Culture, 15-34.
- Ratner, C. (2002). Subjectivity and objectivity in qualitative methodology. In *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, Vol. 3, No. 3.
- Raymond, A. (2001). *Cairo. City of History*, Transl. by W. Wood. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.
- Riley, T. (2002). Introduction in Riley, T. et al. *The changing of the avant-garde*. New York: Museum of Modern Art.
- Robins, K. (1991). Prisoners of the city: whatever could a postmodern city be? In: Carter, E., Donald, J. and Squires, J. (Eds) *Space and Place: Theories of Identity and Location*, pp. 303–330. London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Robins, S., Cornwall, A., and Von Lieres, B. (2008). Rethinking ‘citizenship’ in the postcolony. *Third World Quarterly*, 29(6), 1069-1086.
- Robinson J (2002) Global and world cities: A view from off the map. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 26(3): 531–554
- Round, J., Williams, C. and Rodgers, P. (2008) Everyday tactics and spaces of power: the role of informal economies in post-Soviet Ukraine, *Social & Cultural Geography*, 9(2), pp. 171–185.
- Roy, A. (2004). Transnational Trespassings. The Geopolitics of Urban Informality. In: Roy, A. and Al-Sayyad, N. (Eds.), *Urban Informality. Transnational Perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America and South Asia* (pp. 289-317). Oxford: Lexington Books.

- Roy, A. (2009). Why India cannot plan its cities: Informality, insurgence and the idiom of urbanization. *Planning Theory*, 8(1), 76–87.
- Ryzova, L. (2015). Strolling in Enemy Territory: Downtown Cairo, Its Publics, and Urban Heterotopias. *Orient-Institut Studies*, 3.
- Sager, T. (2016) Activist planning: a response to the woes of neo-liberalism?, *European Planning Studies*, 24:7, 1262-1280, DOI: 10.1080/09654313.2016.1168784
- Said, R. (1996). *Al-Haqiqa wa Al-Wahm fi AlWaqi' Al-Misri* (in Arabic), Cairo: Dar AlHilal
- Salama, H. (2013). Tahrir Square: A narrative of a public space. *International Journal of Architectural Research: ArchNet-IJAR*, 7(1), 128-138.
- Salama, H. (2009). *Place production in globalizing Middle Eastern cities: A study of Cairo and Dubai*. University of Southern California.
- Sandercock, L. (1998). *Towards Cosmopolis: Planning for Multicultural Societies*. Chichester: Wiley
- Sandercock, L. (2000). When strangers become neighbours: Managing cities of difference. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 1(1), 13-30.
- Save the Children (2013). *Syrian Refugees Emergency Needs Assessment Report, Cairo, February 2013*. Available from https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/savethechildre_ena_april20131.pdf/ [Accessed September 2018]
- Sawhney, N., De Klerk, C., and Malhotra, S. (2015). Civic engagement through DIY urbanism and collective networked action. *Planning Practice & Research*, 30(3), 337-354.
- Schmid, C. (2008). Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space: Towards a three-dimensional dialectic. In: Goonewardena, K., Kipfer, S., Milgrom, R., and Schmid, C. (Eds.), *Space, difference, everyday life: Reading Henri Lefebvre*, pp. 27-45. London: Routledge.
- Schwarz, T. and Rugare, S. (2009). *Pop up city*. Cleveland OH: Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative, College of Architecture and Environmental Design, Kent State University.
- Scott, J. (1985). *Weapons of the weak*. London: Yale University Press.

- Selim, G. (2013). Instituting order: the limitations of Nasser's post-colonial planning visions for Cairo in the case of the indigenous quarter of Bulaq (1952–1970). *Planning perspectives*, 29(1), 67-89.
- Selim, G. (2014). Global Civil Society and the Egyptian 2011 Uprising: Assessing the Boomerang Effect. *Mediterranean Review*, 7 (2), 83-112.
- Selim, G. (2016). Between order and modernity: resurgence planning in revolutionary Egypt. *Journal of Urban History*, 42(1), 180-200.
- Sendra, P. (2015). Rethinking urban public space: assemblage thinking and the uses of disorder. *City*, 19(6), 820-836.
- Sennett, R. (2007). The Open City. In Burdett, R. and Sudjic, D.(Eds.) *The Endless City, an authoritative and visually rich survey of the contemporary city*. London: Phaidon Press
- Shafie, k. (2016). Restoring Downtown...Restoring Hope, In: Stryker, B. and Nagati, O. (eds) *Creative Cities: Re-framing Downtown Cairo*, pp. 63-67. Cairo: CLUSTER.
- Sharif, Y. (2017). *Architecture of Resistance: Cultivating Moments of Possibility within the Palestinian/Israeli Conflict*. Taylor & Francis.
- Shawkat, Y. (2013). Social justice and the built environment: a map of Egypt. *The Shadow Ministry of Housing, Cairo, Egypt* [In Arabic].
- Shawkat, Y. (2014). Mubarak's Promise. Social justice and the National Housing Programme: affordable homes or political gain?. *Égypte/Monde arabe*, (11), 203-233.
- Shawkat, Y. (2016). Property Market Deregulation and Informal Tenure in Egypt: A Diabolical Threat to Millions. *Architecture MPS*, 9(4), 1-18.
- Shehayeb, D. (2009). Advantages of Living in Informal Areas. In: Kipper, R. and Fischer, M. (Eds.), *Cairo's Informal Areas Between Urban Challenges and Hidden Potentials: Facts, Voices, Visions*. Cairo : German Technical Cooperation.
- Sheppard, E., Gidwani, V., Goldman, M., Leitner, H., Roy, A., and Maringanti, A. (2015). Introduction: Urban revolutions in the age of global urbanism. *Urban Studies*, Vol. 52(11), 1947-1961.
- Shrestha, P. and Aranya, R. (2015) Claiming Invited and Invented Spaces: Contingencies for Insurgent Planning Practices, *International Planning Studies*, 20:4, 424-443

- Silberberg, S., Lorah, K., Disbrow, R., and Muessig, A. (2013). *Places in the Making: How placemaking builds places and communities*. Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Silva, P. (2016). Tactical urbanism: Towards an evolutionary cities' approach?. *Environment and Planning B: Planning and design*, 43(6), 1040-1051.
- Sims, D. (2010). *Understanding Cairo: The Logic of a City Out of Control*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.
- Sims, D., Sejourne, M. and El Shorbagi, M. (2003). The case of Cairo, Egypt. In: UN-Habitat Global Report on Human Settlements, *The Challenge of Slums, Earthscan, London; Part IV: 'Summary of City Case Studies'*, pp195-228.
- Singerman, D. (2009). *Cairo Contested: Governance, Urban Space, and Global Modernity*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press.
- Singerman, D. and Amar, P. (2006). *Cairo Cosmopolitan: Politics, Culture, and Urban Space in the New Globalized Middle East*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press.
- Sisson, P. (2014). *Housing in Megacities is a Mess. What Can We Do About It?* . Available at <https://www.dwell.com/article/housing-in-megacities-is-a-mess.-what-can-we-do-about-it-64b95e51> . [Accessed September 2021]
- Soja, E. (2000). *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions*. New York: Blackwell
- Sorkin, M. (1992). Introduction: Variations on a theme park. *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City*, pp.xi-xv. New York: Hill Wang.
- Stadnicki, R., Vignal, L., and Barthel, P. A. (2014). Assessing Urban Development after the 'Arab Spring': *Illusions and Evidence of Change*. *Built Environment*, 40(1), 5-13. Oxon: Alexandrine Press
- Stewart, D. J. (1996). Cities in the desert: the Egyptian new-town program. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 86(3), 459-480
- Stickells, L. (2011). The right to the city: rethinking architecture's social significance. *Architectural Theory Review*, Vol.16, 213-227
- Swiss Economic Cooperation and Development State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) (2017). *Swiss Cooperation Programme Egypt 2017-2020*. Available

at https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/deza/en/documents/laender/kooperationsstrategie-aegypten_EN.pdf [Accessed 1 July 2019]

Tadamun (2013). *ʾIZBIT KHAYRALLAH*. Available from: http://www.tadamun.co/?post_type=city&p=2741 [Accessed June 2020]

Tadamun. (2015). *Masākin ʾUthmān*. Available from: http://www.tadamun.co/?post_type=city&p=5737 [Accessed 2 August 2019]

Talen, E. (2015). Do-it-yourself urbanism: A history. *Journal of Planning History*, 14(2), 135-148.

Talu, V. (2016). Tactical Urbanism as an Enabling Process and Tool. In: Bazzu P. and Talu V. ed., *Tactical Urbanism 5 - Italy*. Sassari: TaMaLaCà Srl, p.18. Available from https://issuu.com/streetplanscollaborative/docs/tu_italy_eng [Accessed 26 May 2018].

Tarbush, N. (2012). Cairo 2050: Urban Dream or Modernist Delusion? *Journal of International Affairs*, 171-186.

Tarek Waly Center Architecture and Heritage (2015). Needs Assessment and Activity Design Study, The Unplanned Areas Upgrading and Employment-Enhancing Programme in Egypt, Izbit Khayrallah, Cairo, Available from <https://www.walycenter.org/images/00%20articles/04%20archives/02%20Studies/02%20Reports/01%20Urban%20Studies/0102-2015%20Development%20of%20Izbit%20Khayrallah%20EN.pdf> [Accessed March 2021]

Temel, R., (2006). The temporary in the city. In: Haydn, F., and Temel, R. (eds). *Temporary urban spaces: concepts for the use of city space*. Basel: Birkhäuser

Till, J. (2005). The negotiation of hope. In: Jones, P. B., Petrescu, D., & Till, J. (Eds.). *Architecture and participation*, 23-41, London: Routledge.

Tonkiss, F. (2013). Austerity urbanism and the makeshift city. *City*, 17(3), 312-324.

Trancik, R. (1986). *Finding lost space: theories of urban design*. Somerset: John Wiley & Sons.

UNESCO ICCSD (2018). *UNESCO Creative Cities Programme: For Sustainable Development*. Paris: UNESCO

UN-HABITAT (2011). *Cairo A City in Transition*. Cairo: American University in Cairo.

UN Habitat (2012) *Strategic Development of Greater Cairo-English version*. UN Habitat for a better Future. Available From:
<https://unhabitat.org/strategic-development-of-greater-cairo-english-version>
 [Accessed 10 October 2022]

Verdini, G. (2015). Is the incipient Chinese civil society playing a role in regenerating historic urban areas? Evidence from Nanjing, Suzhou and Shanghai. *Habitat International*, 50, 366-372.

Wallace, A. (2012). *Remaking Community? New Labour and the Governance of Poor Neighbourhoods*. United Kingdom: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Walter, D. (2013). *Urban Design Interventions: An Emerging Strategy of Arts-Based Social Change*. MSc., University of Oregon.

Wates, N. and Wolmar, C. (1980). *Squatting: the real story*. London: Bay Leaf Books.

Watson, V. (2009). 'The planned city sweeps the poor away...': Urban planning and 21st century urbanisation. *Progress in planning*, 72(3), 151-193.

Watson, V. (2014a). Co-production and collaboration in planning–The difference. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 15(1), 62-76.

Watson, V. (2014b). African urban fantasies: dreams or nightmares? *Environment and Urbanization*, 26(1), 215-231.

Webb, F. (2018) Tactical Urbanism: Delineating a Critical Praxis, *Planning Theory & Practice*, 19:1, 58-73

Wendler, J. (2014). *Experimental urbanism: Grassroots alternatives as spaces of learning and innovation in the city*. PhD., Department of Geography, University of Manchester.

Whitaker, G. (1980). Co-production: citizen participation in service delivery, *Public Administration Review*, Vol 40, No 3, pages 240–246

Whyte, W. (1980). *The social life of small urban spaces*. Conservation Foundation

- Weiss, R.S. (1995). *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies*. Simon and Schuster.
- Williams, C. (2006) Reconstructing Islamic Cairo: Forces at Work. In Singerman, D. and Amar, P. (eds.) *Cairo Cosmopolitan: Politics, Culture and Urban Space in the New Globalised Middle East*, 269-294. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.
- Willis, B. (2014). The advantages and limitations of single case study analysis. *E-International Relations Students*. Available from <http://www.e-ir.info/2014/07/05/the-advantages-and-limitations-of-single-case-study-analysis> [Accessed 23rd August 2017]
- Wolf, G. and Mahaffey, N. (2016). Designing difference: co-production of spaces of potentiality. *Urban Planning*, 1(1), 59-67.
- Wortham-Galvin, B. D. (2013). An anthropology of urbanism: How people make places (and what designers and planners might learn from it). *Footprint*, 7(2), 21-40.
- Yencken, D. (1988). The creative city. *Meanjin*, 47(4), 597.
- Yin, R. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods (4th ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE
- Yin, R. (2013). Validity and generalization in future case study evaluations. *Evaluation*, 19(3), 321–3
- Zardini, M. (2008). A New Urban Takeover. In: Borasi, G. and Zardini, M. (eds.). *Actions: what you can do with the city*. Monreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture.
- Zeiger, M. (2012). The Interventionist's Toolkit: 3, our cities, ourselves. *Places Journal*, September 2011. Available from <https://placesjournal.org/article/the-interventionists-toolkit-our-cities-ourselves> [Accessed 2 March 2018]
- Zhang, Z. (2006). What is lived space. *Ephemera*, 6(2), pp.219-223.
- Zhang, A. and Andres, L., (2020). Conclusion: Transforming Cities Through Temporary Urbanisms. In: Andres, L. and Zhang, A. (eds). *Transforming Cities Through Temporary Urbanism: A Comparative International Overview*. 231-239, Springer.

Zimmerman, M. A. (2000). Empowerment Theory. In: Rappaport, J. and Seidman, E. (eds.), *Handbook of Community Psychology*, 43–63. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publisher

Appendix A: Table of Interviewees

Case Study	Role	Name/Reference	Date
Passageways	Shop Keeper	Kodak PW - Participant 1	April 2018 August 2018
	Shop Keeper - Home Accessories shop	Kodak PW - Participant 2	April 2018
	Local community member	Kodak PW - Participant 3	April 2018
	Local shop owner (1)	Philips PW - Participant 1	April 2018 August 2019
	Coffee shop owner	Philips PW - Participant 2	April 2018
	Omar Nagati Architect/Designer	Nagati	April 2018 April 2019
	Shop tenant	Philips PW - Participant 3	August 2018
	Local shop owner	Philips PW - Participant 4	August 2018 August 2019
	Shop Tenant	Kodak PW - Participant 4	August 2018
	Passageway User 1	Kodak PW - Participant 5	August 2018
	Passageway User 2	Kodak PW - Participant 6	August 2018
	Passageway User	Philips PW - Participant 5	September 2018
	Vacant shops - Furniture and Design exhibitor	Kodak PW - Participant 7	September 2018
	Cairo Governorate official – 1	Central Cairo Gov. Official 1	April 2019
	Cairo Governorate official – 2	Central Cairo Gov. Official 2	April 2019
	Ismailia Head of Marketing	Ismailia HoM	April 2019
	Ismailia Tenant and Building Manager	Isailia Tenants Relations Manager	April 2019
	Ismailia Development Head of Engineering	Ismailia HoE	April 2019
	Restaurant staff 1	Kodak PW - Participant 8	April 2019
	Restaurant staff 2	Kodak PW - Participant 9	April 2019
	Vacant shop exhibitor	Kodak PW - Participant 10	April 2019

	coffee shop worker	Kodak PW - Participant 11	August 2019
	Kiosk seller	Kodak PW - Participant 12	August 2019
	Shop keeper - watches	Kodak PW - Participant 13	August 2019
	Male user 2	Philips PW - Participant 6	August 2019
	Male user 3	Kodak PW - Participant 14	August 2019
	Sandwich shop cashier	Philips PW - Participant 7	August 2019
	Female user 3	Philips PW - Participant 8	August 2019
	Shop Manager	Kodak PW - Participant 15	August 2019
Geneina	Nevine Akl Architect/Designer	Akl	April 2018
	Local NGO Director	Geneina - Local NGO Director	April 2018 August 2019
	Local NGO worker	Geneina - NGO activities manager	April 2018 August 2018
	Local NGO admin assistant	Geneina - NGO admin	August 2018
	Local resident	Geneina - Resident 1	April 2018
	Local resident	Geneina - Resident 2	April 2018
	Ghada Mourad / Architect	Mourad	April 2018
	Local mother	Geneina - Resident 3	August 2018
	Local resident	Geneina - Resident 4	August 2018
	Local resident	Geneina - Resident 5	September 2018
	Local resident	Geneina - Resident 6	September 2018
	City Administration Official	City Administration Official	April 2019
	Local resident	Geneina - Resident 7	August 2019
	Local resident	Geneina - Resident 8	August 2019
	Football Pitch caretaker	Geneina - NGO worker	August 2019
	Local resident	Geneina - Resident 9	September 2019
	Local resident	Geneina - Resident 10	September 2019

Ezba	Local resident	Geneina - Resident 11	September 2019
	Local resident	Geneina - Resident 12	September 2019
	Local resident	Geneina - Resident 13	September 2019
	Nevine Akl Architect/Designer	Akl	April 2018
	Another local woman	Ezba - Resident 1	September 2017
	Local resident	Ezba - Resident 2	September 2017
	Local street vendor	Ezba - Resident 3	September 2017
	Local street vendor	Ezba - Resident 4	September 2017
	Local street vendor	Ezba - Resident 5	September 2017
	local resident	Ezba - Resident 6	September 2017
	Local resident	Ezba - Resident 7	September 2017
	Local juice shop keeper	Ezba - shop keeper	April 2018
	Local coffee-shop worker	Ezba - Coffee-shop worker	April 2018
	NGO worker	Ezba - NGO Worker 1	April 2018
	Taxi driver	Ezba - Taxi driver	August 2018
	woman local resident	Ezba - Resident 8	September 2018
	NGO worker	Ezba - NGO Worker 2	August 2019
	Local Tuktuk driver	Ezba - Resident 9	September 2019
	Local resident	Ezba – Resident 10	September 2019
	Local resident	Ezba – Resident 11	September 2019
	Local resident	Ezba – Resident 12	September 2019
	ISDF official	ISDF Official	September 2019

Appendix B: Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADCD	Administrative Capital for Urban Development
AKTC	Aga khan Trust for Culture
CLUSTER	Cairo Laboratory for Urban Studies, Training and Environment Research
CUIP	Cairo Urban Initiative Platform
DEDI	The Danish Egyptian Dialogue Initiative
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit – the German Development Cooperation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISDF	Informal Settlements Development Facility
Kodak PW	Kodak Passageway
MURIS	Ministry of Urban Renewal and Informal Settlements
NHP	National Housing Project
NUCA	New Urban Communities Authority
PDP	Participatory Development Programme
Philips PW	Philips Passageway
SECO	Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs
SFD	Shaarawy Foundation for Development
TAZ	Temporary Autonomous Zones
UCCN	UNESCO Creative City Network
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees