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# Culture-led regeneration projects and gentrification in Middle East historical urban centers: evidence from Khedivial Cairo

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**Culture-Led Regeneration Projects and Gentrification in Middle East Historical Urban Centers**  
**Evidence from Khedivial Cairo**  
**Projets de Régénération Et de Gentrification Dirigés Par La Culture Dans Les Centres**  
**Urbains Historiques Du Moyen-Orient Evidence Du Caire Khédivial**



**By ZIED Lamiaa**

Thèse de doctorat en Géographie présentée et soutenue publiquement  
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## **Abstract**

In many Arab cities, the real estate sector and the state are leading the urban regeneration initiatives, driven by the adaptation of neoliberal policies and the rise in international competition. Consequently, many cities in the MENA region are analogous to developing metropolises in their advanced globalized landscapes with opposing underprivileged districts in many regions. Nevertheless, many threats have been posed to the heritage. The environment that was vernacularly built has been damaged and the urban fabric has been ruined. In some cases, heritage and authenticity have been commodified for the sake of tourism and consumption under neoliberal urbanism, and later became one of the effective forms of displacement. Therefore, urban regeneration process in many of Arab cities in MENA's region is a led gentrification process in which the State and the real estate development industry are at the forefront of this process for the sake of capital accumulation.

The Greater Cairo region typically illustrates how the built environment has been shaped by policies driven by profit within the framework of neoliberal and post-political movements. The stated goal is to make Cairo competitive with other major metropolises; nevertheless, the urban development strategy threatens to displace tens of thousands of low-income and informal areas. The distinctive heritage of khedival Cairo and the growing valorization of the Belle époque era sparked media and official interest to revitalize Cairo's colonial. Khedivial Cairo's urban regeneration plan entails a wide variety of actions, from short-term cosmetic upgrades for city marketing to long-term structural and economic reinvention. This study stresses that the urban regeneration of Khedivial Cairo serves various gentrification purposes. The gentrification process of Khedivial Cairo can be considered an investment approach led by both the state and the private sector. Hence, it confirms how capital can be predominant over sustainability and publicly oriented policy decisions, manifesting how urban heritage has been used as an asset for capital accumulation and commodification. In Arab cities, gentrification process is a localized response to politico-economic changes driven by strong pro-development interests rather than being a socio-cultural process that impacts socio-economic mobility and culture production. As a result, the growing capital investment return, especially in the real estate market, is determined by this process.

## Résumé

Dans de nombreuses villes arabes, le secteur immobilier et l'État mènent les initiatives de régénération urbaine, poussés par l'adaptation des politiques néolibérales et la montée de la concurrence internationale. En conséquence, de nombreuses villes de la région MENA sont analogues à des métropoles en développement dans leurs paysages de mondialisation avancés, avec des quartiers défavorisés opposés dans de nombreuses régions. Néanmoins, de nombreuses menaces pèsent sur le patrimoine. L'environnement construit de manière vernaculaire a été endommagé et la fabrique urbaine a été ruinée. Dans certains cas, le patrimoine et l'authenticité ont été transformés en marchandises à des fins de tourisme et de consommation dans le cadre de l'urbanisme néolibéral, devenant ainsi une forme efficace de déplacement. Par conséquent, le processus de régénération urbaine dans de nombreuses villes arabes de la région MENA est un processus d'embourgeoisement dans lequel l'État et l'industrie du développement immobilier sont à l'avant-garde de ce processus pour l'accumulation de capital.

La région du Grand Caire illustre typiquement comment l'environnement bâti a été façonné par des politiques motivées par le profit dans le cadre des mouvements néolibéraux et post-politiques. L'objectif déclaré est de rendre le Caire compétitif par rapport aux autres grandes métropoles ; néanmoins, la stratégie de développement urbain menace de déplacer des dizaines de milliers de personnes à faible revenu et des zones informelles. Le patrimoine distinctif du Caire khedival et la valorisation croissante de la Belle époque ont suscité l'intérêt des médias et des autorités pour revitaliser le Caire colonial. Le plan de régénération urbaine du Khedival du Caire implique une grande variété d'actions, des améliorations cosmétiques à court terme pour le marketing de la ville à la réinvention structurelle et économique à long terme. Cette étude souligne que la régénération urbaine du Khedival du Caire sert divers objectifs de gentrification. Le processus de gentrification du Khedival peut être considéré comme une approche d'investissement menée à la fois par l'État et le secteur privé. Par conséquent, il confirme la prédominance du capital sur la durabilité et les décisions politiques axées sur le public, et montre comment le lieu urbain est utilisé comme un atout pour l'accumulation de capital et la marchandisation. Dans les villes arabes, le processus de gentrification est une réponse localisée aux changements politico-économiques motivés par de puissants intérêts favorables au développement, plutôt qu'un processus socioculturel ayant un impact sur la mobilité socio-économique et la production culturelle. Par conséquent, le rendement croissant des investissements en capital, notamment sur le marché de l'immobilier, est déterminé par ce processus.

## **List Of Abbreviations**

Administrative Capital for Urban Development (ACUD)  
American University in Cairo (AUC)  
Cairo Governorate (CG)  
Cairo Governorate and the Presidential Committee (CHDC)  
Cairo Image Collective (CIC)  
Cairo Jazz Festival (CJF)  
Cairo Lab for Urban Studies, Training and Environmental Research (CLUSTER)  
Downtown Cairo Contemporary Art Festival (D-CAF)  
General Organization for Physical Planning (GOPP)  
Greater Cairo Region (GCR)  
Greater Cairo Region Urban Planning Center (GCRUPC)  
Holding Company for Tourism, Hotels and Cinema (HOTAC)  
Informal Settlements Development Facility (ISDF)  
International Monetary Fund (IMF)  
Middle East and North Africa (MENA)  
Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources (MIWR)  
National Democratic Party (NDP)  
National Organization of Urban Harmony (NOUH)  
New Administrative Capital (NAC)  
New Urban Communities Authority (NUCA)  
Nile Research Institute (NRI)  
Sovereign Wealth Fund (SWF)  
Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF)  
Tahrir Cultural Center (TCC)  
The Armed Forces Land Projects Organization (AFLPO)  
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)





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## **Culture-led Regeneration Projects and gentrification in Middle East historical urban centers. Evidence from Khedivial Cairo**

### **General Introduction**

Economic globalization has created an ever-changing playing field for many cities. Constant innovation, accompanied by the intensifying flow of commodities, capital, and talented creative people, serves as the basis for contemporary globalization. Therefore, cities are engaged in an ongoing competition to establish themselves on the global map and attract international investment and tourism. In this global contest, smaller cities with little to offer are marginalized in favour of large newborn metropolises or older revitalized ones. In this context, cultural heritage is perceived as a trigger in enhancing the city's image. The creative economy extensively leverages cultural heritage to boost local economic growth. The importance of cultural heritage in revitalizing consolidated urban areas and communities and ensuring sustainable development in cities in the Global North is widely acknowledged. In European cities, culture-led regeneration models and creativity have been incorporated substantially in development strategies in order to maintain cultural distinctiveness while fostering economic growth (Ray, 1998). However, the development of several urban regeneration projects has resulted in widespread gentrification in several cities.

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is one of the world's primary hubs of civilization and urban culture. Historic cities like Cairo, Tunis, Istanbul, Damascus, and Baghdad have undergone various transformations throughout history. For example, in the late Ottoman modernization period of the 19th and 20th centuries, certain cities were restructured, while others were developed as a direct result of European colonialism or nationalist development schemes. In the MENA region, historic urban centers are the nuclei of their cities, serving as hubs of residential, commercial, and cultural activity. The historical significance of urban centers and their resemblance to Western architecture may have considerably contributed to humanity's "collective memory" and the city's identity. In addition to drawing in visitors and contributing to the economy, these historical and cultural assets serve as an archive of the intersections among the numerous people, ideas, cultures, politics, products, and services that have coexisted there over time, rather than being just a living testament of a single culture's history.

In Arab cities in the Middle East region, the political-economic shift over the last decades has led to a new hand of cards being dealt in the urban realm. Wippel and Steiner (2019: p.5) aptly describe this change as “*battlefields, visions, and construction sites: the urban as an arena of contest. This is how urban development in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is presenting itself at the end of this decade*”. Many Arab cities are experiencing urban regeneration initiatives spearheaded by the state and their governments and real estate market, propelled by the widespread implementation of neoliberal policies, and affected by rising international competition. Neoliberalism, as Hackworth (2007) argued, “*is everywhere and, apparently, everything*” (2007, p. xii).

Urban centers in developing countries strive for a share of global consumer markets. Their main goal is to entice regional offices of multiple national companies (MNCs), so-called "transnational classes" (Sklair, 2005), and offshore financial capital into the local real estate market, looking for a profit. The design and function of urban spaces reveal the economic mechanisms and political processes of neoliberalism. As a result, several cities in the MENA region resemble other developing metropolises, with their high-end globalized landscapes juxtaposed against predominantly underprivileged districts. However, heritage has been subjected to various threats. Besides the damage to the vernacular-built environment, the urban fabric has been torn down. In some other cases, heritage and authenticity have been commodified under neoliberal urbanism for tourism and consumption and have effectively become a means of displacement.

*“A driving force of heritage loss in many developing countries is economic transformation; with it comes related changes in land use, population distribution, and income levels. Here, the appeal of modernization often wins out over that of cultural heritage preservation, and even national-level heritage protection does not guarantee that a major cultural asset will survive.”* (Global heritage fund, 2010: p. 19).

The explanation is simple: Gentrification and development strategies are intricately linked to broader political and economic processes. Gentrification is a broad term that refers to urban development processes that vary considerably according to the local context. Although neoliberal urbanism serves as gentrification's bedrock, urbanization and regeneration are inseparable components of the process. Additionally, "gentrification" refers to urbanistic strategies that enable the real estate market "to mediate space in the same way that the financial market mediates time" (Sheppard, 2006: p. 125). Gentrification policies resulted from expanding local and global "circuits of real estate capital and entrepreneurial urban policies" (Shin, 2019: p. 17) where the state plays a critical role. Sometimes, gentrification has been utilized to boost real estate value in historical sites or urban centres, luring visitors and users by fostering a kind of de-traditionalization of cultural heritage (Fortuna, 1997), and transforming it into a consumer culture scene (Featherstone, 1995). This trend is often cited as a significant contributor to the worldwide reproduction of capitalism. It is also considered a new "global urban colonialism" (Atkinson & Bridge, 2005).

### **Research Goal, Grasp Gentrification in a MENA City Context**

There has been a rebound in investments and a rise in private market interest in cities across the countries. As a result, the gentrification process as an urban or modern strategy (Smith, 2002) has widely responded to the more extensive economic and political restructuring. It was not until recently, however, that the term "gentrification" became common parlance in Egypt or many Arab cities across the Middle East. Instead, more impartial terms like "urban regeneration," "urban revitalization," and "urban rehabilitation" are still used to conceal gentrification. In contrast, post-industrial cities in Europe and North America have served as the primary research subject for gentrification studies.

We assume that urban regeneration in Arab cities (non-oil states) in the MENA region is a gentrification-led process driven by the state and real estate development sector for capital accumulation. However, gentrification in developing countries cannot rely on the Western context alone. The process of gentrification in the Arab world is more contentious and problematic than in other regions because of the substantial variances in political systems and economic conditions, as well as the diverse spatial and temporal trajectories of urban development. In addition, tensions between land-based economic expansion, heritage conservation, and social justice have developed due to the widespread demolition, exclusion, and eviction that ensue throughout the development or regeneration process. Hence, various researchers have called to broaden the geographic scope of gentrification studies and consider what the Global South could add to the theory-making debate (Lees, 2012).

The relative lack of literature review on regeneration schemes and the gentrification process in Arab cities in the Middle East region and their outcomes prompted us to dig deeper and develop a more nuanced understanding. Hence, the dissertation aims to offer a critical and alternative interpretation of the regeneration in historical and urban heritage centers of the MENA region to fill the knowledge gap and advance our understanding of the topic matter. Given the similarity of Egypt's political and economic situation to those of other Arab countries in the Middle East and North Africa region, this study focuses on the urban regeneration schemes mainly in Cairo, Egypt, a significant capital in the MENA region within the context of gentrification as a global process. As part of a larger strategy to improve the Greater Cairo (GC) area, the study examines the regeneration of Khedival Cairo. The dissertation aims to determine whether the regeneration process makes up for gentrification or is merely a regeneration project to achieve long-term development and sustainable outcomes. Hence, the study focuses on urban regeneration's social, cultural, economic, and political dimensions and related practices.

### **Hypothesis and Research Questions**

Managing urban shift via urban regeneration has been advocated as a strategy to deal with many of the city's urban issues and potential. The social, economic, and environmental aspects of metropolitan areas have seen substantial transformations as a result of urban regeneration efforts. Political orientation and global economic demands in Egypt impacted socio-economic mobility and culture production. The shift to a neo-liberal political economy headed by state authorities affected the urban realm as a central domain of capital accumulation. Neoliberal strategies and market ideologies also dominated art and heritage.

In urban development, the top-down strategy has been prioritized consistently. This approach refers to the state's proclivity for leading and implementing massive infrastructure projects. Regarding urban development in Egypt, Cairo has many informally formed urban sprawl and new cities that are not operating at their full potential. The national urban policy prioritized the reclamation of desert territory and the construction of new cities above the revitalization of decaying urban cores. Unofficially, it is more convenient for the central government to fund desert development projects and foster real estate speculation than to invest in infrastructure. As a result, centrally located and older places have been overlooked and vacated. In addition, as in other major developing-world capital cities, middle-class citizens of Cairo have been leaving the central areas in droves to establish themselves in more tranquil suburbs away from pollution and chaos. Downtown Cairo, for instance, has suffered for over half a century as a result of rent control, nationalization, mismanagement, and neglect.

The Greater Cairo region is a paradigmatic illustration of how profit-driven policies within neoliberalism and post-political movements have shaped the built environment. In 2008, the General Organization for Physical Planning in Egypt (GOPP) proposed its vision for the Greater Cairo region dubbed 'Greater Cairo 2050', which aspired to *"an image for a better future"*.

*"In 2050, Egypt would become an advanced country (economically and socially) and acts effectively on the regional and international level"* (GOPP, 2009: n.d.)

According to Greater Cairo (GC) Urban Development Strategy Part I: Future Vision and Strategic Directions (2012: p. 9), the vision of 'Greater Cairo 2050' is *"a goal and a national action charter adopted by the state, with individuals and civil society organizations interacting with it and various segments of the society committing to it"*. The plan seeks to model Cairo after other global cities; however, the urban development strategy threatens to displace tens of thousands of low-income and informal areas. Egypt 2052, a revised version of the original plan, mimics a similar development approach across the country. The wealthy minority of the city will gain disproportionately from these plans, which target underprivileged and marginalized regions of the city to build hotels, and malls, expanded green space in the city centre, and so (HIC-MENA: 2011).

Although the regeneration experience in Egypt is limited to historical and slum areas only, the distinctive heritage of khedival Cairo and the growing valorization of the Belle époque era sparked media and official interest. As a result, attempts to revitalize Cairo's colonial core have intensified *"to provide new services and economic opportunities for Greater Cairo"* (ANA33, 2010). Since 2008, several parties have attempted to revitalize Khedival Cairo; however, the outcome of these attempts varies. Khedival Cairo urban regeneration process encompasses a wide range of activities, from aesthetics improvements for city marketing to long-term processes of restructuring and economic reinvention.



Despite gentrification and incumbent upgrading are modes of revitalization initially identified by Clay (1979), there is a widespread belief that gentrification is crucial to neoliberal urbanism strategies. Gentrification is a progressive neoliberal urban planning strategy fueled by the promise of "creative cities." Gentrification is integral to the city's marketing strategy and the urban imaginary. Before gentrification may occur in a particular development process, the conditions are determined by the logic and strength of economic capital.

We ask:

- To what extent have Khedivial Cairo regeneration schemes given way to the gentrification process?
- Who are the 'agents of change' or 'gentrifiers'?
- Are independent artists involved in the regeneration or gentrification of downtown Cairo?
- To what extent has the distinctive architecture of Khedivial Cairo influenced the regeneration process?
- What have been the cultural, political, and economic impacts of the Khedivial Cairo regeneration process?

### Hypothesis 1:

I argue that the khedival Cairo urban regeneration process is employed to serve varying gentrification objectives as a localized response to politico-economic changes shaped by pro-development solid interests. While neoliberal market imperatives heavily influence urban regeneration plans in Cairo, the Khedivial Cairo regeneration project is a gentrification-led process. I suggest that the Khedivial Cairo regeneration initiative is a political-economic process rather than Socio- culture process, reflecting the state's political orientation and global economic demands that underlying the progressive return of capital investment. For the benefit of global capital and urban competitiveness, gentrification is a means and a goal of this process, which is intended to change the region into more affluent and exclusive neighborhoods distinguished by the expansion of multinational businesses and tourist attractions.

### Hypothesis 2:

The distinctive architectural heritage of Khedivial Cairo drew a wide range of interests. I propose that Khedivial Cairo's distinctive architectural heritage has played a vital part in developing the neighborhood through creative adaptive reuse strategy. However, gentrification is linked with historic preservation as a capitalist regeneration process. As a result, heritage has been commodified and used as an asset. Due to the lax legislative regulations, the government and others used a profit-driven approach to historical preservation rather than a preservation-oriented one.

### Hypothesis 3:

I believe downtown Cairo possesses the qualities of a creative milieu and is a place with significant potential to serve as an inspiring location for dynamic businesses, entrepreneurial endeavors, and creative class. When creativity and entrepreneurialism are incorporated into the mix, downtown regeneration schemes benefit immensely. Therefore, I assume that "creativity" and "entrepreneurship" are capitalist tools that contributed to downtown Cairo gentrification to enhance economic development and consumption among the well-off.

### Hypothesis 4:

To transform downtown Cairo into an open museum, I argue the state has backed downtown Cairo's gentrification through its role in space production by reclaiming control over public space and creating the most compelling image possible. The process also creates a new narrative for downtown Cairo, appealing to new affluent residents, elite consumers, and investors.

## **Research Methodology**

The present study attempts to provide a deeper insight and better understanding of the MENA region's regeneration/gentrification process in urban heritage centers. This issue poses many challenges to social science researchers. Hence, choosing an appropriate research methodology is essential to reach reliable results. Selecting an appropriate methodology that is well-defined systematically is a basic requirement in scientific investigations. This can be realized by using qualitative techniques that allow the researcher to "*study selected issues in depth and detail*" (Patton, 1990: p.13). Furthermore, according to Strauss and Corbin (2008) and Levitt et al. (2017), qualitative research is inductive to discover meanings and insights. Consequently, it can be said that it emphasizes "(a) *discovery*, (b) *broadly defined goals*, (c) *flexible research questions*, (d) *emergent contents*, (e) *generation of hypotheses* and (f) *credibility*" (Cropley, 2021: p.37).

Like many other historic neighborhoods in Arab cities in the MENA region, property depreciation, population decline, and the overall economic downturn has severely impacted the Khedivial Cairo. Therefore, qualitative methodologies have been used to investigate and examine the regeneration approaches and their outcome from different perspectives and the gentrification process to *understand*<sup>1</sup> and interpret the phenomena rather than explain them.

### **The Case Study Context**

Bryman (2012) argues that the case study approach in research design is not a technique but a form. Hence, using the case study method is an effective tool to collect data from various sources and accumulate them for developing a detailed story that can aid in understanding circumstances, challenges, conditions, and relations (Yin 2009). Additionally, an in-depth assessment of the real-world perspective can be conducted using the case study research technique (Yin, 2012). Instead of using a “*representative*” approach (Bryman, 2012), this study opts for case studies since they allow for a more “information-oriented” (Flyvbjerg, 2006: p.230) approach to data collecting and analysis, which is essential to the success of the study (Bryman, 2012). Being complementary processes, gentrification and redevelopment are better examined using case studies to identify their dynamics, particularly in economically depressed urban neighborhoods. This paves the way for an in-depth analysis of the area’s history, current economy, and cultural norms.

The first part of the study addresses the regeneration initiatives in two downtown areas of non-oil Arab cities in the MENA region: the "SOLIDERE" project in downtown Beirut and Abdali in the new downtown Amman. Similarities and differences between them are traced and depicted. Then, due to limited time and resource constraints, the study focuses on a single case study of one city because narrowing down the focus on one case “*allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events such as...small group behaviour, organizational and managerial processes, (and) neighborhood change*” (Yin, 2009: p. 4). Accordingly, the in-depth analysis is conducted on “Khedivial Cairo”, the central area of Cairo, as a case study for investigating, analyzing, and understanding the dynamics of regeneration and gentrification by examining its political and socioeconomic patterns chronologically to gain a deeper understanding of this area.

Indeed, Downtown Cairo retains its Mediterranean, medieval, and touristic character despite increased urbanization in the last decades. The area has long been recognized as Cairo’s business, commercial, and entertainment hub. Its unique architectural legacy reflects the finest of the *Bella Époque* era, combining European styles with local influences and materials that are an integral element of Cairo's character. However, Cairo's downtown area started to decline following the military revolt in 1952, which signaled the end to downtown Cairo’s Golden Era. This was

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<sup>1</sup> Hollis (1994)

reflected in a number of changes impacting the socioeconomic structure of that area. For instance, economic stagnation and mass immigration stifled downtown Cairo's once-burgeoning cultural and public riches, as well as its potential for economic dynamism. These factors made gentrification more likely in downtown Cairo. Hence, the Khedivial Cairo regeneration project, as well as the recent political, economic, and sociocultural transformations are thoroughly examined and scrutinized for an in-depth analysis.

### Sources

According to Cropley (2021: p. 84), data frequently consist of “*spoken or written words, although other forms of communication exist (e.g., non-verbal data such as body language)*”. The qualitative method of this study employs a number of data sources that include documentation, media archives, interviews, and direct observation for an effective illustration of the study's conclusions. The data collected in this study are crucial, consisting of both past and current aspects that serve as the foundation of the study and its analysis. Subsequently, these multi-data sources are analyzed to provide context for the findings.

### **Interviews**

Research in social sciences relies heavily and frequently on interviews as a key method of collecting data that needs attention and experience. Interviews are usually conducted in the form of a dialogue between the researcher and the interviewee, followed by note-taking or electronic device recording. Among the four main methods of data collection in qualitative research, unstructured and open-ended inquiries emerge as one of the methods that allow for eliciting ideas and opinions from participants and obtaining historical information (Creswell, 2003).

Urban regeneration and gentrification process is intimately linked to the subjective perception of various stakeholders. Hence, twenty-eight interviews with key government officials, experts, and key stakeholders involved in policy and practice in the downtown Cairo redevelopment project were conducted. To set up meetings, I called the bodies concerned, introduced myself, explained the research's goals, and asked if I could meet with them at a convenient time for an interview. To conduct a neutral and objective interview, I double-checked that the interviewees were able to speak freely. Then, with the respondents' agreement, the majority of the interviews were audiotaped and later transcribed into text after being translated from Arabic into English. An hour-long interview was the average length, with the shortest ones lasting 40 minutes and the longest ones lasting 1 hour and 45 minutes. In order to make the interviews as convenient as possible for participants, they were set up in their place of work according to their schedule. These interviews allowed for an in-depth discussion of the study themes and helped participants better grasp their own experiences and viewpoints, express them in their own words, and bring out problems that they believe are significant.

Twenty-three interviews took place in person, while five took place over the phone. Telephone interviews have inherent drawbacks and benefits. One of the drawbacks is the difficulty of establishing rapport (Bryman, 2012), but the participants' hectic schedules made it impossible to meet face-to-face. However, telephone interviews were also beneficial because they were clear and provided pertinent and significant data for the study. The questions were designed to ask the key stakeholders in downtown Cairo's regeneration process about their efforts, plans, perspectives, and experiences regarding the gentrification issue. The relationship between the key stakeholders and secondary stakeholders as well as the implications of such a relationship were also addressed and analyzed.

In addition to the above sources, I spent a lot of time on the downtown Cairo streets talking to people, such as security guards, local residents, street vendors, small business owners, and brokers for a more concrete understanding of the neighborhood's nature, local concerns, and cultural context, etc. Unfortunately, these informal interviews could not be used as a main source of data, as a huge bulk of the interviewees did not want their names to be used nor their voices recorded due to security concerns. Nevertheless, they were very useful to understand local people's reaction about local urban dynamics.

Name	Expertise
Ahmed El-Alfi	The founder of the GrEEK Campus
Ali Mourad	The director of Tahrir Cultural Center
Ahmed El-Attar	The founder of the D-CAF festival
Amro Salah	The founder of Cairo Jazz festival
Emad Abo Ghazi	The Former Minister of Culture
Hesham Tawfik	The Minister of Public Business Sector
Mohammed Abu Seeda	The director of NOUH
Mohammed ElSerougy	Executive Engineer in Al-Ismailia Company
Mohammed Ashraf	The general Manger of the GrEEK Campus
Mohammed El-Taher	CEO in Al-Ismailia Company
Rawan Bassem	Community Manger at Startup Haus Enpact
Saied El-Bahr	Project Manager at Cairo Governorate
Sameh Ibrahim	Program coordinator at Startup Haus Enpact
Yasser Gerab	Outreach director and independent artist at Townhouse Gallery
Somia Amer	Co-founder El-fan Midan
Safi El-Sawi	The Director of Garage El-Mahrousa
Ahmed Shaker Abd Elatif	Artist and the Director of the National Theater
Magdy El-Sabbagh	Architect at Sigma Properties
Farouk Hosni	The Former Minister of Culture
Karim El-Shafi	Chairman of Al-Ismailia Company

Galila El-Kadi	Urban Planner Professor
Amr Elhamy	Chief Executive Officer. TSFE Tourism and Real estate Sub fund
Ahmed Hassan	OHK's Managing Director
Mohammed Saeid	Zawiya's Director
Mohammed Abd El Fattah	Independent artist
Tarek Abdel Khalek	Advisor to the Minister & Head Of Human Resources · Ministry of Planning & Economic Development

A list of the names of significant stakeholders who were interviewed.

### **Observation**

Qualitative studies also use observation as a data collection method. Observation is “*the systematic description of the events, behaviors, and artifacts of a social setting*” (Marshall & Rossman, 1989: p.79). It is regarded as first-hand knowledge that can be gained through field research and observation of participants. This method is highly significant and beneficial for this study because an in-depth knowledge of the research area and the individuals involved in it can only be gained through such approaches. The observation process of this study started by defining the geographic scope and writing down notes that include informal interviews and in-depth description of the scene, paying particular attention to social and economic settings. Between 2018 till 2021, I attended different cultural events, festivals, the inauguration of several projects and different meetings of the Cairo Heritage Development Committee (CHDC), thanks to interviews with important stakeholders. Throughout the observation I was able to experience different stages of urban transformation and their influence on local community and the economy. Furthermore, I was able to improve the design of the interviews with the key stakeholders.

### **Data Analysis**

After compiling the data required for the study, a meticulous analysis is conducted of the study's recorded interviews, observation notes and other collected data, such as official documents, media archives, articles, journals, and any other available materials to enhance the findings' reliability and accuracy. Not all data on all variables are subjected to analysis due to the constraints of qualitative research. Only the data that illustrate the qualitative research conclusions for support or contrast are analyzed. Then, in the following phase, the data is organized and coded while extracting relevant statements from the interviewees' remarks.

A “code” in qualitative research refers to a word or phrase that symbolically gives a complete, meaningful, and evocative value to a part of language-based data (Saldaña, 2009). In the present study, the “open coding” process is used. It is the process of discovering and naming conceptual categories that often appear in texts. Then, an iterative process follows for checking and correcting any inconsistencies in the collected data as well as the encoding categories. Finally, the encoded text that best suits our topic and displays our findings in a variety of ways is recovered. The next phase is organizing the material into themes and meanings to examine how the government, market, and individual actions affect neighborhood decline, phases of regeneration, and gentrification. Regeneration and gentrification processes as well as their associated socioeconomic effects received particular attention in our study and were grouped into meaningful themes. Finally, the fourth and last phase in the process is developing preliminary interpretations.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Because everything that is not valid is not reliable, reliability is a prerequisite for validity (McManus et al., 2011). In other words, validity necessitates reliability, and reliability necessitates validity. In qualitative research, the relationship between what the researcher records as data and what happens in the real world is critical for the study's validity (Oluwatayo, 2012). Hence, the researcher must thoroughly describe the various methods and phases of investigation in order to maximize reliability and validity of the findings. Moreover, a comprehensive explanation of the study's objectives, methodology, and participants should be provided in full detail by the researcher.

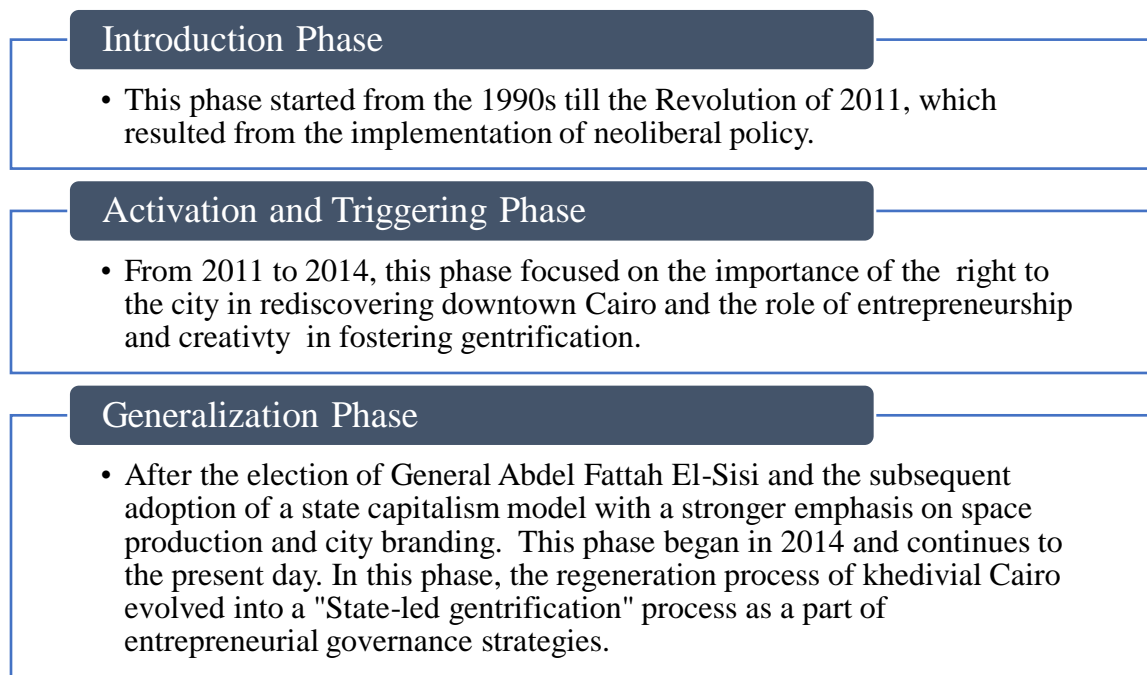
### **Validity**

In qualitative research, validity is defined as the degree to which data are logical, credible, and reliable, as well as the ability to defend them when disputed (Venkatesh et al., 2013). It is also the measurement of how strong or accurate a study is (Trochim, 2006). Validity is evaluated according to the precision with which data collection instruments capture the phenomena under study (Punch, 1998). One of the methods for validating acquired data is triangulation. The triangulation method conducts cross-verification of data from multiple sources. In addition to its contribution in establishing validity in the study, triangulation also serves to improve the researcher's comprehension of the undertaken research.

### **Research Structure**

Gentrification is the outcome of multiple events or factors. Gentrification, as Hamnett (1991) claimed, requires opportunistic gentrifiers moving in, an abundance of cheap housing in the downtown area, and a general cultural fondness for certain urban neighborhoods. Before gentrification may occur in a particular development process, the conditions are determined by the logic and strength of economic capital.

The process also entails several phases (Clay, 1979). Accordingly, to investigate and validate the suggested hypotheses, a proposed framework classifies the gentrification of downtown Cairo into three chronologically ordered distinct stages based on the actors involved: culture pioneers, profitable entrepreneurs, and the state.



*Figure 1: Khedival Cairo gentrification phases. Source: developed by the researcher*

The study is divided into four parts. Each part delves deep into one of the proposed gentrification phases. Part one is dedicated to literature reviews and the theoretical framework adopted in the study. Part two focuses on neoliberalism in Egypt and the onset of gentrification. Neoliberalism as a pro-business policy in Egypt incubated new capitalists, financiers, speculators, and real estate developers who became Mubarak's protected network. The neoliberal policy mainly impacted the art and cultural scene, the architectural heritage of downtown Cairo and the urban planning schemes. Neoliberal economic policies introduced the gentrification of Cairo's downtown, spearheaded by heritage preservationists; the emergence of Cairo's contemporary art scene; the efforts of independent artists; and the government's urban strategic plan for development in the Greater Cairo region (GC 2050). A separate chapter is devoted to each of these topics: Neoliberalism and emergence of Cairo's contemporary art scene, neoliberalism and heritagization process in downtown Cairo, and neoliberalism and urban planning/ development in Egypt.

Part three examines the significance of the right to the city in re-discovering downtown Cairo as a creative milieu (chapter 6) and the role of entrepreneurship in fostering gentrification in the neighborhood. Since the January Revolution of 2011, downtown Cairo has witnessed unprecedented urban transformations. The rediscovery of downtown Cairo unleashed a wave of



entrepreneurship in Egypt that is still unfolding. A slew of entrepreneurial led projects and creative initiatives have triggered the second wave of gentrification in Khedival Cairo and contributed significantly to the preservation of some of downtown Cairo's iconic buildings through rehabilitation or adaptive reuse (chapter 7). Furthermore, the boldness and creativity of downtown Cairo's entrepreneurs encouraged more investment in the area. As a result, the movement "back to the city" has gained momentum. In this context, the role of Al-Ismailia Company for Real Estate Investment in downtown Cairo gentrification process as the largest property owner in downtown Cairo and the most influential in terms of its ability for social transformation is investigated (chapter 8).

In part four, the State role in Khedivial Cairo gentrification process is extensively examined. One of the primary motivations behind downtown Cairo regeneration is the desire of the state and political leaders to gentrify the area. It may, hence, be called a state-led gentrification process which is a spatial manifestation of neoliberal urban policies (Smith, 1996) and a pivotal force in the reproduction of capitalism. The state employed a wide range of strategies to keep control over downtown Cairo's public space, while also depicting the most compelling image. Since 2014 and up until 2016, the state has been actively involved in gentrification through various measures of space production. With the adoption of state capitalism, this engagement has become increasingly prominent and more widespread and has continued from 2017 to this day.

Since 2014, downtown Cairo, however, has been wracked by the competing demands of a bustling populace in public spaces, the state's development objectives and plans, and the financial and investment interests of a burgeoning class. Chapter 9 draws on Lefebvre's writings on space production (1996) for examining the key disputes regarding people's right to the city. Scrutinizing these disputes provides insights into whether citizens' rights to reclaim and proclaim unbiased and equitable social connections in the prevalent political-economic ideology are enabled or hindered. Chapter 10 examines the role of aesthetics and branding strategy in space production, embellishing the image of Khedival Cairo, and promoting gentrification. Chapter 11 focus on state capitalism, examining how Egypt's sovereign fund and the construction of the New Administrative Capital are influencing the district's gentrification. Chapter 12 demonstrates the relevance of the large-scale urban development projects to downtown Cairo's gentrification trend by addressing Cornish El-Nile redevelopment project.

The findings reveal similarities and differences between the Global South and the Global North based on the existing gentrification literature. Studies of the Khedivial neighborhood of Cairo have revealed the critical roles played by the state, the political elite, and the private investment in urban regeneration. This is valid as long as all the parties involved are willing to reap the financial benefits of the neighborhood's distinctive real estate value through the dynamic circuits of capital and policies. The dissertation confirms that the khedival Cairo urban regeneration is employed to serve varying gentrification objectives. This has led to creating a new narrative for downtown Cairo that appeals to a broader audience of potential residents, consumers, and investors through space production via securitization and extensive use of urban aesthetics. Artists and cultural producers (the creative class) in downtown Cairo have shaped and redefined culture in ways that visually celebrate downtown Cairo's wealth and beauty, socially aims transform a historic neighborhood into a hub of high-end consumption, and economically demonstrate the dominance of the private sector over the state. However, displacement is an inevitable outcome of the Cairo downtown gentrification process. Rather than physical displacement for the original inhabitants, downtown Cairo has experienced different forms of displacement.

To conclude, gentrification process is a localized response to politico-economic changes shaped by strong pro-development interests rather than a socio-cultural process with far-reaching effects on socio-economic mobility and culture production. The process underlying the progressive return of capital investment, primarily in the real estate market. Khedivial Cairo's gentrification process is a state-led and private-led investment approach that grants capital dominance over sustainability and publicly oriented policy decisions involving urban space management for capital accumulation and commodification. Tourism and consumerism have turned heritage into a financial asset. To a large extent, heritagization is carried out for ego gratification, to gain global recognition and financial return, or to enhance one's aesthetic preferences.





## **Part One**

### **Literature Reviews and The Theoretical Framework**

## Part One Introduction

The purpose of this section is to present the necessary literature and theoretical framework. The conceptual framework explains why the study is important and relevant, as well as how the study design (including data collection and analytic methodologies) addresses the research questions correctly and thoroughly. According to Eisenhart (1991: p.205), a theoretical framework is “a structure that guides research by relying on a formal theory...constructed by using an established, coherent explanation of certain phenomena and relationships”. The theoretical framework “has implications for every decision made in the research process” (Mertens, 1998: p.3). It is inseparable from the literature review and may sometimes be utilized as a guideline to rationally develop and understand the distinct, yet interrelated elements of the literature reviews.

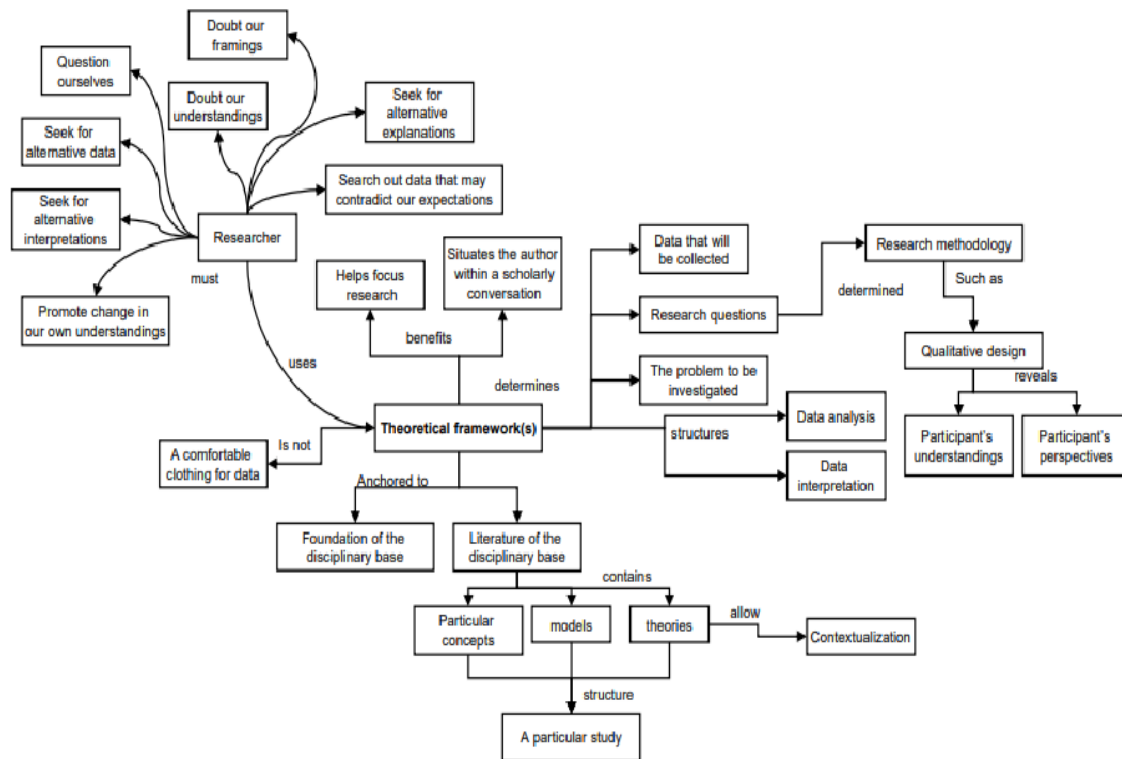


Figure 2: The role of theoretical frameworks in qualitative research. Source: (Mertz & Anfara, 2006)

Chapter two discusses the impact of globalization and urbanization on Arab cities in the MENA region to improve our understanding of the complexities of the regeneration and gentrification process and its consequences on cultural and urban heritage. The regeneration initiatives in the central areas of two non-oil Arab cities in the MENA region, SOLIDERE in Beirut and Abdali in Amman, are also highlighted in the framework of urban regeneration and gentrification process.

From Latin America to Asia and across Europe, Cairo's development in the 19th century was a part of the broader modernization strategy. Khedivial Cairo was granted cultural value by the UNESCO Heritage Sites (2014) following its designation as a buffer zone around the Old Cairo neighborhood and was consequently referred to as protected area (NOUH, 2010). Therefore, it is essential to highlight downtown Cairo's historical, symbolic, urban, architectural, and functional value to understand the city center's gentrification potential. So, an overview of downtown Cairo (Khedivial Cairo) is presented as a case study in the second part of chapter two.

## **1 Chapter One: Theoretical Framework & Literature Review**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Cities, as “*key nodes through that wider circuits of production, exchange, and culture are coordinated*” (Abu-Lughod, 2001: p. 400), have long been seen as the primary drivers of global change and basis of global economy. As a result of the Keynesianism Crisis, neoliberal policies gained prominence. Municipalities, city governments, and other local government units had to abandon Keynesian logic and shift to an entrepreneurial governance model because of severe financial constraints. To put it another way, they felt compelled to participate more actively (Lee, 2006). Neoliberalism is a political-economic ideology that has legitimized and rationalized globalization, created legal frameworks for marketisation and commodification, and redefined the relationship between the state and capital (Smith, 2002; Peck, 2004). As a result, it had far-reaching ramifications and repercussions, from the micro to the macro level. In macroeconomic restructuring policy, neoliberalism refers to “*a range of policies intended to extend market discipline, competition, and commodification throughout all sectors of society*” (Peck et al., 2009: p.50).

In “new urban politics” (Cox, 2009, 2011), cities have been transformed into centralized locations for capital investment. Space production and urbanization are essential tenets of the capitalist economic and business paradigm. Today, neoliberal policies are incorporated with urban governments' goals and priorities, such that gentrification is now considered an appreciated neighborhood transformation. Neoliberal interests use gentrification as a political tool. Hence, it is intrinsic to the neoliberal discourse. The gentrification of blighted and deteriorated neighborhoods results from the regeneration initiative's efforts to revitalize them. Gentrification is inextricably linked to neoliberal urbanization as an inner-city real estate investment. While gentrification may have some positive impacts, it also has some negative ones on the surrounding neighborhood. Reviewing the relevant literature is essential for thoroughly analyzing downtown Cairo regeneration project as it sheds light on regeneration dynamics in the context of neoliberal policies. This part focuses on globalization, neoliberalism, entrepreneurial governance and financialization. These trends strongly influenced cities' urban planning/development process and the widespread gentrification as a global strategy.



## 1.2 Globalization, Neoliberalism and Gentrification are all Intertwined?

Globalization has become an increasingly important topic of discussion in recent decades. For economic and political debate, globalization was the cornerstone of a unified global market that resulted in the gradual erosion of state sovereignty (Khan, 2003). The role of cities in various contexts have been re-evaluated due to the increased focus on globalization amongst specialists and policymakers around the globe. In the early 1990s, Sassen's Global Cities theory (1991) provided a framework for realizing the importance of strategically located cities with resources in the global production system.

*"Now that development is being driven more by globalization than by nationalization, the role of cities is increasing. Power comes from global economies that are realized by integrating national economies into the global economy, and cities provide the strategic linkage functions". (Knight, 1989: p.327).*

Urbanization and globalization are inextricably linked. According to Florida (2016), *"Globalization and urbanization go hand in hand"*. As a result, uneven urbanization has sped up. UN World Urbanization Prospects report (2018) stated, *"In 1950, 30 per cent of the world's population was urban, and by 2050, 68 per cent of the world's population is projected to be urban"*. Urban scholars have used several terms including "entrepreneurial city" (Hall & Hubbard, 1996), "informational city" (Castells, 1989), "global city" (Friedmann, 2005), and "world city" (Friedmann, 1995), to examine and conceptualize the relationship between urbanization processes and contemporary globalization (Sassen, 1991). According to Harvey (2000), globalization seeks to conceal the inherent class divisions in a capitalist economy.

The significant shift in the state's role since the 1970s have had far-reaching consequences on how cities are being developed worldwide. Globalization has made neoliberal economic policies mandatory for governments. Neoliberal hegemony emerged in the early 1980s, as a result of both, a vicious campaign by the monetarist economic school, and political momentum spurred on by Thatcher and Reagan's administration. Neoliberalism has spread throughout the world and is widely regarded as capitalism's next phase of globalization. Neoliberalism contributed significantly to the rationalization of globalization. In addition, it facilitates marketization and commodification, and restructures state-capital relationships (Smith, 2002; Peck, 2004). Neoliberalism has proved to be a significant force behind acceleration of globalization. Hackworth (2007) claimed that *"neoliberalism is set to take the place of globalization as the next popular meta concept in the social science."*

### 1.3 Neoliberalism As a New Doctrine

Neoliberalism, a new wave of economic liberalism, has gained prominence in recent decades. It is a broader term that refers to "*a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade*" (Harvey, 2005: p. 2). In some contexts, neoliberalism is perceived as a contemporary mode of capitalism to address the 1970s and 1980s accumulation crises, which were tied to "*the declining profitability of mass production industries and the crises of Keynesian-welfarism*" (Peck et al., 2009: p.50). According to Harvey, and other neo-Marxist academics, neoliberalism is a "*political project to re-establish the conditions for capitalist accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites*" (Harvey, 2005: p.19). As Harvey (2006, p:145) pointed out, "*neoliberalism swept across the world like a vast tidal wave of institutional reform and discursive adjustment*" and became "*political rationality and a governing approach*".

Although neoliberalism was rooted in the early twentieth century (Drolet, 2011), political and economic conservatives have long embraced its core ideas. According to Monbiot (2016), Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek introduced neoliberalism during a meeting in Paris in 1938, where the term was first used. In Friedrich von Hayek's book (1944), *The Road to Serfdom*, and his first organization, the "Mont Pelerin Society", founded in 1947, neoliberalism doctrine was spread and financially supported by millionaires and their foundations (Monbiot, 2016). Following Friedman's recommendations, the term "neoliberalism" was first applied as a monetarist economic doctrine (Monbiot, 2016). Yet, until the 1980s, neoliberalism as a political economy theory had not been widely implemented to guide policymaking. However, while laissez-faire neoliberal restructuring was at its most vigorous, the electorate voted for conservative leaders like Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan (Brenner& Theodore, 2002). According to Thatcher (1987: n.d<sup>2</sup>),

*"There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look to themselves first. It's our duty to look after ourselves and then, also to look after our neighbour. People have got the entitlements too much in mind, without the obligations. There's no such thing as entitlement, unless someone has first met an obligation".*

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<sup>2</sup> Epitaph for the eighties? "There is no such thing as society".

As well, Ronald Reagan, in his inaugural (1981), stated, "*government is not the solution to our problem; Government is the problem*" (Reagan foundation, 1981). Following Thatcher, Ronald Reagan prioritized reducing taxes and government expenditure, limiting labor power, deregulating business, and releasing American financial capital. In the late 1970s, financial liberalization played a pivotal role in the "Washington Consensus", providing theoretical underpinnings for many of the market-based policies and reforms embraced by neoliberal ideology (Peck, 2013). Within the framework of International Financial Institutions (IFIs), neoliberalism has become the predominant ideology. These organizations "*became centres for the propagation and enforcement of free market fundamentalism and neoliberal orthodoxy*" (Harvey, 2005: p. 29). In the Shock Doctrine, author Naomi Klein emphasized the use of crises as neoliberal theorists promoted as a means to impose undesirable policies and harsh measures while people were distracted and engaged (Monbiot, 2016). In the developing world, debt-stricken governments sought financial aid from international organizations were compelled to adopt neoliberal policies.

These policies, in many societies that focus on varying general principles, are currently integrated with the government's policies and practices at various geographic scales. Today, neoliberalism in western countries is the dominant ideolog. Monbiot (2016) claimed that this ideology supports, perpetuates, and justifies capitalism's social and economic inequalities. However, neoliberalism's form and content are consequently quite diverse. For example, a significant difference exists between the "soft" neoliberalism of the Global North and the "hard" neoliberalism of the Global South (Peck, 2004: p. 403). The neoliberalism in the Global North as Peck and Tickell (2002: p. 394) argued, is based on the "*pervasive naturalization of market logics*", while in the Global South, there is increasing governmental control over markets and society under neoliberalism (He & Wu, 2009; Zhang, 2013).

Neoliberalism, as Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore (2005) claimed, depends on the active mobilization of state power. The process, as Peck et al. (2009: p.51) note, "*entailed a dramatic intensification of coercive, disciplinary forms of state intervention in order to impose versions of market rule*". Amid the global rivalry for investment and economic opportunities, markets are perceived as an essential source of capital that served "*national interests, or at least those of ruling elites, rather than an engine of opportunity for the individual*" (Bremmer, 2010: p. 52). Society, as Purcell (2009) contended, "*functions better under a market logic than any other logic, especially a state-directed one*" (Purcell, 2009: p. 141). The integration and deregulation of markets made the mobilization and cross-border movement of investment capital possible (Adedeji & Thornton, 2008). The state's primary role is to ensure the stability of the money supply, protect the property's private rights, and facilitate the widespread creation of new marketplaces in which businesses might flourish (Harvey, 2005). Consequently, it is the "*articulation of state, market, and citizenship that harnesses the first to impose the stamp of the second onto the third*" (Wacquant, 2012: p. 71). The main characteristics of neo-liberalization include market rationality, deregulation, privatization, individualism, welfare state dissolution, decentralization of

government, unequal economic growth, and escalating social division (Dumenil & Levy 2004; Harvey 2005, 2006).

According to peck (2004: p. 396), beyond the struggles over the market and state, “*the neoliberal script suggestively encompasses a wide range of proactive state strategies designed to refashion state economy relations around a new constellation of elite, managerial and financial interests*”. Neoliberalism represents a return to financial dominance (Harvey, 2010). As Saad-Filho claimed, neoliberalism goes beyond the restoration of classical liberalism, reinforcing the elite and conservative alliance. Neoliberalism expresses itself as a new form of imperialism. Financial capitalism is a new phase of capital accumulation. Recent groundbreaking economic research found that capitalism has led to the reification and aggrandization of economic inequality (Piketty, 2013).

#### **1.4 Neoliberalism & Urban Regeneration**

Neoliberalism is a potent lens for evaluating regulatory and institutional change in wide spatial dimensions and a variety of socio-political settings (Peck, 2010). The increasing demand to develop cities shifted the city's policies to marketing strategies to enhance city's image rather than the emphasis on regulation and state welfare aspects (Harvey, 1989). Cities in this regard are providing the tangible foundations that neo-liberalization process are focused on. Over the past 25 years, neoliberalism has significantly influenced local government and urban planning systems.

According to Brenner and Theodore (2002: p.375) “*cities have become the incubators for many of the major political and ideological strategies through which the dominance of neo-liberalism is being maintained*”. Urbanization and modernization are essential preconditions for neoliberal policies. Moreover, neoliberal urbanism often directs city planners and developers to rank their cities at the pinnacle of the global urban network list, where competitiveness is the primary metric for success. Furthermore, the majority of financial flows are focused on leading global cities, which are also enjoy widespread recognition (Sassen, 2001). It represents the reformist planning philosophy, a panacea for excess financial capital, and the changing demands of capital to restructure urban environments.

A city's expansion, decline and regeneration are inevitable in every urban transformation (Berry et al. 1993). Urban decline, as the Institute of Civil Engineers (1988: p. 21) claimed, "*exists in an area when the environmental standards have sunk to a level which does not support an acceptable quality of life, and which fails to attract new investment from industry or commerce. In some cases, the area may have become locked into a long-term physical, social and economic decline.*" Scholars and academics have extensively demonstrated the causes and consequences of urban decline. The inability of urban policies, planning, and management processes and their inappropriate strategies to keep up with the rapid and complex nature of urban transformation, as well as the dynamic interactions of regional, national, and global political, economic, and social variables, play a major role in cities' decline (Hackworth, 2007). In neoliberal contexts where cities compete internationally for investment, development programs aim to revitalize neglected commercial, industrial, and residential inner-city districts (Weber, 2002). Numerous concepts are covered under the term "urban development." The struggle over words, as Dalla Longa (2011) argued, could appear complicated or time-consuming, leaving us stranded '*on the desert island of terminological debate*'. Furthermore, this terminological conflict morphed into a second set of deeper conceptual disagreements.

"Urban regeneration" is a modern urban development strategy that refers to the shift in the built and social environment. Urban regeneration is, "*the process of reversing economic, social and physical decay in our towns and cities where it has reached that stage when market forces alone will not suffice*" (Adair et al., 1999: p. 2031). The process aims to alleviate urban issues, enhance the urban environment, stimulate economic growth (Carter & Roberts, 2017: p.18) and safeguard cultural heritage. Goals vary based on time, place, and context. For Roberts (2000), urban regeneration is a "*comprehensive and integrated vision and action which leads to the resolution of urban problems and which seeks to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of an area that has been subject to change*" (Roberts, 2000: p.17). There has been widespread adoption of the urban regeneration process in developed and many rapidly urbanizing developing nations. Different terms have been used to describe urban regeneration based on the region and local context, including urban renewal. European countries were the first to adopt urban regeneration initiatives, which gained momentum quickly (Grebler, 1962). Early in the 1980s, the decline of the inner city posed a challenge for economically liberal governments' competitive market ideology. If derelict urban nodes continue to degenerate and are underutilized, cities will never reach their full potential. Hence, the regeneration of inner cities has become an essential strategy for cities to play visible and significant roles in the more extensive network of global city economies. Consequently, numerous pioneering inner-city regeneration initiatives were developed worldwide in the 1980s and 1990s. Current regeneration policies have supplanted 1960s renewal initiatives as they incorporate the needed themes such as competitiveness, accountable governance, social cohesiveness and integration, and demographic diversity (Boyle & Rogerson, 2001; Smith, 1996, 2002).

The 1980s heralded the beginning of the "postmodern" or "third wave of urban regeneration," which characterized by its neoliberal approach to regeneration (August & Walks, 2017). The neoliberal ideology is still the driving force behind global economic, political, and urban changes, as the "*capitalist machinery ... structuring a new planetary geography*" (Ong, 2007: p.3). In neoliberal literature, urban regeneration is a major "neoliberal frontier" in urban planning (He & Wu, 2009). The neoliberal approach for urban regeneration is about generating market-driven policies and favorable environments that will attract capital to dis-invested zones (August & Walks, 2017; Boland et al., 2017). Instead of relying on public funding, governments use subsidies and other financial incentives to boost private investment (Swyngedouw et al., 2002; Wang & Aoki, 2019). Significant investments in urban assets like buildings and land are necessary for sustainable urban development. The private sector was granted a broader role in various urban strategies. As a result, the entrepreneurial culture has developed in response to these strategies that focus on urban regeneration (Edwards & Deakin, 1992), aiming at improving the city's image. Thus, neoliberalism has been the focus of extensive urban studies under variable conceptualization such as new urban politics (MacLeod, 2011), entrepreneurial urbanism (Harvey, 1989) and urban neoliberalism (Brenner & Theodore, 2005; Harvey, 2006).

### **1.5 Entrepreneurial Cities and Urban Restructuring**

Increasingly, cities' governments are adopting more businesslike strategies, with an emphasis on coalitions and public-private partnerships aimed to "*mobilise city space as an arena for market-oriented economic growth and for elite consumption practices*" (Brenner and Theodore, 2002: p. 368). According to Harvey (1989), the management of capitalist cities underwent a significant shift in 1970s and 1980s after decades of urban managerialism were centered on social reproduction questions. The managerial' approach, as Harvey (1989) claimed, "*has steadily given way to initiatory and 'entrepreneurial' forms of action*" (Harvey, 1989: p. 4). The entrepreneurial approach is a type of urban governance that had been steadily emerging during this period.

In the 1980s, Harvey introduced different concepts such as 'urban entrepreneurialism', 'entrepreneurial city' and 'entrepreneurial governance' through his extensive work. Urban governance throughout the transformation from managerialism of the Keynesian city to the entrepreneurism of the neoliberal city, "*has moved more ... into line with the naked requirements of capital accumulation.*" (Peck & Tickell, 2002: p.393). The notion of urban entrepreneurialism is used efficiently in analyzing the sociopolitical challenges resulting from urban governance and policy shifts. Urban governance, as Hubbard (1996: p. 1441) claimed, "*is no longer the provision of services to city residents, but a concern with the prosperity of the city and its ability to attract jobs and investment.*" From an economic perspective, efficiency and efficacy are the basics of the new urban governance. As a part, economic development and inbound investment with speculative place-making are integrated by entrepreneurialism (Harvey, 1989).

Cities have adopted entrepreneurial mechanisms to *'make costly redevelopment projects "pay for themselves"'* (Weber, 2002: 537). With local economic growth taking center stage, entrepreneurialism expressed what Cox has called a "new urban politics" (Cox, 1993). Political and economic elites have actively taken part in this process *"on which the stake is to shape an urban future in line with the aspiration of the most powerful segment(s) among the participant"* (Swyngedouw et. al, 2002: p.568). Cities' governance has become increasingly entrepreneurial, which has been assisted by the negotiation and consultation networks that bring together government bodies, private sector firms and non-profit organizations. However, Entrepreneurial urbanism's selectiveness in spatial scale (Ward, 2003: P. 116) exacerbated cities' uneven development patterns and spawned "splintering urbanism" (Graham &Marvin, 2002).

*"The widespread adoption of urban entrepreneurialism in an urban system can reinforce inequalities between cities lead all to easily to a zero sum game in which all cities feel compelled to engage in urban entrepreneurialism even if it leads to a form of inter-urban competition which becomes more destructive than constructive"* (Hackworth, 2007: p.286).

Urban entrepreneurialism, as Harvey (1989) stated, has three main characteristics. First, the new urban political arena is more influenced by business interests, notably through public-private partnerships. This contrasts with the Fordist-managerialism era, during which elected local governments dominated urban life (Treasury, 2000: p. 10). As a norm rather than an exception, *"the notion of a public-private partnership in which a traditional local boosterism is integrated with the use of local governmental powers to try and attract external sources of funding, new direct investments, or new employment sources"* (Harvey, 1989: p. 7). Instead of working to improve living circumstances in a specific region, this public-private partnership would aim to create a place as a speculative construct, focused on investment and economic development rather than social improvement. (Harvey, 1989: p. 8). Such an approach is now universally accepted. The public sector is no longer the primary source of funding and driving force behind development and urbanization. Instead, the governments and municipalities have a much more critical role to play in planning and establishing a framework for sustainable urban development. According to Healey (1992), their role is to provide non-financial support as a partner and moderator in urban development processes. The primary public goals of public private partnerships (P3s) are to increase private capital and funding, speed up urban development projects and reduce the burden on the public sector's finances and administration. Additionally, a broad spectrum of interactions between governmental, private, and community actors were also suggested (Pierre & Peters, 2019). Second, this business-led agenda resulted in a "creeping enfeeblement" of governments (Peck &Tickell, 1994). As a result of the devolution of authority to various domains and changes in responsibilities of the government, community, and private sector, there has been a significant shift in the culture of inter-institutional relations (Painter, 1997). According to Harding (1992), *"the growing influence of an economically neo-liberal government and the profit-seeking private sector has marginalized those voices advocating the specific targeting of benefits to the urban*

*underprivileged since the mid-1980s"* (Harding, 1992: p. 231). Finally, places, rather than territory, benefit from entrepreneurial strategies and the implementation of flagship projects. Urban entrepreneurialism as Macleod (2002) argued, “[tends] to be driven by a political economy of place rather than territory’ and deindustrialized and ‘derelict’ city centre spaces are especially valuable” (Macleod, 2002: P. 604–605).

Entrepreneurial urbanism has mostly focused on metropolitan areas in North America and Western Europe. Harvey's view of urban entrepreneurialism has centred on highly speculative "flagship" projects, such as convention centres and festivals. These projects aimed to enhance the city's image and escalate interurban competition. Hence, the projects frequently target tourists and place-mobile capitalists rather than localities. As a result, the gentrification process used a means, particularly in the entrepreneurial approach. However, Harvey pointed out that these projects are at risk of inadequate capital and may be impeded by lack of funding. As a result, public funding, instead of brave and bold entrepreneurs, is frequently borne to carry out these flagship projects as part of a place marketing strategy.

### ***1.5.1 Large Scale Urban Development “flagship” Projects***

In response to a shift in urban planning ideology that prioritized places and spaces over people, massive urban development projects (UDPs) were implemented. The shift was driven by political and economic elites and rent-capture strategies employed by the private sector to strengthen their power through governance networks (Swyngedouw, 2005: P. 67–8).

*"Large-scale UDPs have increasingly been used as a vehicle to establish exceptional measures in planning and policy procedures. This is part of a neoliberal "New Urban Policy" approach and its selective "middle- and upper-class" democracy" (Swyngedouw et al., 2002: p. 542).*

Large-scale UDPs where global and local forces merge are also known as flagship projects. The initial wave of flagship projects occurred in several cities, such as Baltimore and Newcastle. Doucet (2009) argued that this wave was *"a response to both the cataclysmic shifts in cities brought about by de-industrialisation and as an example of neoliberal strategies being developed and implemented at this time."* (Doucet, 2009: p.101). Flagship projects include arts-led regeneration initiatives (Orueta& Fainstein, 2008; Peck, 2005; Peck, 2011), business improvement districts (Ward, 2006), and creative quarters (Florida, 2002). Instead of being geographically dispersed, these projects are concentrated around specific locations, such as city centers, historic sites, and water courses. In these areas, growth opportunities exceed real demands (Bianchini et al., 1992). The selected locations are often prestigious because of their capacity to draw private sector and capital investment. Flagship projects, as Bianchini et al. (1992) stated, are *"significant, high-profile and prestigious land and property developments which play an influential and catalytic role in urban regeneration"* (Bianchini et al., 1992: p.245). For example, cultural



facilities' investment is an essential part of the rehabilitation of industrial zones for bolstering the macro-regeneration process through cultural cooperation. Other projects attempt to improve the image of a city via the establishment of 'iconic' facilities or events, primarily to promote the city as a tourist destination. Finally, the flagship projects seek to position cities on the global map by improving their image (Doucet, 2009), as a panacea to different problems.

In recent decades, to meet the ever-evolving demands of the production and consumer sectors, urban regeneration based on large-scale UDPs was the driving force behind the alteration of the urban fabric and physical reconfiguration in major cities (Loftman & Nevin, 1995: p.304). The primary focus of Urban planning is the redevelopment of existing and creation of new consumption-oriented urban space, not the production of goods and services. Certain groups and classes are frequently targeted in flagship projects, including investors and visitors by providing a safe environment for urban and cultural tourism, as well as high-end residents (back) to the city and affluent people as tenants. According to Macleod (2002), large-scale urban development projects are "aimed primarily at stakeholders 'who live beyond the immediate locality'. In today's postmodern, fragmented megacity, large-scale UDPs like these have become ubiquitous (Healey et al., 1992). Four key characteristics, including "intricate uses," "change of land-use," "various streams of funding," and "rescaling of the central state," were identified by Guironnet and Halbert (2014).

According to Mjoor (2008), these projects are distinguished by their symbolic significance, public-private collaborations, and dramatic spatial alterations that respond to international standards in architecture and economics. The engagement of wide stakeholders in PPP projects encompasses different motives and goals. The objective of the private sector is mainly focused on achieving profitability and high returns, while the public sector and developer's goals are more diverse including, the mobilization of additional private capital, and the speed of urban development cycle without administration and budgetary drain (Healey et al., 1992: p.218), to broaden the city's economy. Bianchini et al., (1992), claim that the success of "flagships" is dependent on their ability to attract further development—the catalytic effect. According to Swyngedouw et al. (2002: p.543), local parties, or the broad populace, usually backed large-scale UDPs. These projects are usually started through exceptional measurements, however, sometimes governments took the lead in development, bypassing "*local authorities and constituencies*".

Raco and Henderson (2009) suggest that, contrary to popular belief, these policies result in socio-spatial segregation rather than fostering equal economic development. Most of these projects, as Swyngedouw (2002) claimed, “*accentuate socioeconomic polarization through the working of real-estate markets (price rises and displacement of social or low-income housing), changes in the priorities of public budgets that are increasingly redirected from social objectives to investments in the built environment and the restructuring of the labor market.*” (Swyngedouw et al., 2002: p. 542). The adjacent localities to flagship areas usually stand in stark contrast to their surroundings. Traditionally, these areas attracted the working class because of their proximity to a major industrial hub. These areas are characterized by their small residences, a large portion of which is social housing. The revitalization of neighbouring neighbourhoods is a key goal of the flagship projects (Bianchini et al., 1992: p.249). As a result, neighbouring regions frequently undergo gentrification to facilitate growth (Smyth, 1994). These developments projects are frequently linked to gentrification since major corporate gentrifiers, rather than individual gentrifiers, are typically the main forces behind it (Hackworth, 2007: p. 126). Gentrification sometimes is a goal of developers.

Arab cities in the MENA area have been hosting international events and tackling large scale projects, such as waterfront redevelopment and urban regeneration, on a regular basis since the late 1990s. As Daher (2013), noted “*the circulation of urban flagship projects in Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, the Arab Gulf States and the Arab region transform urban realities, property values, speculation as well as the nature of public life in these cities*”. Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and other members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) are renowned for their unique architectural designs and utilization of cutting-edge technology. Dubai and other Middle Eastern cities have competed for tourists by showcasing their opulence and modernity. Several cities have launched megaprojects to lure (local) investors, tourists or events that will boost the profile of the host city internationally. The World Cup in Qatar in 2022 and the Dubai Expo in 2021 are two examples of large-scale events. In the early 1990s, the large-scale urban development projects had a profound influence on the urban fabric of Arab Gulf states. Scholars have theorized that the development of mega-projects in other Arab cities in MENA region has been directly influenced by Gulf nations by funding project developers, and images, a phenomenon they referred to as “Dubaization” (Elsheshtawy, 2009). Several scholars (Barthel & Planal, 2010; Hourani, 2014; Krijnen & Fawaz, 2010) argue that the implementation of an entrepreneurial urban governance paradigm is what ultimately leads to mega-projects. These projects are evidence of urban neoliberalism's globalization. Other scholars highlighted the significance of authoritarian regimes as the driving forces behind so-called “presidential” or “royal” megaprojects (Barthel & Planal, 2010; Bogaert, 2018). However, these flagship projects are viewed as a distinguishing characteristic of MENA’s urbanization that indicates the emergence of national power “*megaprojects are at the core of contemporary Arab town planning*” (Barthel, 2010: p. 133). These projects targeted international tourists, investors, and politicians, and were therefore perceived as an effort to improve the country's global standing.

Henri Lefebvre's *The Urban Revolution*, released in 1970, is the primary source of modern urban development. Lefebvre (2003) defined the second circuit of capital, mainly represented in real estate, as a solution for absorbing the shocks of the capitalist structure, to reinstate, reproduce, and reinvent itself. "The urban revolution" is Lefebvre's term for the shift of capital from industry to real estate (replacing the Industrial Revolution). Entrepreneurial urbanization has become the alternative to industrialization. In this context, city development is led by entrepreneurs and developers, rather than urban planners. Harvey (1978) states that there are three capital circuits. The primary turn of capital is founded on the Marxist theory of capital accumulation and the production of values and surplus values. The second capital circuit is established as a remedy to prevent itself from collapsing. The implementation of large-scale and long-term processes of production and consumption in the built environment is a part of the capital's secondary circulation. Entrepreneurs and developers essentially transform space into a commodity by renting it out and accumulating land through the secondary circuit of capital (Harvey, 2012). State intervention as a mediator is critical in shifting capital from the primary turn to the secondary one to support capital flow (Harvey, 1978). Recently, real estate companies have become the dominant economic force in MENA's Arab cities as a result of the implementation of large urban development projects and regeneration programs. With a few notable exceptions, the most powerful conglomerates are situated in the Gulf region, with Dubai at the top of the list. In the recent decades, the process of destruction and reconstruction has been used to generate excess value through urban development.

### **1.6 Contribution of Cultural Heritage to Urban Regeneration**

Since the 1980s, there has been much discussion over the significance of culture and cultural heritage (Ashworth & Voogd, 1990; Zukin, 1995; Bianchini, 1993; Rypkema, 2005). Therefore, it is crucial to design a local development plan that emphasizes the effective utilization of cultural capital and policy to boost the value of urban areas for all social actors. For the new urban policies founded on neoliberalism and driven by market demands, exploitation of distinctive cultural assets becomes the most profitable and potent weapon for city regeneration (Brenner & Theodore, 2002), through a wide range of strategies. The recent entrepreneurialism approach is capitalizing on property-led urban regeneration initiatives (Healey et al., 1992; Turok, 1992), and revitalization based on exploitation of cultural capital.

A society's or social grouping's culture, according to UNESCO (2006), is made up of unique spiritual, material, intellectual, emotional, and aesthetic expressions and social interactions and constructed form. One of the primary definitions of culture has been set by Edward Burnett Tylor in his *Primitive Culture* (1871: p.1) as "*complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.*" Afterward, the concept gradually became more complicated. According to The Hangzhou Declaration of 17th May 2013, culture was designated as a facilitator and driver for development. "*Culture can be a powerful driver for development, with community-wide social, economic and*

*environmental impacts*” (UNESCO, 2013). As noted, the economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts are interconnected systemically (Throsby, 2008). In consequence, culture has been placed at the center of sustainable development strategies as a catalyst for reaching the Millennium Development Goals (UNESCO, 2013).

*“There can be no full ownership, no full participation of development strategies without the full integration of culture”,* Irina Bokova, Director General of UNESCO, in Hangzhou International Congress China, 2013(UNESCO, 2013).

In this context, cultural heritage is viewed as a creative potential source /asset, rather than being a hindrance or a low-productivity resource *“The cultural and natural heritage is among the priceless and irreplaceable assets, not only of each nation, but of humanity as a whole.”* (UNESCO, 2013). The role of cultural heritage has been highlighted in the New Urban Agenda (2030) in (points 45 and 60), for *“developing vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive urban economies”, “sustaining and supporting urban economies to transition progressively to higher productivity through high-value-added sectors”* (UN<sup>3</sup>, 2017) and as an integral part of the worldwide contest. Cultural heritage as Hosagrahar et. al. (2016: p.44) noted, *“helps attract tourism, employment, and local investment, fostering the sustainable development of the city. [It] places are nodes of economic activities for the creative industries, (...).”* Historic buildings, as stated in the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (2004), *“have been a positive catalyst in achieving structural economic change, attracting higher value investment and jobs, and providing the context for creative, high-quality, contemporary design in new development”*. Incorporating historical context with competent urban planning is essential for achieving an *“urban renaissance”*(Brown et al., 2004). For Arab cities in MENA region, urban regeneration entails demolishing old, dilapidated buildings and replacing them with new ones and introducing new amenities and services (see chapter two). In some cases, preservationists hold on to some of these structures for financial or aesthetic value.

### ***1.6.1 Property-Led Regeneration***

Academics have paid a considerable attention to property-led urban regeneration strategy, particularly since the UK Conservative government applied it in 1980s (Healey et al., 1992), and in the United States (Wolf-Powers, 2005). Successful regeneration, as Healey et al. (1992) and Berry et al. (1993) argued, necessitates property development in the form of real estate. According to Healey (1992), *“The primary thrust of the policy was to achieve urban regeneration by attracting and assisting investment by the private sector in property development”* (Healey et al., 1992: p. 277). The investment performance of regeneration properties has been evaluated by Adair et al. (2003). They pointed out how long-term profits from regeneration properties can exceed local and national norms. In addition, the regeneration neighborhoods provide considerable investment

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations. A Conference in Quito on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) from 17 to 20 October 2016

possibilities and high investment return. Urban planners in the United Kingdom and elsewhere in Western Europe have focused on a property-led regeneration approach (Turok, 1992). The success of property-led regeneration in major cities (Halbert, 2007) is associated with neo-liberalization (Taşan-Kok, 2010; Moulaert et al., 2003), and the implementation of large-scale urban development projects (Dziomba 2009: p. 21 ff.). Others argue that these strategies were influenced by the privatization policy of urban regeneration projects in the United States, which focused on property development in the cities' central business districts (CBDs) and inspired such approaches (Barnekov et al., 1989). The focus of these projects, themes, and dimensions might vary.

Property development, as Turok (1992) identified, is "*the assembly of finance, land, building materials and labour to produce or improve buildings for occupation and investment purposes*" (Turok, 1992: P. 362). According to Solesbury (1990), urban regeneration necessitates the use of property. He emphasized the role of property development in boosting "*investor confidence*", and the significance of the property developer in broadening a city's property mix to attract different activities such as enterprises and households. According to Healey (1992), the emphasis on property in urban policy is most likely the result of several economic and political factors. According to Turok (1992), the spread of property-led urban regeneration in 1980s was the result of a complicated interaction between social, economic, and political factors. Nevertheless, Turok (1992) asserted that the property development process has its dynamics; thus, it would not be regarded as a development factor.

The decline in property rates and the subsequent uptick in development activity sparked the development process of property development. The city center or waterfront areas were frequently the focal point of these endeavors (Jones & Watkins, 1996). Hence, it is assumed that highly concentrated areas require extra attention (Bianchini et al., 1992). Private sector property development is "*an inevitable one-way process leading from physical to economic and community prosperity*" (Turok, 1992: p. 363). In this context, private sector participation in real estate development is crucial and has increased dramatically to stimulate economic growth in urban areas. Urban regeneration based on property development requires new organizational capacities to be developed and adapted by local governments and the private sector. As a result, Harding (1991) and others have discussed a new organizational and procedural paradigm defined by public-private partnerships with the regeneration of British cities. These property-led efforts were able to remove private-sector supply side restraints by using a series of subsidies.

Property development is crucial to a city's identity formation and promotion, as well as to the production of urban space and urban landscapes. However, discussions about real estate development have recently been contentious and marginal. Several studies have questioned the economic benefits for the disadvantaged and unprivileged groups resulting from increasing property-led redevelopment strategies (Hambleton, 1990; 1991; Imrie & Thomas, 1989; 1993). Significant inequalities have emerged in urban areas of the UK and the USA over the past few decades (Logan & Swanstrom, 1990; Sassen, 1991). According to Harding's (1991)

comprehensive analysis of regeneration strategies, property-led approaches ignore local demands. Because of the fierce competition, some local development enterprises have struggled, increasing property costs have an impact on people with low resources, and taxpayers have missed out chances as funding originally allocated for environmental and social issues has been redirected to the property development (Healey et al., 1992: p. 287).

Property-led regeneration, as observed by Turok (1992), did not take into account crucial factors like the development of human capital, the enhancement of international competitiveness, and infrastructure investment. He concluded that property development is not a panacea for economic regeneration and appeared to be lacking in terms of physical development. In short, in the economic domain, the lack of property development, certain economic activities as well as investment opportunities would be limited. Therefore, property development, according to Turok (1992), needs to be part of a holistic strategy that considers the disadvantaged population and the state of the local economy to achieve positive economic outcomes. In the 1990s, significant key reforms in urban policy, such as boosting community engagement and addressing social marginalization, were made to combat the adverse effects of property-led regeneration. However, since the 1980s, there has been a continued emphasis on the economic corporate strategy, business model and the privatization of public policy (Imrie & Thomas, 1999). Despite its dwindling influence on current urban policy, many Western countries still place a high value on property-led redevelopment. After the 2008 financial crisis, new studies on property-led city regeneration programs have explicitly incorporated "financialization" into their analysis.

### **1.7 Financialization And Neo liberalization**

In recent decades, the term financialization has found its way into the lexicon of several economic disciplines. The term "financialization" has been bandied around by social scientists since the 1970s, when it was first coined. The Bretton Woods System's collapse<sup>4</sup> resulted in a new pattern of capital accumulation known as financialization. Financialization is frequently used interchangeably with other terms like financial liberalization, privatization, excessive speculation, and rapid expansion of the financial sector (Sawyer, 2016). Despite the frequent use of financialization, no agreed-upon definition exists (Lapavitsas, 2011: p. 611). Even though financialization encompasses a wide range of social phenomena, its meaning and ramifications have been analyzed in various ways from a critical perspective. For Toporowski (2015), "*[t]he use of the term in different contexts and with different meanings makes it of dubious analytical value*"

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<sup>4</sup> For a long time after World War II ended, the Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates was perceived as undervaluing the dollar. Between 1968 and 1973, the system collapsed. IMF members have been able to choose any form of currency exchange arrangement (except pegging their currency to gold) since the collapse of the Bretton Woods system. They can allow their currency to float freely, peg their currency to another currency or a basket of currencies, adopt another country's currency as their own, participate in a currency bloc, or form a monetary union. Source, International Monetary Fund <https://www.imf.org/external/about/histend.htm>

(Toporowski, 2015: p. 255). However, Robin Blackburn (2006: p. 39) offered a simple definition of financialization as the “*growing and systemic power of finance and financial engineering*”. Broadly, financialization means the “*growing influence of financial markets over the unfolding of economy, polity and society*” (French et al., 2011). The phrase stresses the growing influence of financial interests, markets, and financial intermediaries in determining economies (Epstein, 2005).

Neoliberalism's unwavering commitment to financial stability has bolstered the dominance of financial capital over society. Neoliberalism is now widely recognized as a distinct stage in capitalism's historical development, coinciding with financialization. The term neo-liberalization has also come to refer to the term financialization and the shift in public policy from production to finance. The objectives of global financial liberalization include innovation in financial goods, management practices, risk allocation, and corporate governance models. As a result of financial liberalization, lending, debt, and the global money supply have all risen dramatically. An important theme in much of the work on financialization is the shifting role of the state. Fine and Saad-Filho (2017) claimed that “*financialization underpins a neoliberal system of accumulation that is articulated through the power of the state to impose, drive, underwrite and manage the internationalization of production and finance in each territory*” (Fine & Saad-Filho. 2017: p. 687). In this sense, governments develop or employ a broader range of financial instruments and political plans and policies for dealing with social, economic, and political challenges (Mader et al., 2020). Hence, state intervention under neoliberalism “*has been transformed rather than simply 'reduced'*” (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2017: p. 690). Increasingly, the state's role is seen as a commodity vehicle for the generation of trade value rather than a social institution.

Capitalism driven by financial markets is seen as the new stage of economic development and capital accumulation. Financing-led capitalism is seen as the next stage of the capital accumulation process. In academic literature, financialization has been defined by different terms including, finance-led capitalism. In addition, several urban political economy studies have examined the financialization of urban redevelopment (Rutland, 2010). Various elements of the urban built environment, ranging from infrastructure to real estate, become financial assets after being transformed and restructured (Aalbers, 2012; Guironnet & Halbert, 2014). The restructuring process aimed to diversify their portfolios through risk-adjusted strategies. Investment in assets and financial goods became the predominant mode of capital due to overaccumulation problems (Harvey, 1982, 2010) resulting from the lack of new lucrative products for trading or production. The massive structural shift has led to the pursuit of economic valorization of assets, not just in financial institutions, but also in enterprises’ “*In the 1980s, property and financial markets became more intertwined*” (Pugh 1991a, 1991b). Governments under Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom had advocated for the expansion of property and stock-owning democracy through measures such as the sale of municipal housing and the privatization of state-owned firms (Coakley

&Harris, 1992). Global financial conglomerates took place during this euphoric period. According to Haila (1988), property is considered a commodity with both a use and a market value.

The public and institutions view the physical value of real estate as a semi-financial asset (Coakley 1994), has provided safe investment opportunities, resistant to short-term fluctuations in the economy. There are several factors that private investors consider when deciding whether or not to invest. The internal rate of return (IRR) is essential in the decision-making process. Various case studies<sup>5</sup> on the portfolio diversification strategies of significant US pension funds were done under the banner of the “geography of finance” (Clark, 2005). The keys to success in unexplored markets are associated with investment policies and rationales that are based on risk-adjusted returns. Additional studies used surveys and focus groups geared towards best practices to explore how property investors finance urban regeneration (Adair et al. 2000). There has been an emphasis on public actors and their roles in providing infrastructures, land, and tax exemptions, while simultaneously realizing the necessity for IRR. Finally, they point out that there are a variety of investors, both in terms of resources, and tolerance for risk (Green &Trachea, 2002; Nappi-Choulet, 2006).

The importance of finance in the real estate sector as a significant driving force was highlighted. It has been suggested that the increasing profile of financial entities and market financing strategies has prompted an introspective focus on the inherent conflicts in late-stage capitalism (Aalbers, 2016). Financial investors play a critical role in determining current urban development projects through real estate markets. Their portfolio management strategies, a thorough understanding of market finance such as asset classes and risk-adjusted return analysis (David & Halbert, 2013) pay close attention to socially processed investment criteria, which are extremely picky regarding investment locations, building styles, and tenant profiles (Halbert et al., 2014 b). As a result, the construction and use of urban space are increasingly conforming to the needs and desires of financial investors (Halbert et al., 2016).

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<sup>5</sup> see (Hebb, 2005; 2006; 2007)



### *1.7.1 Heritage As Real Estate Asset*

“Heritage” is considered a sort of succession. Heritage as The Quebec Association for the Interpretation of the National Heritage’s Committee on Terminology (1980) refers to, is *“a reality, a possession of the community, and a rich inheritance that may be passed on, which invites our recognition and our participation”*. Individuals, groups, or organizations offer diverse values to heritage, including historical, artistic, economic, social, and scientific ones (Samuels, 2008). Over time and among nations, standards for determining the value of heritage have evolved. Based on the IPSASB<sup>6</sup> proposal, heritage should be defined very closely as *“assets with historic, artistic, scientific, technological, geophysical or environmental qualities, that are held and maintained principally for their contribution to knowledge and culture”* (ASB, 2006: p.3<sup>7</sup>). The term includes different forms of assets including *“landscape and coastline, historic buildings and archaeological sites”* (ibid).

Due to their distinctive value, heritage properties are more significant structures. According to Haspel (2011), heritage properties *“are not off-the peg architecture, but unique originals that are also an exclusive business address”* (Haspel, 2011: p.906). The city's listed heritage buildings have become a leading example of urban amenities that enhance the city's image. They contribute considerably to shaping the urban context and forging the identity of city or “sense of place”, as they are the underlying characteristics of places and spirits, also associated with “collective memory” and nostalgia. Even though several organizations have explicitly defined the term heritage asset, a review of the relevant literature revealed that there is no accepted definition. Most definitions emphasize the benefit of heritage objects, things, and locations for the public due to their distinctive cultural, historical, artistic, environmental, or scientific characteristics. Accordingly, heritage properties must be preserved since they provide aesthetic and spiritual value not available in other types of properties (Licciardi & Amirtahmasebi, 2012).

The rehabilitation of heritage properties necessitates considerable conservation and refurbishment expenditure. As a result, investors interested in heritage properties should be informed of the high maintenance and repair expenses associated with these structures (Lim et al., 2014). The hefty expense may deter investors from acquiring heritage properties. In addition, the extra capital cost for regular maintenance would diminish profitability and lengthen the return period for investors to recover their investment. Furthermore, there are significant disparities in the scope and legislative framework for urban heritage conservation across the globe, at both national and regional levels. Hence, conserving cultural heritage is challenging because of the disparity in definitions and practices, which makes it even more difficult to secure private sector funding (Starr, 2010). As a result, devising innovative financial solutions for the regeneration and rehabilitation of historic urban neighborhoods by combining private and public sector resources

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<sup>6</sup> International Public Sector Accounting Standards Board.

<sup>7</sup> Accounting Standards Board

can be difficult and time-consuming. Moreover, without past price movement, investors have a lower level of confidence in the market's future.

*“Over the long term, places with strong, distinctive identities are more likely to prosper than places without them. Every place must identify its strongest, most distinctive features and develop them or run the risk of being all things to all persons and nothing special to any”* (Robert Merton Solow – Economist and Nobel Laureate).

However, brownfields are viewed as potential sites for innovative reuse, providing cities with considerable opportunities for sustainable development within their current boundaries. According to Deloitte (2017), exploiting the historic environment as an asset and source of inspiration has aided cities' economic and social regeneration. The innovative repurposing of historic components at these sites has stimulated historic real estate development. As a result, heritage has evolved into a commodity that influences real estate prices (Ahlfeldt et al., 2012) and a resource that attracts visitors and tourists (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2000). Consequently, property developers have been more involved in identifying and using cultural heritage as a development resource. Hence, two independent value systems appear to be overlapping.

Recently, heritage as a resource has attracted new user groups, resulting in several studies on how to evaluate the economic impact of exploiting heritage. Several studies have incorporated financial instruments and artworks into a diversified portfolio since there is a low correlation of returns between financial assets (stocks, corporate bonds, treasury bills) and the art market (Wang & Zheng, 2017; Campbell, 2009). The distinct historical, aesthetic, and scientific qualities of heritage properties could be a common denominator between them and artwork (De la Torre, 2013). Heritage properties having historical or artistic characteristics may help in creating a diverse portfolio, while also influencing business location decisions. Economic considerations are increasingly being given precedence over social, political, cultural, or even aesthetic ones in the heritage discourse. According to the International Valuation Standards and Economic Theory<sup>8</sup>, heritage assets are non-operational or non-cash generating assets. When Throsby (2012) applies the use and non-use values paradigm, he differentiates between the direct value of heritage services and the value accrued to those who perceive heritage as a public benefit. This dichotomy is frequently referred to as a market value versus a non-market value. Valuation of heritage has various aspects which are not explained by mere economics. A city's real estate market value is influenced by the atmosphere of its neighborhoods, such as cultural facilities, historic structures, and their characteristics, or the historic-cultural ensemble, particularly in the historic inner-city district. These facilities increase the value of the real estate in inner cities because they make them more desirable to people who are more likely to move there (Brueckner et al., 1999; Glaeser et al., 2001). As Shipley (2000) asserted, heritage properties have higher sales rates than the general

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<sup>8</sup> International valuation standards council (IVSC), 2010: p. 58 (201.05).

market, and in comparison, their valuations are more resilient to market downturns. Localities purchased by property developers are redeveloped by city governments to enhance the prerequisites of financial investors. As a result, the city government shifted its attention from pursuing entrepreneurial strategies that were aimed at officially encouraging real estate investment (Healey et al., 1992).

According to Marquardt (2012), many studies have demonstrated the substantial changes in local neighborhoods because of the reorientation of purchasers, developers, and municipal planners in response to gentrification. Many researchers contend that neoliberal urban regeneration produces geographies of exclusion and dispossession by marginalizing impoverished residents in gentrification processes and displacing them (Unsal, 2015; Wu, 2016). Financialization and neoliberal policies of the 1980s led to a shift from neighborhood-level gentrification to new-build gentrification, where entire districts or housing estates are demolished and rebuilt from the ground up, rather than the incremental upgrading of individual properties that reflects the traditional meaning of gentrification. Indeed, the term “gentrification” as a political rallying cry and an economic notion has been largely discredited. Neoliberalism's narrative of competitive progress (Peck & Tickell, 2002) is bolstered by these concepts, and that narrative clears the way for ever more covert and subversive gentrification forms (Wyly & Hammel, 2001).

### **1.8 Gentrification As a Political and Economic Concept**

Since its inception, the field of gentrification studies has extensively expanded and evolved. Recently, gentrification has emerged as a global buzzword in urban geography, urban planning, and urban society, among other fields (Nofre et al., 2017). “Regeneration”, “renaissance”, “revitalization”, and “renewal” are often used interchangeably to describe gentrification (Dalla Longa, 2011). In urban regeneration processes, gentrification is seen as a tool, goal, outcome, or unintentional process. It encourages the upgrade of crumbling dwellings and the rehabilitation of public infrastructure (Hamnett, 1984; Lees et al., 2008). While gentrification may occur everywhere, it is more likely in areas with relatively low-cost housing stock. According to the IGI Global Dictionary, urban development agendas around the world include gentrification as a tool in their planning manifestos for improving the physical and socio-economic standing of economically deprived urban cores. Gentrification is used to define the urban investment-driven rehabilitation and regeneration of entire city blocks, neighborhoods, and districts.

Academics and scholars believe that gentrification is a part of or associated with globalization or neoliberalism aimed at achieving economic objectives, developing, and rehabilitating urban spaces based on markets and economic incentives (Lees et al., 2008; Smith, 2002). Contemporary gentrification entails deeper political and economic dynamics that are typically linked to neoliberal ideologies. In a global context, gentrification is the main force behind the reproduction of capitalism. As a result, gentrification is no longer restricted to the world's megacities (Lees, 2000; Atkinson and Bridge, 2005). Gentrification in Smith's (2000) perspective is "*the consummate expression of an emerging neoliberal urbanism*" and "*a global urban strategy*" (Smith, 2002).

In sum, gentrification is a crucial issue in urban studies. Urban (re)development finance strategies and politico-economic imperatives are inextricably linked with gentrification. Variegated gentrification has resulted from differences in the political-economic system, land ownership and urban policies, and personal preferences for the aesthetics of particular dwelling types, among other factors (Forrest, 2016). While gentrification has the potential to revitalize blighted urban areas, it is a privileged class process that turns urban areas into exclusive hubs of cultural production and social stratification for the wealthy. Slum redevelopment projects, which force the eviction of long-term inhabitants without a formal lease, are not the only ones that fall under this criticism. Academics also critique green gentrification projects, stating that environmental sustainability and social justice ideologies conceal prejudice and exclusion in practice (Anguelovski et al., 2019; Avni& Fischler, 2020). Capitalist urban regeneration represents a threat even when inhabitants appear to be granted in-place housing (Goetz, 2010; Rosen& Avni, 2019).

### **1.9 Gentrification As an Evolved Concept**

Gentrification perceived as the rise of a neighborhood's socioeconomic status, has become a significant focus of urban studies in recent decades. The process involves the influx of wealthy residents and investment (also known as capital) into a neighborhood. According to Loretta Lees, Hyun Bang Shin, Ernesto López-Morales (2016), gentrification's conceptual definition "*has been evolving over time and space, reflecting the expanding epistemological horizon over how the urban is defined and what new trends of urbanization have emerged*" (Lees et al., 2016: p.28). Early studies of gentrification, as Zukin (1987) pointed out, attempted to monitor, and trace the phenomenon as a process of neighbourhood transformation and to speculate on its effects on shifting suburbanization trends and inner-city deterioration. Over time, gentrification has become a global process strongly linked with more significant shifts in economic, political, and social realms (Zukin, 1987). Finally, contemporary gentrification is more systematic and pervasive than the period waves.

Deindustrialization, urban abandoned, and suburbanization have all been linked to the decline in urban economy and population which in turn has influenced the urban development pattern in inner-city districts. Therefore, urban renewal initiatives gained traction in the 1950s and 1960s. However, early attempts at urban redevelopment under the Keynesian welfare state were heavily criticized for having a detrimental impact on low-income neighborhoods. The urban areas of the United States have changed dramatically since the close of World War II. As whites left the cities for the suburbs after World War II, many downtown areas across the country fell into disrepair. It was in 1961 that Jane Jacobs published *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* famously denounced modernist top-down urban renewal initiatives and compared them with the productive bottom-up approach of New York's Greenwich Village urban renewal: gentrification. The state-led demolition effort in the United States is heavily criticized as a "federal bulldozer" (Jacobs 1961). A vision of modernism was the seedbed for these projects; they were intended to address urban issues from the top down. Many urban renewal projects were modelled after the model of Robert Moses. As claimed, the successful model removed portions of New York City for contemporary, clean-cut apartment towers and interstate roads. For Bennett (1990), these planned urban redevelopment efforts were unsuccessful. According to Smith (1982), in New York City, the word "homesteading" was frequently used instead of gentrification in the 1970s (Smith, 1982: p. 139). The word gentrification has been avoided by many American observers, preferring titles like brown stoning, neighborhood revitalization, and back-to-the-city movement (Williams, 1986: p. 65).

Ruth Glass originally popularized gentrification as a term in a 1964 essay she authored about the evolving urban dynamics of London's Islington Borough. Gentrification as Glass stated, is "*the invasion of middle class who replaced the working class and the renovation of residential houses*" (Glass, 1964). The improvement of old working-class housing and the renovation of their historic buildings was due to a demographic segment who were descendants of the country's nobility, and their heavy purchasing in inner-city London. Glass used gentrification strategy to improve the quality of life in many neighborhoods.

*"One by one many of the working-class quarters of London have been invaded by the middle classes—upper and lower. Shabby, modest mews and cottages—two rooms up and two down—have been taken over, when their leases have expired, and have become elegant, expensive residences... Once this process of 'gentrification' starts in a district it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working-class occupiers are displaced and the whole social character of the district is changed"* (Glass, 1964:P. xviii).

Glass has experienced the expansion of gentrification to neighboring and adjacent neighborhoods in the immediate vicinity. Gentrification in central London illustrates the forms of transformation that have taken place in terms of demographics, the economy, and politics (Glass, 1964). Regeneration policy in the United Kingdom blurs the distinction between gentrification and reconstruction. According to Rowland Atkinson,

*“Increasing demolition, affordable housing problems, housing market failure and a design-led approach to promote ‘liveability’ and recapturing middle-class households appear as strategies linked to renewal but also to gentrification” (Atkinson, 2004: p. 107).*

The bulk of downtown London as reported by the UK Census (National Statistics, 2001), has undergone, or is undergoing gentrification. An amazingly accurate forecast about the future of the city where Ruth Glass lived proved to be right decades later in Ruth Glass’s (1964) classic work.

*“Since the fifties, town and country planning legislation has, in essence, been anti-planning legislation.... [D]evelopment rights have been de-nationalized, development values have been unfrozen; real estate speculation has thus been ‘liberated’. These measures, together with the relaxation of rent control, have given the green light to the continuing inflation of property prices with which London, even more than other large cities, is afflicted. In such circumstances, any district in or near London, however dingy or unfashionable before, is likely to become expensive; and London may quite soon be a city which illustrates the principle of the survival of the fittest—the financially fittest, who can still afford to work and live there. Thus London, always a “unique city”, may acquire a rare complaint.... [It] may soon be faced with an embarrass de richesse in her central area—and this will prove to be a problem, too.” (pp. xix–xx)*

The relationship between government policy and gentrification has become more visible in Britain and the United States. In their discussion paper "Dealing with neighborhood change: a primer on gentrification and policy choices," Kennedy and Leonard (2001: p.12) noted that, "*The federal government, states, cities, and non-profit organizations are increasingly motivated, have the resources, specific policy levers, and overall strategies to direct revitalization efforts in targeted central city areas. "Under some circumstances, these revitalization efforts can lead to gentrification".* Gentrification has evolved and become more pervasive since Glass first used the term in 1964. Gentrification expanded to smaller places like Cleveland, Ohio, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Glasgow, Scotland, and, of course, Kansas City (Smith 2002). Since its inception in North America and Europe, “planetary gentrification” (Lees et al., 2016) has spread over the world, from San Francisco to Seoul. Since the 1990s, terms like “globalization,” “neoliberalism,” “deregulation,” and “financialization” have had a significant impact on urban economics and politics (Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Hackworth, 2007). There is a connection between the rise of gentrification, economic disparity, and the "back to the city" movement (Florida, 2017).

According to Benzhaf and McCormick (2007), gentrification is defined by three distinct characteristics:

- (1) The increases in the value of the real estate and rental charges.
- (2) The building of a new structure or refurbishment of an existing structure, modernizing and converting existing rental housing stock into owner-occupied units.

and (3) The influx of new inhabitants with more excellent socioeconomic status into the area.

### ***1.9.1 Geographies of Gentrification***

According to Lees (1996), the “geography of gentrification” (a phrase coined by Ley in 1996) is the key to reviving the gentrification study. All indications point to the geography of gentrification as the driving force behind current gentrification trends and the lack of understanding of gentrification in academic literature. Context and timing have been disregarded in research on gentrification and the urban policies that supported it (Lees, 2000). Lees (2000) noted that the explanatory power of the geography of gentrification is contingent on its temporality and context. Several academics have attempted to express the evolution and mutation of gentrification in terms of time, including the development of the gentrification stage model since the 1970s (Clay, 1979; Rose, 1996; Wyly & Hammel, 1999) and the periodization of gentrification waves in the United States since the 1950s (Hackworth and Smith, 2001; Wyly and Hammel, 2001). Lees (2000) also referred to “new wrinkles” that need to be addressed in a future study on the geography of gentrification: “1) *Financifiers*, 2) *The third-world immigration – the global city*, 3) *The black/ethnic minority gentrification – race and gentrification*. 4) *Liveability/urban policy – discourse on gentrification*”. A later version of her argument asserted that a “geography of gentrification” must consider the geographical and temporal elements of gentrification: international, national, and citywide comparisons and a study of process timing (Lees, 2012).

### **1.10 Gentrification Waves & Types of Gentrifiers**

There are several forms that gentrification has taken due to economic and political shifts. Since its inception in the 1950s, gentrification has played many varied roles in the inner cities. In 1979, Phillip Clay developed the first gentrification models (Lees et al., 2008: p. 31-33). Clay classified gentrification into four stages: pioneering, expanding, adolescent, and maturity. Later, in the 1980s and 1990s, Clay's model explained the development of gentrification. Also, Hackworth and Smith (2001) are among the most remarkable recent attempts to model gentrification. Initially, gentrification waves swept over North America and Europe before spreading to the rest of the globe (Hackworth& Smith, 2001; Murphy, 2008). According to them, three major gentrification waves have occurred in New York City as a case study, which were separated by two recession-caused transitional phases. The engagement of real estate entrepreneurs and demand-side consumer powers are increasingly associated with each gentrification wave. There is a strong emphasis on the fact that their periodization allows broader applicability based on the reading of other cases: “*Specific dates for these phases will undoubtedly vary from place to place, but not so significant as to diminish the influence of broader scale political events on the local experience of gentrification*” (Hackworth & Smith, 2001: p. 466).

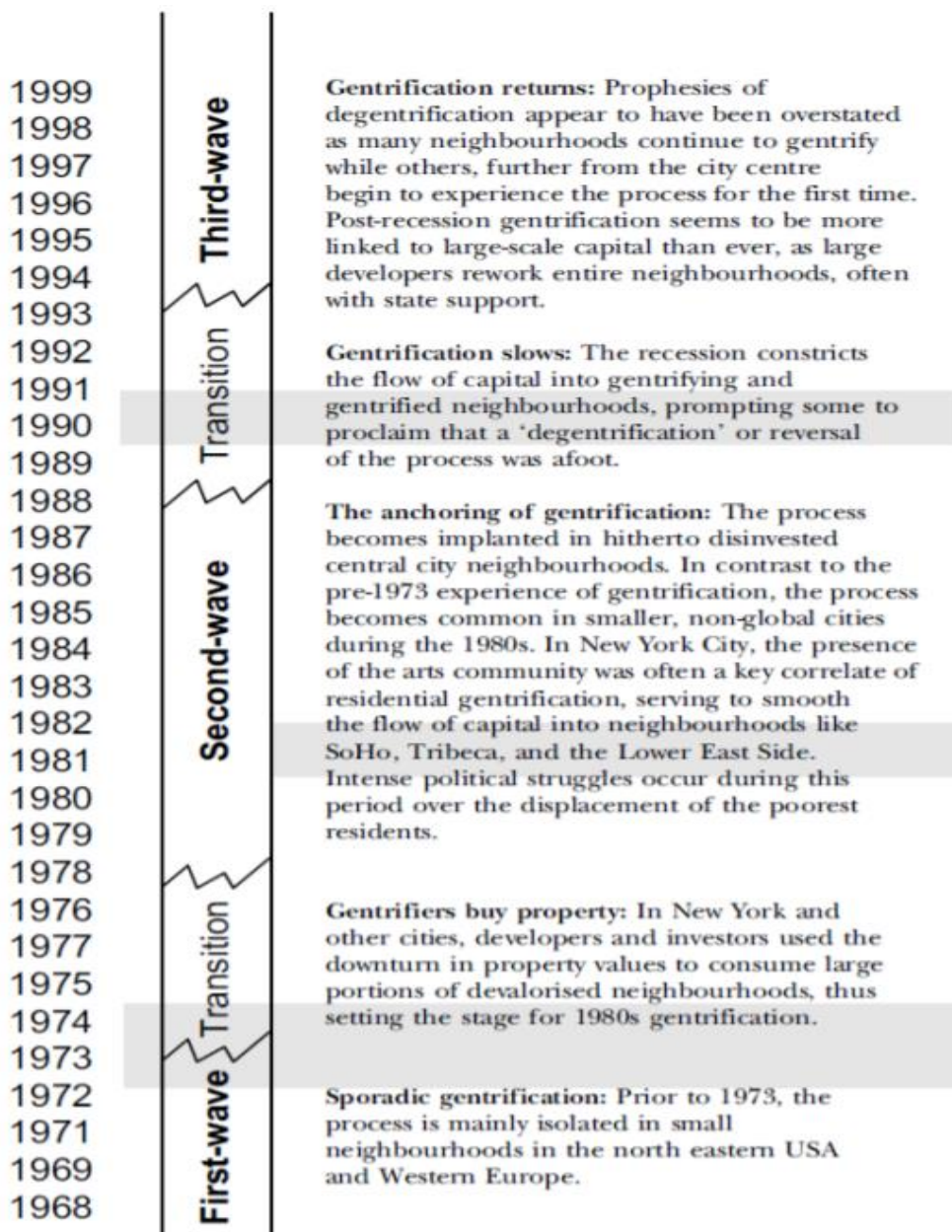


Figure 3: Schematic history of gentrification (recessions in grey). Source: Hackworth & Smith (2001) in Albers (2019: p.4)



### *1.10.1 The First Wave*

In Clay's model, the “classical” or “first wave” of gentrification is the pioneering phase which began in the 1960s and is based on the work of Glass. In Hackworth and Smith's (2001) paradigm, this “sporadic gentrification” is linked to the urban renewal movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Reinvestment and the back-to-the-city movement were caused by the rehabilitation initiatives and the engagement of small-scale, localized public investment in deteriorating districts (Nelson, 1988: p.17). As an early form of gentrification, the back-to-the-city movement in large cities (Lees et al. 2008) was a result of people leaving the suburbs in pursuit of a more exciting and diverse place to live (Ley 1996). However, the movement of capital flows (Smith, 1996) and/or a middle-class influx in pursuit of cultural and lifestyle preferences (Ley, 1994) is frequently understood as the back to the city. Consequentially, working-class citizens are displaced by “brownstoners” or “pioneer gentrifiers” who are a “small group of risk-oblivious people” (Clay, 1979) take over the housing in the declining working-class areas (Lees et al., 2008). Pioneer gentrifiers improve or emancipate neglected urban environments and foster tolerance among residents (Lees, 2000; Ley, 1996).

Young urban professionals, dubbed “yuppies”, were more interested in the subcultural richness of socially disadvantaged neighborhoods. Research on first-wave gentrification tends to center on hippies, artists, and homosexuals as the main counterculture groups (Ley, 1996, 2003; Zukin, 1982) and their physical and creative skills. Affordability, aesthetic preferences, and a desire for racial, ethnic, or class variety, along with tolerance, are all factors that play a role in where they choose to live (Lees et al., 2008). While these countercultures may not have much economic capital, they have enough cultural capital to make a significant impact on the urban landscape and establish their own distinct identity. Before the advent of more prominent investors, their renovation and decoration initiatives served as a primary market test. When these marginal gentrifiers established a distinct identity through their successful creative activities, a frenzy of entrepreneurial activity ensued (Ley, 1996).

### *1.10.2 The Second Wave*

The second wave began after the 1973 recession and continued almost until the 1980s (Hackworth & Smith, 2001). Hackworth and Smith (2001) consider post-recession 1973 as the “anchoring period” of gentrification which introduced a new type of gentrifier. These gentrifiers were better off than the first wave, including developers, builders, mortgage lenders, landlords, real estate firms, and government agencies. This type of gentrifiers had a considerably more substantial influence on the process. The wave was bolstered by public policies and government measures designed to foster a “good climate” for the real estate market to avert urban decline (Lees et al., 2008). Hence, this wave of gentrification became interwoven with urban and economic transformations on a broader scale. Compared to the previous wave, the second phase is marked by the rise of urban entrepreneurialism and the formation of public-private partnerships (Lees et al., 2008). It also targets new middle-class consumers (Gotham, 2005). In the late 1970s and 1980s,

there was more to gentrification than just changing the demographics of a neighborhood's housing stock; it also affected "*a wider range of economic and cultural processes at the global and national scales*" (Hackworth & Smith, 2001: p.468). A worldwide "*gentrification blueprint*" emerged to reinvigorate urban areas that had been stagnant for decades (Davison & Lees, 2005). This period incorporated gentrification and cultural redevelopment strategies, including the construction of "renaissance" landmarks such as art museums and concert halls (Gotham, 2005).

While the state and public sectors were concerned with halting urban decline, private sector investment was considered too risky to warrant consideration (Hackworth & Smith, 2001). In the second wave of gentrification, investing in inner-city neighbourhoods seems to be a perfect opportunity. However, risk issues, including the prevalence of countercultures and increasing opposition to gentrification, made investors wary of investing in inner-city neighborhoods during the second wave (Smith, 1996). With the massive influx of capital into inner-city land and property by developers, gentrification became a substantial place-specific reinvestment in the city core. As a result, many working-class and countercultural groups were compelled to move because of the increase in property values caused by the affluents taking over the inner city. The recession of the early 90s began with the 1987 stock market crash, driving some to declare the end of gentrification, a claim that Smith dismissed as nonsense in 1995. Instead, gentrification underwent yet another mutation (Aalbers, 2018).

### *1.10.3 The Third Wave*

The third wave began in the mid-1990s. In this wave, large-scale processes replaced small-scale ones that began with marginal gentrifiers or middle-class customers. According to Hackworth (2002: p. 820), "*the most easily gentrified neighborhoods had already appreciated in value to the point where the smallest investors could no longer enter the market without sizable down payments and/or assistance from local government*". The third wave may be referred to as a more corporatized wave (Hackworth & Smith, 2001; Lees et al., 2008), resulting from the growth of large corporate developers, Real Estate Investment Trusts (REIT), mortgage brokers of new networks, and the creation of new forms of "corporatized gentrification" which has become a global urban strategy. Aalbers (2018: p.2) claimed that the third wave "*was quickly included in discussions of neoliberal urbanism*". Beauregard (1986: p.19) pointed out that the goal of the municipal government is "to make it easier to gentrify". Therefore, the term generalized gentrification has been applied to the third wave of gentrification, which is part of the liberal urban plan. Furthermore, throughout this gentrification tendency, market-driven urban public policies and the privatization and commercialization of urban space have reportedly become more "generalized," as postulated by Smith (2002). Therefore, we may also describe gentrification as "state-led" or "government-sponsored".

The third wave is characterized by state intervention, the formation of new alliances and partnerships with international capital and real estate developers, along with the involvement of the public sector (Hackworth & Smith, 2001). Gentrification, as a “global urban strategy”, Smith (2002) claims, “*is densely connected into the circuits of global capital and cultural circulation*” (Smith, 2002: p. 427). More emphasis is being placed on improving the city's image and investing in speculative ventures. Following Smith's views, Lees (2000) contends that gentrification has spread beyond the so-called global cities. It is becoming increasingly common to see inner-city communities being renovated and reinvigorated. The gentrification process in this phase is restructured in many ways. As a result, Smith started to focus on urban regeneration strategies as the driving force behind the globalization of urban gentrification. Smith (2006) argued that gentrification, under the name of urban regeneration plans and in partnership with private capital, has become a common urban strategy for municipal governments all over the globe. Urban regeneration has increasingly been used to refer to interventions aimed at improving the environment, the image, and the safety of urban areas and stimulating particular services such as housing, transportation, economics, and entertainment (Franklin et al., 1991). Urban regeneration can undoubtedly benefit from so-called positive gentrification. State-led and debt-fueled gentrification in the late 1990s and early 2000s had a major role in triggering the global financial crisis that began in 2007, which was sparked in the US. However, it seems that state-led gentrification to be persisting in many regions, including both those who were hit hard by the recession and those who were relatively untouched.

#### ***1.10.4 The Fourth Wave***

In their book, *Gentrification* (2008), Lees, Slater, and Wyly were among the few to theorize consecutive waves of gentrification. According to Lees et al. (2008), there is a new gentrification wave “*not readily identifiable outside of the United States*” hit the United States after 2001 (ibid: p.184). The fourth wave of gentrification, coined by Lees et al., incorporates “*an intensified financialization of housing... with the consolidation of pro-gentrification politics and polarized urban policies*” (ibid: p. 179). It can only be seen as a continuation, perhaps an acceleration, of gentrification's third wave (Doucet, 2014). It is the “financialization of home” with the “third wave” of gentrification (Aalbers, 2016). The state's “creative destruction” policy is evidence of this gentrification wave that favors public-private partnerships and market-based solutions to the urban issue (Lees et al., 2008).

Many financialization studies place the onset of financialization with the industrial crises in Western Europe, Bretton Woods' collapse, and the development of neoliberalism in the 1970s. Others have highlighted a number of other factors linked to financial deregulation in the City of London and Wall Street, such as the development of technology and the rise of institutional investors like pension funds. A series of subsequent catastrophes, including the European sovereign debt crisis in 2009 and the bursting of the Chinese stock market bubble in 2015, were spawned from the 2007 U.S.-based financial crisis (Aalbers, 2015).

The state's support for gentrification briefly decreased as a result of these related and succeeding crises, which singled the beginning of a new transitional period marked by austerity urbanism (Peck, 2012)

The collapse of the dotcom<sup>9</sup> market resulted in a significant shift in capital into the real estate market. Financialization, which has a significant urban dimension, has interwoven capital markets and real estate since the 2008 global financial crisis (GFC) (Aalbers, 2012). The emergence of the financing market over the last few decades has resulted in a profound shift in how the built environment is (re)developed. As a result, the fifth wave of gentrification appeared. This was as Aalbers (2019) stated, occurred between 2010 and 2020 and was predominantly tied to housing financialization. Fifth-wave gentrification is the urban environment's embodiment of financialized or finance-driven capitalism (Boyer, 2000). Besides expanding the gentrification frontier to different locations, existing gentrifying localities also receive additional investment. In many sectors in various regions, local investment is still robust, but now it is reinforced by international capital. There has been a shift in perspective toward housing and other forms of real estate, viewing them as "just another asset class" (Van Loon & Aalbers, 2017). It is widely accepted that advanced capitalist economies have undergone fundamental alterations due to financialization.

Financialization as Aalbers (2019: p.1) noted, is *“the increasing dominance of financial actors, markets, practices, measurements and narratives, at various scales, resulting in a structural transformation of economies, firms (including financial institutions), states and households”*. In this context, literature has broken down financialization into three distinct strands: financialization as an accumulation regime, the growth in shareholder value as a result, and financialization in daily life (Aalbers & Fernandez, 2016). Housing either plays a minimal role or is just considered one of the financialization carriers in these diverse strands. Financialization of housing is becoming more and more common globally in the fifth wave of gentrification, which Lees, Slater, and Wyly (2008) defined as a peculiarity of the US fourth wave of gentrification. Various actors sought to invest not just in commercial real estate however also in residential real estate of low- and middle-income (Fields, 2015; Wijburg & Aalbers, 2017). Financialization has been examined by different researchers throughout different perspectives including mortgage securitization (Gotham, 2009), and expensive and excessively long loans (Newman, 2009) among others.

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<sup>9</sup> When technology stocks rose and fell, they sparked the dotcom bust. Venture capitalists were excited by the Internet's meteoric rise and rushed to invest in promising start-ups. To go public, none of these firms needed much more than an idea and a willingness to take risks.

According to Hyra's (2020) seminal theoretical contribution, the fifth phase of housing financialization—"rental real estate speculation"—has financial speculation more closely linked to contemporary gentrification. As a starting point, it is ideal for new real estate investors. Investments in rental properties can create revenue and long-term value. In addition, ownership of real estate provides investors with several tax benefits and incentives. Most rental property owners' primary aim is to build positive cash flow, which means they want to make more money each month than they spend on operating expenses and costs, even if they do not get there at the outset. Multifamily rental housing "*is an important segment of the urban real estate market but was historically difficult to treat as a financial asset because of perceived difficulties and cost of management; small portfolio size; lack of data on returns, loans and loan performance; and the small secondary mortgage market for commercial loans*" (Fields & Uffer, 2016), referred to DiPasquale & Cummings, 1992). Towards the end of the 1990s, it was possible to treat multifamily rental housing more like a financial asset rather than a liability (Bradley et al., 1998). The financialization of multifamily rental housing in different global cities has resulted in a new rental-tenure form of gentrification, unlike the traditional one. Financialized landlords, which include REITs and financial institutional investors (pension and sovereign wealth), are increasingly driving the acquisition of multifamily assets for repositioning (Rottke, 2004). Private equity funds are a particularly alluring investment option for investors due to their focus on maximising profits and high returns. Real estate private equity funds are established and managed by investment banks, private companies, and other real estate sector stakeholders with cash from institutional investors and bank loans. Investing in real estate as Linneman (2004) argued, can be done directly, or indirectly. However, the ultra-rich and the upper middle class are increasingly investing in "super-prime" and other residential properties in established metropolises and tourist hotspots as well as in a growing number of evolving global hubs (Fernandez et al., 2016). Several investors, particularly the transnational wealth elites (super-wealthy), do not acquire premium real estate to benefit from high rents but to keep their surplus cash as part of an ever-expanding 'safe deposit box' of selective cities (Fernandez et al., 2016). According to Colliers International, this new generation of investors differs from the traditional and conservative former type who "*did not work single-mindedly to maximize the potential of their properties*" (2006: p.4).

Mortgage markets are now supporting global investment processes (Aalbers, 2016). As institutional investors are becoming more prominent, the focus on turning assets into tradable commodities has intensified, as well as the shift in the importance of the financial sector's involvement in the economy as a whole (Engelen et al., 2010). This hypothesis has been confirmed by Fields and Uffer (2016: p. 1498) who stated that "*beyond the ability to buy or sell, upgrade or increase rents of the underlying asset (the property itself) investors can also make rents on the financial terrain, through buying and selling mortgage-backed securities or participating in the market for distressed financial assets, adding to the adaptive power of financialization*". While gentrification is still a state-led process (as in the third and fourth waves), capital complements rather than replaces the state's vital function.

Rather than merely supporting homeownership through mortgages, the financial sector is establishing a more profound presence through the growth of corporate landlords and capitalist networks. Prices and competitiveness in the housing market have increased generally due to the increased interest in high-end properties. Such investments have a variety of unfavorable results in the urban fabric, including absence of a feeling of belonging and alienation, a decrease in housing affordability, a decline in local economic opportunities, and increasing displacement and housing instability for working and underprivileged populations due to the construction of exclusive enclaves for a newly emerging financial class (Lees et al., 2008; Rolnik, 2013). Multiple types of displacement, including residential, political, and cultural, have also been exacerbated by rising rents (Hyra et al., 2020). Hyra (2020: p.3) argued that the fifth wave of gentrification “*provokes ‘displacement anxiety’ and fears of being ‘pushed out’, making displacement concerns inseparable from this neighborhood transformation*”.

### **1.11 Causes of Gentrification**

Gentrification is not the result of a single event or factor. Three conditions are necessary for gentrification: an influx of opportunistic gentrifiers, an abundance of affordable housing in the core, and a widespread cultural preference for urban settings (Hamnett, 1991). Arguments about gentrification are typically focused on urban structural changes against baby boomer generational value shifts (Cordova et al., 1991: p.27). The primary force behind gentrification is capital accumulation, with its emphasis on profit-seeking or the choices of individuals motivated by cultural and aesthetic preferences. Hence, due to this binary narrative, many studies have zeroed in on either the economy of the supply side (production) or the demand side (consumption) triggers.

#### ***1.11.1 Production-Led Gentrification or Supply Side Approach***

Gentrification from this perspective is seen “*as part and parcel of the class dynamics of urban transformation associated with capital investment and disinvestment*” (Betancur, 2002: p. 781). This strategy uses changing land values and housing development to create space and repurpose abandoned assets suitable for gentrification, emphasizing the restructuring of the urban economy. It draws attention to the interplay between the state and capital and their contribution to the genesis of gentrification (Schaffer & Smith, 1986). Disinvestment in the city's core and the “rent gap” has given rise to the production-side approach. According to the production-side approach, the value of land in the central city has decreased because of suburban sprawl and the deindustrialization of the city's core, creating a gap between the property's potential and actual valuation. In disinvested areas, gentrification happens when there is significant gap between “*the actual capitalized ground rent (land value) of a plot of land given its present use and the potential ground rent that might be gleaned under a ‘higher and better’ use*” (Smith, 1987: p.462).

The importance of the city real estate market in the capital accumulation process has been acknowledged for quite some time (Smith 1979, 1987, 1996). Smith's argument for the "capitalist roots of gentrification" posited that it was the inflow of funds from the exurbs to the city which drove gentrification, rather than the influx of people (1996). When the disparity in rents is significant, investors, landlords, and "occupier developers" pounce on the opportunity to reinvest in derelict inner-city properties and adapt them to new use. According to Smith (2010), urban renewal takes place when a rent gap is created, similar to rehabilitation. With urban renewal, however, the deteriorating stock is physically unsafe, or the existing structures are inadequate to support the desired activity. Therefore, the gentrification process results from the profit-maximizing capitalization of urban land in the hands of developers rather than gentrifiers. According to Cordova (1991), real estate agents, developers, and banks are the architects of gentrification because they are principally accountable for the urban property shift.

Local, state, and federal governments are additional participants in the production and supply side approaches. Public subsidies and state policy and regulation, such as zoning laws, facilitate place-based reinvestment and speed up gentrification processes in inner cities (Smith, 2000). According to Smith (1979; 1996), the government collaborates with private actors as part of a broader political economy. The government promotes the idea that the city is a "growth machine" by regulating land use and promoting urban development for capital accumulation (Smith 1996). However, the production explanation has been criticized since it refers to all gentrifiers as investors and ignores their non-economic values and cultural contributions (Lees et al. 2008).

### *1.11.2 Consumption- Led Gentrification or Demand-Side Approach*

This approach primarily targets new middle-class people who are rather liberal compared to the old middle-class people and wish to distinguish themselves from them. Hence, it highlights consumers' preference for gentrified properties and localities. Several factors affect consumed preferences, including cultural and socioeconomic diversity, unique architectural value in urban neighborhoods, and the proximity of gentrified areas to the city center (Schaffer & Smith, 1986; Zukin, 1987). Geographers like David Ley (2003) believe that the move from production to financial and cultural service-based sectors is the core of gentrification in major cities. There has been a strong emphasis on the cultural values and consumption behaviors of the new middle class or creative class/artists and their amenities, not work (Florida, 2002; Ley, 1996). Ley (2003) highlighted the relevance of aesthetic disposition in determining the influence of cultural preferences on gentrification. Hence, the new generation of professionals and the younger middle class, with their aesthetic preferences, turned to the inner cities in search of a particular sense of place (Ley, 1996). The new middle class, dubbed 'gentrifiers', seeks the consumption of aesthetics and experience rather than economic considerations (Ley 1996; Lees et al. 2008). In contemporary "post-industrial cities", the "white-collar residential style" is what Zukin referred to as gentrification (1987: p.135), replacing productive blue-collar occupations. Some gentrifiers are eager to preserve the nostalgic authenticity of a place (Ley, 1996; Zukin 1982), as they value

rough-and-tumble “urban” experiences. (Ley, 1996; Brown-Saracino, 2009). In gentrification literature, authenticity has developed as a significant idea. Zukin (2010) argues that the concept of “authenticity” is bourgeois and can only be understood through third-party observation. Class-based political stances, socioeconomic integration, and racial/ethnic diversity may serve as sources of inspiration (Brown-Saracino 2009; Ley 1996).

In both wealthy developed and developing countries, gentrification is one of the most prominent issues influencing today's inner cities of significant metropolitan areas (Atkinson & Bridge, 2005). It is difficult to pinpoint the precise reasons for gentrification since it mostly depends on the new arrivals and the service they demand. Gentrification is a complicated phenomenon with varying causes and effects. Hence various definitions have been proposed. Gentrification process, according to Smith (1996), is a class transformation process. It is a recasting of deprived urban areas in the style of affluent arrivals. For Clark (2005), gentrification “*is a process involving a change in the population of land-users such that the new users are of a higher socio-economic status than the previous users, together with an associated change in the built environment through a reinvestment in fixed capital*” (Clark, 2005: P.258). Patch and Brenner (2007) claimed that gentrification is “*the reinvestment of real estate capital into declining, inner-city neighborhoods to create a new residential infrastructure for middle and high-income inhabitants*”.

While the Urban Displacement Project's definition of gentrification is “*a process of neighborhood change that includes economic change in a historically disinvested neighborhood -- by means of real estate investment and new higher-income residents moving in -- as well as demographic change -- not only in terms of income level, but also in terms of changes in the education level or racial make-up of residents*” (UDP, 2019). Eventually, the initial residents would have to leave since they could not afford the rising rents and other costs associated with staying in the area. However, Kosta (2019: p.1102) argued that gentrification can happen without a shift in the resident mix “*an influx of new residents..., new commercial establishments, or new users that frequent particular spaces of the neighborhood at particular times but may not reside locally, can be instances of gentrification*”.

### **1.12 Displacement And the Right to The City**

Despite gentrification's pervasiveness, the process still follows the same basic patterns since its initial rise in larger urban centers. The process is initiated with small investors, followed by developers, displacement, and opposition. According to different scholars (Bridge et al., 2011; Duany, 2001; Freeman, 2006), gentrification has some positive effects: the inner-city's regeneration and the promotion of social mixing in some cases, including the improvements in aesthetics, landscape, and urban quality; the reduction of crime levels and other social issues; vividness and the diversity of economic activities. However, other authors (Lees, 2008; Smith, 2008) remind us that gentrification's negative consequences should not be ignored. The gentrification argument includes neoliberalism's impact on housing, housing choice, and



displacement. In highly polarized cities like New York, anti-relocation demonstrations developed somewhat violently because of the threat of displacement (Smith, 1996; Abu-Lughod, 1994). Harvey (2012) points out “disneyfication” as a direct consequence of neoliberalism wherein cities become playgrounds for the wealthy and more expensive for the general public. Massive and direct displacement is unquestionably a cornerstone of gentrification in the Global South or developed world. Since gentrification has proven to be a profitable strategy for acquiring limited resources like land and housing, it has extensively been used to displace low-income people and seize their property and houses for commercial and economic gain (Whitehead & More, 2007). Accordingly, gentrification could be defined as “*a process of displacement, a process in which power is wielded, one that discriminates against the poor segments of the population*” (Helbrecht, 2018: p. 3).

Grier and Grier (1978: p.8) state that “*displacement occurs when any household is forced to move from its residence by conditions that affect the dwelling or its immediate surroundings, and that: (1) are beyond the household’s reasonable ability to control or prevent; (2) occur despite the household’s having met all previously imposed conditions of occupancy; and (3) make continued occupancy by that household impossible, hazardous, or unaffordable.*”. Marcuse (1985), broke down the idea of displacement into several subcategories: direct last-resident displacement, also known as eviction, wherein landlord seeks to push tenants out of their homes by slashing services or drastically raising the rent; direct chain displacement, due to gradual increase in rent value and the physical deterioration of buildings; exclusionary displacement, incorporating high-end developments that are costly to community members as well as the collapse of property into abandonment; and displacement pressure, where the dramatic socioeconomic shift in the surrounding environments forced local inhabitants to move even there is no direct pressure to leave.

There is a close relationship between displacement and issues of “right to the city” and space production. (Harvey, 2003; 2008; Lefebvre, 1996; Mitchell, 2003). Numerous scholarly works have been motivated by the ‘right to the city’ thesis, as well as by activism. Their works aim to fight for social justice and the rights of specific groups in the urban space and residency on various scales and locations (Brenner et al, 2009; Friedmann, 1995; Marcuse, 2009; Mayer, 2009), as well as to serve as a counter-neoliberal organizing concept that can be used to challenge the market logic. According to Newman and Wyly (2006), few scholars have documented and/or participated in organizing and supporting their opposition to gentrification, privatization, and marketization as an integral part of global neoliberal urban strategies by defending unprivileged groups and their rights to stay. Gentrification as Hackworth (2002: p. 815) argued is “*the production of space for progressively more affluent users*”. The process entails the transformation of the space of the inner-city neighborhoods from production to consumption for the upper middle class. According to Rankin and McLean (2015), the redevelopment of dis-invested commercial areas reduces the city's accessibility to underprivileged populations, who frequently perceive that the investment is not for

them. As a result, of gentrification, the author agrees, long-term residents were victims of landlord harassment, real estate speculation, racist diversions, police violence, and threats of displacement.

## **2 Chapter Two: Urban Regeneration of Arab Cities in the MENA Region & Khedivial Cairo**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The MENA region has long been considered the cradle of world civilization, human culture, and the origin of the world's major religions and faiths. The region is a treasure trove of historic landmarks that serve as symbols of the region's cultural and religious identity as well as key tourist attractions. However, orientalism and colonization in the Arab world have influenced the concept of cultural heritage in the region. In recent decades, most of the Arab cities in the Middle East and North Africa region have experienced rapid urbanization and development due to globalization and considerable socioeconomic expansion. For example, in the Gulf region, modern cities have been built by international consulting and engineering firms. Their planning schemes have departed from the conventional and traditional framework of tiny settlements. Hence, there has been an obvious and substantial change from the pre-1960s nomadic lifestyle of the Gulf area to the metropolitan lifestyle of the present day.

In Arab cities in the MENA region, historic centers are frequently the first sites to decline due to the rapid expansion of cities, the subsequent changes in urban architecture and the flight of the city's indigenous population, among other reasons. Additionally, over the past few decades, these cities have been subject to extensive external interventions and western influences due to the implementation of neoliberal policies. The distinctive urban fabric of these historic centers, including their historical structures, alludes to the city's potential for further development. Here, historic districts have recently been appreciated for their significance as urban assets and an essential part of cities. Heritagization, as well as other forms of urban development and regeneration, is considered a kind of gentrification that has considerably influenced the built environment's heritage and restructuring. Nevertheless, in many cases, the implementation of large-scale urban development projects (UDPs) and the recent transformation of urban patterns in Arab cities have resulted in the loss or degradation of cultural heritage and the city's identity. Furthermore, the global commercial real estate enterprises and construction consultancy companies are significantly contributing to the urban restructuring process through their top-notch services (Summer, 2005; Daher, 2008). However, the "restructuring" of urban development in the Arab region's non-oil nations has resulted in an uneven development geography and urban geographies of inequality (Harvey 2006, Daher, 2011).

This chapter seeks to highlight the urban shift in Arab cities in the MENA region and its implications for heritage. The Abdali Urban Regeneration in Amman and the Post-War Reconstruction Project in Beirut City have emerged as obvious global urban models, demonstrating neoliberal policies and large-scale entrepreneurial urban development. Additionally, the Greater Cairo metropolitan exemplifies how profit-based policies have seized control of the ways in which urban environments are developed under neoliberal and post-political trends. Before delving into the regeneration and gentrification processes of downtown Cairo (Khedivial Cairo) as a case study, a general overview of the neighborhood is provided. Downtown Cairo's urban development since the master plan's inception in 1867 is chronologically traced in this chapter. According to the National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH, 2010), Khedivial Cairo is hugely significant and is classified as a protected area. Hence, Khedivial Cairo's historical, architectural, cultural, and symbolic significance is cited as a driving force for the gentrification process.

## 2.2 Globalization and Urban Development of the Arab cities in the Middle East and North Africa region

As Daher (2007) explained, the word "Middle East" originated from “*earlier British designations of the world, which have been maintained on the maps and in the geopolitical imaginations of policy makers*”. (Daher, 2007: p.3) The Arab nations in the MENA region are divided into four sub-regions that span the whole Arab region and are considered partners; countries in the Maghreb region: Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, and (Mauritania); countries in the Mashreq region: Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, Syria, and Iraq; countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which can be referred to as oil countries: Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates; and countries in the Southern Tier region: Yemen, and Sudan.



Figure 4: Arab counties in the MENA's region. Source: Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

According to Cernea (2001<sup>10</sup>), “*The Middle East and North Africa countries are home to an extraordinary cultural heritage, secular and religious, of critical importance not only for each country but for the entire world*”. The MENA region's rich heritage and diversified cultural components have contributed to its distinctiveness and helping to develop its own unique identities.

*The wealth of cultural heritage endowments of the Middle East and North Africa countries is not only a testament to the importance of the region's contributions to humanity's history. It also represents an enormous capacity to support and inspire the development of the region's countries into the future (Cernea, 2001: p. v).*

However, the Arab world has become one of the world's most urbanized areas. Globalization and rapid socioeconomic growth have accelerated the development and urbanization of most Arab cities in the Middle East and North Africa region. According to Katja Schäfer – UN-Habitat Regional Office for Arab States (ROAS) (2013), urbanization is driven by “*economic development, migration to oil-rich countries, drought and conflict (importance varying by sub-region)*”. Hence, the urbanization of Arab cities in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) area indicates that the city is being restructured and relegated to a financial center.

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<sup>10</sup> In the books' cover photo

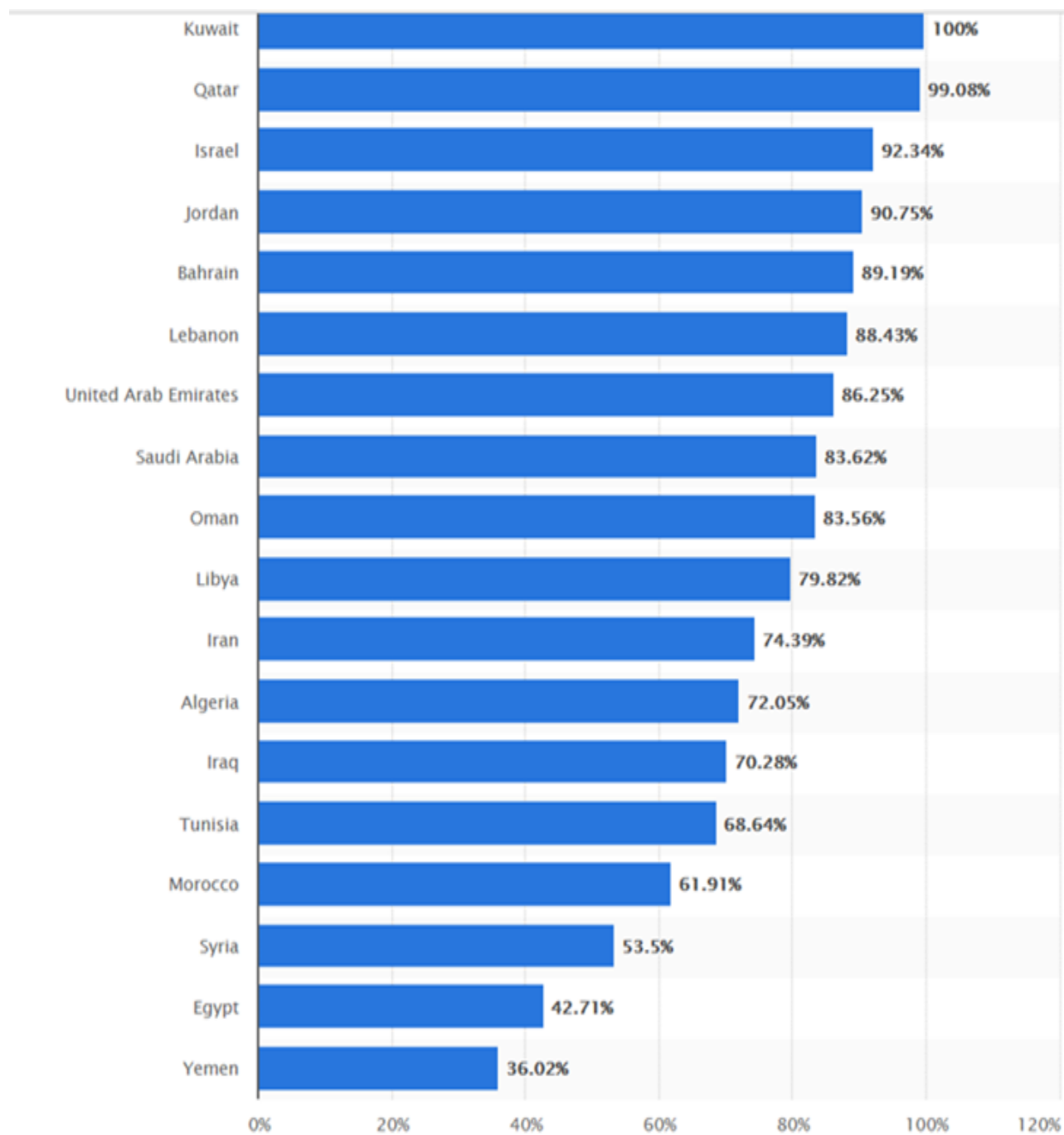


Figure 5: Degree of urbanization in the MENA countries in 2017. Source: Statista

In the Arab world, the unprecedented increase in urbanization has resulted in a profound shift in the production of the urban fabric and urban experience. Although the impact of globalization on the urban pattern in the Arab region differs from one city to another, the uncontrolled phenomenon is negatively affected the city identity and urban heritage. For example, Numerous Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) cities have developed long-term strategies for becoming globally competitive metropolises in a range of fields. As a result, the Arabian Peninsula has seen unprecedented urbanization in the last half century. According to UN Habitat (2013), the GCC countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) one of the world's most prosperous and urbanized, with 85 percent of their citizens residing in cities. This number is projected to climb to 90 percent by 2050. Furthermore, excessive urbanization has drastically transformed the cityscape (Damluji, 2006). This urban shift is underpinned by modernity and a strong private investment and market-oriented economic strategy.

The economies of the Gulf states are considered among the "Global North" economies by most development indicators because of their reliance on fossil fuel riches (Hobbs, 2017). The Gulf nations have seen extraordinary rates of modernization, urbanization, and globalization thanks to the recent boom in fossil fuel revenues and investments “*In less than one lifetime, the Gulf has transformed from one of the most disengaged parts of the world to a strategic fracture point of globalization in a regional context*” (Fox et al., 2006: p.5). However, their development strategies disregarded the local community and indigenous requirements and the environmental context. Hence, it created a sort of “*dislocation and alienation among urban Gulf Arabs*” (Hobbs, 2017: p.68). The adoption of western planning concepts was in opposition to their traditional lifestyle and culture. Therefore, the traditional urban fabric and the newly western-style environment dominated by foreign models have become completely separated. Dubai, the region’s financial and transportation hub, is a clear example of urban development and rapid spatial transformation under the influence of globalization. The development was based on the strong vision of its leader who took advantage of Dubai's strategic location<sup>11</sup> and was proactive in responding to global change. Thanks to this huge transformation, Dubai has been described as “*non-Arab society planted in the heart of Arabia*” (Hirst, 2001).

According to Scharfenort (2009), cities in the Arab Gulf countries since the late 1990s, are re-structured and radically transformed by large-scale urban development projects. The implementation of large-scale development projects did not take into consideration the cultural context, environmental conditions, or the true identity of Islamic-Arab cities. Thus, the authentic and traditional urban fabrics have been demolished and replaced, or abandoned to deteriorate in favor of more contemporary, Western-style designs. It is no secret that some oil-rich countries think of the decrepit remains of the old medina, considering modernization and globalization, as

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<sup>11</sup> on the banks of Dubai Creek, a natural inlet of the Persian Gulf



an eyesore from a bygone period, which do not deserve to be restored or remembered. Furthermore, historic districts had to be demolished to make way for more contemporary structures, suggesting a search for new alternative identities. As expressed by Elshestawy (2004), numerous comparative analyses of the region's traditional and modern urbanism are based on a "narrative of loss", where historic towns have given in to the disarray and disharmony of their younger equivalents.

Nevertheless, the underlying emphasis on physical delivery of cultural flagship projects and mega-events in GC by central governments has become the significant alternate trend of globalization in the planning practice. For example, Dubai 'flagship events' such as Dubai Festival City, Exhibition City, Sports City, and Dubai Expo 2020 helped the state to be positioned as an event-tourism destination. In line with Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, several cultural flagship projects have been placed in GC states, such as the cultural district in Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi which includes Guggenheim Abu Dhabi and Louvre Abu Dhabi. Additionally, King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, Doha's Museum of Islamic Art, and Qatar's National Museum are all examples of such projects. These flagship projects, as part of ambitious branding strategy, did not seek to regenerate the city's previously disregarded and neglected parts or to preserve cities' lost identity. Hence, they have been criticized for ignoring local art and cultural traditions by not displaying them alongside high-end art exhibits in their museums (Elsheshtawy, 2018).

Other projects, in contrast to the previous greenfield developments, have been launched recently in several Gulf cities. The heritagization of the vernacular architecture of old quarters is driven primarily by the prestige and potential financial returns emerging over time. For an example, only Al-Ain Oasis, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, has been designated a World Heritage Site in the United Arab Emirates for its historical and ecological richness. The project includes the restoration of the 50 buildings of Dubai's Bastakiya (al-Fahidi) Historic District, along with art galleries and educational exhibits. The project serves as an economic development engine to strengthen national identity. However, several critics have decried the Dubai Heritage Village for being disneyfied, portraying "*an idealized version of bygone eras, without the smell, dirt, poverty, insecurity and disease*" (Ragette, 2003). It cannot be denied, nevertheless, that both Bastakiya and Dubai Heritage Village offer significant educational and touristic (and hence economic) value. Another example is the historic center preservation and regeneration in Jeddah as part of a larger strategy to reinvigorate the private sector and promote new urban dynamics based on the city's rich heritage.

### **2.3 Neoliberalism and Urban Regeneration Strategies in Developing Arab Cities**

Since the beginning of the 1980s, there has been increasing pressures on developing Arab nations to reorient their economies along neoliberal lines due to global political and economic shifts. The neoliberal economic model embraces political and economic reforms mandated by external forces, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank-advocated Structural Adjustment Plan, which offered loans in exchange for neoliberal reforms (Mitchell, 2002). Neo-

liberalization in the Arab region has always been questioned as a representation of power. However, authoritarian rule increases the role of the state instead of limiting it, which is opposed to the neoliberal ideology. Neoliberalism, with its emphasis particularly on urban development driven by market orientation, commercialization, privatization, and short-term returns, has been the dominant discourse in many Arab nations in the MENA region. The economic elites closely linked with political leaders are the beneficiaries of the debilitating development models that are based mostly on land rent. As a result, urban development in Arab cities is a “restructuring” process creates areas of uneven development around the globe and urban geographies of inequality (Harvey 2006, Daher, 2011). According to Erin Cox (2015: p.1), the adoption of neoliberal reform led to “*inadequate understanding of national development needs, de-prioritizes participatory methodology and fails to address structural underpinnings that create unrest*”.

Over the last few decades, large-scale projects (LSPs) that are mainly economic have been developed and implemented in many Arab cities extensively and only by their governments or through public-private partnerships. The enforcement of a neoliberal policy has necessitated the foundation of new governmental agencies to fulfil neoliberal terms, such as financial autonomy and partnership with the private sector. After September 11 attacks, Gulf investors and oil revenues of the rentier state in the Gulf have become the new main channels for funding and supporting the economic development of other Arab cities in the region, searching for high yield and secure investments. This can be phrased as follows: “*not only did the attacks reshape Gulf investors vacationing patterns but they have also forced investors to look closer to home to invest their excess liquidity*” (Global Investment House, 2008: p10). In response to these circumstances, the Gulf relied heavily on urban regeneration projects as well as privatization to achieve these goals. In Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, and Morocco, among other MENA cities, entrepreneurial strategies, and urban development projects in partnership with gulf investors reflect the excessive urban shift toward consumer-driven economy for tourism and the elite. International commercial real estate companies and construction consulting firms are playing a key role in the urban restructuring process through their high-quality services (Summer, 2005; Daher, 2008). Several scholars who have studied the effects of neoliberal urbanism in the Arab world have stressed the profound socio-spatial changes of such initiatives, most notably the displacement of undesirable people to economically depressed neighborhoods (Barthel, 2010: p. 6).

#### **2.4 Comparison of Amman's Abdali Urban Regeneration with Beirut's Post-War Reconstruction Project.**

Considering neoliberal policies and large-scale entrepreneurial urban development, the Abdali Urban Regeneration project in Amman and the Post-War Reconstruction Project of Beirut City are clearly global urban models. Beirut's SOLIDERE project transformed downtown Beirut into a luxury quarter (Makdisi, 1997; Summer, 2005), commercial and entertainment hub. Development rights for SOLIDERE were granted for a space that was double the size of the pre-war city center

(4.7 million square meters of net floor space) (Faour et al., 2007). The project serves as an example of how historic cores and city centers may be restored and redeveloped as integrated business, commercial, and social spaces (Scharfenort, 2013). However, the post-civil war reconstruction project has been criticized in principle for demolishing the old city center and erasing all memories of the civil war to establish Hariri's vision of Beirut as a contemporary economic and cultural hub. According to Bruno Marot and Serge Yazigi (2012: p.1) "*Periods of post-war reconstruction are often the backdrop for new socio-economic and political dynamics. In Beirut, the rise of market-led urbanism, a lack of proper urban planning and the far-reaching sectarian polarisation are all factors that could raise questions about the model of urban regeneration implemented and arouse new socio-political tensions.*" The luxury housing in the new downtown attracted investors and affluent residents from Middle East or the Lebanese diaspora (Karam, 2010). Downtown Beirut's tertiary roles were the driving force behind the regeneration of Lebanon as a whole, with the construction of a regional center for finance, commerce, culture, and tourism (Schmid, 2006; Ragab, 2011).

In Jordan, the "Amman Master Plan" (2007-2008) serves as a blueprint for neoliberal futures in the city. In 2002, Amman embarked on a flagship project, Abdali, an instance of urban entrepreneurialism. The SOLIDERE experience in Beirut was a major influence on the large-scale urban regeneration. According to Qudah (2015), Amman's Abdali project was little more than a blatant copy of Beirut's SOLIDERE project, which reflected the demands and architecture of Beirut onto Amman without any regard for context. The similarities between the two projects (as will be analyzed further below), "*are outstanding, especially in the initial scheme of Abdali*" (Zalloom, 2015). The similarities confirm Olds's argument that large-scale urban development projects are "modeled on each other" (Olds, 2001).

The two large scale projects highlight the importance of Holding Companies RECHCOs and real estate construction in revitalizing the city's core and establishing a more contemporary downtown. The two projects were carried out by two different companies in partnership with the state. In Abdali, the project was executed by Mawared (National Resources Investment and Development Company), a state-owned corporation. The company was the military's investment arm. Later, the company became a leading urban regeneration entity and the Jordan's largest real estate developer in partnership with SAUDI OGER. In Beirut, SOLIDERE' (Société Libanaise de Development et de Reconstruction), a Lebanese joint stock company, was responsible for the post-war reconstruction work. Around 50% of the company's total shares were dedicated to the owners of the confiscated properties, while the other half was delegated to investors (Beyhum et al. 1992). At the time, Hariri, Lebanon's prime minister, exemplified the enduring interpenetration of public and private interests. He has the largest share of 6.5% (Makarem, 2014). The projects' funding was, as the company stated, "*an innovative legal and institutional framework .....enabled reconstruction to proceed without recourse to public funds*" (Irving, 2009)

The RECHCOs, as Mango (2014: p. 5, 6) claimed, “*undercut political processes, bypass social and traditional heritage, and destroy physical historical structures*”. The partnership with the state enabled the companies to deal with, seize, and expropriate privately owned land and properties from residents and businesses for public benefit. In the two represented models, the state eventually relinquished control over the decision-making process to both firms. The project management and master planning for the entire project were handled by each company. After taking a backseat in SOLIDERE, the state facilitated the acts of the political and economic elites in pursuing their own goals (Makdisi, 1997). The state interventions included the financial subsidies and the issuing of legal exceptions such as law (117/91) which authorized the Lebanese government to seize all the lands and buildings, evacuate the residents who inhabited downtown Beirut during the war and compensate the property owners, which was much less than the real value of the property (Humphrey, 2015: P.4). According to Mango (2004: p. 100), the role of the government “*was limited to approving the basic structure of the REHCO; approving the expanse of land to be reclaimed; and specifying the area to be expropriated*”.

Lebanon's Prime Minister justified the project by saying, “*Lebanon today is the site of a struggle between evil and good. The alternatives facing the nation, he insisted, are clear: either "the will to progress" or "the will to despair"*” (Makdisi, 1996). This discourse gave the state legitimacy over society for the sake of a brighter future. Later, the public duties and responsibilities were delegated to the company SOLIDERE (Makarem, 2014). In 1994, the confiscation rights were handed over to the relevant company, SOLIDERE. This action has been criticized and described as “*a typical example of the dangers inherent in the state 's abdication of its role in orienting and controlling one of the most sensitive reconstruction development projects in the country*” (Salaam, 1996: p198).

*“According to Solidere’s website, the tasks of Solidere included the supervision of all operational activities: land development included master planning, engineering studies, infrastructure work, commercialization of building rights, real estate development including domestic and international marketing, rehabilitation of modeling of the project, organization of Solidere’s equity subscription and set-up of the company”* (Ragab, 2011: P. 110).

When it comes to SOLIDERE Beirut, there is no room for the poor migrants and the undesired individuals in this project. As a result, the firm adopted two techniques to vacate the structures before they were demolished: the financial incentive approach (Gerges, 2015) or violence (Makdisi, 1996).

Comparatively, in Amman, the state's contribution to Abdali, as observed by Elsheshtawy, was considerable by granting prime lands, tax exemptions, and eliminating all hurdles and bureaucracy (Elsheshtawy, 2008). For example, Law No. 12 of 1987<sup>12</sup> states that: *“Real estate cannot be subjected to acquisition unless for a project that achieves public benefit with fair compensation”*. Additionally, this law also stipulates that: *“the prime ministry has the right to approve the request made by any public sector (municipalities, ministries...etc.) to use the land of acquisition however anticipated by the prosecutor (public sector), even if the demand doesn't imply a public benefit of which the former acquisition was made for”*. Nevertheless, Daher (2013: p.101) contends that confiscation actions *“push the poorer segments of society to the outskirts of the city in newly zoned heterotopias”* creating tensions and conflicts between the state and the property owners who do not want to sell and leave.

In both cases, political and economic elites played a significant role, regardless of whether the country was an entrepreneurial state (Jordan) or a *laissez-faire* state (Lebanon). They were the investors and creators of the city's image. Hence, it was they who nominated the international developers to become partners in planning for designing the place according to their standards and desirable attributes, for the other global elite to live, work, and invest there. Dubai city became part of the world's consciousness. In his article "The Emergence of a New Urban Brand: Dubaization" (2006), Alraouf refers to Dubai as the most famous Arab city of our time. The massive urban development in Dubai (Dubaization) has become a role model for many cities in the MENA region to follow, such as Amman and Beirut (Elsheshtawy, 2008). It can be said, therefore, that Dubai's urban development model was the best alternative for developing a world-class project.

As the "Paris of the Middle East," Rafiq Hariri sought to restore Beirut's city center to its pre-war glory and identity (Kassab, 1997: p. 50). This reconstruction project also sought to maximize the investors' profitability and returns. According to Trendle (1991), *“Today, with the fighting over, there is a new plan to destroy the city center once again, but this time with the bulldozer and the pick-axe, in order that Beirut can reclaim its former title as the Hong Kong of the Middle East”* (Trendle, 1991: p.22). Thus, old Beirut downtown was replaced by a newer and more contemporary one. Manhattan, Hong Kong, and Arab oil cities' urban development schemes served as potential models for the reconstruction project in an effort to erase the image of a war-torn city. In Beirut, the empty space model- destruction or brownfield development – provides a blank slate and the chance to start over. The model has been criticized by many researchers and academics. Beyhum (1992) wondered:

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<sup>12</sup> Published in the Jordanian official Gazette: Section 3 of Acquisition Act and Amendments

*Is Beirut really a desert city? Is it a city without a history, which one can simply abandon to the bulldozers? ... Will Beirut be reconstructed without being lost, without closing itself off, without ultimately being forced to deny itself? Will the feeling of tolerance which existed in the Ottoman city be allowed to prevail once again? (Beyhum, 1992: p.55)*

Mango (2004: p.100) also confirmed that a fatal blow has been directed to the memory of this two-thousand-year-old city, replacing it only by a "mirage" of a new city that is more suitable to the oil-rich Arab countries with "a wealth of new buildings", but a "dearth of architectural traditions".

In Amman, the government usually refers to the Abdali regeneration project downtown as "the new downtown". According to the CEO of the private shareholder company Abdali Investment and Development, "the project is planned to create a new centre for the city" (Al-Hindi, 2007: p.20). The project is aimed at enhancing Amman's image to attract global investments for supporting the country's economic growth (Summer, 2005). The cutting edge in Amman's new downtown takes cues from Dubai's skyscraper boom by attempting to replicate the city's most recognizable structures.

Each project seeks to boost the local economy by enhancing the city's image in order to draw both massive volumes of global capital and investment, along with high-end tourists. According to Elsheshtawy (2008: p.2), the two projects are "unburdened by history, they are free to create a new identity and in turn serve as a model for the rest of the Arab World". Furthermore, the local identity in both Abdali and the SOLIDERE' projects has been sacrificed. Citizens did not have a voice in either "the decision-making nor implementation levels of the planning process" (Summer, 2007: p. 8).

Although SOLIDERE company's earlier slogan for branding Beirut was "ancient city for the future" (Leclair-Paquet, 2013: p. 20) suggesting that the modernity and historical significance of the center were inextricably linked (Nasr, 1996), the SOLIDERE reconstruction plan did not take into account the city and the people's diverse historical and social identities, as well as their collective memories, and the pre-war identity. This allows for a wide range of interpretations, one of which being the influence of imitation (Rageb, 2011). One such example is the widespread destruction of historic souks, which have been replaced by more lucrative ultramodern western-style shopping malls, and the historic buildings in Martyrs square for luxury residential buildings (Rageb, 2011). Khoury (1995) expressively describes this process by saying "Beirut attempts to regenerate itself by recycling garbage and destroying its own memories." The city center, as Khoury (1995) claims, "appears as an empty space, a placeless space, and a hole in the memory" and he asks, "How are we to preserve the memory of this place in the face of such frightening amnesia?". However, parts of Beirut's architectural heritage and landmarks from the pre-war era were selected to be preserved, such as the martyrs' statue at the martyrs' square and Place De L'Etoile. Ragab (2011: p.113) justifies this approach by saying "The project attempts to make use of the past and the nostalgic impulse that war generates towards it as a marketing tool and to reformulate an ambience that is basically meant to be economically profitable." As a result, one

of the primary goals of preserving and restoring these areas was to provide an amenity as well as symbolic and aesthetic references for those who remained in and around downtown and the capital city.

Moreover, the persistent construction of new urban forms by real estate developers, combined with a lack of legislation governing demolition works, resulted in severe decay of the urban heritage and the loss of many buildings of high heritage value (Akl & Davie, 1999). About 80 percent of the structures of nearby buildings were damaged or destroyed by the use of high explosives during the demolition and clearance activities in Beirut's downtown area (Beyhum, 1991). Makdisi (1997a: p. 674) aptly summarizes the dilemma by saying "*more buildings were destroyed by bulldozers than the War itself*". The demolition of the urban heritage and physical memory forms and the denial of the original owners and tenants' right to return, live and work "*concretised the division of the city*" (Ohrstrom, 2007: p.1). The high profile of development that is targeted at "*rich Arab tourists*" or "*population other than those who originally visited, worked, lived in, and owned the place*" as Rageb (2011: p.112) claimed "*has had a significant impact on the way the regular citizens are able to fit in the place where "fakeness and exclusion" is the prevailing notion*".

Real estate firms rose to prominence as the market's main participants due to the implementation of massive urban development projects and regeneration schemes. In Beirut, the aforementioned project is "*simply a real estate development where history and heritage are but themes incorporated through Disneyfied pastiche representations*" (Daher, 2011). The real estate sector has grown continuously since the post-civil war and has become one of the most important sectors of the Lebanese economy. Due to the intense real estate activity, several neighborhoods have been gentrified at an alarming rate, resulting in the displacement of large numbers of people. State intervention, including the provision of tax benefits for investors and liberalization of rental contracts and capital mobility, has led to speeding up the process of gentrification in Beirut.



Figure 6: Downtown Beirut. Source: (Hamshahri online, 2019)

Repeatedly, the same strategy has been adopted in Abdali New Downtown: existing structures on the planned development plots had to be torn down (Goussous & Haddadin, 2019). The fantasy image of these places and the excessive luxury and opulence make it look like dream islands in a fairy tale. Furthermore, the publication of these fantasy images and the spread of real estate advertisements for these projects selectively targeted wealthy high-class residents and investors, negatively affected the local community, deepened emotional separation, and created a sort of hatred and hostility with those elites. As Assi (2014: n. p) puts it,

*Even if the Abdali Boulevard turns out to be the coolest thing in the world (and it might), we should all make a conscious effort to not refer to the project as “downtown”. That’s a marketing game, and the winners are the marketeers and the Saudi/Lebanese investors.*

The Abdali New Downtown project converted the place into a capitalist-driven luxury secluded island. Public amenities have been delegated and replaced with mixed-use towers and commercial uses in the revised plan. These towers are “*High-end and isolated business towers, which are anticipated to include exclusive office and residential space in addition to retail, commercial and other tourism activities*” (Daher, 2013: p.102). This boom in the real estate sector resulted from the participation of a number of leading star architects, such as Norman Foster (UK), Architecture Studios (France), Norr (Canada), etc. The objective is to elevate Abdali to the status of a global



central business district and put it on the list of global mega-projects. Consequently, this boom has led to a rapid increase in land and properties' prices. For instance, the real estate, finance, and business service share was 23% of GDP, i.e., the highest GDP value in Jordan (ABC-Investments, 2009). In other words, urban interventions have been less democratic and more elite-driven priorities, resulting in socio-spatial segregation in the city.



*Figure 7: The Central Business District of Amman Source: -Abdali Project Website (2015)*

In sum

As Jacobs (1961) pointed out, economic interests in urban development projects were given higher priority than the demands and needs of the populace, especially of lower-class people. In several Arab cities, the implementation of large-scale projects has been inadequately integrated into the overall urban planning and development process and has had significant historical implications. It is more difficult sometimes to integrate cultural and urban heritage into urban planning policies or other schemes for development and regeneration. It's important to note that contemporary globalization has made the preservation versus demolition dilemma even more complicated and challenging. Consequently, cities' urban morphology has seen a dramatic change and their image has also been distorted. The decisive role of the state and private capitals in urban redevelopment and regeneration schemes has resulted in a restructuring of urban space along class lines, transforming historic and heritage centers, mainly inhabited by low-and middle-income

neighborhoods, into high-and ultra-high-end residential communities and displacing people who have lived there for generations (Lees, 2003: p. 61). This process, as Lees (2003) argued, is a "discursively invisible process of gentrification" (Ibid).

However, it is worth noting that modern urbanization and development are occasionally accentuated by cultural tourism. Given the importance of both supply and demand side variables in current contemporary gentrification tendencies, it is obvious that promoting urban heritage and historical districts for the purpose of enhancing the city's image and marketing by both the state and the private capital alike has become an apparent component of the process. "Heritagization" is, therefore, used as a vague slogan designed to "modernize" the district rather than preserve the area's tangible and intangible distinctive heritage character. Furthermore, urban heritage has long been commodified by developers and policy makers and is strongly considered an economic resource due to the global shift from the production to the consumption approach. Urban policies are currently emphasizing quality design, urban amenities, heritage, and culture to encourage investment in formerly undervalued, disregarded, and deteriorated urban centres. Urban redevelopment, regeneration and heritagization are considered forms of gentrification and have had a significant impact on the heritage and the restructuring of the built environment. Hence, the Greater Cairo region is an excellent demonstration of how profit-based policies have taken over how the urban environment is developed under neoliberal and post-political tendencies. Egypt's experience with regeneration was originally limited to historical and slum neighborhoods exclusively. However, the growing interest in Cairo's city center and its unique architectural heritage as well as the increasing value placed on the Belle Epoque era have spurred official interest in revitalizing downtown Cairo to "*provide new services and economic opportunities for Greater Cairo*" (ANA33, 2010).

### **2.5 The Establishment of "Paris along the Nile"**

Muhammad Ali's regional reforms and his orientation towards modernization and westernization marked the early stages of downtown Cairo foundation.

*Although architectural modernity in the non-Western world is commonly attributed primarily to colonial agency, its development and domestication in the Egyptian context occurred within a top-driven endogenous process, embedded in Ottoman cosmopolitanism, and prone to all sorts of hybridizations (Volait, 2014: p.1).*

During Muhammad Ali's reign, the first expansion of Cairo's metropolitan outside its Islamic Cairo boundaries was initiated. His wide-ranging urban development work was a proof of his nonacceptances for conventional norms. Raymond (2000) notes that during the rule of Muhammad Ali Pasha in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (*r.1805-1848*)

*The area was subject to various ad hoc interventions: carriage roads were built from Azbakiyya to Bulaq and Shubra: new dams prevented inundations. Hills were leveled, and plantations planted. A string of palaces was built along the Nile and the lake of Azbakiyya was turned into a garden<sup>13</sup>.*

Unlike his successors, Muhammad Ali's efforts did not have much impact on downtown Cairo; rather, they laid the foundation for the city's future urban development:

*The work of Mohamed Ali was to clear the medieval city of its dusty coating; the modern city came into existence in the age that followed, but it would not have taken the shape it did without the preparatory efforts of Egypt's first modern leader (Abu Lughod, 1971).*

Cairo's urban modernization in the 1860s and 1870s, according to Egypt's foremost interwar historian, Abdel Rahman El-Rafe'ei, was partially due to Ismail's ancestors' long endeavor to remove the sand hills encircling the old city for sanitary purposes (Kazamias, 2015). The first blueprint for Cairo was drawn up by Khedive Ismail pasha<sup>14</sup> (Arnaud, 1998/2000: p.33). The modernization plan aimed to position Cairo as a worthy world power, change the urban fabric of Cairo and develop the city's image by elevating its region's prestige beyond the bounds of its geographical space. The visit of Khedive Ismail to Paris 'Exposition Universelle' in 1867 inspired his vision (Mitchell, 1991) and provided him with a comprehensive model for the transformation and the beautification of the city (Al Sayyed, 2006). The dramatic change in Paris's image due to the improvement work that has been carried out by Baron Haussmann influenced the large-scale urban transformation project in Cairo. This project has been dubbed "Haussmannization" in reference to Cairo's development into a modern city (Raymond, 1973: p.289). The Haussmannization development model for downtown Cairo presents the "physical imposition of colonialism's geographical imagination" (Selim, 2015: p.183) via European modernization and urban exclusion. According to Mitchell (1991), "The identity of the modern city [Cairo] is created by what it keeps out. Its modernity is something contingent upon the exclusion of its opposite". The development of a new Western-style area was regarded as a national urban project that exemplified a new vision of the city and the state in general.

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<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Ralph Bodenstein, 2015: p.19-20.

<sup>14</sup> (Lived: 1830-1895- reigned: 1863-1879)

In 1868, Khedive Ismail Pasha decided to apply his vision of "*Paris along the Nile*" (Myntti, 1999) before the inauguration of the Suez Canal, to introduce modern Egypt to his distinguished European guests through a legendary and unforgettable ceremony hosting the monarchies of the world (Ali, 1997) and the absolute top tier of European nobility and aristocracy. The Suez Canal ceremonies in 1869 embodied the new image of the modern capital. As a means of achieving his vision, Ismail Pasha restructured the government and hired European professionals (Arnaud, 1998/2002). Ali Pasha Mubarak was appointed as the "Public Works Ministry" (AlSayyad, 2011: p. 199-214) and he was responsible for designing a new blueprint for modern Cairo that was inspired by Paris's plan. The plan included the establishment of a new district to fulfill Cairo's future growth and population increase of up to 750,000 people in 50 years. The chosen site was on the western bank of the Nile close to Cairo's traditional centers at the military barracks (in the Nile Palace) and extended to Bab El Louk. Jean-Antoine Cordier Bey presided over the Roads Authority during this time.

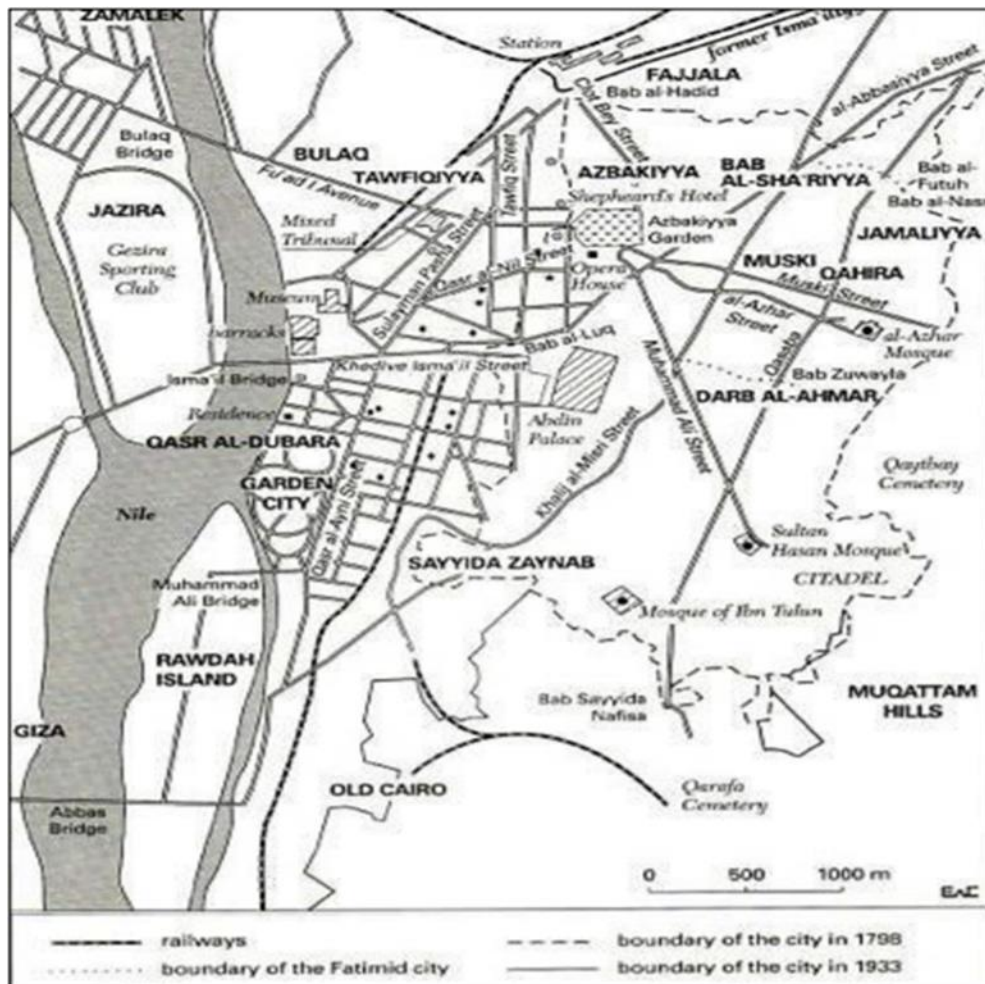
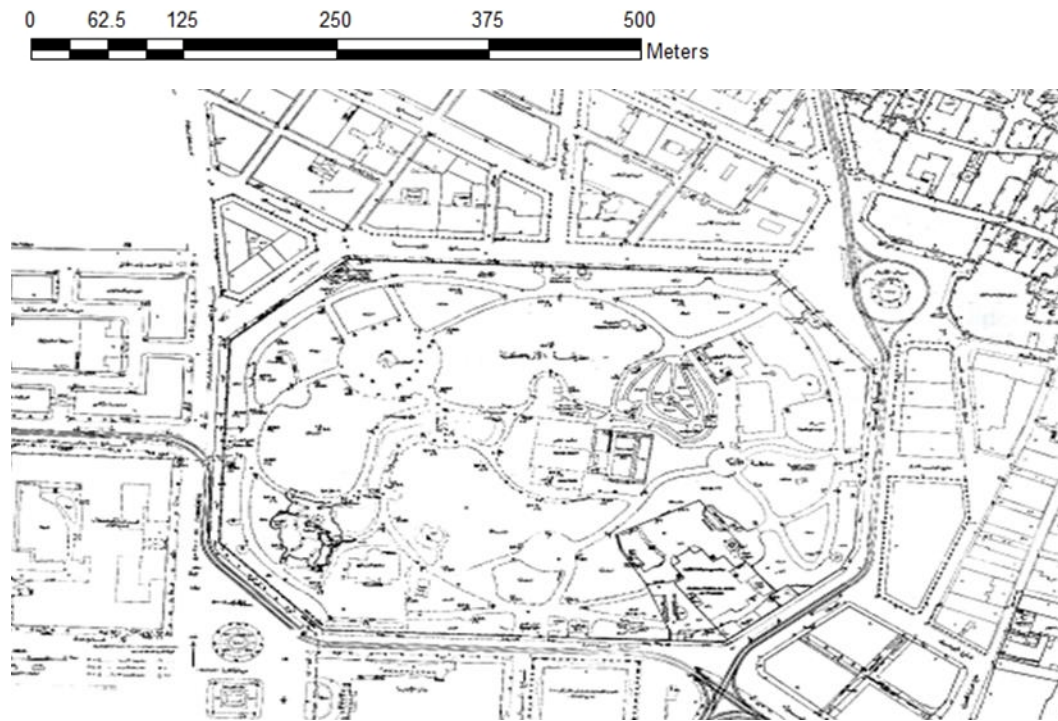


Figure 8: Transformations occurring in Cairo during Mohamed Ali and Khedive Ismail Periods. Source: (Rashed, 2015: P.25)

According to Ashraf Elmokadem's dissertation (1997), the early downtown Cairo's foundation was the bay "el-Khalieg" built in 1733 by the Nile to the north of the old Cairo "Massr el-Ati'äh." From this point, the plan started with the Fatimid city outside the western walls of Cairo and then went towards the north, building a border between the two districts, the Fatimid City and the suburbs which were separately developed in different directions. This allowed the formed rural area of the four places, Cairo "alKahira", "Bulak", old Cairo "Massr el-Ati'ah" and "Giza" to be developed into a new city quarter due to its favorable central location. Abdeen Palace, modeled after the Palace of Versailles, was erected on the edge of the large square where a lake once existed to replace the Citadel. Additionally, many big lakes were turned into large parks after being filled (Lyster, 1993). Al-Azbakiyya and Ismailiyya quarters were among Ismail Pasha's first attempts to achieve the Parisian model. Al-Azbakiyya was re-planned, as it was the core of the whole urban area and the spin between Ismail's new city and the old one. The Ismailiyya quarter, which is commonly known as Wist Al-Balad or downtown, was created to the east of Al-Azbakiyya quarter, reaching the Nile's eastern bank. The district was designed with a road system comprising an orthogonal network connected to a star-shaped design, both of which focus on a roundabout square. It was partitioned into square chunks (2000 to 5000 square metres each), engaged by extensive townhouses that were surrounded by greenery enclosures. The edge of the Fatimid city and the Ismailiyya quarter were connected by Al-Azbakiyya garden (Elshahed, 2007).

In 1837, Mohammed Ali ordered the construction of Al-Azbakiyya garden as a promenade for Cairo's citizens and visitors from Europe, in addition to Shubrâ Boulevard. Birket Al-Azbakiyya was a lake transformed into a European Park so that the lake could be drained to improve sanitation. The Park was initially designed by Murtan Bey. Later, it was redesigned by Jean-Pierre Barillet-Deschamp, the landscape architect hired by Ismail Pasha as a road layout engineer and horticulturist. Jean-Pierre Barillet-Deschamp worked for more than ten years in the planting department of Paris and designed the Champs de Mars and Bois de Boulogne. The twenty-acre garden, Al-Azbakiyya, was one of his most important works in Egypt and "*one of the finest gardens outside Europe*" (Mostyn, 2006: p.70). The garden was modeled after Park Monceau in Paris (Andariah, 1993; Hamdy et al., 2007) and it was inaugurated by Khedive Ismail Pasha in 1872. Later, the deterioration elements adversely affected Al-Azbakiyya garden, which was not properly maintained. The size of the park extensively shrunk, losing more than 80% of its original size over time due to building constructions, urban development, and the implementation of infrastructure projects such as the Metro line. In 2014, barely four Feddans remained of their previous size.



*Figure 9: Al-Azbakiyya garden's old map. Source: NOUH*



*Figure 10: Al-Azbakiyya garden, taken by Felix Bonfils (1831–1885). Source: NOUH*

On the southern side of Al-Azbakiyya quarter, a new opera house was built, modelled after Teatro La Scala in Milan. Moreover, theatres and other ministerial buildings were established in the same neighborhood, such as Cabaret, Central Post, Fire Brigade, Mixed Courts, and Continental Hotel. Throughout the early modern period, Al-Azbakiyya was the capital's main vibrant cultural hub, taking center stage in Egyptian popular entertainment (Wiet, 1965).

### ***2.5.1 Comparison between the Khedivial Cairo urban planning model and the Parisian model***

The urban planning model of Khedivial Cairo and the Paris urban development model by Haussmann (1853–1870) exemplified a classic case of state-led modernization. Although the Khedivial Cairo plan was largely similar, in terms of planning techniques and expansion, to the Parisian model, different motivations were behind each model. On one hand, Haussmann's urban development of Paris aimed to create an "*up-to-date mid-nineteenth-century man*" (Saalman, 1971). On the other hand, it also exemplified political motives and the Empire's interests above all others. In the Parisian model, the authentic urban fabric was replaced by wide boulevards connecting key points, and large nodes (squares) were cutting through the old city fabric and demolishing whatever stood in its way.

In Downtown Cairo, the adoption of Haussmann's model reflects the Khedive's fascination with the European model in designing a blueprint for Cairo's future as a modern metropolis. The development plan was synchronized with the two most important economic events in the country's early modernization: the cotton boom of the 1860s and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. The modern planning along the banks of the Nile was copied on vacant land adjacent to the old city, west of the existing Fatimid Medieval Cairo. Modern Cairo's plan included a wide straight street network connected with squares on one side and adorned with fountains and statues. The two banks of the Nile were linked together via bridges, not boulevards streaming out from all around as the Parisian model. The establishment of Khedivial Cairo as a modern capital was one part of a dual project. The other part focused on preserving the city's medieval quarters through selective restoration. The dual project gave the city its dual identity in contrast to Haussmann's model in Paris.



Figure 11: Strong similarities between the urban fabric of Cairo and Paris, as shown in 1836 – La place de l'Étoile in Paris. Source: Paris-unplugged and Tahrir square. Source: (Kamel. 2019)



Nonetheless, the Khedive's plan for downtown Cairo as a district for Egypt's aristocracy and Europeans resulted in a form of urban disconnection. This point raised a wide debate among researchers and academics. On one hand, the neo-Marxian Abu-Lughod, in her book "Tales of Two Cities" (1960), emphasized the division and differentiation between modern downtown Cairo and the traditional old Cairo city. Stewart (1999) notes "*Cairo became divided into two realms which can be depicted as either east/west or traditional/modern, each defined in stark contrast to the other*". Volait and Bodenstein, on the other hand, confirmed the integration of the Khedivial extension of Cairo rather than its separation "*the new quarters were socially and economically more integrated with the older quarters than sometimes claimed*". (Capresi, & Pampe, 2015)

However, the establishment of Khedival Cairo as a modern global capital transformed Cairo from a medieval city to a modern metropolis; from a dark, narrow street to an energizing, wide one full of life and activities that emulated the thoroughfares of Paris (Naaman, 2011). Nevertheless, the ambitious projects increased the Egyptian debt and led to the bankruptcy of the country (Abu-Lughod, 1971: p.113). In 1862, Egypt was compelled to seek loans due to the lack of financial resources, which prevented the country from continuing its massive projects. Due to horrendous conditions, European bonds were granted in part, which led to the country's bankruptcy in 1876 and the British-French financial domination (Tunçer, 2015). Consequently, in 1879, Khedive Ismail was deposed, and British rule superseded Ottoman sovereignty in 1882. The impact of the colonization and the influx of Europeans and foreigners was clear in downtown architecture and urban spaces, which enabled a wider economic shift underneath (Mitchell, 1991).

## **2.6 British occupation 1882-1952: the cosmopolitan colony and belle époque era**

The British mindsets opened the country to a wide array of imperial experiences that turned the city into a cosmopolitan city more connected to the international economic system. After a military coup in 1879, the United Kingdom bombed Alexandria and the occupation army landed at the Suez Canal, staying in the country until 1954. For more than half a century, Egypt was a form of English court under Ottoman authority. The Cairene style of life at that time was influenced by the West. The city was more open to Western culture than before (Shafik & Salma, 2020). Modernization was driven by the city's elite, who reaped both economic and political benefits from these developments. According to Wahaba (1990), these features of modern life can be depicted as follows:

*Department stores, guarded by mustachioed Albanian porters with their "fustanellas" and high boots ... here French and English bookstores, tearooms and Parisian-style cafes (of which only Groppi's achieved international repute) were interspersed with clothing stores, milliners, art galleries, clubs for the rich, banks... here Europeans, rich Egyptians, and Levantines of every class did their shopping, conducted business in their offices, and sipped coffee*

Three groups controlled Egyptian development before the outbreak of World War I: the ruling elite, metropolitan capital represented in European individuals and enterprises, and the British political and military establishment (Tignor, 1984: p.8). Since 1882, the British military presence in Cairo has not contributed to any of Cairo's architectural or urban development. Despite the lack of the British footprint on downtown construction process during the Protectorate period of 1882 to 1922, downtown Cairo evolved into its current form. The considerable public interventions by the British authorities were evident in the improvement of street networks and infrastructure, and the accomplishment of one of the largest sewage and drainage projects in Cairo (1907-1915). During the rule of Lord Cromer, Ismailiyya district became a business and entertainment hub, a self-contained colonial city for Egypt's emerging and rapidly expanding middle class. Sulayman Pasha Street, Qasr al-Nil Street, along with Fouad Street formed the perimeter of the neighbourhood that had been developed with extensive urban qualities by the turn of the twentieth century.

British forces during World War I depleted Egypt's national resources, which fueled anti-British sentiment and eventually led to the Egyptian Revolution of 1919, resulting in Egypt's partial independence from Britain (El Kadi, 2012). The 1919 revolution and the first elected government's reforms in 1924 had a significant impact on downtown Cairo due to the accessibility of ordinary Egyptians to the area, and the increase in economic activity. This period lasted until it reached its peak in World War II with Europeans escaping war in Egypt, especially Cairo and Alexandria (Arnaud, 1993). The Egyptian economy began to be dominated by the local industrial and commercial bourgeoisie between World War I and World War II. The formalization of land administration and the privatization policies (Arnaud & Depaule, 2008) enabled foreign investments to flock to Egypt and establish themselves in profitable enterprises (Tignor, 1984). Investors from the private sector subsequently regained confidence, and Egypt became once again the target of European investments looking for large returns. Building societies rose to prominence, and the century ended with a construction boom that culminated in Egypt's first stock market collapse.

The bourgeoisie class (Tignor, 1984) that included foreigners, the wealthy Egyptian elite and their private capitals were behind the construction and real estate boom in downtown Cairo, capitalizing on the rapid rise of land value. They supported the expansion, and the development of many other residential districts close to downtown Cairo like Garden City, Maadi and Heliopolis. The Nile Land & Agricultural Company owned by Frantz Sofio, Charles Bacos, and George Maksud built the Garden City area, while Heliopolis district was developed in 1905 by the Belgian industrialist Baron Empain (Shafik & Salma, 2020). These new developments led to new types of class segregation. Later, the modern foreign urban model and the contemporary European architectural patterns have spread in the Egyptian society via the middle class. Due to the existence of the British Barracks along the Nile at the edge of the city's downtown area as well as the hotels, bars, banks, cabarets and cinemas, Khedivial Cairo, was widely considered as a major colonial hub. Indeed, the only people who benefited from the economic and political reforms were the foreign expats, the aristocrats, and the affluent Egyptians.



## 2.7 Khedivial Cairo: A Hub for Cultural and Artistic Activity

Modern Cairo, as we previously explained, reflected the political orientation of Khedive Ismail. The urban transformation of Cairo is aimed at creating a new image for the modern capital. The construction of this image included the creation of an aesthetic environment and architectural transformation. The erection of new places for culture and entertainment attracted new social classes and helped in forming new identities. As part of the city's rapid modernization efforts in 1868 and 1869, a bevy of theaters and other venues for public entertainment were built. Pavlos (Paul, Paolino) Draneht or Draneht Bey<sup>15</sup> was the supervisor of Khedivial theatres. In 1868, Khedive Ismail commissioned a Théâtre de la Comédie (Théâtre Français), and it was inaugurated with the Offenbach-opera on 4 January 1869 (Sadgrove, 1996). The Khedivial Opera House, a small-scale replica of the renowned La Scala Opera House in Milan designed by the Italian contractor and ornamentist Pietro Avoscani, opened on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1869. In 1902, the National Egyptian Museum of Antiquities was inaugurated as the first building in the world to be specifically constructed as a museum. Since that time, downtown Cairo has become a favorable destination for local and foreign visitors. On December 21, 1908, the National University of Egypt was opened in the northern section of al-Isma'iliyya square. In 1919, after being bought by a board of trustees including multiple American groups, the institution changed its name to the American University in Cairo (Meital, 2007). All the major art galleries and artists' studios, the greatest photographic studios, and the most famous modern Egyptian and international bookshops were established in downtown. Emad al-Din Street later became a hub for theatrical performances. As Egypt's film industry grew, Terzo movie theatres began popping up all over the area, along with first-class cinemas. According to Ryzova (2005), "*Cabarets and cinemas along Emad El-Din Street, the city's prime entertainment district, catered to a variety of audiences, including provincial youth visiting the brothels on its fringes; and of course, many a middling youth, efendi student from near or far, came here simply to wander, window shop and check out the next movie on lobby cards*" (Ryzova ,2005: P.9). In addition, downtown and its vicinity are home to the headquarters of a large number of cultural, artistic, and scientific institutions, such as the Institut d'Egypte and the Geographical Society at the southern entrance of Ismailiyya Square (Currently Tahrir Square). The Fine Arts Appreciation Society headquarters was set up in the center of Khedival Cairo, then later moved to Garden City. Moreover, the Egyptian Automobile Club and Muhammad Ali Club were located on the northern side of downtown.

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<sup>15</sup> From 1867 until 1879

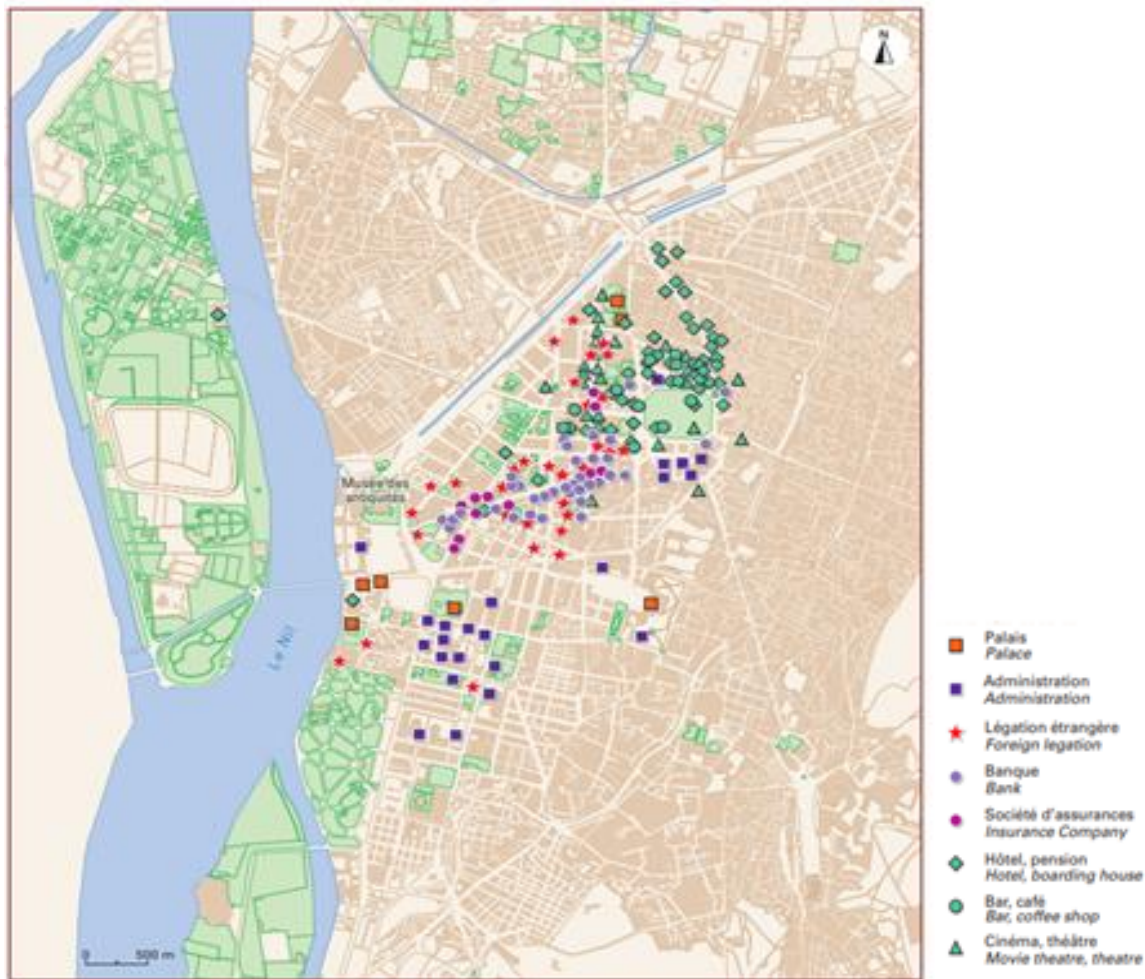


Figure 13: Downtown Cairo in 1914-1920. Source: (El- Kadi, 2012)

## 2.8 Deterioration of Khedivial Cairo

There have been far-reaching implications for Egypt's economy as well as social and cultural life since the 1952 coup d'état that overthrew the kingdom and replaced it with a republic in its place. The Free Officer's Coup d'Etat in 1952 was followed by the implementation of the nationalization program and Nasser's decolonization policies which sought a modern industrial vision to form the Egyptian identity and advocated social rights. This vision was embodied in the state taking control of a large number of privately held businesses and structures, especially in the downtown area. In addition, the process of centralization expanded the city master plan and was followed by structural shifts among the population and cultural alteration towards socialism. Particularly, downtown Cairo has undergone frequent changes due to political shifts. Hence, a dramatic transformation significantly impacted the socioeconomic dynamic in downtown. This time marked the beginning of the district's gradual deterioration, which accelerated throughout the 1970s. Since then, the district has started to lose its finely polished urban qualities. As the novelist Sonallah

Ibrahim in Dhât (1992) puts it, the degradation was not only for structures and buildings but for the public open space-goings along with the social strata who used.

Downtown Cairo was predominantly inhabited by upper-class Egyptians and foreigners, and the cost of renting an apartment was quite high. According to Raymond (1977/ 2000), in Tawfîqqiya<sup>16</sup> in 1927, 62.34% of the population was made up of foreigners. However, many foreigners and Egyptian bourgeois were either forcefully deported or persuaded to leave Egypt as a result of the political change (Abu-Lughod, 2004). Army officers and other middle-class families have taken over the aristocracy and the foreigners' properties and replaced them (AlSayyad, 2011). The displacement of the original inhabitants and their replacement by those whose social, economic, and cognitive values were incongruous with the area's cultural context negatively affected downtown Cairo. The exodus of a large part of the foreign community caused a huge change in the social configuration and contributed to further degradation in the quality of the urban space, as a result of the burgeoning local community's shifting uses. According to Abaza (2011: p. 1081), *"The city of Cairo teaches us that its changing elites have often moved from decaying districts to new areas, leaving behind their run-down derelict spaces"*. Furthermore, the construction of new districts at the same time, such as al-Mohandessin in the west and Nasser City to the east attracted many of the upper-middle class residents of downtown who were drawn to these new urban developments (Alsayyad, 2011). Some scholars included El Kadi (2012), considered the intellectual elite's departure from downtown Cairo in the 1960s as a decline of society, even while numerous banks, insurance firms, restaurants, coffee shops, and movie theatres continued to call Cairo's central business district home. In addition, Nasser's socialist ideology produced several laws aimed at reducing and controlling rents in order to protect low-income tenants on the one hand, and to abolish the existing aristocratic classes' private property privileges (El-Kazaz, 2018), on the other hand. These laws were advanced for more than 20 years (1952-1974) until Sadat's reign. As a result, rent-controlled properties in central Cairo experienced a lot of drawbacks, and many of them have become dilapidated from a lack of maintenance.

Post-colonial nationalism's socialist state became more accessible to the world economy under Sadat's liberalization policy (infitah) between 1970 and 1981. Sadat's policy endeavored to *"improve the public sector's efficiency and to liberalize the economy, giving the private sector more room for productive activity"* (Khan, 1985: p. 93). Therefore, the policies of Sadat *"privileged the gaze of tourists and upper-class Egyptians"* (Ghannam, 2002: pp. 30-31). Additionally, it provided a new channel for profit-driven private investment in Cairo's urban development and infrastructure projects.

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<sup>16</sup> One of downtown Cairo streets

The new economic policy was associated with the emergence of new social strata identified as the new bourgeoisie or riches of the Infitah who chose to place themselves comfortably elsewhere away from downtown Cairo. However, several different types of informal housing have sprung up throughout the city as a result of the shrinking role of the government in providing essential public services (El Kadi, 2012). From 1976 to 2006, due to urban transformation and decline, the residents continued to move out from the district to other areas, and more than 1.5 million residents left downtown causing it severe deterioration (Abdelhadi et al, 2009). According to El Kadi (2012, p.95), *“Short of overall rehabilitation, it was evident that the centre of the east bank [Khedival Cairo] could not serve as a showcase for the liberal post-1973 era”*.

From the 1980s onward, the urban expansion of Cairo began to spread beyond the core part of the east bank's initial settlement marked by colonial genuflection and historical constraints, rapidly toward the west and north. On the outskirts of the city, new, affluent communities have been developed in the desert, far from the declined and overcrowded inner-city, to facilitate the *"productive redistribution of the population"* (El Shakry, 2009) instead of revitalizing the existing urban fabric. Until this point, government initiatives and real estate developers had little to no impact on the downtown area. Nevertheless, private citizens, business owners, locals, and other non-governmental entities were largely responsible for the majority of downtown's-built environment modifications. Since then, downtown Cairo has been transformed from an affluent residential area into a business and shopping district for working classes.

Although it is not considered a permanent residence, the area where commercial activities, offices, banks, theatres, and restaurants are located is attractive to expatriates in search of work. In this context, downtown Cairo and its surrounding areas had a very high rate of rural outflow during the 1940s and 1950s, as downtown was a perfect location for both employment possibilities and leisure activities. Later, downtown's former food storage rooftop cabins have been converted into housing for the impoverished. Ma'ruf, northwest of downtown, is a clear illustration of how migrants took over the area and turned it into a squatter settlement and a crucial retail district for the underprivileged (Naaman, 2011). According to demographic data from the most recent census, this region has been losing residents over the past three decades. Insurance companies started to own a large number of properties, many of which are vacant. Abaza (2011) depicts the transformation that Wist al-Balad witnessed as follows:

*“Wist al-Balad [Downtown ] has seen such rapid decay in recent decades that nothing can be worse than the bitter present. In other words, today's centre looks like a slum. Façades and public spaces such as corridors, floors and steps have become visually chaotic with advertisements, cables, bursting air conditioners and so on.”* (p. 1081)



## 2.9 Khedival Cairo' Borders

According to the National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH), Khedivial Cairo includes Ismaili Cairo and Tawfiqia Cairo. The area covers about (6 km<sup>2</sup>) on the eastern bank of the Nile. It is the area between Tahrir Square in the west, passing through Al-Jalaa Street and Ramses Square in the north, Clot Bey Street to Ataba Square in the east, Abdel Aziz Street until Ahmed Maher Square, then Hassan Al-Akbar Street and Abdeen Square, Al-Qasr Al-Aini Street and Sheikh Rehan Street, all the way to Tahrir Square. Muhammad Ali Street is also affiliated to the region.

Northern border: It starts from behind Misr station, heading West on Al-Gomrok Street, then Al-Azbekiya Police Street, then Al-Galaa Street until Abdel Moneim Riad Square, all the way to the Nile Corniche.

Western border: It starts from the intersection of the Nile Corniche with Abdel Moneim Riyad Square, all the way to Sheikh Riham Street, then Al Qasr Al Aini Street, to Dr. Handoussa Street, then the Nile Corniche again to Foum Al Khaleej Square.

Southern border: Foum Al Khaleej Square.

Eastern border: It starts from the Gulf Square in the south, then heads north on Al Sadd Al Barani Street, then Nasiriyah Street, Abdeen Mosque Street, Hassan Al Akbar Street, then the facades of Muhammad Ali Street, the facades of Al Jaish Street until Al Rowai'i lane, the facades of Clot Bey Street, all the way to the Misr station again. Khedivial Cairo, according to the World Heritage Site (UNESCO), Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), and National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH), is made up of five districts (El-Azbakeya, Abdin, Qasr el-Nil, El-Mosky, and Part of El Sayda Zeinab).

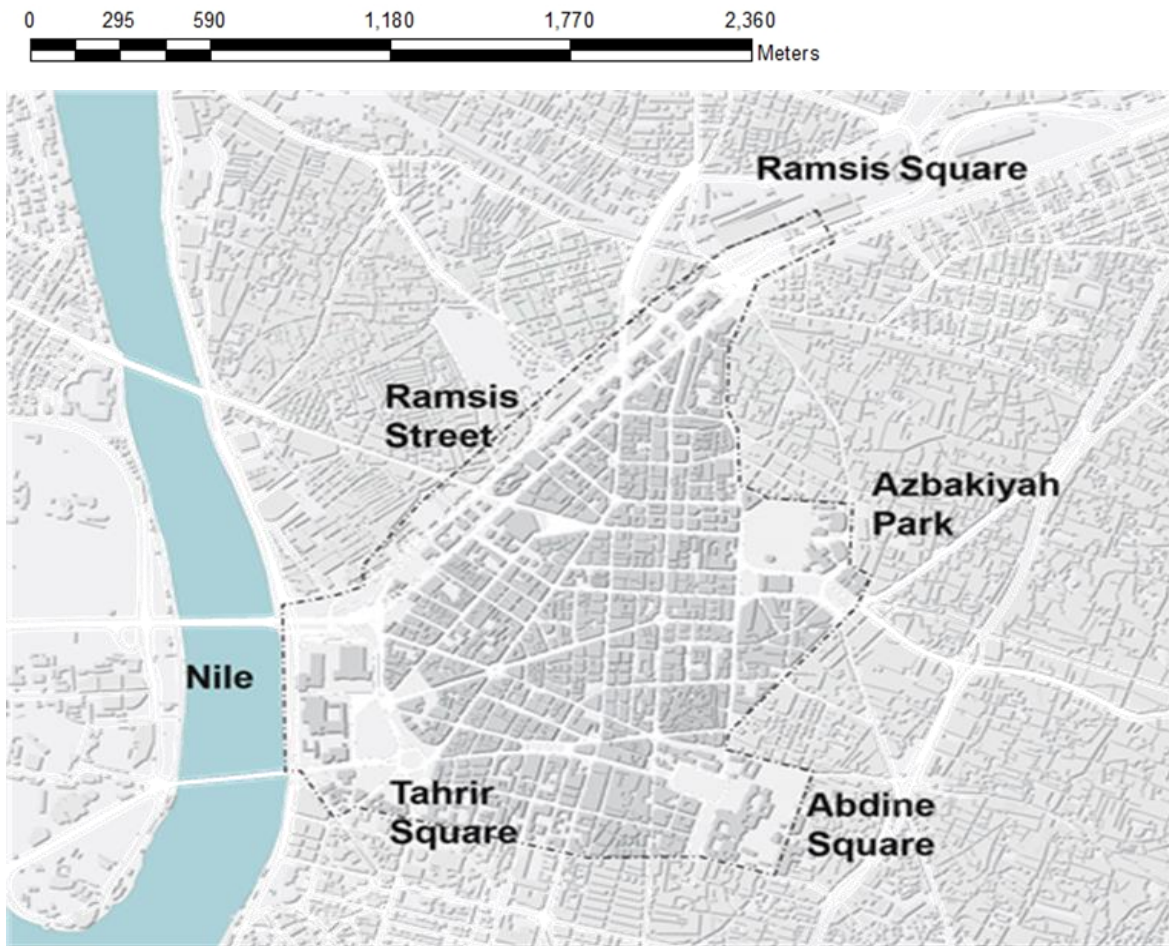


Figure 14: Khedivial Cairo borders. Source: Cairo governorate

## 2.10 Monitoring the General Urban Character of the Study Area



Figure 15: Main urban patterns in downtown Cairo. Source: (Ana33, 2010)

A map of downtown Cairo shows three main urban forms: 1. Radial Structure; 2. Grid Iron Structure; 3. Organic Structure. For each pattern, the built form varies from one area to the other.

1-The square's corner buildings are a notable feature.

2- Formerly vast palace plots have been subdivided across the area.

3-There are six to eight-story buildings in the region with radiational courtyards still visible and functioning as semi-public areas.

The city's skyline provides a useful perspective on the area's general qualities. The average height of the buildings is between six and eight floors only. There have been a few notable exceptions in the last few years where buildings have been raised to a maximum of twelve stories in height or more. It is observed that the majority of the structures have a land size of at least 2000 square metres. Regarding the rhythm of the openings in the facades, it meticulously manifests the types of construction that were used in its construction era, such as load-bearing walls and stone masonry...etc. The architectural styles of the buildings were varied. Some of the buildings followed one style, while others combined several styles, such as Classic, Late Classic & Neo- Classic, Baroque & Neo- Baroque, Renaissance, Art Deco, Art Nouveau or Jugendstil, Islamic, Expressionist, and Tucson, etc. The European style was prevalent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and the structures at that time exemplified that style. The buildings exhibited the lavish use of decorative elements, such as elaborative capitals of columns and domes that topped the buildings and, in particular, the corners of the buildings. It also highlighted the various and distinct treatments of the building ends.

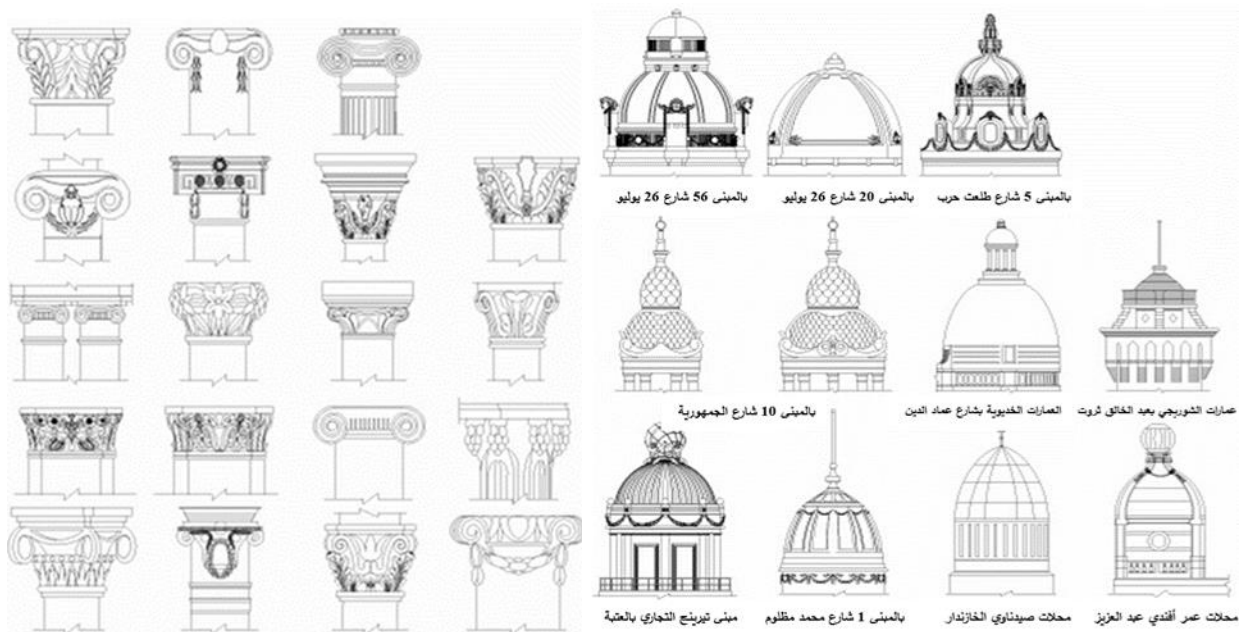


Figure 16: Some of Cairo downtown buildings' ornamentation: Source: NOUH

The downtown area has been a home to a variety of functional and economic buildings, including local and foreign banks, the stock exchange, large retail establishments, the High Court, and other administrative structures, such as the Tahrir Complex as well as a large number of entertainment venues, such as theaters and cinemas. Currently, most of the ground levels of downtown buildings hold various forms of commercial activities, while the buildings' upper floors often house a mixture of small hotels, storage spaces for commercial activities on the ground level, offices, residences, and vacant units. The quality of the buildings' façades has deteriorated due to extensive modifications with improper materials and aggressive signage for upper-story offices, which have undermined the buildings' appearance.

When it comes to the public space in downtown Cairo, the informal economy also hastened the fast destruction of various structures and the public spaces that had been designed for the cultural and elite bourgeois (Sabour & Luoni, 2013). Shawarbi Street, among other places in downtown Cairo, became a hotspot for illegal commodities from cities like Port Said, which were free-trade zones during the Infitah (Ryzova, 2013). As a result, vendors started squatting in the passageways and corridors between buildings, and residential apartments were transformed into offices (El Kadi, 2012). The proliferation of inexpensive retail outlets replaced high-end boutiques that once served and targeted selective clientele and the elite. Regardless of the lack of aesthetic harmony, these shops attracted a crowd of window-lickers and strollers from the poorest to the lower middle class. Additionally, traditional Baladi bars, which were authorized to sell alcoholic beverages, were popular in downtown throughout the 1970s and 1980s, catering to the popular class and tourists.

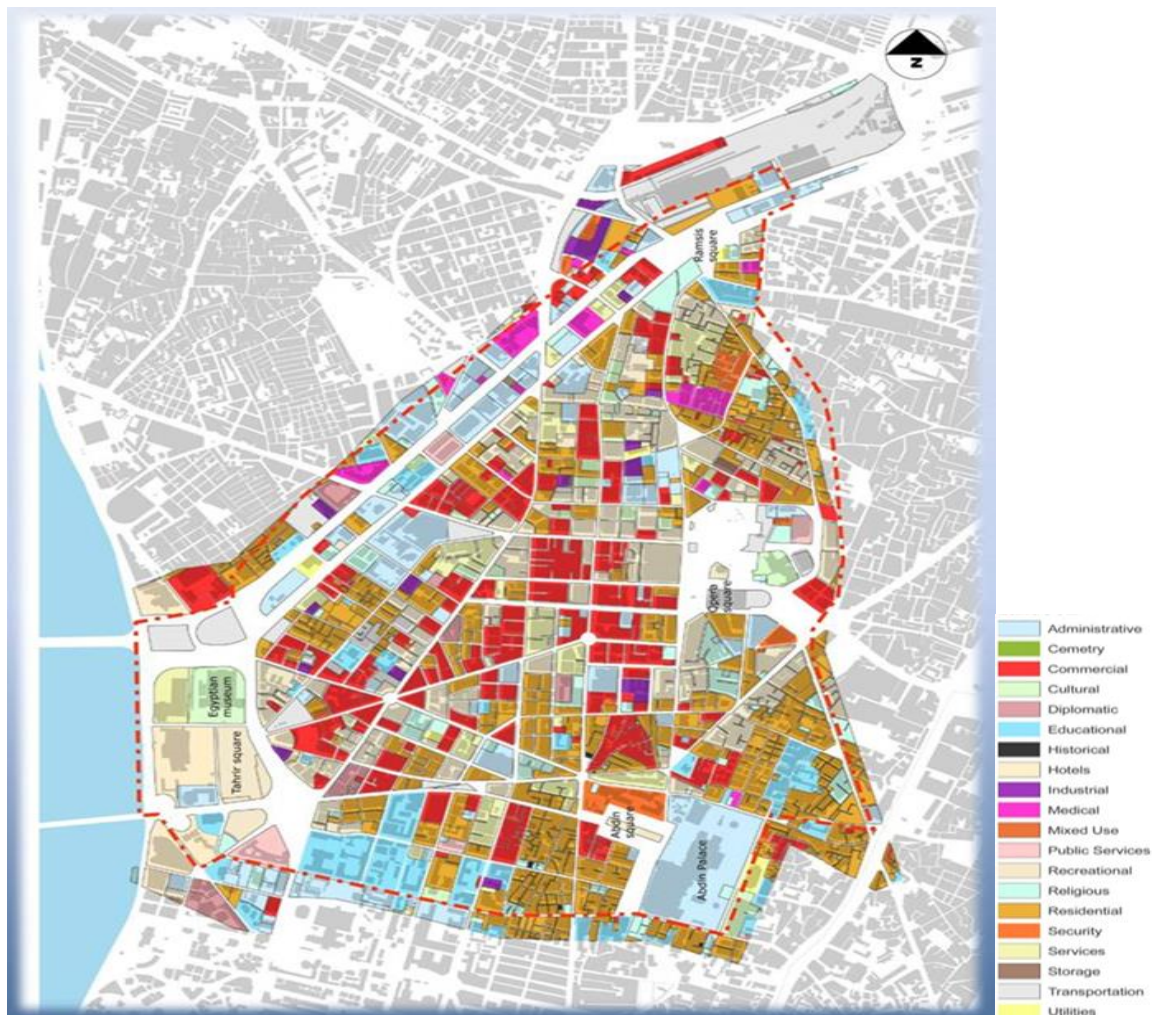


Figure 17: Downtown Cairo different usages. Source: Cairo Governorate

Based on Al-Ismailia Company for Real Estate (2011) evaluation study, by 2006, downtown Cairo has seen substantial alterations. The quick change has been primarily manifested in a considerable drop in residential stock converted to offices and the quality of retail uses that have switched to a mass market. In addition, the neighborhood has become an informal market frequented by individuals from lower socioeconomic strata because of the presence of a number of technical professions in the area. Downtown Cairo, as Abaza (2011) described, “hosts a significant part of informal-sector activities, cheap food, vegetable, fruit and second-hand open markets (in the bazaar style), mobile stalls, cheap entertainment and leisure spaces” (p.1079).



Figure 18: Deteriorated areas in downtown Cairo. Source: (ANA33, 2010)

A rapid increase in population was accompanied by an increase in the number of people using the district at the same time owing to a broad variety of activities, resulting in traffic congestion (Braker, 2016). This had an impact on accessibility of the neighborhood and the pedestrian experience for locals and visitors alike.

*Taxi drivers often shun taking you there, anticipating traffic jams despite the wide boulevards designed on a grid like pattern. Walking on foot, one can hardly navigate a path between street vendors who push pedestrians onto the road (Ryzova, 2015, p.1).*

In spite of the radial grid of streets, the rapid increase in traffic flow as a result of dismantling the tramway network and the prioritization of automobile traffic over pedestrian mobility has created a serious congestion problem. Based on the 2002 research undertaken by the Ministry of Housing, Utilities, and Urban Communities, it was impossible to estimate precisely the traffic volumes in downtown Cairo due to the shifting lanes of automobiles on most streets during the previous years and up to the present. Specifically, traffic problems have been highly associated with Attaba Square, Abdin Squares, Claude Beih and Mohamed Ali streets.

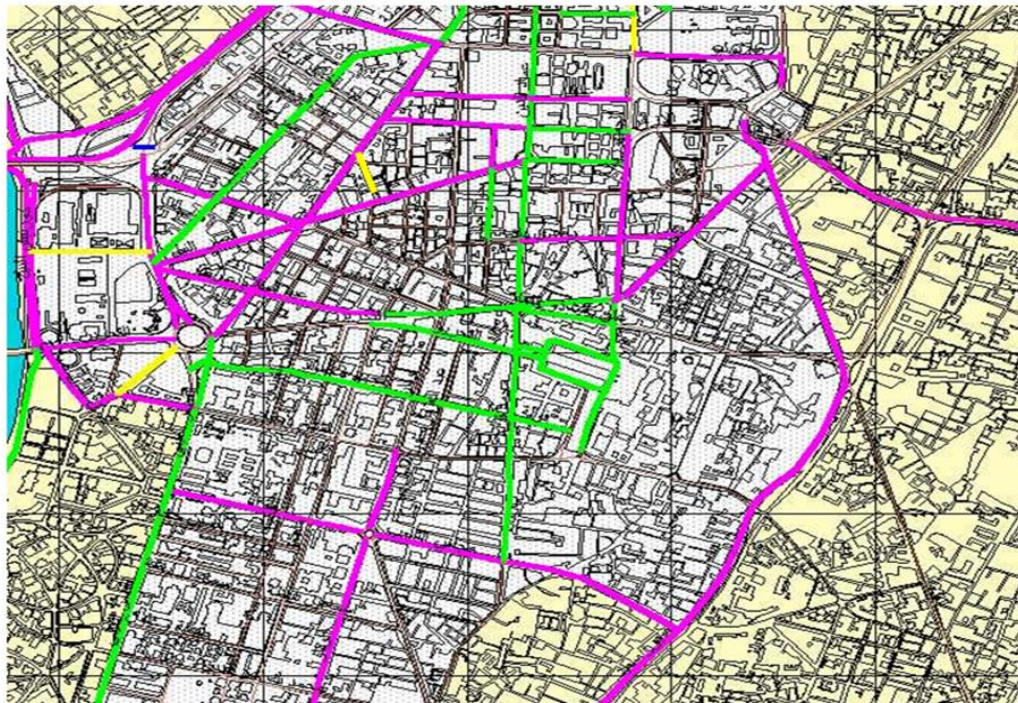


Figure 19:: Downtown Cairo's Traffic study. Source: Regional Center for Urban Development Planning for the Greater Cairo Region

heavy traffic, medium traffic, light traffic, pedestrian

### 2.10.1 Mobility system

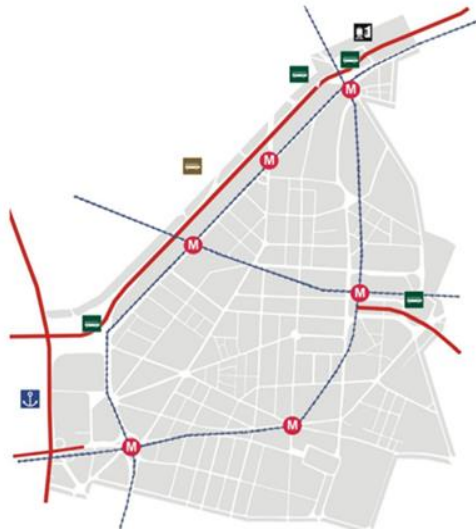


Figure 20: Downtown Cairo's transportation modes. Source: (KHE10, 2010) (Downtown Cairo official competition)

- Two metro lines (the completion of Line 3 - will increase the attractiveness and centrality of Khedive's Cairo)
- Lack of safety and comfort conditions of support infrastructures for surface public transport
- Lack of coordination between networks and operators
- Widespread use of public transportation as the primary mode of transportation (50 %)
- High percentage of pedestrian transit (30%)
- Absence of a continuous, safe, and inclusive network for pedestrians.

To conclude,

the central city enjoys a particular sense of place, it is a mixture of Mediterranean, medieval, and touristic attractions that still survive despite the rapid urbanism in the past decades. Downtown Cairo has been the city's economic, retail, and entertainment hub since its inception. The richness of the built environment in downtown Cairo stemmed from the distinctive architectural heritage representing the very best of the Bell Époque era, which combined European styles with local influences and materials, an essential part of the place's identity. Downtown Cairo has experienced a steady decline after the military revolution in 1952, marking the end of downtown Cairo's Golden era. The district has been witnessing multiple transformations, especially in the socioeconomic structure of its dwellers and visitors. The affluent neighborhood has been converted into a chaotic region overrun by street vendors as well as bustling traffic. Downtown Cairo's potential for economic vibrancy, cultural inspiration, and public wealth has been extinguished by a long-term lack of investment in the built environment and demographic out-migration. After falling into disrepair, the region was rediscovered by the Egyptian government in the 1990s and some private developers, who saw an opportunity to revitalize many of the area's abandoned urban enclaves. Their goal was to gentrify some of its vital zones through a variety of activities.



## Part One Conclusion

Based on literature review, over the past few decades, neoliberal theories have considerably influenced the political sphere. Neoliberal ideas have spread over time and space fluidly and re-colonize territories while being re-formulated and regurgitated. Consequently, it is challenging to disentangle the impact of market forces, notably in the real estate market, from the speed-up regeneration of deteriorating inner-city neighborhoods. Gentrification, as Wyly, Hammel (2001), and Smith (2002) argued in their definition of "neoliberal urbanism," is one of its fundamental characteristics. For Hackworth (2007: p.123), gentrification is "*a revealing window into much broader processes like neoliberalism*". Governmental policy and gentrification are strongly correlated. Through gentrification, which Tsing (2000) referred to as a process of "scale-making" on a global scale, neoliberal governmentality has been reconfigured into a hegemonic framework for "revitalization" (Foucault 1997; Brown 2015). Smith and Williams (1986) claimed that gentrification was not just the result of natural tendencies and market forces but also a product of government policies influenced by powerful pro-development agendas.

In many Arab countries in the MENA region, neoliberalism has been the prevailing ideology, mainly focused on urban development that is oriented toward the market, commercialization, privatization, and short-term profits. Large-scale urban development initiatives in Arab cities in historic and urban heritage center reflect the globalization of urban neoliberalism. As a result of their focus on well-off tourists, investors, and politicians, these projects were widely hailed for their potential to reinforce the country's international profile. As a corollary, these developments paved the way for real estate conglomerates to rise to power. That's why we call it "gentrification," because of the drastic changes it causes to a neighborhood's heritage and architecture and urban morphology. The revitalization of Khedivial Cairo is also a clear paradigmatic case of how neoliberal and post-political trends are ushering in a profit-based policy regime and gentrification that influences the urban development and restructuring of cities.

## **Part Two**

### **Neoliberalism And The Onset Of Gentrification**

#### **Khedivial Cairo First Gentrification Wave**

##### **(The Introduction Phase)**

## Part Two Introduction

Since the 1952 revolution, Egypt's economy has seen several significant shifts. The implementation of several economic policies significantly impacted socio-cultural domains, economic growth, and urban development. For example, between 1961 and 1964, President Gamal Abdel Nasser applied large-scale nationalization programs to strengthen the Egyptian economy to establish solid welfare programs for achieving "*social justice, progress and development, and dignity*" (Osman, 2011: p. 52). Nasser's era, as Cox (2015: p.2) claimed, "*closely followed Keynesian economic theory, which asserted the necessary role of the state in providing equal access to employment and welfare programs amongst citizens*. However, President Sadat (1970 to 1981) chose the Weberian state model (El-Mahdi & Marfleet, 2009), as an attempt at market-based development, to dissolve state ownership by adopting *infitah* (opening) policy rather than the corporatism that was implemented by Nasser's regime (Ateş et al., 2006). The partial liberalizing of imports, enacting private investment legislation, and implementing IMF stabilization packages were all part of this policy. With the implementation of Sadat's policies, the administrative system leaned more toward capitalism. These changes have resulted in an influx of new large indigenous businesses, and notably a few dominant market actors that account for a relatively high proportion of production, employment, investment, taxation, bank loans, and exports. This significant shift in economic policies, as Mitchell (2002) claimed, triggered Egypt's economic policy shift due to the lack of faith in socialism and harsh economic conditions under Sadat.

After the assassination of President Sadat, President Mubarak chose to avoid any controversial liberalization or restructuring measures. In the 1980s, Egypt faced a severe economic crisis resulting from the decline in oil revenues, income from the Suez Canal, and the level of Egyptian migrant workers' remittances, which increased the foreign and national debt. The Egyptian government could not deal with external debt, which reached around a 45million dollars (Soliman, 2011: p. 62) and the resulting increase in financial strain and budget deficit. As a result, Egyptian policymakers recommenced their call for market-based growth in the early 1990s. Following Egypt's participation in the Kuwait war in 1990 and 1991, the regime agreed to a new International Monetary Fund (IMF) stabilization package, including a generous debt-relief scheme (Ikram, 2007: p. 150). The goal of this debt-relief scheme was to push Egypt toward neoliberalism and restructure its economy according to market-led development (Ikram, 2007).

In 1991, President Mubarak started to align the state economy along neoliberal lines as a political rationale through a series of adjustments based on the US Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Program (ERSAP) driven by the Washington Consensus (Williamson, 1990),<sup>17</sup> to ensure the smooth functioning of the free market. Economic policy suggestions for developing nations, as outlined by the Washington Consensus, include

<i><b>Fiscal discipline:</b> strict criteria for limiting budgets;</i>
<i><b>Public expenditure priorities:</b> away from subsidies and administration towards 'neglected fields with high economic returns...'</i>
<i><b>Tax reform:</b> broadening the tax base and cutting marginal tax rates</i>
<i><b>Financial liberalization:</b> interest rates should be ideally market-determined</i>
<i><b>Exchange rates:</b> should be managed to induce rapid growth in nontraditional exports</i>
<i><b>Trade liberalization:</b> tariffs not quotas, and declining tariffs to around 10 per cent within 10 years</i>
<i><b>Foreign direct investment:</b> no barriers and 'equality' with domestic firms</i>
<i><b>Privatization:</b> state enterprises should be privatized</i>
<i><b>Deregulation:</b> abolition of 'regulations that impede the entry of new firms or restrict competition' ...</i>
<i><b>Property rights:</b> secure rights without excessive costs and available to the informal sector</i>

Economic, political, and social policies in many Arab countries in the Middle East region are increasingly determined and enforced by supranational monetary institutions such as the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Bank for Development and Reconstruction. Implementing neoliberal policy demands the active participation of influential actors and organizations. Hence, governments have grown worried about how foreign investors see them due to the impact of credit rating agencies, which IFIs used to assess a government's viability based on debt service commitments and internal reforms. These loan packages are meant to guarantee that governments carry out the changes stipulated by the IFI.

Privatization of PSEs and SOEs, pricing and trade liberalization, more malleable labor regulations, and the elimination of social programs were all part of Egypt's economic adjustment program (Ikram, 2006: p. 61). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) frequently mentioned its approval and satisfaction with former prime minister Ahmed Nazif's "open market" policies between 2004 and 2010. (Enders, 2008). Western funders and donors commended President Hosni Mubarak for

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<sup>17</sup> Drafted by John Williamson in 1989 and later used to exemplify US policy through Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs).

implementing neoliberal reform policies and restoring Egypt's economic prosperity (Osman, 2011: p.57). The World Bank (2007) declared Egypt the "world's top reformer" for four consecutive years. Neoliberalism as pro-business policy in Egypt incubated new capitalists, financial speculators and real estate developers who became Mubarak's protected network. During the 1990s, a small number of corporate owners and families dominated important sectors, accumulated considerable wealth and capital, and owned huge portions of the private sector's output, employment, and investment. There has been a plethora of incentives, preferential access to resources, and exemptions granted to large Egyptian enterprises for decades under the banner of promoting investment and supporting the private sector. Since the late 1990s, these huge firms have benefited from tax advantages and hefty subsidies for energy, exports, and land acquisition.

Downtown Cairo's socio-economic and cultural dynamic changed significantly after introducing neoliberal policies. The neoliberal policy impacted the art and culture scene, the architectural heritage of downtown Cairo and urban regeneration schemes. The emergence of the contemporary art scene and the efforts of independent artists initiated the gentrification process in downtown Cairo. As a result of the recent resurgence of nostalgia for an imagined bygone "Golden Age" of cultural refinement and international interest in the hitherto unappreciated monarchy and colonial period, downtown Cairo's modern heritage has been valorized since the 1990s. The engagement of governmental and private sector actors and widespread media coverage speed up the momentum of change and the heritagization process. As part of the strategic urban development plan based on the "Greater Cairo 2050" vision, the historical and heritage centers, including downtown Cairo, were also intended to develop and revitalize. These aspects are investigated in conjunction with their contributions to the neighborhood's regeneration process when considering gentrification in the area. It can be understood that the adoption of neoliberal policies in Egypt was a major player in the emergence of the early waves of gentrification in downtown Cairo.

### **3 Chapter Three: Neoliberalism & Emergence of Cairo's Contemporary Art Scene**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In the first half of the last century, downtown Cairo became a center of culture and entertainment. The proliferation of trendy cafes, bars, restaurants, cinemas, art galleries, bookstores, and exhibition halls led to the establishment of downtown Cairo as the epicenter of Egypt's intellectual, artistic, and political scene. In the late 1960s, several distinct social subcultures began to form in the city center, creating a more dynamic and diverse space. The older generation of artists and writers used downtown social spaces as a "*de facto cultural institution*" (Ryzova, 2015: p. 37). Since the 1970s, downtown Cairo has been progressively degrading, yet this has given the neighborhood and its distinctive architecture a fading bohemian charm that is favored by its believers. The literary bohemian movement in downtown Cairo provided a counterpoint to state-owned cultural institutions and official space. In contrast with Egypt's tumultuous political events, the counterculture of intellectuals and artists emerged to challenge the official narrative of prevailing state institutions. Downtown Cairo's cafes and galleries, such as Cairo Atelier and Mashrabia, were the center of resistance and played a significant role in downtown Cairo's attractiveness.

In the 1990s, the implementation of neoliberal policy and major economic reforms led to the extensive expansion of private-sector art institutions, markets, and the promotion of neoliberal artistic subjectivity. The flow of artists as neo-bohemians to downtown Cairo was fueled by the central location and lower rents as a result of the declining physical condition of its buildings. In the middle of downtown Cairo's hectic activity, artists found inspiration in the authenticity and aesthetic value of the city's cultural heritage. Since the late 1990s, downtown Cairo has become increasingly popular with the respectable social class, including intellectuals, artists, and academics, as a bohemian bourgeois enclave. The creative initiatives of the counterculture pioneers and artists who carved out their own cultural characteristics in the urban environment, nooks, and decaying buildings sparked initial gentrification in downtown Cairo. This can be explained by what is known as prototypical "marginal" gentrifiers, in which artists, authors, political activists, musicians, students, and groups such as the LGBT community move into a core neighborhood for its affordability, despite the dangers of rehabilitating the decaying property. This often occurs in the early stages of gentrification and plays an important role in the subsequent gentrification process. By creating an attractive vibrancy scene, the creative arts and cultural scene have a quantitatively significant effect in predicting future gentrification spots.

### 3.2 Egyptian Intellectuals and Downtown Cairo Historic Cafés

The cultural heart of Cairo lies within its cafés, where many Egyptian intellectuals and literary figures were all part of Egypt's underground political movement at some point. Namman (2011) demonstrates that downtown coffee shops serve as a cultural hub for a broad spectrum of people. The deterioration of downtown Cairo as the residential and commercial hub in the last third of the twentieth century invited generations of Cairene literati, artists, and political activists to gather in downtown cafes, bars, and restaurants that developed as popular hangouts (Ryzova, 2015). The *Effendiyya*, a modern anti-colonial nationalist movement, negotiated the urban spaces of downtown Cairo in these venues, which served as a vital disputed site also along with other social groups in 2011.

There were numerous social, political, and cultural institutions established in downtown in the first half of the twentieth century that were affiliated with political and partisan groups, including the Socialist Group and the Leftist and Wafdist Movement, among others. In addition, there was a slew of artistic institutions on Emad al-Din Street, some of which are still surviving, including the theatre of Najeeb al-Rihani and Sayed Darwish. Thus, several cafes sprung up in and around downtown and were strongly associated with both the neighborhood's political and cultural organizations. Many books, including "Tales of a Katkoot Coffee" by Mahmoud Al-Saadani, "Cultural Cafes in the World" by Kamel Rehome, and "Cafes of Literature and Art in Cairo" by Abdel-Moneim Shames, featured these cultural cafes as an important chapter or main title.

Cafes in Cairo, particularly those in downtown, are frequented spaces of political dissent and intellectual insurrection. Suleiman Pasha Street is home to several cafés, including the Sphinx Café, which was open until the 1980s, as well as "Cubism," "Souk Al-Hamidiyah," "Nile Valley," and "Zahrat Al-Bustan". Many notable people frequented Ataba's Al-Bousta, or "Matatia," café, including Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, known for his creative dance and literary readings. This café as Hamdi Abu Jalil mentioned, played a significant role in the 1919 revolution before being subsequently demolished (Abu Hmila, 2019). The Izzy-Veitch Café in Tahrir Square was a popular hangout for intellectuals and artists alike from the 1940s until the 1970s, however it was eventually replaced by a car dealership. The golden age of the Café was during the period between the years 1957 and 1974. In the 1940s, middle- and lower-class Egyptian youth flocked to the café, looking for a place to discuss their social and political concerns. Several Egyptian historians attest that this café, served as a seedbed for the Revolution of 1952 since many of its patrons were politically involved during rallies, most notably in the year 1942. The Café continued to play a pivotal role during the Student Movement in 1971 against Sadat's government decisions regarding Israel. Security forces attempted to encircle the student movement and intercept them within the campus boundaries, resulting in students fleeing to other spaces, such as the Izzy-Veitch Café. They conducted marches to the Café while chanting patriotic slogans. Among the Cafe's visitors were many young intellectuals and innovators such as Salah Gaheen and Hassan Suleiman.

Under its current name, Al-Horriya Café first opened its doors in 1936. British officers and troops first came, followed by Pashas, artists, intellectuals, and various groups with varying interests. Over the following years, its name was associated with a group of cultural and artistic symbols, such as: Sheikh Zakaria Ahmed, the artists (Ahmed Ramzi, Rushdie Abaza, Shukri Sarhan, and Zakaria AlHijawi), and football players (Abdel-Karim Saqr and Mukhtar Al-Tash), and film directors (Fateen Abdel-Wahab and Hassan Al-Imam). Although today the Al-Horriya Café is no longer attracting renowned artists and intellectuals, it still serves many local cultural groups as a place for meetings and seminars. Al-Nadwa Al-Thkafia (the Cultural Symposium), established in 1962 and located in Flaky Street in the Bab al-Luq area, is another famous cafe in downtown Cairo. The café was named as such according to its function, as a symposium and forum for gatherings for a large variety of writers and artists. The visitors of the café were mostly intellectuals, such as Naguib Mahfouz, Gamal Al-Ghitani, Farouk Abdel-Qadir, Waheed Farid. The Café is located close to the main headquarters of the Socialist Movement, and therefore its members filled the café, creating a platform for political discussions and socialist ideologies and their application in Egypt. This movement continued until the 1970s when the Socialist Movement disappeared. AlNadwa Al-Thkafia remains a prominent café in Cairo that accommodates a similar young clientele for political and social exchanges.

Another famous café, which lives on today, is the Riche Café, built in 1863. The café is located on Suleiman Pasha Street (Talaat Harb) and has witnessed two revolutions in the twentieth century. The Riche Café was the theatre of many important political, cultural, and artistic changes, ranging from the political and national movements calling for freedom and social justice, to the renaissance movements and artistic, literary, and musical modernity. Cafe Riche was frequented by some of Paris' literary and intellectual elites, including legendary writers Alexandre Dumas and Emile Zola. The first owner of Rich Café was a French Orientalist, and its ownership was transferred to several foreigners until it reached the hands of Egyptians, who showed an appreciation for the value of the place, its history, and its intellectual influence. The Café began to take on a major role in society in 1916. It was a secret meeting place for political activists before the 1919 Revolution, and it continued throughout the twentieth century over various changes, from the era of the monarchy to the revolutionary movement up to the Nasser period. The Café was the home of several key discussions on contemporary national issues, the nascent new ideologies, emerging social political studies, and many decisions related to the revolution. Simultaneously, the Café was a forum for artists and writers like Taha Hussein and Ramses Younan. In addition, Naguib Mahfouz held his weekly salon every Friday. During the Nasser era of the 1960s and into the 1980s, this political and intellectual forum served as a meeting point for intellectuals and innovators. President Sadat's plans for modernization reduced the role of Riche Café, which led to the complete closure of the cafe during the 1990s. The picture drawn by historians of the Riche Café during the last half of the twentieth century confirms this stage of the true cultural prosperity of the Cairo community, and



it often seems that it has receded or been lost. After the earthquake in 1992, the Café was in ruins, and was recently restored.



Figure 21:Riche Café. Source: Riche Café official Facebook page and (Almasry Alyoum, 2018).

Concurrently, Bar Al-Lewaa was one of the most visited Cafes in the heart of Cairo. Mustafa Kamel published his newspaper at the beginning of the twentieth century with the same name, which brought fame to the Cafe itself. In addition, during the British occupation of Egypt, the Cafe's visitors were from the intellectuals, writers, journalists and poets throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, including Abdel-Halim AlGhamrawi, one of the most popular journalists. The Cafe was associated with numerous stories and events, particularly because of its location in front of the Al-Ahram Newspaper building, which granted it a major position in the media and intellectual scene in Cairo.

Downtown Cairo as Ryzova (2013) claimed,

*“acquired a particular bohemian quality as the prime site of independent culture, often linked to political resistance. A number of Downtown cafes, bars and restaurants emerged as famous hangouts of generations of Cairene literati, artists and political activists While practically none of them lived there, most writers and intellectuals worked nearby, because most cultural institutions – theatres, publishing houses, newspapers and bookshops, big and small, private or state-run – were (and remain, to a degree) located either in or near Downtown”* (Ryzova 2013: p.15).

Ryzova sees these social subcultures as a hub for counterculture, bohemian ideals, political opposition, and non-hegemonic, transgressive behavior. Recently, Al-Bald Library or Al-Bald Café, where the development of Cultural Cafés did not stop at writers' or intellectuals' meetings, but gave the Café a new meaning, by conducting critical discussions of literature and cinema. In conjunction with the weekly screening of films, Al-Bald Library can be considered as a special space for culture enthusiasts. The library's diversity of users allowed it to explore new cultural and intellectual possibilities, especially since its inception was distinguished by political activism, as it received revolutionaries and casualties of the January revolution. The revolution of 2011 saw the Café's role as comparable to that of other cafes, such as Riche, Matatia, and Al-Bourse, in both the political and literary dimensions. As a result, according to Nagi (2016)

*"The government closed many Cafes with various bureaucratic lawsuits, and some youth Cafes were closed by the local official of Abdeen, because they are Cafes for atheists. These Cafes tried to present a new concept for the Café, not a place to sit and drink beverages only, but also to sell books and hold art exhibitions and sometimes simple music shows. In short, the Downtown Cafes sought to present a new concept of the Café as a contemporary cultural place, but this what the government did not understand, and it considered its visitors atheists. "*

Simultaneously, downtown Cairo became a home for an increasing number of touristic cafés. On Adly Street in Cairo in 1909, Groppi Cafe established its first location. It was a meeting place for aristocratic and foreign families, as well as a favorite place for English army officers during World War I. In 1925, the second branch of Groppi Cafe was opened at Suleiman Pasha Square, in a new building designed by the Italian architect Giuseppe Maza. The Cafe included a shop for the finest

Swiss sweets, a fine restaurant, a bar, and a small garden with a cinema owned by Giacomo, who was considered as the first one to enter the summer cinema space in Egypt. The Groppi Suleiman Pasha branch was visited by many world-famous people such as Ezra Wise Man, the former President of Israel, and Umm Kulthum. It became a favorite forum for elite parties and a venue for well-known international bands.

*"It is said that Groppi's Shop was the first advocate for democracy in Egypt, and the British always knew the danger of this place on them, so they often raided it with their soldiers and their weapons to intimidate, arrest and sometimes kill"* (Makkawi, 2010: p.431)

In 1930, the Americen café Shop opened for the middle class and *Affandya*<sup>18</sup> and a few years later another branch of American was opened. Estoril Restaurant and Bar was also a meeting place for the elite and the educated for its calm and distinctive character. In the 1960s, when Egypt was in the epicenter of global events, most of the editors and employees of foreign agencies who were concentrated in Downtown were based in Estoril for eating and exchanging news. In addition, Le Gruen remains as one of the places that brings together intellectuals and artists. The Greek Club was a key meeting place as well.

### 3.3 Art and Changing Regimes

There has always been a strong connection between Cairo's central area's art scene and political and economic shifts. Cultural and artistic developments in Egypt have been influenced by the transition from colonialism to socialism, followed by partial liberation and the infusion of foreign capital under President Sadat. Foreign art institutions, such as Western museums and commercial galleries, have had a significant effect on the art and cultural scene. Neoliberal policies under Mubarak helped to privatize the cultural industries, which resulted in an extraordinary increase in private-sector art organizations, markets, and audiences. The implementation of neoliberal policies also supported and promoted the advent and availability of Egyptian contemporary art (Elsirgany, 2015). Since the late 1980s, the contemporary art scene in downtown Cairo has turned more dynamic with a wider reach. The independent contemporary art scene, which was linked to global art circles, flourished from the late 1990s onwards. The young pioneers in art and culture production, who are low-economic high-cultural capital, started the initial stage of gentrification in downtown Cairo as a site of creativity. Later, the artists as early gentrifiers were overlooked in top-down urban governance strategies (see part four).

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<sup>18</sup>*Affandy* is originally from Medieval Greek: ἀφέντης [a' fendis]) is a title of nobility meaning **sir, lord or master**, especially in the Ottoman Empire and the Caucasus for educated men; especially those who are of high social standing.

Contemporary art is a relatively new phenomenon in the Middle East. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, European aesthetics were widely accepted and fully adopted in art, but only among the elite and the well-educated audiences. In the 1990s, new art forms began to appear and circulate internationally. In many cases, modern art has replaced all forms of traditional art in the Middle Eastern region. It was and still is seen as “too western” in content and not relatable to the general public at large (Nashashibi, 1998: p. 166). In Egypt, many museums were instituted, and a number of art societies were shaped during the first three decades of the 20th century. The colonial experience and aristocratic elites' patronage introduced European modern art's policy and practice (Winegar, 2006). The early graduates of the European College of Fine Arts in Cairo created the private-sector market in modern Egyptian art in the colonial period (Winegar, 2006), which involved Europeans living in Egypt as well as the remnants of the Ottoman aristocracy. The political shift from colonization to socialism in 1952 in Egypt impacted the old affluent segment, who was no longer able to support and patronize art to maintain the bourgeois status. Furthermore, the majority of art structures and organizations were nationalized and run by government officials and military officers. As a result, art sales outside of state outlets plummeted (Iskandar et al., 1991). Modern art's elitist and imperialist connotations and implications have also been softened and minimized by the new Egyptian Ministry of Culture (Winegar, 2006). Progressively, the value of artistic development in the country has been acknowledged by the regime. The regime was keen to reunite the artists and integrate art into the national project under the oversight of the Ministry of Culture as "*a significant arm of government information or propaganda policy*" (Al Qassemi, 2017: p. 7). Several cultural and artistic movements were established in the 1950s and late 1960s, but they could not continue. The revised legislation enacted after the revolution allowed authorities to detain any group of more than five citizens. Consequently, as a direct result of the political climate, the artist transitioned to an independent practice.

With the end of the socialist state and the influx of foreign capital, substantial links with outsider arts institutions such as Western museums, commercial galleries, and Egyptian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have developed. Yet, like his predecessor Nasser, Anwar Sadat (president from 1970 to 1981) attempted to silence his opponents, including intellectuals and artists (Al Qassemi, 2017), whom he considered to be a threat to his neoliberal vision. He wanted to deactivate the Ministry of Culture and dramatically reduce arts and culture budgets (Winger, 2006). Furthermore, art did not rank high on Sadat's priority list. Sadat's political views favored Islamists and liberals over communists and socialists. In this sense, two large art exhibition halls were converted into Islamic banks (Winger, 2006: p. 150), and various movie theaters have been demolished for new enterprises and investment banks. During the 20th century, the zenith of state-owned art in the Arab world, there were few, if any, galleries, and a suffering art market.

### 3.4 Mubarak and The Flourish of the Contemporary Art Scene 1981–2011

Since the mid-1990s, as Winegar (2006, P.173) pointed out, “*a foreign-dominated private sector art market emerged for the first time since the colonial era*”. This move was influenced by Mubarak's efforts to attract international investment. The extensive expansion of private-sector art institutions, markets, and audiences was the result of the development and availability of global communications technologies, combined with market liberalization urged by the IMF and the US. The government's economic "reform" program resulted in an influx of Egyptian *nouveau riche* and international executives willing to purchase artwork, who increasingly consider the artworks as investment assets, expecting benefits in return (Deloitte, 2019). After 1989, as Winegar noted, Egyptian cultural policy was responsible for “*initiating the privatization of the art market and the promotion of neoliberal artistic subjectivity*” (Winegar, 2006: p.187) due to the shift in state officials' perspectives. In the 1990s, Nasser-era legislation on national protection and income distribution that had not already been repealed by Sadat was revoked (Winegar, 2006: p.181). As a result, the opening and running of art galleries in Cairo became legal for foreigners. In the early 1990s, many private art galleries opened, mostly located in Zamalek, a profitable art venue specializing in contemporary art. In downtown Cairo, Stefania Angarano opened Mashrabia Gallery, in 1990, followed by the late Renata Jordan's Gallery Cairo-Berlin, L, Atelier Art Gallery and then Espace Karim Francis in 1995. Indeed, Karim Francis Gallery, Mashrabia Gallery, and Townhouse played significant roles in proposing alternate and innovative routes for art practice. Opening of private galleries such as Townhouse, and Mashrabia provided a new source of funding for artists (Maltzahn & Bellan, 2018). This narrative as Winegar (2006: p.184) stated, has also predominated on the English and French art sites, where Americans, Europeans, and wealthy graduates of the American University in Cairo have frequently praised the new downtown galleries. Reviving downtown Cairo as a cultural hub was made possible by the creative culture and art scene.

### 3.5 Downtown Cairo Contemporary Art Scene and Gentrification

The art continues to be a major localized element in promoting community change. Individual artists, creative art companies, and artistic spaces act as a colonizing force, laying the groundwork for gentrification to take hold (Ley, 1986, 2003; Zukin, 1982). As Ley observed, in Western cities, artists were the newcomers who “*value the inner-city locations and contribute, mainly through their sweat equity, to the upgrading of older buildings*” (Meligrana & Skaburskis, 2005: p. 1572) and established a neo bohemia (Lloyd, 2010; Zukin, 2009).

In downtown Cairo, the art and cultural scene included some innovative initiatives and others more serious and mainstream. Both of them, alike, contributed to the spontaneous richness of the local art scene. The pioneer artists in Cairo's downtown area were the driving force behind many of the cultural and artistic initiatives, which frequently ran counter to the political priorities of the government. However, the lack of cooperation and sometimes conflict between the state-run

institutions and the foreign-funded independent art scene has had a significant impact on art production and limited creativity, which eventually led to the fragmentation of the artistic scene.

Since the 1990s, the Mashrabia gallery has served as a benchmark for contemporary art, as the first privately owned contemporary art gallery in Egypt. The gallery is located in central Champollion Street in downtown Cairo. The Mashrabia Gallery is aimed at creating a bridge between Europe, the West, and Egypt, promoting the local artists abroad. Also, the gallery as Stefania Angarano, the owner and the curter of the Mashrabia Gallery stated, helps in creating a vision of the people that would eventually purchase art (Lavent, 2015). Temporary exhibitions on a monthly basis have been organized by the gallery, detached from the academic way and technical skills. The gallery also hosted workshops, lectures, book launches, artist talks, and discussions as well as art exhibitions of different genres. In the 1990s, other profit-driven galleries popped up in the area, such as Renata Jordan's Cairo-Berlin Gallery and Espace Karim Francis. However, for artists seeking larger venues in which to display their work, the Townhouse was not just an excellent option; the building itself served as a springboard for a variety of creative endeavors.

### *3.5.1 Townhouse Gallery*

The Townhouse Gallery is a space for contemporary visual art, performances, and theatre distant from both the commercial galleries and state-owned spaces in Cairo that have monopolistic power. The gallery also operates a range of initiatives that have a significant influence on local communities and artists. The Townhouse Gallery created a new alternative culture and art scene that succeeded in shaping the space into an independent realm for artistic and cultural pioneers. Although it is regarded as one of the important art spaces and leading galleries in MENA region, the Gallery is also a good token of the creative potential of “counter preservation<sup>19</sup>” (Sandler, 2016) that resists gentrification and commercial real estate development. The gallery became a hub for Cairo's authors and poets, as well as a venue for a thriving theatre scene, providing an alternative space, a unique opportunity for the city's young artists to get exposure and experience and become a part of the international art scene. The increasing artistic production and artistic cooperation go beyond the Townhouse Gallery's desired goals and objectives.

In 1998, the Egyptian artist Yasser Grab and William Wells (a Canadian resident in Egypt) refurbished the first floor of a three-story rickety building in downtown Cairo. The Townhouse has incorporated as a company that offered cultural services to avoid the difficulties other entities that registered as non-profit organizations encountered<sup>20</sup>. The Townhouse was heavily reliant on foreign donations over the first decade, which spanned 1998-2008. In 1999, the gallery expanded

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<sup>19</sup> “Counterpreservation” a concept has been introduced by Daniela Sandler to understand this intentional appropriation of decrepitude.

<sup>20</sup> Yasser Gerab, Personal interview, November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019

from one to two extra floors in a gracefully decaying century-old building on Ma'rouf Street. A nearby warehouse, affectionately known as "the factory," was leased by Townhouse Gallery in 2000 and renovated to serve as additional exhibition space. The Rawabet Theater opened in a repurposed warehouse on Townhouse Lane in 2006. Its mission is to bring together artists and their audiences. Yasser Grab believed that the location was ideal to achieve the project's goal of providing a platform for young independent artists and their critical, informative art works that highlighted Egypt's issues in the late 1990s. Townhouse formed a Swedish-based international foundation in 2008. The Townhouse Foundation is accountable for ensuring that all Townhouse-related operations in Egypt are carried out via the utilization of European funds and agreements, which helps to ensure a continuous supply of external financial aid.



*Figure 22: Townhouse Factory and bookshop. Source: Townhouse Official website*

The extent of the impact of Townhouse on the neighborhood is difficult to measure but many markers of its influence can be easily identified. It offers a unique model of how art and culture venues revitalize urban spaces and the communities they embrace and foster change without noticeably high levels of neighborhood turnover. The transformation from a garbage-strewn alley into a bohemian zone proves how the arts can shift the current cultural landscape into something more accessible and relevant to Cairo's citizenry, while also creating a symbiotic relationship with the local community. The Townhouse Gallery engaged directly and effectively with the local community within the derelict neighborhood which includes different forms of craftsmen such as local carpenters, glass cutters, mechanics' workshops, and welders, along with a local governmental school, to create a relationship that benefits both parties, rather than trying to impose change on the neighborhood by introducing an entirely new audience interested in contemporary art and maybe provoking hostility.

SAWA workshops ("together"), one of Townhouse's pioneering initiatives that fused the terms "neighbor" and "neighborhood" *"At first the project of social engagement through the arts was directed to the neediest communities in Cairo: refugees from Sudan. Soon other refugees joined them; first from Iraq and more recently from Syria"*

(Ali, 2020: p.100<sup>21</sup>). A fashion display for the refugees was held in the mechanics' garages, which were open for the events. The SAWA gift shop displays and sells some of the program's goods. The workshops were focused on an array of artistic fields such as animation or theatrical performance, as well as setting up regular day outings for children to help them adapt with new and different surroundings from their local experiences. Given the fact that education is an absolute right to each child, a number of literacy classes are offered to the community. This initiative has helped child laborers express their voices, cement equal relationships, develop communication and social skills, and have a sense of self-esteem.



Figure 23: workshops for street children. source: (El Ahi, 2009)

The local community shaped the gallery's identity, and they became active participants in the artistic direction. Townhouse Gallery and the surrounding community benefit from the free services they provide, from setting up and breaking down shows to attending as audience members<sup>22</sup>. Nat Muller, a curator and author from Rotterdam who was involved in Townhouse's curatorial residency program from 2008 to 2009, stated *"Townhouse integrated [its] surroundings into the gallery...there is no clear boundary between [it and] the street,"* (Golia, 2015). The gallery's service, as Azimi (2004) claimed, created a near -anthropological approach *"a rare laboratory and school...putting forward a conception of art that is dynamic, generous, and self-reflexive,"* (Azimi, 2004). Hence, Townhouse Gallery could be defined as a community-based arts initiative. Townhouse fostered equality and coexistence as an alternative art space in a highly populated area.

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<sup>21</sup> Come Together: Institutional Frameworks, Communities, and the Rise of Collaborative Art Praxis in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Yasser Grab, the director of Townhouse Gallery, November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019





Figure 24: Open Studio residency project at Townhouse Factory in 2003. Source: Graham Waite (2003)

### 3.5.2 Nitaq: Downtown Art Festival

In 2000, the competition between galleries turned into collaboration when Mashrabia Gallery, Espace Karim Francis, and Townhouse, together with private galleries in Switzerland, Turkey, and Tunisia, organized the Nitaq Downtown Art Festival. Cairo's Nitaq Downtown Art Festival was the city's first non-government sponsored, collaborative arts event. The festival presented a wide range of events including displays, shows, concerts, talks, and readings at several venues. The festival succeeded in invigorating the art movement in downtown Cairo and transforming the entire neighborhood into a thriving art show. The Nitaq Art Festival was held in “a tentative triangle boarded by three downtown thoroughfares: Tahrir St., Sherif St., and Champollion St” (Mohamed, 2020: p.254). The festival as Karim Francis (2013) claimed, expanded beyond art’s “elitist private gallery audience to the streets of downtown Cairo. the lobbies of its building, its narrow lanes, cafes, restaurant, apartments and shop windows, to fruther increase the accessibility of contemporary art and reach a wider public”. Historic buildings that had been abandoned or neglected, like La Viennoise, were repurposed into exhibition spaces. Winegar (2006: p.173) described the opening night of the Nitaq art festival on a January evening in 2000, and how the streets of downtown Cairo were jam-packed with people. According to Essa (2000: p.1), the audience's enthusiastic reaction “confirms that Cairo has real reason to nurture it as arts community” The festival succeeded in establishing a new artistic paradigm by shedding light on new kinds of art, fostering a larger knowledge of art, and drawing both local and worldwide attention, including that of funders “The Nitaq Festival was unlike anything seen previously in the Egyptian art world. The event was such a massive success that it was repeated the following year” (Winegar, 2006: p.173).

The second edition of the Nitaq festival as Dina Mohamed (2020: p.254) referred to, was designed to open on the same day of the inauguration of the international Cairo Biennial (inaugurated by the Egyptian state in 1984). Thus, it has been interpreted as a “*direct challenge of state hegemony over art and culture*” (ibid). Furthermore, it has been described as “*foreign conspiracy to influence the line of creativity of precocious Egyptian artists*” (Eissa, 2000: p.1). Azimi (2004), compared the Biennale as a traditional event both in concept and curation and the Nitaq festival as a “*true post-modernists*” creative art event which has the possibility of “*shaking up stagnant conceptions surrounding the of the space*”. After a series of complications, the event was discontinued in 2001. However, the two editions of the Nitaq art festival confirmed the worthiness of downtown as the center of the contemporary art movement and as a hub for various cultural forms (El Shimi, 2015). The activities of this festival, as claimed, “*span several artistic fields and have resulted, for instance, in the rise of independent bands and independently produced short digital films.*” (El Batraoui& Khafagui, 2010: p.64)



Figure 25: The Nitaq Festival Poster Design. Source: Karim Francis

Different events have been launched in the wake of the Nitaq Festival after it had been dissolved due to ambiguously messy cultural politics. Additionally, Townhouse Gallery has carved the path for other multiple cultural venues to establish their initiatives nearby. In 2002, Townhouse Gallery hosted Photo Cairo, Egypt’s first annual event focused on the photographic arts (Golia, 2015). Photo Cairo is Egypt’s first exhibition program dedicated to photography and a creative outlet for self-expression. A group of students used street façades, the internet cafes and abandoned studios

and instated their exhibitions creatively to display their own works. The event inspired the foundation of the Cairo Image Collective (CIC) in 2004. The Cairo Image Collective (CIC) is an initiative devoted to "*visual culture and artistic practice, engagement, and discourse.*" ("Contemporary Image Collective", 2015). The initiative, dedicated to filmmakers and enthusiasts, demonstrates the diversity of film development in various regions. It is aimed at providing a venue for filmmakers and audiences to watch, discuss, learn, and create films so that more people can understand the art of film. The Contemporary Image Collective (CIC), which initially located in Townhouse's annex as a working space, "*was a go-to place for young photo enthusiasts to learn photography and was also home to an array of stimulating exhibitions and talks*" (El Shimi, 2015). After creating a name for themselves in the community, the CIC moved to another location in Downtown and registered themselves separately from Townhouse (Abdelaal, 2021). Cairo Hackerspace, a similar initiative for experimentation in various fields, was established in 2009 with Townhouse's help. The initiative's facilities and equipment were offered to a variety of groups. In 2014, Cairo Hackerspace was relocated at Townhouse gallery. later, they moved to Champollion Street in another space and still cooperating with Townhouse gallery. Medrar for Contemporary Art was founded in 2005 by artists who were inspired by both initiatives to accommodate younger artists, focusing on video and interactive-technology arts. Medrar for Contemporary Art set the stage for artists who wanted to have extensive conversations and collaborations with their peers, to improve their goal as active contemporary artists<sup>23</sup>. The establishment of Medrar was reinforced through Young Arab Theater Fund, Foundation for Arts Initiatives, Culture Resource 's Abbara Program<sup>24</sup>. The Studio Emad Eddin Foundation also emerged in 2005 as a recognized rehearsal and workshop venue, supplying required facilities for performing arts and workshops in theatre, storytelling, dance, and filmmaking for both artists and technical staff. It is a part of Orient production company<sup>25</sup>. Art-related events and tours, as well as photographs from local photographers, have been promoted by Orient Productions on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram.

### 3.6 Art and Real Estate Developer

The first edition of the Nitaq festival did not only succeed in creating a new artistic paradigm and transforming downtown Cairo into a "*bustling art show*" (El Shimi, 2015), but the festival also succeeded in attracting "*an alliance of young investors*" (Hamza, 2009). In 2001, as part of the al-Nitaq Art Festival, artist Lara Baladi, the granddaughter of Abdallah Mirshak<sup>26</sup>, invited the public

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<sup>23</sup> Medrar official webpage

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>25</sup> Orient production is a film and theatre production company.

<sup>26</sup> Egyptian-Lebanese businessman who acquired the Viennoise building in 1940

to see her photographic installations “Sandouk El Dounia” (the world in a box), which were shot and exhibited in La Viennoise (Cairoobserver, 2014).



*Figure 26: Lara Baladi photographic installations Sandouk El Dounia in La Viennoise. Source: Al-Ismailia Company for Real Estate Investment*

Karim Shafei, the Chairman of Al Ismailia (see below) rediscovered downtown Cairo and its distinguished architectural heritage, which inspired his vision because of Lara Baladi’s show at La Viennoise. In 2008, Al-Ismailia for Real Estate Development was established and acquired the building along with other abandoned and decayed heritage buildings in downtown Cairo.

### ***3.6.1 Al-Ismailia Company for Real Estate Investment***

Al-Ismailia Company was founded as an Egyptian private company, managed by Beltone Private Equity and Karim Shafei, the Chairman of Al Ismailia for Real Estate Investment Company and cultivator of the Downtown Rehabilitation Project, with a startup capital of 67 million US dollars. The consortium includes Amwal Al Khaleej of Saudi Arabia, a private equity Saudi firm, and other Saudi investors. In addition, Samih Sawiris of Orascom Development a real estate, developer, accompanied by small Egyptian investors from different fields such as, Ahmed Khaled Moustafa and Shahira Mahmoud. Al-Ismailia vision, as cited from their pages, “*is to restore & revive Downtown Cairo to be the global face of Egypt through providing a comprehensive contemporary experience that merges Downtown’s historic legacy and modern culture*”. The Al-Ismailia visionary founders initiated the first spark for Downtown Cairo refurbishment. Since its foundation, Al-Ismailia company was keen to acquire many downtown iconic heritage buildings. The purchasing process started during the property slump before the government efforts for regeneration “*Al- Ismailia for Real Estate Investment started in 2008, tapping into the renewed interest in the revival of that Egyptian identity, and the links that this had to Downtown.*” (Shafei, 2015: p.64). Al Ismailia’s renovation projects, and marketing policy are strongly associated with

cultural and consumer-orientated production. The strategy demonstrated the power of private capital in accelerating gentrification and reshaping downtown Cairo's iconic urban heritage in accordance with the global demands. After the implementation of neoliberal policies in Egypt, real estate developers, such as Al-Ismailia Company for real estate investment, began to be drawn to the *Belle Epoque* heritage. In Mubarak's Cairo 2050 Strategy (Berger, 2014), Al-Ismailia company was appointed as a key partner. Under Sisi government's vision for central Cairo's redevelopment, the company managed to maintain its position. Khedival Cairo regeneration plan is driven by real estate developers as it mirrors the power of business elite in Egypt. Al-Ismailia exploited processes like heritagization, and securitization to emphasize the neoliberal restructuring process in its policies and practices.

### **Chapter Three Conclusion**

From the 1990s till 2010, the prestigious district supported new cultural waves. Downtown Cairo has become favorable place for young artists and cultural pioneers. Artists and activists have gravitated to the downtown area due to its heritage value, central location, proximity to transportation, affordable rent, and the long-established literary and political culture in downtown cafes and pubs frequented by writers, socialists, and intellectuals. In the ten years preceding the 2011 uprising, these independent endeavors concentrated on fusing local and global concepts, yet they were bound to a particular social class. The Nitaq Festival and Townhouse Gallery infused the flourishing of the contemporary art scene in Egypt and helped to put it on the map of global art through their support for generations of young artists whose work was not welcome in government-approved spaces. However, the counterculture pioneers and artists who carved out their cultural features in the urban surroundings, nooks, and dilapidated buildings were the ones who initially ignited gentrification in downtown Cairo (see analysis and discussion). This young generation was also the engine behind the 2011 revolution in Egypt (see chapter six).

## **4 Chapter Four: Neoliberalism and Heritagization Process**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Heritage regimes have grown increasingly neoliberal (Coombe, 2012) even if, on the surface it does not seem so, notably through an immerging dominance of market ideologies and economic logic in heritage management and its means of valuation. The listed heritage in the city center is a prime example of urban amenities contributing to a city's attractiveness. Protecting and repurposing valuable historic buildings and desirable heritage addresses is essential in improving the quality of life of a locality and in city marketing. As Haspel (2011) stated, "*special properties from the built, artistic, or horticultural heritage, or national sites are not off-the peg architecture, but unique originals that are also an exclusive business address*" (Haspel, 2011: p.906).

Khedival Cairo epitomized the finest of the *Belle Époque*, fusing European design elements with those of the local, and therefore became an integral part of Cairo's culture and history for generations. Several factors have contributed to the deterioration of Khedivial Cairo's unique architectural value since 1952, including rent freezes that left little money for maintenance and restoration. Downtown Cairo and Cairo's *Belle Époque* heritage has been discovered as a "proud moment of Egypt's urban rebirth" rather than a symbol of foreign hegemony since the 1990s due to a new wave of nostalgia for a perceived bygone 'Golden Age' of cultural refinement (Duffield, 2019) and the growing international interest in the previously unvalued monarchy and colonial period. 'Heritagization' as a management technique has been widely used since the 'heritage boom' in the late twentieth century (Harrison, 2013). The heritagization of Cairo's downtown area sought to turn the area into an open museum as a marketing tool to enhance the city's image. Methods and techniques used in the downtown heritagization process are discussed in this chapter.

## 4.2 Khedivial Cairo Architectural Heritage

—Over the long term, places with strong, distinctive identities are more likely to prosper than places without them. Every place must identify its strongest, most distinctive features and develop them or run the risk of being all things to all persons and nothing special to any. [...] Livability is not a middle-class luxury. It is an economic imperative. Nobel Prize Laureate Robert Merton Solow's (Historic England, 2017)

Khedivial Cairo displays an image of modernity through its distinctive architecture. Since its foundation, and until the 1940s, Khedivial Cairo embraced the finest architecture influenced by the contemporary "European" architectural styles" (Elshahed, 2007: p.25). Initially, Khedivial Cairo was adorned by splendid villas with gardens based on Ali Pasha Mubarak<sup>27</sup> buildings' guidelines that required high quality construction rather than uniform architectural style. After the reign of Khedive Abbas Helmy Pasha II (1874 – 1944), Khedivial Cairo witnessed significant changes. From 1897 till 1907, downtown Cairo started its construction boom whereby villas, together with their gardens, have been replaced by four to six-story apartment blocks. During the cotton boom (1903-1907) and again in the 1920s (Hawass, 2002), land speculation companies launched the development of Khedivial Cairo as a residential and commercial area.

The real estate construction boom in downtown was a sharing effort between the private capital of monied Egyptian, and the inflows of European capital and foreigners. According to Elshahed, (2007: p.25) "Downtown was constructed over forty years by various landlords who purchased land or were given land by the Khedive if they promised to build "worthy" architectural pieces worth a minimum of 2000 Egyptian pounds. Worthy architecture of value at the time meant that it followed contemporary "European" architectural styles. These buildings would house residential units for upper classes of society both Egyptian and European". As a result, Egypt's architectural style had become increasingly global due to the efforts of both foreigners and local elites (Volait, 2014). Till this phase, Khedivial Cairo represented the very best of the *Belle époque*, combining European styles with local influences and materials, an essential part of the place's identity. The architectural boom which made downtown Cairo an eclectic architectural hub was carried out by foreign architects, mainly Italians, French and Austrian such as Antonio Lasciac<sup>28</sup>, Mario Rossi and Francesco Battigelli from Italy, and Marcel Dourgnon, Leo Nafilyan and Julius Franz pasha from France (Hawass, <sup>2002</sup>).

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<sup>27</sup> Ali Pasha Mubarak was the head of the "Public Works Ministry" to modernize Cairo following the Paris Haussmannian model.

<sup>28</sup> the chief architect of the royal palaces in the rule of the Khedive Abbas

*“Grand palaces and beautiful European style buildings were erected; outstanding squares were designed. French architects, assisted by Italian contractors and designers undertook the building of a pleasant mix of neo-classic, art-déco, art-nouveau, baroque and a little later, neo-islamic styles”* (Eldeen, 2013: p. 920)

The downtown architectural heritage was a symbol of the ‘Occidental Eclecticism’.<sup>29</sup> Eclecticism is a trend in architecture, sculpture, and photography, and a mixture of multiple models and elements of various European styles, such as the new classical style, neo-baroque style, and modern art, that reveals the craftsmanship of the architect without relying on a certain style. The term eclecticism is derived from the Greek word κλεκτικός-eklektikos. The term appeared in the mid- nineteenth century by the modern pioneers of architecture who preferred to liberate themselves from the pressures of the classical and the importance of creativity. These pioneers called themselves selective or eclectic. The term has been in use for a long time and has since been supplanted by Historism (Seebohm, 2010). The trend took its place in the Islamic world when they started to imitate Western architecture as a manifestation of European civilization. One of the most well-known examples of eclecticism in downtown Cairo was the Egyptian museum. It was opened to the public on November 15<sup>th</sup> 1902 and is regarded as the world's first museum building. Prior to this date, it was customary to assign old residential villas to any museum (Al Hadidi, 2007). The neoclassical style emerged first, with Greek and Roman decorative ornaments on the façade, followed by the French, and Italian Renaissance style. The museum's overall design is influenced by European neoclassical architecture.

However, given that the majority of the structures were constructed by European architects using imported construction materials from Europe throughout the 1920s and 1930s, a nationalist movement emerged to challenge European domination in both architectural style and the profession of architecture (Cairoobserver, 2012). Building national identity via architecture resulted in an eclectic mix of styles that can be found throughout downtown, from neo-Renaissance buildings to Mamluk revivalist structures, to Pharaonic structures (Volait, 2014). The military revolution in 1952 marked a new phase of Egypt’s history. This era is characterized by the shift from colonialism to nationalism and socialism. The dramatic shift had a profound impact on Egypt’s political and economic structure in general, and downtown Cairo urban fabric. In the vicinity of Midan al-Ismailia (al-Ismailia Square, which was later renamed Tahrir Square) in downtown Cairo and close to the Socialist Union Headquarters, several Structures were built including the ultra-modern Nile Hilton, which replaced the British Barracks, and the Arab League building (Rabbat, 2011). These projects aimed at Egyptianizing downtown’s colonial identity. As part of a long-term effort to create a contemporary modern image for Cairo in the second half of

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<sup>29</sup> Cairo: An Italian architectural itinerary A guide to the historic buildings designed and built by Italians in the 19th and 20th century



the twentieth century, colossal construction like the Ramsis Hilton and TV and Radio tower were erected during this time, increasing Cairo's skyline. According to Ghannam (2002; p.32), Milad Hanna, an Egyptian engineer, described these structures as "*the golden peel that covers the surface, [hiding] the miserable conditions of popular areas*". At odds with the previous predominating distinctive international architectural style in downtown Cairo, the post-1952 new Egyptian architecture marked Egypt's new era in searching for a new identity. Furthermore, since the 1952 revolution, the heritage buildings have been subjected to different forms of deterioration resulting from different causes, such as rent control, that reduce available funds for necessary upkeep and repair.

### **4.3 Causes of Deterioration and Loss in Heritage Buildings**

The degradation of historic structures is influenced by a variety of factors, including environmental hazards and societal changes. While natural catastrophes have devastating consequences in terms of deterioration and destruction, man-made causes may also have an influence on this legacy to a similar extent. In Egypt, one of the major challenges is the potential loss of architectural heritage wealth in 20<sup>th</sup> century neighborhoods as a result of the increasing rate of demolition and violation actions that have occurred to significant villas and many historic buildings in recent decades. Khedivial Cairo's urban and social fabric have been severely deteriorated since the elite residential district has lost its glamour and splendor (Shafei, 2015; p.63-67). Since the last half of the twentieth century, the major possible causes of the deterioration of many downtown heritage buildings, are overpopulation, legislations and unregulated mixed-use spaces, and ignorance and neglect (which is usually coupled with vandalism and fires).

#### ***4.3.1 The Cairo Fire on January 16<sup>th</sup>, 1952***

A number of political events took place on Tahrir square and in downtown Cairo before the revolution of 1952. The "massacre" of Isma'iliyya marked the end of the Khedivial *Belle Époque* period.

*"When, on 25 January 1952, news reached Cairo of the bloody encounter between British troops and the Egyptian police in Ismailia, the garrison town in the Canal Zone, riots broke out in Cairo. The following day saw angry crowds on the streets of Cairo looting and burning more than 750 buildings. The rioters targeted buildings that somehow symbolized the presence of the foreigners in Egypt; these included the opera house, casinos, dance clubs, cinemas, bars, and banks. The day, known as "Black Saturday", in which 26 people died and more than 500 were injured, signaled the end of an era in Egypt"* (Gray et al., 2015: p. 13)

On January 26, around 12:30 p.m., downtown Cairo was rocked by arsonists who set fire and looted several British, Royal Family, and other aristocratic properties, assets and structures including the Badia Casino, located in Opera Square, Rivoli Cinema, and Shepherd's Hotel. Many downtown buildings were either damaged or destroyed. Because it was intended as an antidote to nationalist sentiments, Mohammad Al Shahed (2007: p. 41) attests that the fire signaled the end of an age and a revolution against colonial architecture for commercial and recreational purposes. According to El Kadi (2012), around 711 commercial buildings were burnt. While Volait (2015) estimated that the blaze caused the burning of 463 structures.



*Figure 27: Fire at the Rivoli Cinema, Fu'ad Street, January 1952. Source: Dar al-Hilal Archives, Cairo, Egypt*

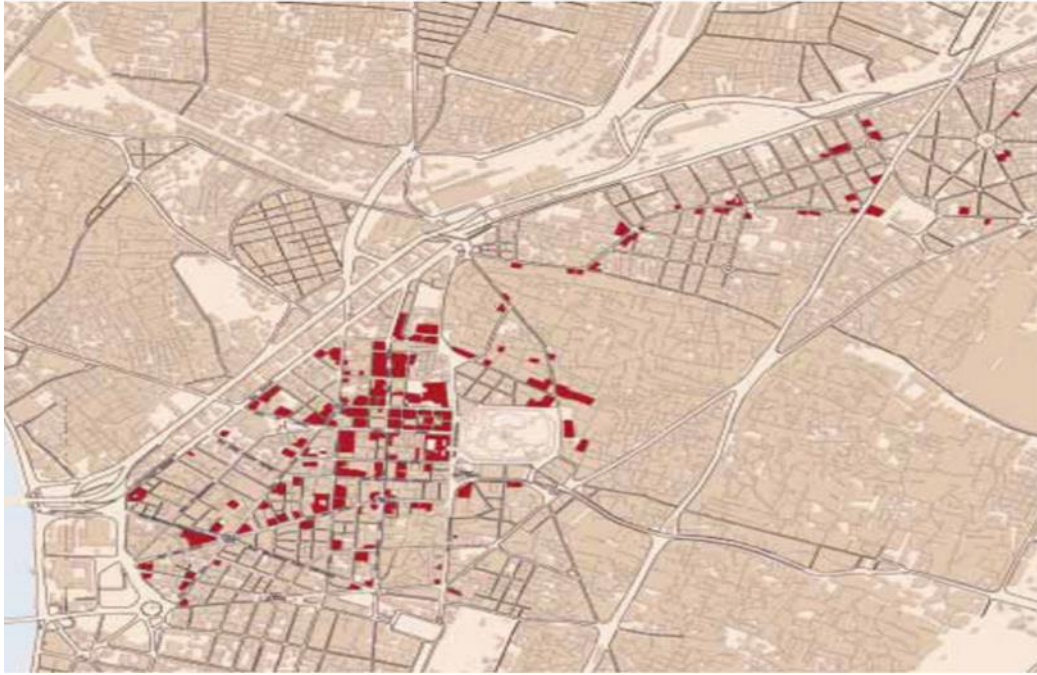


Figure 28: The buildings affected by the Cairo fire in red in January 1952. Source: (El Kadi, 2012: P.84)

In 1973, the Egyptian Opera House, a prestigious cultural landmark in downtown Cairo was destroyed in a devastating fire. Later, the Opera House was replaced with a multi-story car park after years of being used as an open-air parking lot.



Figure 29: Opera house wooden structure turning into ashes after the devastated fire. Source: (Romany, 2019)

In May 2016, a large sector of Attaba district, which is part of the Khedivial Cairo's borders, was ruined by another fire. The fire initially erupted in a hotel and quickly spread to other nearby structures. According to Aman (2016), the fire “*burned down more than 250 stores and commercial warehouses*”. In spite of the multiplicity of fires in this area, the government did not take any decisive measures to maintain this region and its heritage and to prevent similar incidents in the future. In June 2019, a massive fire broke out in Attaba heritage market. The Attaba market is a covered heritage market, and one of the largest markets in the Egyptian capital. In 1892, the market was founded in the Mosky area. Over 5,200 square meters of space were devoted to this undertaking (1.3 acres).



Figure 30: Attaba Market after devastating fire. Source: (Ahrām online, 2019)

#### **4.3.2 Nasser’s decolonization policy and heritage buildings deterioration**

Between October and December 1960, in addition to the departure and exodus of many downtown foreigners’ communities between the Suez Crisis in 1956 and the Arab Israeli War in 1948, Nasser’s decolonization policy and July Socialist Principles lead to the punitive confiscation of properties and companies as “*reactionary capitalists*” (Gray et al., 2015). Also, the new law prohibited any person from owning more than 200 acres of agricultural land<sup>30</sup>. Royal properties were among the assets seized by the government. The majority of the seized structures were transformed into institutions for public use that gradually fell into disrepair as they were poorly maintained for several decades or became eventually public schools, such as the Palace of Said Halim Pasha (grandson of Khedive Muhammad Ali Pasha), later the al-Nasriyya School for Boys.

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<sup>30</sup> Fisher, op.cit. p.696

— [...] the exodus of foreigners and a large part of the Egyptian aristocracy in successive waves [...] released a mass of housing stock in the centre which was eventually distributed among very diverse actors: members of the ruling class and their friends, clients of the State and public sector enterprises. [...] the exile of the King also prompted the departure of members of the court and former prime ministers and ministers who were dispossessed of their property. In the best of cases, repossessed palaces were used for administrative and cultural purposes, particularly educational, while demolition of houses and intensification of buildings were the general rule (El Kadi, 2012: p.86-89)

The repurposing of Egypt's royal palaces, and aristocratic residences occurred in two distinct periods. The first, was during Khedive's Ismail reign by using the abandoned (Awkaf) buildings as schools to continue support the education system as a key element of Mohamed's Ali pasha Egyptian renaissance policy. During the second wave, royal places were reused after the 1952 Revolution as governmental institutions, public schools, and some ministries, such as the ministry of education. The approach aimed at achieving the 1952 revolution goals. As a result, most of heritage buildings were misused and deteriorated due to the lack of maintenance. Other royal places were reused as sector banks (Nasser Bank), museums, hotels, and presidential residences. These models have been well-maintained overtime. Both banks and government agencies have an interest in becoming real estate managers and developers. In contrast, several privately owned properties, many of which belonged to Europeans but were transferred to privately owned Egyptians, could not be maintained in the face of escalating economic problems. Consequently, they were torn down to make way for more modern high-rise apartment buildings (Khalil, 2009).



Figure 31: Back view of pink marble palace of Prince Saïid Halim Pasha designed and constructed in 1899 by Antonio Lasciac Bey (Gorizia 1856 - Cairo 1946). Source: (Raafat, 2001)

Heritage management strategies highlight the importance of maintenance efforts to keep the sites operating and functioning properly, to uphold them as valuable and irreplaceable assets (Worthing et al., 2002). Heritage maintenance is crucial to effective conservation practices. Through proactive maintenance, cultural values could be maintained, and the uniqueness of the heritage building would be preserved. Accordingly, the originality and authenticity of the fabric would retain as well. Even though Cairo's downtown area was declared a heritage site for its distinctive architectural value, this approach was not adequately applied. Several key factors have contributed to the rapid degradation of historic and heritage structures due to a lack of maintenance. For instance, real estate development and maintenance in Khedival Cairo has been plagued by a frozen rent law since 1952.

#### *4.3.3 Maintenance and rent frozen law*

Several nations throughout the world have used rent control extensively as a distributional strategy. Rent control policies were originally introduced after the end of World War I and the beginning of World War II, due to economic needs. Overpriced construction materials and unavailability of housing supplies due to conflict led to some landlords raising rental rates that were unaffordable for most tenants. The goal of rent control was to shield low-income renters from the rising costs of housing stock (Tucker, 1991), and to serve as an anti-profiteering approach. For McCall (1988), rent control has been accepted as a means of protecting lower- and middle-income classes by limiting inflationary prices in housing stock. A rent control law is a law that sets a maximum rent that landlords can collect from tenants, which is usually lower than the rent that would otherwise have been demanded. It is a collection of laws limiting the reasons for eviction so that the landlord does not get around rent limits by having the tenant evicted (Oni, 2008).

As mentioned, rent control was originally implemented after the end of WWI in 1924, when rents increased by 50% higher than rents paid in 1914, but it was overturned in 1925 due to a lack of economic necessity. The rent law was reissued in post-World War II decree no.151 of 1941. The rent law may take different forms, such as freezing rents, renting as a percentage of the cost of the building unit to the owner, or renting to ensure a certain rate of return for certain owners (McCall, 1988). According to McCall (1988), only the courts have the right to terminate the lease in certain conditions. Furthermore, the lessor has no right to change the rental value that has been determined in the lease. In Egypt, after landlords were coerced to cut down rental rates by 15% to 20% through a military decree in 1944, the Egyptian parliament codified Bill No. 121 in 1947 pending all rentals value for those units constructed before 1944 to 1941 rates. According to the old-renting law, the rent value for properties which are subjected to the old-rent contracts are fixed at the rates of 1941. Also, the original tenant's estate was passed down the generations after his or her passing. In President Anwar Sadat's reign, tenants were permitted to rent or exchange their occupied units without consulting and/or mentioning the landlord.

Stephen Malpezzi and Peter Rydell (1986) explained the general consequences of rent control. One of these consequences is maintenance reduction and repair by the landlords in which *“dwellings deteriorate, causing a drop in the quantity of housing services they provide. Finally, landlords can remove their dwellings from the rental market by abandoning them or converting them to other uses, such as owner occupancy, and over time, potential starts may be foregone”* (Malpezzi & Rydell, 1986: p.9). In Egypt, for historic buildings before the mid-nineteenth century, the maintenance and preservation of historic buildings were financially counting on the buildings’ owners. Since the rent law was adopted, many Egyptians continue to rent their homes at the same rates they did before the policy was enacted. Rent in Cairo's downtown is the same as anywhere else in Egypt: EGP 10: 50 per month. However, the rent values are less than the actual real estate’s market values and restricts the rate of rent increases. The annual rental value does not exceed 7% of the actual value of the land and building where the property is located. The inadequate, meager rents and the further progress of the law created high levels of tension between tenants and landlords due to continuous manipulation. Furthermore, this demotivated the property owner from maintaining and refurbishing their properties or at least paying for the required maintenance. The conflicts between the landlord and tenants are hard to resolve even through the judicial system. Accordingly, the demolition became the chosen alternative solution for the owners. Consequently, maintenance responsibility fell upon the tenants who in turn didn’t pay attention to such a matter. In the presented case study, despite the negative implication and the deterioration for most of the heritage of downtown Cairo, freezing rents to some extent protect the buildings for a long time from demolition and preserved the area’s cultural identity.

In addition, many other encroachments also pose a threat to downtown Cairo's distinctive architecture including.

Many buildings' loads are exacerbated because waste is simply left to be amassed on balconies and roofs rather than being properly disposed of. This is contributed to the aggregation of insects and reptiles, as well as the difficulty of exterminating them. Slums also slither into the spaces between the buildings, on the rooftops, and at the entrances of these buildings, which prevents uniformity or harmony between the structures from being achieved.

Numerous rooftops include tiny studio apartments or metal storage facilities that are used as residential rentals or to house the tenants and doorkeepers necessitated the construction of bathrooms to service rooftop occupants. However, their misuse led to the deterioration and deformation of these buildings. In addition, the buildings were subjected to serious infractions, the most basic of which was the haphazard installation of air conditioners that did not fit with the original facades. The first floors of various buildings are now annexed to the ground floor stores. As a result, they turned the entire floor into a display area.

In residential buildings in downtown Cairo, offices, companies, clinics, and even occasional artisan studios have sprung up, resulting in an increase in visitor traffic to non-residential units, which is contrary to the pattern of housing-related activities. The undesired overlap of usage has compelled many residents to leave their homes and move to neighboring areas.



Figure 32: The deterioration due to the lack of maintenance and infringement inside of khedival Cairo building. Taken by the author, 2019.

#### 4.4 Heritage Conservation Challenges in Egypt

The urban transformation led by Khedive Ismail (1863-1879) to build "Paris along the Nile" (Arnaud, 1993), and the industrial boom that peaked from 1890 till the end of the century, had a significant impact on the built environment. In response to the destruction of a considerable number of old buildings, a "Comité de conservation des monuments de l'art arabe" was established in 1880, under the Ministry of Islamic Endowments (Awqaf) in the reign of Khedive Tawfik (Duffield, 2019). The committee was one of the first architectural heritage preservation attempts in Egypt. The committee aimed at documenting all the threatened and vulnerable Islamic and Coptic buildings and monuments by using photographs and drawings (Sanders, 2008) for static preservation (Elsorady, 2012).

In 1952, the military revolution and the new regime paid little attention to the subject of conservation. The demolition of the built heritage has continued because of several innovative smart plans for land use and traffic problems (Abada, 2000). Heritage and historic sites have been exposed to various interventions throughout the decades, resulting in a slew of conflicting conservation regulations. A divide between conservation and development approaches is still evident (Elgamal, 2014). Many of Cairo's historic landmarks, such as the Pyramids, are poorly designed urban housing or even considered slums (Abdelwahab, 2019). Furthermore, these policies addressed heritage conservation as a single building project. The lack of interest was also beyond the exclusion of downtown's *Belle Epoque* architecture from the national agendas of



cultural preservation, as it was a symbol of colonial culture (Duffield, 2019). Different political, social, ideological, and legal factors have contributed to this movement, which has been dubbed an anti-colonial independence movement (Abaza, 2011). Hence, the importance of modern heritage was also poorly considered in Egyptian law as unworthy. The official and political interests leaned towards protecting traditional pre-colonial heritage for their more ‘authentic’ value (Carabelli, 2006).

#### **4.5 Heritage and Neo-liberalization**

Neoliberal process as Brenner et al (2010) claimed, is facilitating “*marketization and commodification while simultaneously intensifying the uneven development of regulatory forms across places, territories, and scales*” (Brenner et al, 2010: p. 184). The ultimate goal of neoliberal urban policy is “*to mobilise city space as an arena for market-oriented economic growth and for elite consumption practices*” (Brenner & Theodore, 2002: p. 368). In terms of cultural heritage, built heritage is the most distinct type of heritage. The potential value of authentic built heritage across generations is incalculable if they are appropriately managed and adequately protected.

Heritage has become the new orthodoxy, the most profitable and powerful instrument for city governments. Rather than focusing solely on preservation and traditional conservation as a symbolic economy, it is employed to gain competitive advantages in the marketplace. Heritage evolved as a method for consolidating social identities, legitimizing political authority, and promoting economic development through tourism (Harvey, 2001). The process also alludes to the growing influence of political power and the dominant groups, mostly real estate developers and investors, who determine what should be underlined, conserved, and carried into the future. Market ideologies and economic logic have become the dominating actors in heritage definition, management, and valuation. Furthermore, heritage regimes are increasingly neoliberal (Coombe, 2012).

Coombe and Weiss (2015) argue that neoliberalism is increasingly being applied in the field of heritage studies as “*a generic adjective for states, policies, and economic practices, a process of economizing heritage goods and/or promoting socio-economic development in competitive global economies*” (Coombe & Weiss, 2015: p.44). In addition, many scholars and academics believe that heritage evokes intense emotions such as, place attachment, nostalgia, and grief (Alonso González, 2017). According to Harvey (1989a), Hewison (1987) describes a desire to hold onto the past due to a massive nostalgic tendency during a moment of enormous social change. Harvey saw a fixation on identity, which he attributes to labor market uncertainty, as the reason for this drive to preserve the past. Therefore, heritage has been commodified in the regeneration process to yield economic returns and to improve the quality of life.

Since the late twentieth century, ‘heritagization’ as a management strategy has widely been adopted ever after the onset of the ‘heritage boom (Harrison, 2013). Heritagization is used to define the practice of using the past and recycling historical elements considering present political, social, and economic contexts (Ashworth, 2011). It is an innovative shift to the alternative heritage thru recycling old ideas and making them relevant again. Ashworth (2011) believes that heritage production or heritagization is a political process that supports the legacy of a present political system. The political process implies heritage selection and management for repossessing the past. While Smith (2006) believes that heritage is selected by a societal process that is carried out through authorized heritage discourse (AHD) and sustained by experts. As a result of heritagization, old buildings have increased in value, driving up real estate prices.

#### **4.6 Neo- liberalization and The Gowning Valorization of Downtown Heritage**

The *Belle Époque* term has been introduced via Mostyn's publication in 1989. The term has disseminated within cultural circles and become highly regarded. In 1992, a powerful earthquake drew societal attention to the legacy of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century era. A new alliance of preservationists, Egyptian cultural elites, intellectuals, and private sectors along with the state actors have expanded their efforts to conserve the threatened buildings and sites. Since the 1990s, the recent resurgence of nostalgia for a supposedly extinct "Golden Age" of refined sophisticated, culture and growing international interest for the previously unvalued monarchy and colonial period, all has a profound impact on discovering downtown Cairo and Cairo's *Belle Époque* heritage. It is recognized officially as a “*proud moment of Egypt's urban rebirth*” instead of being symbol of foreign hegemony (El Kadi & El Kerdany,2006).

In addition, a sizable effort has been made to revitalize the area that mostly deteriorated as a result of rent control regulations. Egyptian consecutive governments have exerted significant efforts to maintain historic assets all over the country. Legislative amendments have mirrored the shift in priority from the 1990s onwards to the preservation of downtown and *belle époque* heritage. The period 1993-1998 saw a series of national decrees that ban the destruction of palaces and houses linked to key events or personages. These awareness-increasing efforts were led by a mixture of well-positioned organizations and high-profile intellectuals, architects, and urban planners. Cairo governor made the first decisions to safeguard the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century modern heritage that covered the period from 1850 to 1950 and prohibited destruction in 1996 because of an expanding wave of villa demolitions. Eventually, the issuing of the military decree No. 2 for the year 1998, was implemented to prevent the heritage demolition (Volait, & Piaton, 2003). Furthermore, the Ministry of Housing and Infrastructure's Committee for the Safeguarding of Architectural Heritage and the GOPP introduced the first foundations for cataloguing historically significant buildings and carrying out continuing evaluations in 1998. In addition, the Office of Cairo Governorate conducted a series of rehabilitation projects in downtown Cairo in partnership with the Ministry

of Culture, private proprietors, diplomatic missions, and conservation groups to transform various avenues into pedestrian zones (El Kadi & El Kerdany, 2006).

The Fulbright Commission, Mubarak Library, and Al Ahram Weekly Newspaper established the National Campaign for Preserving the Architectural Heritage of Modern Egypt in 1997 under the auspices of Egypt's first lady at that time, Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak. This initiative resulted in the issuing of a cabinet decree in 1998, ordering the selection and inventory of valuable buildings belonging to historic spans around the county (El Kadi & El Kerdany, 2006). State agencies further surveyed and inventoried sites and city districts established in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century to identify buildings that need protection, and more than sixty buildings in Cairo governorate were included in the national plan for historic monuments. The involvement of both governmental and private-sector actors, as well as widespread media coverage, accelerates the momentum of change. The preservation of the nation's modern heritage was driven by the growing nostalgia among intellectuals, authors, and some state representatives who believe they are a part of the "enlightened" élite (Abaza, 2011). The project began with an in-depth evaluation and data gathering procedure called "Heritagization."

*The heritization process comprises a range of successive and/or concomitant stages: study, appraisal, documentation, selection, classification, enacting protective laws, creating special institutions to manage safeguarding efforts, deploying the tools, making the renovations, raising public awareness, training consumers, and ensuring ongoing maintenance.* (El Kadi & El Kerdany, 2006: p. 350)

#### **4.7 The Heritagization of Downtown Cairo and The Establishment of The National Organization of Urban Harmony (NOUH)**

In 2001, National Organization of Urban Harmony (NOUH) has been formed as part of the Ministry of Culture by the presidential decree no. 37, for refining the aesthetic values of the Egyptian urban space.<sup>31</sup> The National Organization of Urban Harmony (NOUH) is charged with identifying buildings and areas of value in Greater Cairo, setting the relevant legislation and guidelines for future development in coordination with other related parties. Downtown Cairo has been defined as a protected area according to Law no 119 / 2008. Accordingly, the definition offers downtown Cairo special regulations such as, the solid and void ratio, building capacity, street pattern and the special urban guidelines.

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<sup>31</sup> National Organization for Urban Harmony. (n.d.). Al-'Ahdāf [Aims].

According to the NOUH, the Area of Value represents one feature or more from the following (Hesham, 2011):

- 1- Buildings in the area have architectural or urban unique character according to the Law no. (144) of 2006.
- 2- The area is with a distinct pattern or expression of aesthetic or construction system, or the urban fabric represents a phase of growth or historical development.
- 3- All or a part of the area symbolize an image that displays ideals to politics, the army, history, society, the economy, or science, technology, and/or functional domains. or contains evidence or historic information in one of the areas mentioned.
- 4- The region has ties to a significant incident, person or individuals, or activity that had a significant impact on the history of the country.
- 5- The area represents a basic link to areas or buildings or uses that are important or of great value.
- 6- The area represents a cultural aspect of ancient or existing group of people.
- 7- The area represents a natural value that is characterized by landmarks or natural or geological formations of scientific or aesthetic distinct value; and
- 8- The area represents protected natural sites in accordance with the Law of Environment for the reservations.

Accordingly, any protected area falls into three categories A, B and C

Distinctive Value (A) Zone has the highest level of protection since it includes the greatest concentration of historically significant structures such as the old core.

Distinctive Value (B) Zone is medium security zone, where the architecture is less unique but still reflects the neighborhood's development.

Distinctive Value (C) Zone is the space between the maximum/medium protection zones and the traditional zones, where modifications, upgrades, and replacements can be made with more ease.

#### ***4.7.1 Heritage Listing***

The first step in preserving and maintaining certain places and artifacts is to identify and document assets of heritage significance in order to safeguard them. An asset's cultural or historical value is documented in Heritage Listings. These are mostly lists of individual buildings or clusters of structures, but they can also contain a wide range of other historically significant items. The list has proven to be an extremely useful tool over time for a wide range of stakeholders seeking acknowledgment and appreciation for places that are considered to have exceptional universal value (Jimura, 2011).

Heritage designation provides a legal framework for managing and preserving heritage, ensuring that substantial development alterations do not diminish the value of the heritage site. In addition, listing is crucial for developing tourism plans for localities beyond the traditional landmarks such as palaces, places of worship, or other public spaces, and general public interpretation and

understanding. It is also a valuable resource for research and study, as it provides a broader picture of the heritage of communities and cities and reinforces community pride and sense of place. There is a slew of lists created by national governments, agencies, and even by profit organizations. Garden heritage and old buildings are valuable sources when companies take decisions on locations between cities (Haspel, 2011). Many countries have laws and formalized systems for heritage listings, inventories are also legally required in many jurisdictions as a means of heritage preservation.

In 2006, the Egyptian government issued the law no. 144 which stipulates that a committee for the inventory of the buildings with distinctive value should be formed in every governorate. The main purpose of this measure is to ban the demolition of the unique historic buildings as long as they are registered in the inventory list. As NOUH noted in ‘Foundations and Guidelines of Urban Harmony for Heritage Buildings and Areas’ handbook, heritage building value springs from different attributes such as Aesthetic Value, Architecture Value, Cultural Value, Historical Value, Scientific Value, Spiritual Value or Technological Value (NOUH, 2010). Accordingly, the building should exemplify one or more of the following five criteria to be nominated as a heritage building and listed in the catalogue (NOUH, 2010: P.12).

<b>Value</b>	<b>Criteria</b>
<b>Historic Value</b>	<p><b>A building related to national historical aspects.</b>            Linked to a significant figure locally or globally important.            Related to important national events.            Has a symbolic value.            The building's age</p>
<b>Architectural Aesthetic Value</b>	<p>A building with unique and distinct architectural style.            Distinctive Architectural Design, unique artistic creativity.            Represents an important era in the history of art and architecture.            The product of a locally or globally prominent architect.            Represents a significant structural scientific or technical value.</p>
<b>Urban value</b>	<p>The building has a value of being part of an integrated distinct urban heritage area.            The building's garden has an environmental or historic value.            Heritage buildings integrated with each other in regards of style or building technique.</p>
<b>Social functional value</b>	<p>Related over time to important social functions.            Represents social ideology, faith or tradition.</p>
<b>Local traditional value</b>	<p>The building is a part of an integrated urban, <u>rural</u> or desert architecture            The building is a part of an architectural group built with distinctive materials reflecting its place and climate.            Traditional building represents accumulated experiences in design and construction of traditional crafts</p>

NOUH's criteria for heritage listing, Source: “Basics and Standards of Urban Harmony for Heritage Buildings and Sites”, a Guiding manual, National Organization for Urban Harmony, first edition, 2010.

According to Law 144/ 2006, listing Heritage buildings process pass by many steps included the following (Shalaby& Moosa, 2018).

1. Forming the listing committee:

The listing committee formed by the Governor's Declaration, and it is consisting of:

- a- An official representative of the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Development.
- b- Two representatives of the Governorate.
- c- Large central governorates such as Cairo are segmented into four corners: north, south, east and west and each corner are run by a different director. Their tasks were centred upon visiting various sites and checking whether the buildings hold certain criteria to be registered in the inventory lists.
- d- Five faculty members in specialized universities in the fields of Architecture, Structural Engineering, Archeology, History and Arts, they are selected by the presidents of the universities at the request of the competent governor. The Committee is concerned with the listing of the modern heritage buildings and structures, (late 19th / 20th Century), and revising the listing archive periodically.

2. Approve the listings forms: the listing committee should complete the listing form, which includes (location, components of the site, name of the owner, the legal state, use, construction methods, valuable elements, photos. . .) then the competent governor shall submit the decisions of the Committee to the Prime Minister to approve it.

3. The National Archive: after the listing form has been approved by the Prime Minister, it must be published in the national journal called "El.Wakaea Al.Masria". After that, the owner of the building must be noted that his building has been added to the National Archive of Heritage Buildings, which means that he can't add or demolish or remove any part of the building before taking a permission from the Governorate and the National Organization for Urban Harmony. This archive must be updated every 5 years and has 3 copies at: The National Organization of Urban Harmony, The Governorate and The Prime Ministry.

4. Grievance: The Owner of the building can be grievance in 60 days from his announcement.

According to NOUH guidelines, around 750 buildings downtown have been registered as heritage sites for their distinctive architectural value. The heritage buildings have been classified into three main categories A, B and C for further protection and future preservation and conservation. The heritage of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century are governed by two laws, Law 114/2006 and 119/2008. The laws are used as management tool aiming at conserving and protecting architectural wealth. Law 144/2006 with its 16 articles, aims at monitoring the demolitions and promoting the conservation of heritage buildings. While law 119/2008, Section 2 of the building act, consists of three chapters including Areas of Outstanding Value, Advertisements, and Signboards (Harmony, 2009). The law regulates the activities of the National

Organization for Urban Harmony. The law defines standards and requirements for the conservation of neighborhoods, buildings, and structures of exceptional value. These rules would be codified in a decree issued by the Supreme Council of Urban Planning and Development. It prohibits the destruction or alteration of properties on the National Heritage list and stipulates that the involved bodies shall conform with these regulations whenever they conduct work in one of these sites, buildings, or structures. Nevertheless, most of the khedival Cairo buildings are still in a seriously dilapidated status and suffered from severe deterioration and infringements.

The NOUH guideline states that the preservation of architectural heritage is challenging because of its inextricable link to societal consciousness, some of which are obliquely related to the current situations "political, social, economic, environmental...", while others are directly caused by the increasing urban and suburban populations, the presence of both historic and modern buildings, and the proliferation of informal housing and development. Among the most important problems facing the preservation of heritage buildings are the following:

- 1- Difficulty evacuating heritage buildings from their occupants.
- 2- Inability of the occupants to maintain and restore the buildings.
- 3- Residents' continuous desire to improve and adjust the building.

Furthermore, many buildings have been subjected to endangerment and sometimes demolition due to ambiguous legal jargon, such as the demolition of National Democratic Party headquarters and the Grand Continental Hotel. The intended demolition of the Grand Continental Hotel as Al Sherbini (2016) claimed "*is part of a 1 billion-pound (Dh208 million) scheme to construct a 250-room hotel that will still keep the façade of the old one*". Aboseda, the director of NOUH, provided a legal justification for the demolition "*This hotel is listed under the category C of Law No 144 for the year 2009 that designates buildings of distinct architecture, but allows their demolition and reconstruction of inner parts on condition the facades are kept in order to preserve architectural harmony of the surrounding area*" (Sherbini, 2016). As well, the land where the National Democratic Party once stood has also been transferred to Egypt's sovereign wealth fund, so that it may be used to construct yet another hotel (See chapter Ten). In addition, these loopholes allowed property owners and landlords to remove their buildings from the heritage list or to demolish them unlawfully on the pretext that they are unsafe. Within 60 days of receiving a listing notification for delisting, landlords and property owners can appeal for non-registration to avoid the restrictive covenants as a listed building. The primary causes are the lack of financial incentives and the committee's disdain of landlords' and property owners' participation and voice. In this context, various buildings had been subjected to several intentional acts of deterioration to speed up the demolition process.



*Figure 33: Deliberate destruction by constant bulldozing for delisting (Building no10, El-Bostan Street). Source: (NOUH guidelines, 2009)*

Unfortunately, preservation policy is improperly implemented and disconnected from any broader government organizational perspective which is a major problem. Furthermore, the documentation center has no governmental or judicial power to halt the demolition.



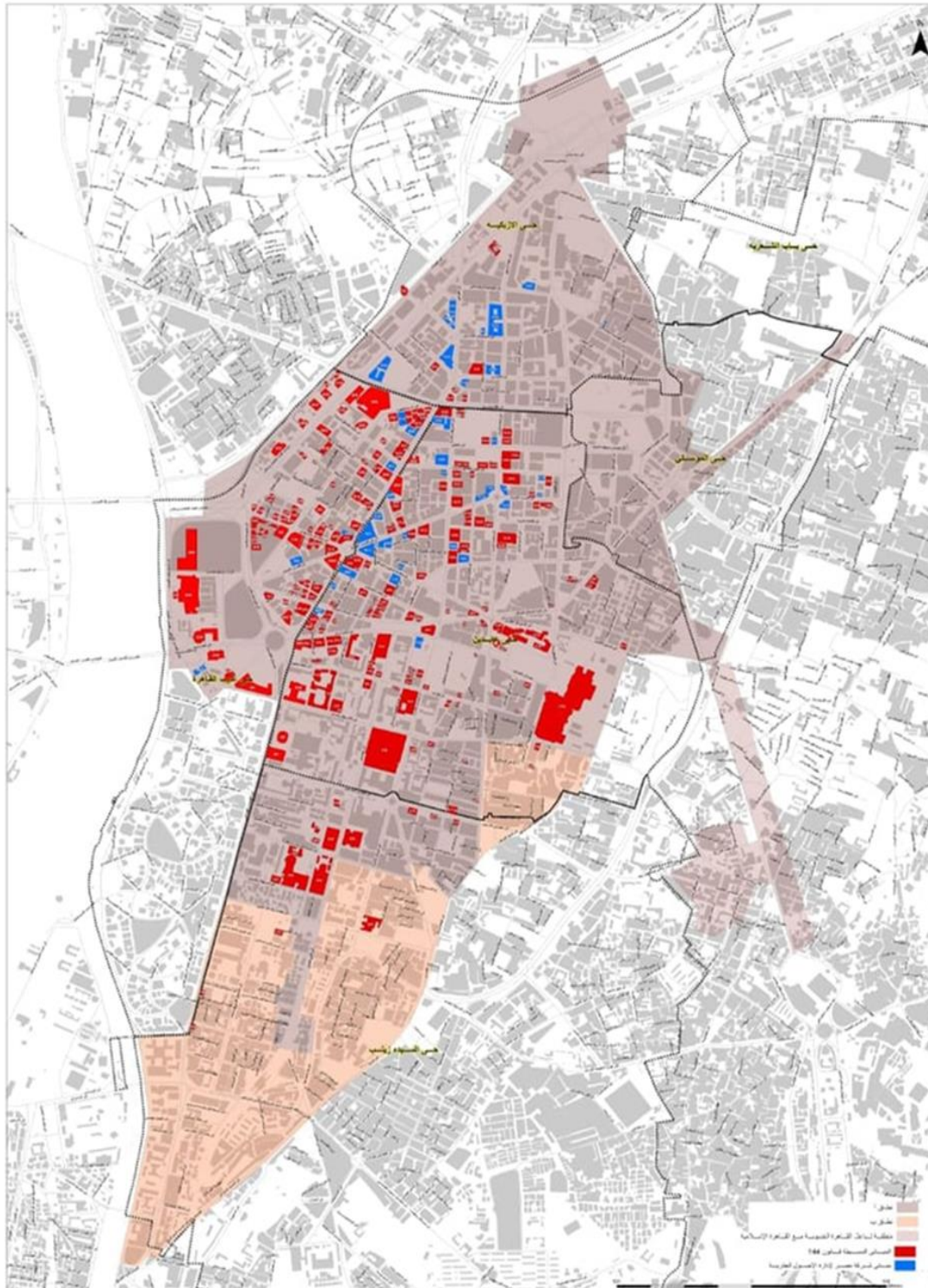


Figure 34: Khedivial Cairo borders, protections levels (A & B) and the registered buildings within according to low no, 144/2006. Source: NOUH

## Chapter Four Conclusion

Modern downtown Cairo owes its charm and attractiveness to the city's Belle Époque era. Since the 1990s, the recent awakening of nostalgia for a perceived bygone "Golden Age" of cultural refinement and the growing international interest in the previously unvalued monarchy and the colonial period has had a profound impact on discovering downtown Cairo and Cairo's *belle époque* heritage. The nostalgia narrative has been employed to restore downtown Cairo's image through the process of "Heritagization". However, the unique architectural history of khedivial Cairo is still suffering from severe deterioration. The primary goal of heritage preservation is to keep the facades and other visual cues of the Golden Age, which is crucial for heritagization process. Rather of prioritizing physical preservation, the heritagization process in Cairo is interested in capitalizing on a romanticized version of Cairo's khedivial heydays for future investment. In this context, the government efforts were limited to façade lifting and painting. These efforts as El-Aref (2004) claimed is merely '*cosmetic changes without altering the mindset, which gave rise to the current situation*' (cited in Abaza, 2011). However, the government is counting on real estate developers such as Al-Ismailia company for Real Estate Investments and investors to upgrade and rehabilitate downtown Cairo heritage through their creative reuse projects to increase their value to revitalize and gentrify downtown Cairo (see chapter eight, discussion, and analysis). The government's regeneration initiatives and Al-Ismailia for Real Estate Investments are interested in developing downtown as "*a world class destination*", motivated by the distinctive architectural value of Belle Époque heritage and its increasing valorization.

## **5 Chapter Five: Neoliberalism and Urban Planning/ Development in Egypt**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The implementation of neoliberal policies and regulations seeks to transform the political-economic context of a city's urban space into an arena for market-oriented economic growth and elite consumption practices to achieve optimum economic performance. In neoliberal discourse, urban planning and development has increasingly been used as a means of economic development and capital accumulation that enables cities to compete internationally (Sassen, 1991). Since the 1990s, the new governance structures in urban planning and the influence of real estate developers on neoliberal urban development have contributed significantly to the formation of the urban studies and planning discourse within a neoliberal state (Heeg & Rosol 2007, Ronneberger et al. 1999). Accordingly, local governments have taken on a new entrepreneurial role as promoter developers to get to the top of the global urban hierarchy by developing cities with competitive logistics in partnership with private actors and the urban elite. Gentrification was a key urban strategy that helped cities compete in the global market (Vives Miró, 2011).

In the middle of the 20th century, Cairo was acknowledged as the largest metropolis in Africa and the Middle East, serving as the region's significant political and cultural hub (Sims, 2003). However, the degraded quality of urban life in Cairo negatively impacted its international position and enabled cities like Dubai to take Cairo's leading seat. Hence, global competition forced Cairo to realign in several ways. Since the 1990s, urban planning and development in Cairo have been a restructuring process characterized by the emergence of new forms of spatially differentiated class projects, such as new prestigious desert cities and gated communities with lush green lawns and golf courses dedicated mainly to the upper-middle class and the wealthy class (Hendawy & Saeed, 2019). The government of Egypt has prioritized modernization and new settlements above regeneration when it comes to preserving urban heritage. The shortcomings in Cairo's urban planning were also evident in its top-down approach, which was largely disconnected from the micro-urban scale.

In 2008, the national development project "Greater Cairo 2050" was unveiled in the media. The displayed images of skyscrapers and other futuristic architectural designs and projects planned for specific Cairo neighborhoods refer to the government's desire and goals to develop and compete with other developed cities worldwide, including Dubai. As part of the "Cairo 2050" project, the historical and heritage centers, including downtown Cairo, will be developed to enhance the city's image globally. Hence, several projects have been launched to revitalize urban districts while retaining their historical and social value. However, the suggested plan to revive downtown Cairo highlights the clout of Egypt's real estate developers and business elite in the state's efforts to turn the neighborhood into a prominent tourist destination.



Figure 35: Downtown Cairo considering Greater Cairo 2050 Vision. Source : GOPP

## 5.2 Greater Cairo Urban Development

Greater Cairo is one of the world's most populous metropolitans. Based on CAPMAS (2017), there are approximately 25% of Egypt's entire population lives there. Greater Cairo is not a single region, the geographic scope includes the three governorates of Cairo, Giza and Qalioubiya and a number of new urban communities (6<sup>th</sup> October, Sheikh Zayed, 15 May, New Cairo, Al-Shorouk and Badr). Administratively, the GCR's three governorates are separated, but they are physically linked and operate as one urban core. However, each governorate has its own characteristics. The region is deemed as a center for political, economic, and cultural activity as it hosts the government headquarters, government institutions, foreign embassies, prestigious universities, hospitals, as well as Egyptian and international financial institutions. Some of the most well-known and prominent tourist attractions in the whole globe are also located there. Accordingly, the region attracts a wide segment of visitors on a daily basis for a variety of purposes. Economically, the region offered 31% of Egypt's GDP (GOPP, 2012).

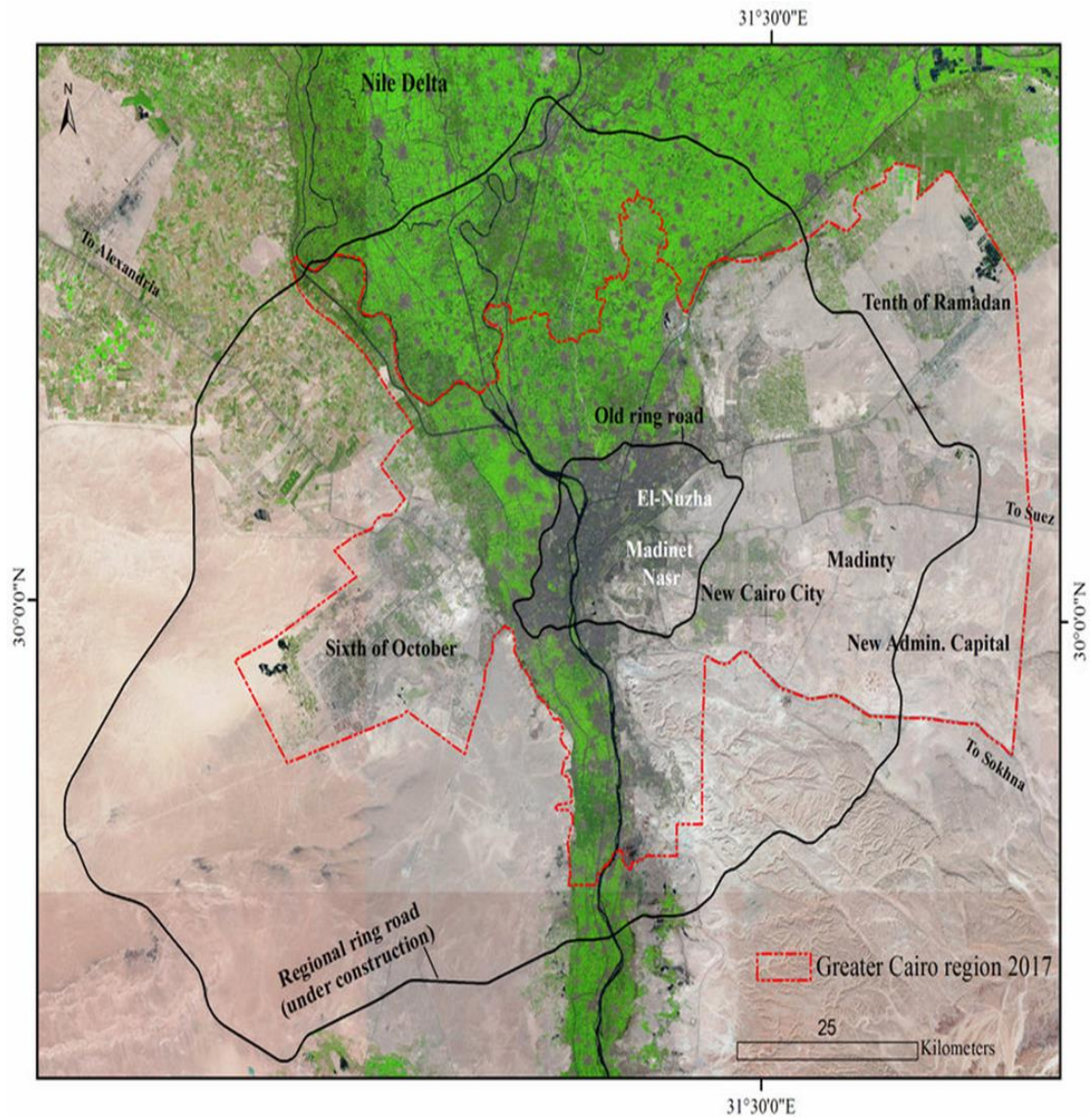


Figure 36: Greater Cairo Region (GCR), Source:( Saleem, 2018).

In the capital region (GCR), the necessity for integrated planning has long been recognized over time. In 1970, the first plan was developed in a time when the GCR's metropolitan region was undergoing a dramatic shift and rapid expansion. The plan was approved in 1973. The second master plan was launched in 1980, as a collaborative effort between the GOPP and France. Based on GOPP's work with French aid, a partial modification of the 1982 plan was prepared between 1990 and 1991. In this edition, no new planning characteristics (such as population growth) were included, and only minor land use updates were incorporated. In 1997, the second revision of the Master Plan of 1982 was achieved.

### **5.3 The Existing Institutional and Regulatory Framework Governing Urban Planning/ Developing Practices**

The main issue facing the GCR is ineffective urban governance, which is mostly linked to centralization that leads to squandered resources, ineffective coordination, and support for mediocre development initiatives. Agglomeration of people and power, and top-down decision-making, are among other terms used to describe centralization. The developed institutional and administrative framework is consistent with a government prioritizes "regime maintenance" (Singerman, 1995: p. 12), which leads to an overly centralized system that hinders the freedom to make decisions democratically and aids national leaders in dodging accountability. Government at all levels, including the local administrative level, is deeply intertwined with central planning and policymaking. Effective local governance cannot be facilitated by local administration because it lacks the necessary administrative and financial authority.

Urban planning and development practices are top-down approaches and heavily centralized process based on the (LAL<sup>32</sup>) of 1979 and the (UPL<sup>33</sup>) of 2008. The urban planning framework includes several institutions, organizations, and authorities responsible for planning, managing and final implementation. The central government is responsible for policy and decision-making, yet it is not prone to internal disagreements or divides. Generally, the government has the upper hand, while the political will remains the motivator and the only guarantee for continuity. Greater Cairo Region is developed and managed by more than 30 separate local and national government entities. For example, urban planning goals and strategies are set by the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities, which is part of the government structure in Egypt. The Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities is administratively supported by two different entities that oversee urbanization across Egypt. The development of new cities is the responsibility of the New Urban Communities Authority (NUCA). The entity is concerned with selling land subdivisions and providing infrastructure and has no interest in how this would function. Cities strategic master plans are produced and developed by the General Organization of Physical Planning (GOPP).

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<sup>32</sup> Local Administration Law

<sup>33</sup> Unified Planning Law

Egypt's governance is dominated by the power of individuals rather than institutions, and more for serving as a vehicle for the establishment of patronage structures (Springborg, 1979). Conflicts of interest and repetitive functions between different entities are very common in the current institutional framework. In addition, there is rampant corruption within all levels of the local government units, which has serious implications for urban planning and development projects within Greater Cairo (GR). Overall, the existing form of the framework for the planning process has had a detrimental impact on urban growth and development activities. The current legal framework includes different laws and regulations governing urban planning/ development schemes in Egypt and the implementation of the urban policies. In addition, the regulations outlining the roles of the various actors involved in its execution. The laws were enacted in a piecemeal fashion, without coordination with the existing legislation. Despite the good intentions of such laws and decrees, the result has been a maze of regulations that have been used whether to prevent or hinder the development and implementation of suitable physical plans in many instances.

In the Greater Cairo region (GCR), numerous issues that have had a negative impact on the region's urban context must be addressed, including the inability to keep up with steady population growth, non-controlled urban sprawl and rapid urbanization, the expansion of slums, the environmental degradation resulting from traffic congestion, inadequacy of the public transport system, infrastructure, and public utilities, and the scarcity of open public spaces (green areas and public parks). Furthermore, the deterioration of areas with great cultural and historic significance is also a concern. The current GC challenges as stated in GOPP (2012) report, "*constitute an increasing threat for its standing, especially under the increasing competitiveness in Middle East to attract the global attention*" (GOPP, 2012: p. 14). Despite the Greater Cairo distinguished cultural and historical characteristics, "*many indicators show that the GC doesn't have the international standing benefitting its potentials*" (GOPP, 2012). Utopian vision continued to be depicted in the GCR's Master Plans for future urban development, but the mechanism for making these changes enforceable and binding remained largely lacking and inadequate (GOPP, 2005).

#### **5.4 Greater Cairo Region Urban Development Strategy (GC, 2050)**

To meet the aspirations of Cairo's residents, a vision and strategy was needed to transform Cairo into a contemporary metropolis. 'Greater Cairo 2050' was the result of this endeavor. In 2008, Mubarak neo-liberal government has adopted the Greater Cairo Urban Development Strategy in accordance with the orientation of the cabinet ministers/businessmen and United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-HABITAT). According to UN-Habitat (2016: p.8), the goal of the Strategic Development Plan was "*to achieve sustainable development of the capital city's metropolitan area, based on a comprehensive strategy supported by a stakeholder-agreed-vision*".

GCR's 2050 vision was a part of a larger national strategic plan. The vision was created to achieve three key pillars Green, Global, and Connected for the target year of 2050 (Shaan, 2016). The project includes a set of studies and plans that suggested a framework and strategies aiming at improving the quality of life and achieving social justice for all segments and economic competitiveness through the development of priority projects and activities, participatory planning processes and the preparation of studies on institutional, legal, and administrative development.

According to the Greater Cairo Urban Development vision, eight pillars have been identified for Cairo development.

Vision	Social Justice	Economic Competitiveness	Environment-Friendly
Eight work pillars	1- Improve living conditions and the quality of life for the population		
	2- Provide a competitive environment for knowledge-based economy		
	3- Improve environmental conditions and achieve sustainability		
	4- Develop the infrastructure of Greater Cairo transportation network		
	5- Develop the new urban communities as diverse and attractive centers		
	6- Create an environment suitable for a tourism boom while preserving historical areas and archeological sites		
	7- Revive the central area of Greater Cairo		
	8- Provide an effective governance system to manage development projects		

Figure 37: The eight pillars for Cairo Development. Source: (GOPP, 2012)

Accordingly, two general strategies were developed including, the Greater Cairo economic development strategy and the Greater Cairo social and urban development strategy. The state-led urban development plan involved a set of ‘interesting’ projects aiming at giving a face-lift to the Greater Cairo Region. In addition, three sectoral programs were determined including the development of unplanned spaces, developing Greater Cairo into a cultural center for Africa and Middle East and establishing Greater Cairo as a global tourism destination (GOPP, 2015). The project was prepared by the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities represented in the General Organization for Physical Planning (GOPP), along with the participation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Local Development. UNDP and UN-Habitat provide the technical support for the project. (UNDP, 2017). As noted in the Evaluation of GOPP-UNDP Projects report (2016: P.22), Greater Cairo Strategic plan “was backed by a very high level of commitment from the top political level”.



Cairo Vision 2050 was highly imitating the visions of London2020, Sydney2030, Paris 2020, Abu Dhabi 2030, Shanghai2050, or Singapore2050. According to David Sims, Cairo 2050 is more of a “vision” than a true plan (Sims, 2011). GCR’ 2050 vision has been criticized from NGOs and planning scholars for its top-down class-biased approach and the displacement of a thousand people to implement contentious development projects in the city. The plan included a massive restructuring of numerous parts of greater Cairo. Planned macro-scale transformations of the city were meant to remove densely inhabited areas and relocate them elsewhere in the metropolis. The strategic development approach works in parallel with the gentrification strategy. The declared social and environmental aims of this strategy appear to be mainly overlooked in favor of attaining economic goals by expanding tourism capacity.

### 5.5 The Future of Downtown Cairo According To GCR’ Vision 2050

“Cairo 2050” vision seeks to revitalize the historical and heritage center because of their global appeal. Hence, a set of projects have been developed, aimed at rehabilitating, and revitalizing metropolitan neighborhoods while preserving their historical and social significance for enhancing the city’s image, and to reposition itself globally. To achieve this, unplanned areas will be developed and inhabitants of GCR's central region will be encouraged to move to the new urban communities in order to alleviate strain on GCR's central region.

#### **The strategic plan of Cairo governorate relies on the following points;**

Highlighting the cultural and heritage landmarks of the governorate and paying particular attention to the Nile River being a natural and pivotal component of the GC along with setting specific condition to deal with different areas in the governorate.

Gradual reduction of centralization of government offices and services in the Capital city to avoid high attraction to the capital on the account of other urban communities, by moving some of these offices and services outside the urban mass of Cairo.

Re-using the stock of land designated for public activities and land uses that can be relocated outside the urban mass of Cairo to meet the needs of Cairo Governorate for open and green spaces and services.

Dealing with unplanned areas with the objectives of achieving development in these areas in mind and providing all means for encouraging reverse migration of its residents.

Addressing traffic congestion by using the available possibilities to develop the management of Governorate traffic flow.

Maintain and increasing the quantity and quality of green spaces to reach international rates.

Paying more attention to pedestrian paths and spaces.

Controlling and decreasing different sources of environmental pollution in Cairo to reach the international standers

Enactment of new legislation for the management of the capital, with the objective of having a unified accountable leadership controlling all administrative and executive resources and powers of overlapping sectors and services, within the framework of balanced relationship with the central government.

Figure 38: Main points that Cairo governorate’s strategic plan are relied on. Source: GOPP

The strategic plan included a sequence of initiatives and programs to be implemented. These projects are mainly focused on urban rehabilitation and renewal projects such as restoring buildings, supporting, and enforcing legislation that assures the property owner's commitment to the needed maintenance, dedicating more efforts to green spaces and pedestrian paths, redeveloping the Nile Corniche to become an entertaining area, improving transportation networks through the establishment of underground tunnels and adjusting the main traffic arteries. In addition, the Strategic Development Proposal includes a plan to move the ministries and government buildings in Cairo's downtown region, establishing a new administrative district (or new administrative capital) as the main subsidiary project.

Media buzzwords like "revamping history" have been used to promote the concept of reviving Cairo's *Belle Epoque* culture and colonial heritage (Fayed, 2009). The project's goal was to attract investments that would provide the needed funding for developing and expanding GC's transportation network and infrastructure. An international competition has been held to present different visions to revive the khedival Cairo in 2009. AECOM Middle East company's proposal for revitalizing downtown Cairo as "*a world class destination of elegance, activity, history, culture and livable neighborhoods*" has been selected and won a contest led by the ministry of housing.

The project's objectives as stated<sup>34</sup>

1. To make a world class vibrant public realm for pedestrians that will increase the quality of life, stimulate economic vitality, and create an exciting and comfortable experience for locals and tourists.
2. To utilize the scale, spaces and built language of the existing urban fabric and historic architecture to showcase the values of continuity and sustainability that will underpin the revitalization of the area by providing a sense of local identity and ownership.
3. To provide mixed land uses at street level and nodes of public transit-oriented development that encourages a variety of new investment opportunities in facilities and attractions for residents and tourists.
4. To promote walking as the preferred mode of movement by providing pedestrian priority routes; increased public transit service; reduction of on street parking and down scaling private vehicle access into the area.
5. To encourage appreciation of the area as an historical and contemporary cultural capital.
6. To stimulate economic viability through increased pedestrian permeability and convenient access to new development areas for tourist attractions; mixed use commercial and residential development; and community facilities.

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<sup>34</sup> Source: Revitalization of the Central Zone of Khedive's Cairo March 2010 Prepared by ANA3, official presentation

7. To create a legible spatial and sequential urban experience that is defined by the plazas, squares, open spaces and street design of the public realm to link the major attractions, landmarks and neighbourhoods.
8. To extend the ‘source of life’ metonym of the Nile throughout the area by the use of water and landscape features, public art and extensive planting to streets and public open spaces as the means to improve aesthetic and environmental quality.
9. To alleviate the area of through-traffic and provide a balance of transport modes to support local economic development.
10. To optimize private and public returns on new development and sustain this over time.
11. To endorse flexibility in building and civic design to enable sustainable and innovative solutions incorporating new technologies that will improve lifestyle quality.

The initial concept design for downtown evolved in a collaborative framework in collaboration with international and domestic acting partners. The plan suggested the renovation of downtown Cairo’s main squares such as, Tahrir, Abdin, Attaba and Ramsis square including clearance of informal structures, and the installation of green spaces (Duffield, 2019). It also aimed to turn Cairo's central zone (Khedivial Cairo) into a more pedestrian-friendly environment, and the construction of multi-story garages to offset parking congestion, for polarizing tourists, investments and qualified workforce “*to provide new services and economic opportunities for Greater Cairo*” (ANA33, 2010). Such initiatives are scheduled to be adopted later for the future expansion of similar areas in old Cairo, such as Fatimid Cairo.



Figure 39: Key projects including Corniche Al Nil, Abdin square, Ataba and Ramsi square, and Tahrir square. Source: (ANA3,2010) official presentation



Figure 40: Khedival Cairo according to the proposed vision. Source: AECOM presentation

The suggested revitalization schemes for downtown Cairo based on GCR's "vision 2050" backed by the partnership between business elite and the governmental sector would enhance the khedival Cairo gentrification process as a lucrative business domain that reflects real estate developers' influence. In 2010, the Khedival Cairo revitalization plan was issued. The initial phase could be labeled as the pre-revolution phase, included the restoration of 20 heritage buildings, but the other phases did not get into gear until 2014, due to the flare-up of the Arab spring in January 2011.

After two decades of implementing neoliberalism as an economic strategy, many of the negative repercussions of neoliberalism's reforms were highlighted (from 1990 to 2010). Neoliberal policies as a class dynamic process opened opportunities for the Egyptian elite as crony capitalism, accompanied by authoritarianism, to capture state economic resources.

*“Egyptian governments, under both the current regime [Mubarak’s] and its historical predecessors, are notorious for excessive bureaucratic regulations, registration requirements and other controls to feed corruption. (...). Compounding the normal bureaucratic culture is the state ownership of many or most of the primary economic levers—banking an financial institutions, tourism, oil, the Suez Canal, manufacturing, the media and so on. Furthermore, government employees receive insufficient pay, while a decreasing minority of Egyptians achieve increasingly vast wealth, thus creating a growing income gap between classes (...). Corruption has remained a significant problem under Sadat and Mubarak.” (Freedom House. 2005, cited Dima Munaff, 2014)*

Eventually, the unfair wealth distribution patterns influence the emergence of other dissatisfied classes (notably the middle and working class) (Roccu, 2013: p. 435). Finally, rejecting torture, poverty and corruption led to the ignition of the Egyptian Revolution on 25 January 2011.

## **Chapter Five Conclusion**

The government’ efforts were concentrated on developing the desert outskirts of its largest cities into brand-new urban zones where real estate investment is permitted. As a result, gated communities and the privatized suburban market attracted Egyptians who decided to move from the historic centers, including downtown Cairo. In 2008, as a part of the "Cairo 2050" development project, downtown Cairo was chosen for future regeneration. Khedivial Cairo regeneration project is premised on attracting tourism and businesses back to the city and creating an entrepreneurial environment. The suggested plan pursues competitiveness and seeks to make the Khedivial Cairo district and the whole Cairo city attractive to global investment. Maspero Triangle was also included in Cairo 2050's strategic development plan as a major development project and designated as a new Central Business District (GOPP, 2008). As a result, a select few investors were eager to capitalize on downtown Cairo's urban regeneration and its potential as a resurrected business, residential, and cultural district. The interest in downtown Cairo's bygone "golden days" spurred both parties' revitalization plans. Through the lens of the Al-Ismailia company and the highly criticized Cairo Vision 2050 plan, the urban regeneration of Khedivial Cairo is a gentrification process supported by the area's distinctive culture and heritage, predicated on appropriated forms of urban modernism. Despite the lack of a comprehensive plan or strategy for Khedivial Cairo management or regeneration prior to 2008, some standard gentrification features are evident in downtown Cairo in that phase. However, they have yet to cause the types of shifts in the urban community that have traditionally been studied in gentrification research.



**Part Three**

**The Role of Creativity and Entrepreneurship In Rediscovering  
Downtown Cairo**

**Khedivial Cairo Second Gentrification Wave**

**(The Triggering Phase)**



## Part Three Introduction

Downtown Cairo has witnessed unprecedented urban transformations since the January Revolution of 2011. From January 25 until February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011, six million Egyptians showed up on the streets, making it the most prominent pro-democracy demonstration in Arab world history (Hamid, 2011). Tahrir Square was the heart of the Egyptian revolution. Following the Tahrir Square protests, restaurants, cafes, and pubs in the downtown area were jampacked with people. Therefore, in Egypt's 2011 revolution, downtown Cairo was rediscovered, and one's right to the city was exercised. The revolution spurred urban activism in several disciplines. Artists and social movements have employed art as a resistance, change, and social transformation tools. Since that time, downtown has witnessed the growth of several art spaces and resurgence through the occupation of different spaces.

The city's affluent residents returned to the downtown area for the demonstrations, where they met up with activists, artists, and others. Gentrifiers (new urban elite) with their consumer preferences and their creative initiatives, as well as business entrepreneurs who were attracted to the quality of the place and the cultural lifestyles that Khedivial Cairo could offer, started to emerge. Their presence contributed substantially to the preservation of some of Downtown Cairo's iconic buildings through the rehabilitation or adaptive reuse process, leading to a second wave of gentrification in Khedivial Cairo. This wave was triggered by a slew of entrepreneurially led projects and creative initiatives. Furthermore, gentrification was backed and bolstered by "*the back-to-the-city movement by capital*" (Smith, 1979) embodied by real estate investors who provided gentrifiable properties. Al-Ismailia Company for Real Estate Investment has become a prominent leading private heritage developer in downtown Cairo. The company is capitalizing on the historical and architectural value of real estate in downtown Cairo to reap substantial financial benefits. Hence, Al-Ismailia Company's strategy for revitalizing Downtown Cairo has played a vital role in the downtown Cairo gentrification process.

In addition, investors have started to appreciate the vibrant independent art and cultural scene of downtown Cairo and supporting it for achieving a more business-friendly environment. In downtown Cairo, culture is shaped and redefined by artists and culture producers (the creative class) in a way that aesthetically and visually celebrates the richness and beauty of downtown Cairo, socially transforms the historic neighborhood into a hot spot for high-end consumption, and financially discloses the dominance of the private sector. Creative art, cultural initiatives, and international festivals have also been used as a marketing tool and a means of creating a new image, serving as an essential element in the Khedivial Cairo regeneration process. Through the above-mentioned tools, the gentrification process has been stimulated. The following three chapters discuss the role of entrepreneurs and the creative class with their initiatives in enhancing the khedivial Cairo gentrification process.

## **6 Chapter Six: The Egyptian Revolution and The Right to The City**

### **6.1 Introduction**

Neoliberalism, as Mitchell (1999) claimed, “*has consolidated a regime that denies Egyptians the right to organize political opposition or hold political meetings, while forbidding the few legal opposition parties to hold public activities:* (Mitchell 1999: p.32). However, the widening economic chasm between most citizens and a handful of wealthy businesses was a major catalyst for the 2011 Egyptian revolution. Despite a 2% rise in GDP per capita, the poverty rate climbed (WDI, 2010). In addition, the corruption and worsening economic and social conditions, the harshness and unnerving presence of the police — which is both disturbing and alarming to see — as well as the brutality of the police against activists, the skyrocketing prices of essential goods and services, and the privatization policy all played a role in sparking the revolution. The young Egyptian revolution characterized a dramatic surge of anti-authoritarian movements seeking social rectification. The upheaval was partly aided by the development of virtual resistance on social networking platforms. Blogger activists in Cairo have developed new ways to voice discontent, including boycott campaigns, cyber-activism, and protest art; as well as new forms of mobilization and engagement means of communication, and organizational flexibility in the face of substantial constraints on expression in Cairo's public spaces. Tahrir Square in Central Cairo was taken back by activists, who used public art works and street graffiti to create protest zones and added key areas of resistance and contestation throughout the city. While the revolution's success is still hotly debated, the Tahrir movement profoundly impacted how we think about public space.

According to *Cities for Citizens* (1998, cited in McCann, 2002: pp.77-79), the right to a city is embodied in three claims: “*the right to voice, the right to difference, and the right to human flourishing*”. Elisa Ravazzoli (2013) discussed how art became a part of everyday life in Egypt following the 18 days of the revolution. Egyptians have employed street art in public spaces to express their collective right to their city. Street art produced and disseminated recognizable visual vocabularies and aesthetic patterns in popular culture. In addition, street art was a powerful revolutionary weapon, amplifying resistance, awareness, and insurrection. The public art performance turned a clogged traffic hub into an active and energetic arena for resistance open to all groups and socioeconomic classes, media outlets, and urban society. In this chapter, we explore, considering the right to the city, what role has art played in Egypt's revolt and subsequent upheaval in reclaiming and rediscovering downtown Cairo?

## 6.2 The significance and the value of public spaces

Regardless of a wide range of advanced technical tools designed for effective social communication, there is always a continuous need for social presence and face-to-face contact between human beings. Thus, public space, as a domain of interaction and sociability practices, has been viewed as a creator and an enhancer of social ties among people (Berman, 1986; Harvey, 1992). These values are crucial for practicing politics (Sennett, 1970). In this regard, public space serves as platforms for political integration, social cohesion, and civic discourse (Walzer, 1986), where people can freely speak, debate, express and discuss (Young, 1990). These factors may lead to united action regarding public affairs. Hence, public space is at the heart of the democratic process and is highly associated with collective deliberation. This controversial topic received high consideration from scholars and researchers alike, which led to a notable amount of theory-based intellectual production in different aspects.

As Ellin claimed, the ancient or contemporary city "*has some characteristics that define it forever: the street, the square, the public buildings, the residence, have established between them, through a slow and uninterrupted process*" (Ellin, 1996: p.25). UN Habitat (2015) acknowledged public spaces as "*a vital ingredient of successful cities.*" In urban planning, abundant studies identify the public space and its analogy as an "open space." Public space, as Carmona et al. (2008) noted, "*relates to all those parts of the built and natural environment where the public has free access. It encompasses all the streets, squares and other rights of way ... the open spaces and parks; and the 'public/private' spaces where public access is unrestricted*" (Carmona et al., 2008: p. 5). In the Biennial of public space (2013), the charter offered one of the most important definitions of public space: "*Public spaces are all places publicly owned or of public use, accessible and enjoyable by all for free and without a profit motive.*" (INU, 2013: n.p)

Public spaces are created and developed as places for social inclusion. Public squares provide the basis for social interaction whereby people of different backgrounds come together to meet, interact equally and freely. It differs from simply watching movies and television shows about other people. In public spaces, as Gehl (1987) argued, "*the individual himself is present, participating in a modest way, but most definitely participating*" (Gehl, 1987: p17). Gehl (1987), also valued the attendance of the other people, activities, events, inspiration, and stimulation as "*one of the most important qualities of public spaces altogether*" (Gehl, 1987: p17). For Zukin (1995), public spaces are "*the primary site of public culture; They are a window into the city's soul*" (Zukin, 1995: p 259). So, public places have a significant link with identity since they have the power to "*shape the cultural identity of an area and provide a sense of place for local communities*" (Cabe space, n.d).<sup>35</sup> According to Bernardo and Palma-Oliveira (2016), different

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<sup>35</sup> The Value of Public Space How high-quality parks and public spaces create economic, social and environmental value. The social dimension of public space.

studies referred to the "*significant and positive correlation between place identity and neighborhood satisfaction. ... and perception of the quality of one's own neighborhood*" (Bernardo & Palma-Oliveira, 2016: p. 247). Spatial identity, as Carr (1992) stated, "*is largely a product of social relationships with others. These others may be loosely affiliated groups or cultural, subcultural, or national ones.*" (Carr et al., 1992: p. 202).

In political philosophy, the concept of "public" arenas has been inspired by the Greek agora and the Roman Forum, "the golden age of democracy"<sup>36</sup>, where the city's public affairs were debated equally among citizens. Public spaces, such as plazas, squares, and city centers, is an interactive platform for public debate, demonstration, and protest to express their voices. Lefebvre (1991: p.410) claimed that "*space is becoming a central object of political struggle in the contemporary world—it is no longer the "medium" or "theatre" of socio-spatial conflicts but one of their constitutive dimensions.*" The political value of public space, as Di Masso (2012) believed, "*seems to be widely supported*" (Di Masso, 2012: p. 124). As a result, it reinforces the political dimension of city life and where the challenge lies. In political studies, public space is a concept used interchangeably with the public sphere.

### ***6.2.1 Public Space and The Right to The City***

The right to the city has flooded into literary and social movement discourses and is interpreted differently (Harvey, 2003). The right to the city, as Lefebvre stated, "*manifests itself as a superior form of rights: right to freedom, to individualization in socialization, to habitat and to inhabit. The right to the [city as] oeuvre, to participation and appropriation (clearly distinct from the right to property), are implied in the right to the city*" (Lefebvre 1996 [1968]: p. 174). The majority of current policies attempt to put the notion of the right to the city within a liberal-democratic framework. Liberal democracy is a type of nation-state where citizens have limited political power. It prioritizes personal freedoms and seeks to protect them by distinguishing the public and private spheres. The right to the city directs all national attention to the state as the only entity capable of guaranteeing any possible right to the city. Government policy is viewed from this viewpoint as a set of legal strategies. Therefore, the rights are considered instrumental; once a legal right has been established, the conflict is over.

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<sup>36</sup> Hannah Arendt (1958)

As Henri Lefebvre (1967) claimed, the right to the city is a "*cry and a demand*", a means to strengthening and reinforcing democracy by occupying space in various ways to address "*problems of disenfranchisement*" (Purcell, 2002: p.103). Civilian mobilization and political struggle are always necessary to achieve rights. Because they are the product of a struggle, they are perpetually vulnerable to more struggle. Marx's presentation in "On the Jewish Question" significantly impacts this perspective, which emphasizes the proletariat's tyranny and the decline of the state according to Marxist-Leninist ideology. Marx envisioned that citizens would finally reclaim the authority that had been sized by the new liberal-bourgeois state (Lefebvre,2009: p. 77–78). Therefore, to claim the right to the city is to advocate for a revolutionary shift that restores centrality to the city (Purcell, 2013: p. 149). Harvey is a firm believer in the public commons and the ability of collective bodies to rise and seize power, as has been demonstrated throughout history by the sense that emerges from the streets, as well as the enthusiasm of street protests (Harvey, 2012).

Although urban development brings significant social, economic, and environmental changes, the emergence of negative social processes is more visible than in cities, where wealthy enclaves coexist with impoverished ghettos. The increasing polarization, social inequalities, and spatial segregation are among the most significant issues tied with urbanization. In 1968, Lefebvre introduced the concept of a "right to the city" as a consequence of the urban crisis. Lefebvre argues that the widespread tendency toward lifestyle homogenization and the engineering and colonization of daily life are major causes of the predicament. However, every citizen has the right to have their voice heard and their opinions counted in city production according to their needs and aspirations, no matter who they are or what they look. Thus, the right to the city profoundly disrupts current power relations and the deep roots of the capitalist system that drive urban growth and the production of urban space.

*“Any city, however small, is in fact divided into two, one the city of the poor, the other of the rich; these are at war with one another” (Plato, The Republic IV, 422B)<sup>37</sup>.*

Right to the city’s literature maintains that “neoliberal urbanization” has sparked a wave of urban mobilization (Harvey, 2003). There are several manifestations of urban mobilization, including conventional civic society, political movements for social justice, anti-profit-oriented urban policies, etc. Under the domination of the globalized neoliberal policies of managing cities whereby market forces and profitable interests dominate cities persistently, the economic reform policies more specific in developing countries ushered a new era of urban inequality resulted from the widening gap between socioeconomic groups and production of “*new urban spaces characterized by segregation and exclusion*” (González, 2018: p.1). Marx interpreted this as granting the state autonomy and rendering it sovereign power over citizens. Lefebvre and Marx

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<sup>37</sup> For Plato, see Cooper, J. M., & Hutchinson, D. S. (Eds.). (1997). *Plato: complete works*. Hackett Publishing.

agreed on the goal. Lefebvre claimed to have set a new "contract of citizenship" (2003a/1990, 1990), to close the gap between state and citizenry (Lefebvre, 1990: p. 32) and move beyond the state and capitalism is a must. A new contract is a form of political awakening, starting a long political struggle to achieve their legal rights.

The right to the city as Harvey (2008) contended should democratize urbanization by "*who commands the necessary connection between urbanization and surplus production and use*" (2008: p. 40). The United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-HABITAT<sup>38</sup>), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (2006) have led an initiative to conceptualize the right to the city as part of a broader human rights agenda to urge cities to adopt policies that foster justice, sustainability, and inclusion. Harvey (2008), referred to the rebirth of interest in Henri Lefebvre's ideas as "*there are various social movements around the world that are now demanding the right to the city as their goal*" (Harvey, 2008: p.1). According to Madanipour (1998), public spaces are spaces used for demonstrations and revolutions by the public to express their discontent against the contemporary crisis of neoliberal capitalism, democratic deficit, or authoritarianism. Saskia Sassen, in an article analyzing the unrest in the Middle East, envisions a "global street" that has become a haven for the powerless. She claimed, "*urban space makes their powerlessness complex, and in that complexity lies the possibility of making the political, making the civic*" (Sassan, 2011: p. 579).

In Egypt in 2011, activists defended their right to resist oppression and political hegemony as a rallying cry for political and economic reform by occupying the space. The occupation of Tahrir Square and other public spaces across the country sent a similar message of defiance to the state control (Abou El Fadl, 2014).

### **6.3 Neoliberalism and 2011 Revolution in Egypt**

Neoliberalism has primarily shaped the governance model in Egypt. It represents '*a mix of liberal pro-market and supply-side discourses (laissez-faire, privatization, liberalization, deregulation, competitiveness) and monetarist orthodoxy (price stability, balanced budgets, austerity)*' (Apeldoorn & Overbeek, 2012: p. 5). For financial gain, the period between 1980 and 2010 was characterized by the dismantling and privatization of vast tracts of land and state-owned firms in the energy, water, sanitation, irrigation, healthcare, transportation, and communications sectors. Privatization aims to lessen the burden of foreign debt and stimulate the growth of sluggish enterprises and restore economic stability (El-Mahdi & Marifeet, 2009: p. 4, 45). In addition, it seeks to centralize the public sector and remove the welfare state.

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<sup>38</sup> State of the world's cities 2010/11 Bridging the urban divide

Neoliberalism in Egypt as Joya (2017) argued, “ushered in a shift from state-planned economies to a private sector-led development model”. The neoliberal reform strategy and collaboration with the private sector produced "crony capitalism" among the Egyptian elites. As a result, 40% of the country's wealth was only dominated by 5% of the country's elite (Osman, 2011: p.127). The Egyptian elites were politically connected actors who benefited from the privatization of public assets and the deregulation of economic sectors through outsourcing and redistributing state resources to the few at the expense of the many (Osman, 2011: p. 141), while workers struggled with wage stagnation and rising unemployment. These policies exacerbated social class divisions (Bogaert, 2013). Despite the promotion of economic policy, there was no real political change. The National Democratic Party (NDP), as the ruling party, dominated Egypt's representative institutions and the government. According to Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (2011), "*Over the course of Hosni Mubarak's rule, the NDP functioned as an instrument of executive power and a mechanism for patronage distribution*"(n.p). In addition, the party allowed the political elite and business executives to benefit from privatization and neoliberal reforms and make fortunes. Later, capitalists and wealthy families came to occupy senior positions in the cabinet.

Cronyism and the consequent stagnation of the private sector in Egypt and other Arab countries in the Middle East area led to the downfall of the authoritarian regimes in those countries (Diwan, 2020). International reports illustrate how the Egyptian government's performance lacks accountability mechanisms and transparency. Various types of corruption exist, including abuse of government funding, authority, and power, bribes, tax fraud, and favoritism. In addition, heavy centralization due to massive bureaucracy and rigidity hinders attempts at modernization. When the government shifted from a developmental state to a neoliberal one, it exacerbated poverty and social disparities. Moreover, the reforms created a "democratic deficit" and social alienation within Egyptian society. Neoliberalism in Egypt “*was able to provide Egyptians with growth without equity, education without inspiration, employment without security, health services without care and voting without any real impact on the political process,*” (Ibrahim, 2011: p. 1347).

#### **6.4 The 25<sup>th</sup> of January 2011 Revolution and The Rediscovery of Downtown Cairo**

From its inception in the 1870s through the end of the monarchical era in 1952, downtown Cairo served as a watershed moment in Egypt's modern and contemporary political history up until 2011. In socio-cultural context, downtown Cairo streets are a plateau for various activities and one of the distinguishing features of the Cairene identity that is subject to disappearance.

*“A survey of the streets of downtown Cairo suggests that the area is indeed a rich and unique source for discerning the heated struggle over the shape of the hegemonic narrative: the way the past and its legacy are designed, disseminated, and received by its own users..... The possibility of including forms of both hegemonic and anti-hegemonic narratives is what makes the streets of central Cairo a unique text for comprehending the struggle over historical representations in public spaces.” (Meital, 2007: p.874)*

Tahrir Square was previously renowned as 'Ismailia Square', after Khedive Ismail, the founder of Khedivial Cairo. After the Egyptian Revolution of 1919, the square became widely known as Tahrir (Liberation) Square (Vatikiotis, 1997). In 1952, Tahrir Square was one of fifteen streets and squares where the military and Free Officers changed their names during the anti-colonial revolution (Raffat, 1998). In 1960, the area was formally christened "Tahrir Square" (Al-Sayyad, 2016; Iskander, 2005). The January 25th Egyptian Revolution in 2011, immediately directed world attention to Tahrir Square as a focal point of political change in Egypt and its continuous waves. The dynamic nature of Tahrir Square can be attributed to its central location and the square's vicinity to the Nile, as well as many significant cultural and educational structures, such as the Tahrir Complex "Mugamma 'Al Tahrir", the American University campus, the Egyptian museum, and the Arab League, the palace of Khedive Abbas Helmi II's sister, and the palace of Khedive Abbas Helmi II (Iskander, 2005). In addition, other governmental and political edifices, such as the National Democratic Party, stimulated the hostility toward the symbols of the state's formal power that later turned into a bloody confrontation.



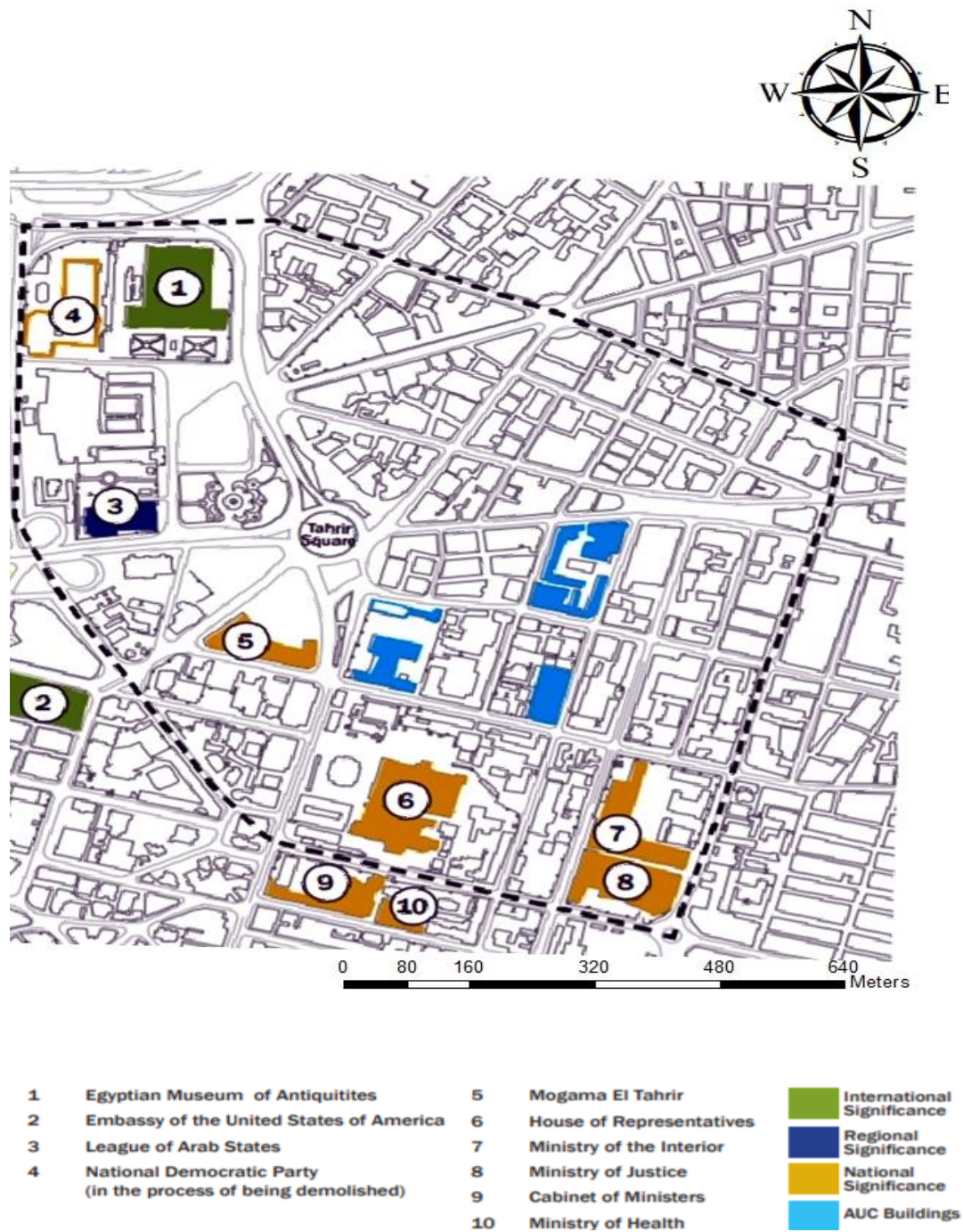


Figure 41: Tahrir square's significant structures. Source: (AUC, 2015).

### 6.4.1 Tahrir Square from a Symbol of Colonization to Liberation

From colonialism to nationalism and independence, Tahrir Square helped define Egyptians' collective consciousness until 2011. Tahrir Square was at the epicenter of political change and “center of vibrant national activity” (Meital, 2007: p. 861). It was a perfect venue for anti-political regimes' social movements to protest and revolt. According to Said (2014), Tahrir Square witnessed 15 significant anti-political regime protests. Before British forces' evacuation and transferring Qasr Al-Nil barracks to Egyptian authorities in 1946, 30 Egyptian protestors were shot in Tahrir Square during the first demonstration of the British presence in Egypt (El-Shahed, 2007). In 1952, Egyptian citizens rejoiced in the birth of the Egyptian republic and put a statue of President Gamal Abd El-Nasser in the Square's centre (Iskander, 2005). Later, the square became a stage for President Gamal Abd El-Nasser's speech in front of thousands of citizens. In 1977, bread riots at Tahrir Square resulted in the quick and ruthless reprisal of the regime.



Figure 42: Tahrir Square, Cairo, Egypt, 1941 & 1965. Source: Wikimedia Commons, and Granger/Shutterstock

American policies and Mubarak's support for the US were heavily criticized during the Gulf Wars (1991 and 2003, respectively). The symbolism of organizing rallies at Tahrir Square was clear from the demonstrators' banners and speeches. Demonstrations in Tahrir Square have periodically devolved into clashes between protesters and the security forces. In 2004, the Kefaya movement "enough" was established as the first movement against Mubarak's rule. The movement is fueled primarily by economic reform policies (Waly, 2013). At the beginning of the 21st century, Tahrir Square was a forum to express solidarity and support for other Arab countries, notably Palestine, Iraq, and Lebanon. Typically, political issues impact the urban space transformations in downtown Cairo. Since the 1980s, the square has been converted into a traffic corridor to prevent potential political or social unrest. The construction of the Metro station removed the elevated public walkway that once encircled the square and shielded pedestrians from oncoming vehicles. Besides

automobile navigation and taxi stops, many footpaths with considerable traffic at the entrances and exits of metro stations and bus stations span the square. As a result, people's political rights to assemble peacefully and create new spatiality have been compromised.



Figure 43: The congestion at Tahrir square. Source: (Donnison, 2012)

In 2011, Tahrir Square symbolized the ongoing Egyptian democracy demonstrations as the central platform for the Egyptian Revolution. Protesters took over the previously formed space under the government's jurisdiction and attempted to break the link between public space and the state. Hundreds of thousands of Egyptians, particularly young people, exemplified a broad spectrum of society, with the poor, lower/middle, and upper classes all united in expressing their demands, grievances, and opinions in the square "*Their fight for democracy [was] inextricably linked to their ability to assemble in urban space.*" (El Shahed, cited Lindsey, 2017). The revolutionaries' collective consciousness and a shared vision for change have reinforced their collective performance, social interaction, and unexpected encounters and created a unique closeness among these different classes. Participants frequently described the square as "liberated ground." (Khalil, 2011: p. 248). The rallying cry was simple: "bread, liberty, and social justice." Those Arab uprisings, particularly in Tahrir Square, undoubtedly marked a turning point in region's contemporary history, whether they failed or succeeded.

*"Whether the 'revolution' has succeeded or not, and whether 18 days is enough to qualify as a revolution – indeed, many believe that it is best to define it as incomplete – still Tahrir Square did trigger a powerful process for advocacy of freedom through reshaping street politics"* (Abaza, 2013: p.4).



Figure 44: Friday of Victory, Tahrir Square, Cairo, Egypt, February 2011. Source: credit to Lara Baldi

### 6.5 Art as Weapon

*‘We need an environment which is not simply well organized, but poetic and symbolic as well. It should speak of the individuals and their complex society, of their aspirations and their historical tradition, of the natural setting and of the complicated functions and movements of the city world’* (Lynch, 1960: p.119)

Prior to the uprising of 2011, art was rarely visible on the streets of Egypt. The impact of the 25th of January revolution in Egypt in 2011 was not limited to the dynamic political change, but it also profoundly impacted the cultural and artistic scene. The public space, mainly Tahrir square, has been transformed into a 'de facto space' for debate, mourning, and public performances (Abaza, 2013,2014). During the revolution, artists stood in the frontline of the revolution at Tahrir Square, using their newly found freedom to express their dissatisfaction with social discrimination and their need for change via art.

Revolutionary art was a means of agitation against social inequality and tyranny. It has also been used to comment on current events, express solidarity with other Arab uprisings, commemorate the martyrs, criticize the dictatorship, and even target the oppressors themselves (El-Khatib, 2013). Popular culture and social responsibility only define the accessibility of space. Thus, public space has been transformed from a congested traffic hub to a performative and animated space because of art and freedom of expression (Abou El Fadl, 2014). Harvie (2009) claims that art can produce urban meaning besides demonstrating urban process. Elisa Ravazzoli (2013) explained how art in Egypt, after 18 days became a part of everyday practice. Graffiti, videos, films, and other self-produced media expressions were not political art in the traditional sense, but rather a sort of "artivism" (Baladi, 2016). William Wells, the director of Townhouse Gallery, referred to the reasons behind the widespread and richness of-the-art scene, "*Everyone is taking advantage of this vacuum. Without state security on our backs, there is an enormous amount of freedom*" (Harris, 2020: n.p). With the influx of young students, activists, and artists during the 25th revolution, the contemporary art scene, which has been active since the 1990s, has seen a resurgence (Nagati & Stryker, 2016). The events and struggle episodes over the space in Tahrir Square sparked a new visual culture that popularized political awareness and symbolized the revolutionary movement's promises.

### ***6.5.1 Graffiti & Revolution***

Contemporary art and visual culture incorporate street art as an indispensable component. Different events have sparked it. As Martin Irvine (2012: p.1) noted in his article, street art is "*a paradigm of hybridity in global visual culture, a post-postmodern genre being defined more by real-time practice than by any sense of unified theory, movement, or message.*" Urban street art, as defined by Nicholas Riggle, arises "*if, and only if, its material use of the street is internal to its meaning*" (Riggle, 2010: p.246). Rob White has also described street art as a "*well organized, skilled activity which has a strong aesthetic dimension, informed by techniques, learning strategies, evaluation, and group forums*" (2000: p. 254). Street art as a culture of symbols is a multifaceted social issue that belongs to a counterculture movement that challenges compulsory order and rules. The works of Michel de Certeau "The Practice of Everyday Life" and Henri Lefebvre's "The Production of Space" are examples of street art subcultures that represent incredibly imaginative and improvisational counter-practices. Although it encompasses anonymity, social activism, illegality, longevity, and ephemerality, it also embraces the elements of creativity, performance, gentrification, and place-making. While street art, graffiti, and murals are often used interchangeably, sometimes graffiti is separated from street art by metropolitan agencies (McAuliffe, 2012: p. 190). Graffiti is a term used in the late 1960s and early 1970s to describe the labels that appeared in New York City and Philadelphia (Ferrell, 1993). The economic and political turmoil since 1970 marked the emergence of graffiti, such as the ban on oil in 1973, the stock market decline, and the Vietnam War (Conklin, 2012). As Zukin and Braslow (2011) stated, urban creative culture includes street art and graffiti that appeal to urban bohemianism and

lived experience. It also creates social awareness and sometimes advocates for social and political changes (Pasternak, 2010).

In Egypt, street art has been used in public spaces as a visual expression that exercises a collective right to the city. It creates and disseminates visual vocabulary and aesthetic patterns easily identifiable in popular culture. Egyptian street art was a powerful revolutionary weapon to support resistance, awareness, and rebellion. There was a constant stream of anti-Mubarak graffiti from the first day on public buildings' wall and military fighting vehicles that were not permitted to enter and sit in territory without being tagged with "down with Mubarak." The expressive graffiti was also used to cover and decorate the facades of shops, offices, residential buildings, and the Egyptian Museum's erected concrete fences. Graffiti and murals that covered Egypt's streets, downtown Cairo, and the walls surrounding Tahrir Square transformed them into dazzling places. The revolutionary art scene spilled out symbolized breaking down the wall of fear and taboos (Khatib, 2012).

Several academic studies in the last few years have focused on how the uprisings pushed these artistic contributions into public space, particularly graffiti and murals. Public spaces under Hosni Mubarak were carefully regulated and ornamented mainly with posters and leaflets promoting the regime and its ruler (Van de Bildt, 2013). In the Mubarak era, graffiti was banned and criminalized. Later, it became a self-perpetuating movement that offered a pointed commentary and documentary message about the state of Egypt.

*“Although the art of graffiti existed all over the city of Cairo well before January 2011, together with the painting of large murals, these gained a mesmerizing new dimension after the revolution”.* (Abaza, 2013: p.4)

Following the ousting of Hosni Mubarak, SCAF<sup>39</sup>, attempted to limit democracy, resulting in art 'awakening'. Public space became a primary arena for graffiti and murals, in which street artists depicted a commemoration of the revolution as it occurred, memorializing the revolution's martyrs (Armbrust, 2012). It also served as a political satire poster, forming a robust and pan-Egyptian identity. As Abaza (2013: p.4) described graffiti in Cairene streets is *"often accompanied by obvious mocking insults, jokes and biting sardonic drawings against the SCAF and the figures of the ancien re'gime"*. The urban studies scholar Ella Chmielewska believes that graffiti may be seen as the *"specific history of protest, contestation, and subversion framed by the locality."* (Chmielewska, 2007: p. 163)

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<sup>39</sup> the Supreme Council of the Military Forces

*“Not simply chronicling or commenting on current events, graffiti invites citizens to actively participate in public debate around how to live together and declare their rights under authoritarian power structures. This marks a profound shift from the experience of Egyptians under Mubarak's reign, during which public space was largely given over to images of coercive consent and ideological control.”* (Elias, 2014: p. 91).

Mohamed Mahmoud Street will long be remembered for its frequent violent clashes between the security forces, military, and police, and demonstrators who claim their rights to the city (Abaza, 2013). However, the wall of Mohamed Mahmoud Street and part of the old campus of Cairo's American University displayed a series of memories of martyrs by independent artists and young art activists.

*“The artists—some acting on their own, others as part of an artistic collective—remind those who take political stands that nothing escapes the eyes and ears of our people”* (Rashed, 2013: n. p).



Figure 45: Mohamed Mahmoud Street's Graffiti commemorating the martyrs of the revolution. Source: Flickr, Photo by Kaisaje

Graffiti and murals were presented in the global media and garnered a solid following as a “*visual proxy for the revolutionary process*” (Pruitt, 2017). It was a key tool for documenting, understanding and analyzing the political climate in the post-revolution.

*“If one does a Google search with the keywords “graffiti Egypt”, about 4,340,000 results will emerge. If one searches for the same keywords on Youtube, 1,500,000 results are returned.<sup>10</sup> The immediate impression one gets not only from the internet, but also when following the cultural scene in Cairo, is that since January 2011 nothing has become more popular and fashionable among foreign and Egyptian journalists, documentary film makers etc. than to produce Youtube videos, articles for both Arabic newspapers and the international press, and reports and documentaries about Egyptian street art and graffiti”*(Abaza, 2015: p.271)

Because of the unprecedented liberation of Egyptian artists after the ousting of Mubarak, Cairo has become “*the street art capital of the region*” (Wood, 2011). Graffiti for Arab writers, as Lennon (2014) stated, “*was one of many resistances that led to the abnegation of the presidency by Hosni Mubarak and the continued protests against SCAF*” (Lennon, 2014: p. 239), while Cairo's walls “*are complicated sites of violence as graffiti writers with differing political messages, both in content and tone, take to the same streets.*”(Lennon, 2014: p.240). According to the international coverage of the Egyptian uprisings in 2011, Ganzeer was at the top of the visibility list among others, such as Keizer, Hosni, and Sad Panda. Graffiti artists decided to set up a temporary “*revolutionary museum*” in the ruined Dubara palace. However, since barbed wire was installed around the property and armed guards were stationed, the plan was abandoned. Later, Horreya/Kharya (Freedom/Shit) was the title of an exhibition held in 2013 at the equally ruined Viennoise Hotel.

### ***6.5.2 Graffiti and Women’s Right***

Artistic expressions such as graffiti and murals have also been essential in breaking down barriers and reflecting societal consciousness while society is undergoing profound change. Women on Wall (WOW) is a month-long street art project led by Egyptian female street artists. The initiative was founded by Mia Grondahl, the author of the photography book *Revolution Graffiti: Street Art of the New Egypt*. The project was initiated in 2013 and has taken over the streets with powerful murals and graffiti to discuss women's social, political, economic, and cultural problems. Denmark's CKU (Center for Culture and Development) funded the project to support the work of about 20 female graffiti and visual artists in several Egyptian cities.



WOW, participants wanted to take the initiative a step further by recording the art-making process. However, they relied entirely on mutual contributions for cameras and supplies because they had no budget to fund filmmaking. Several exhibitions were held in the Czech Republic, Denmark, and Germany. Despite the success of WOW in attracting national and international media recognition, the Women On Walls (WOW) project received wide criticism and objection locally from Egyptian artists.



*Figure 46: One of WOW initiative in the downtown that focused on the theme of 'Women in the Public Space'. Source: WOW site*

In addition, an array of collective musical performances conveyed their revolutionary message. These entertaining performances were undoubtedly the most celebrated and democratic events during the massive protests (Abou El Fadl, 2014). These non-hierarchical acts transformed the urban space into a fun place for delightful live festivals. Moreover, it provided a platform for unprofessional, non-celebrity folks to showcase their talent and skills to a large audience (sometimes) in a non-intrusive way.

### ***6.5.3 Al-Fan Midan (Art Is Square)***

Al-Fan Midan (art is square) festival is another revolutionary art form. In the spring of 2011, Al-Fan Midan as a volunteer art festival was released. Somia Amer, one of the festival's organizers, believed that Al-Fan Midan was a public festival to guarantee everyone's right to art and support the demands of the January 25th revolution. As co-founder Mohammed Habib stated, the main goal of this festival is to introduce new charge-free activities for entertaining ordinary citizens. The festival is held on the first Saturday of each month throughout Egypt's governorates and streets, such as Alexandria, Luxor, New Valley, and Mansoura. However, Cairo remained the

central hub and the primary location. In her dissertation, *Art, Gender, and Revolution in Egypt*, Dima Munaff (2014) explains why the festival activities were held in Abdin Square rather than Tahrir Square: "*it is much quieter than Tahrir Square and is also close to the artistic scene in Cairo is the historical importance of this place where Orabi Pasha delivered his speech "We are not slaves, and shall never from this day forth be inhertid" in 1881 revolt against Khedive Tawfiq".* (Munaff, 2014: p. 19)



Figure 47: El-Fan Midan—Art is a Square Festival—Abdeen Square – Downtown Cairo. (Photograph by Sherif Mounir). Source: (Munaff, 2014)

Under Al-Fan Midan's banner, the festival hosted several monthly cultural events for three consecutive years in public squares across the country. The festival goal as Mohamed Abla mention in press, is "*to bring culture to the masses and educate the public about art. Organizers sought to attract the layman rather than art connoisseurs so as to spark interest in art*"(Amin, 2020:n.p)<sup>40</sup>.The festival presents all genres of artistic creativity, including painting, singing, theatrical and musical performances, folklore, plastic arts, handicrafts, satirical caricature, and child activities. In addition, the festival is screening several documentary films by independent filmmakers and hosting contemporary art exhibitions. Furthermore, the festival was a place for youth to express their political criticisms and grievances differently. Huge crowds went to the squares to watch performances and participate in festival-related activities, demonstrating the

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<sup>40</sup> Mohamed Abla, a painter and sculptor

festival's widespread popularity. According to the festival organizers, this one-day event costs around EGP 20,000 to organize, which is totally granted through donations. Actors in charge are keen on continuously disclosing the balance sheet and receiving aid via the internet for transparency. The initiative also depended on funds from the Egyptian Ministry of Culture and refused foreign funds. However, those in charge do not mind using in-kind donations for a direct benefit, such as the contribution of the Goethe Institute in Cairo.

Revolutionary musical performances and street screenings were also commonplace. Between 2011 and 2014, the non-profit media center Mosireen compiled a public resistance archive encompassing 858 hours of video recordings. In addition, Mosireen and Lara Baladi established the Tahrir Cinema Initiative to screen documentaries at Tahrir Square. The Tahrir Cinema displays films with videos from various events of the revolution, including the 18 days and the skirmishes in Mohamad Mahmoud, as well as testimonials regarding military tribunals, torture, and mistreatment at the hands of security forces. However, after three weeks, in August 2011, the program was abruptly disbanded (Taher, 2011). The Kazeboon (Liars) movement likewise sought to expose the lies and cruelty of the military (Taher, 2011).



*Figure 48: Mosireen initiative, Tahrir Cinema, screen political documentaries and archival film. Credit to Lara Baladi Source: ( Lane, 2012)*

Revolutionary artists' participation in the ongoing revolution was acknowledged by art galleries, as observed by Lara Baladi (2016), and they provided them with the necessary space for workshops, discussion groups, and events like Tweetnadwa. During subsequent massive rallies, the Townhouse Gallery provided a haven for the demonstrators. In addition, several memorable shows and performances have taken place in the Townhouse Gallery. According to Golia (2015), Lara Baladi, a longtime collaborator and exhibitor at Townhouse, believed the gallery was aware more than ever of its surroundings *"It instantly transformed the spaces into studios, conversation spaces, even hacking spaces, while exhibiting shows and performances that resonated with events unfolding on the ground."*(n.p). Townhouse Gallery, as Will (the director of Townhouse Gallery), stated in press, *"is taken up with bookings from political organisations, human rights groups and performance groups"* (Harris, 2020: n.p). The Townhouse Gallery is a pillar of the Egyptian arts community that *"shaped the perceptions, political values, and intellectual mindsets of an entire generation of Egyptian and regional cultural innovators"*(Golia, 2015: n.p).

### **Chapter Six Conclusion**

According to Abaza (2015), *"The power of the street in Egypt produced a surreal energy whereby in public 'a hundred lowers bloomed'. It equally fostered collective performing acts, social interaction, unexpected encounters, and an unprecedented proximity among classes, caught in the gaze at lifestyles that were often conflicting and had hardly ever interacted with each other."* (Abaza, 2015: p. 268). Even with intense political repression, art serves as a vehicle for expression and keeps artists' thoughts and the legacy of their deeds. The revolutionary art scene coined in 2011, drew a diverse range of audiences and international media attention, leading to the re-discovery of the nostalgic charm of downtown Cairo. Between 2011 and 2013, the creative production scene benefited from freedom of expression resulting from the lack of official control over public space and the influx of creative artists to Tahrir Square to participate in 2011 and capture the political shift. The 2011 revolution brought the city's wealthy residents back to its core, where they joined in rallies alongside activists, artists, and others. With such a political awakening, investors and entrepreneurs showed more interest in downtown 's distinctive architectural heritage and its creative repositioning. Investors and entrepreneurs are the cornerstones of the next stage of gentrification in downtown Cairo.

## **7 Chapter Seven: Creativity and entrepreneurship**

### **7.1 Introduction**

Academic studies proved that the quality of a place, particularly metropolitan areas, has a favorable influence on an individual's creativity. Creative people help cities flourish economically by luring businesses to areas where they wish to live (creative class theory). As a result, the clustering of enterprises fosters urban creativity (clustering theories). Economic geographers have long recognized that the agglomeration of cultural amenities, human capital, entrepreneurship, and innovative businesses has a favorable impact on the local and regional scales. The urban center, as a bottom-up "creative hub" endowed with the characteristics of a creative milieu, is a significant pull for the creative class since it has tremendous potential to provide an inspirational setting for innovation, competitive enterprises, and entrepreneurship. Creative class, pioneering businesses, and entrepreneurs play a significant role in downtown Cairo neighborhood regeneration by enhancing urban competitiveness, which is critical to gentrification. In addition, their efforts and actions significantly influence the preservation of cultural assets. As a result, more affluent and educated individuals move there, and gentrification might be easily identified. This chapter investigates how the creative class and entrepreneurs contribute to the revitalization of downtown Cairo by studying their creative initiatives and their role in safeguarding heritage and stimulating gentrification process. In this context, several entrepreneurial models and creative initiatives are reviewed.

## 7.2 Creativity and Entrepreneurship

Cities with a wide range of cultural qualities and amenities remain the most desirable places to live, consume, and produce. Heritage's significance in fostering a sense of place and identity cannot be overstated (Ashworth, 2013). Furthermore, heritage and cultural facilities stimulate, support and boost creativity (Cerisola, 2019). There has been a significant increase in academic and institutional interest on the role of cultural heritage and creativity in regional economic growth (see Andersson et al. ,1993; Florida, 2002). Cities and communities may profit from the latent potential of culture and creativity to bring social, economic, and geographical advantages. In modern cities, cultural resources and heritage are creatively developed to cultivate distinct identities and branding strategies as a crucial means of improving the city's image. Culture and creativity also facilitate the formation of a diversity of socio-cultural networks, which in turn fosters innovation and growth. According to Landry and Bianchini (1995), creativity and innovation have always been a part of urban growth.

What has become known as "Creative Cities" is being used as an effective means for cities to promote themselves on a global scale. A creative city according to Charles Landry (2005: p.3) in *Lineages of the Creative City*, "*identifies, nurtures, attracts and sustains talent so it is able to mobilise ideas, talents and creative organizations*. For establishing a milieu as Landry (2000: p.518) claimed, "*The built environment – 'the stage and the setting - is crucial'*". Creative milieu is defined as a place has an ideal balance of hard and soft variables to support the ideas' flow and innovations... "*The creative milieu is not just about bricks and mortar; it is about the flow of ideas, which takes place within and between creative communities*" (Cerar, 2013: p.11). A "milieu" might be referred to a single street, a neighbourhood, a city, or even an entire region. As a stimulus for economic, political, and social progress, creative cities and creative milieus have been extensively exploited. Florida (2002), as Kostić and others (2018) claim, promotes the concept of a "creative city" as a means of establishing a desirable urban identity and symbolic branding for small areas. However, the creative city is a widespread concealment of the neoliberal agenda. It promotes a form of neoliberalism that is solely concerned with the pursuit of economic gain at the expense of societal well-being. Increasingly, large-scale development projects are being implemented to tap into the city's "creative potential".

In terms of creativity, physical resources as a key component of economic progress (Scott, 2004) no longer have as much value as human capital, a new form of capitalism centred on human creativeness (Florida, 2005). Human creativity as Richard Florida (2002) argued "*is the ultimate economic resource*" (p. xiii). The creative city as Landry stated, is "*created for people to think, plan and act with imagination in harnessing opportunities or addressing seemingly intractable urban problems*" (Landry, 2005: p.2). Thus, the idea of a "creative city" is powered by the "creative class" (Florida, 2002) and focuses on dynamic and diverse changes, including the young generation, popular culture, and the technically savvy and entrepreneurial consumer (Hartley et

al., 2012). A major tenet of Florida's approach to urban development and economic growth assumes that a specific people in "creative" professions has great promise due to their capacity to generate new ideas and stimulate growth in cities and communities. Florida's 2002 creative class hypothesis underwent odd quantifications to prove its validity. Creative people according to Howkins, (2013) "*have a voracious appetite to know what is new and interesting, and the best way to do this is to work together. I show how cities provide hot-house cluster for creativity and how the move from the factory-sized production lines to brain-size thinking is changing the city's mood.*" (Howkins, 2013: p xi). Technology, talent and tolerance, also known as the three T's, softened the rigid structures of industrial production, making cities a favorable place for young people. Artists, cultural creatives, students, and professionals make up the core of the Creative Class.

Economic development is now mostly driven by the collaborative efforts of the creative class. Based on Steven Malanga observation (2004: p. 36) "*notion that cities must become trendy, happening places in order to compete in the twenty-first century economy is sweeping urban America . . . A generation of leftist policymakers and urban planners is rushing to implement Florida's vision [just as] an admiring host of uncritical journalists touts it*" (Malanga, 2004: p. 36). The value of the creative class has also been acknowledged by Howkins (2013)

*"Nobody has idea in a vacuum, so I describe a Creative Ecology and its four factors of change, diversity, learning and adaptation. . . . These elements come together in the core markets of art, culture, design, media and innovation which I call heartlands of the creative economy. I describe how these markets operate, their business models and value chains and give market revenues".* (Howkins, 2013: p. p xi)

According to Markusen and Schrock (2006), the creative sector includes various actors. Diversity stimulates a wide range of opportunities that have a significant influence on other industries. In Florida's view, "*technological creativity (or invention), economic creativity (entrepreneurship), and artistic and cultural creativity, among others,*" are all important components of economic progress and competitiveness (2002: p.33). While Creativity is more about production of ideas and innovation is the way to implement, entrepreneurship is a conjunction of the two. Entrepreneurship is the act of initiating a transformation via invention or creativity. The change to supply-side economics has resulted in greater emphasis on the importance of entrepreneurship in economic development in recent years. For a long time, entrepreneurship was seen as a set of personal characteristics that could be explored using psychological techniques. Recently, effectuation (Sarasvathy, 2008) and action-centered ideas have brought entrepreneurship into the focus of sociological and network science (Memon, 2016). This path is congruent with research into creativity in several respects (Sawyer, 2006). Entrepreneurship has been thought of as a microeconomic phenomenon involving individuals and businesses. Schumpeter (2006) argued that the "gales of creative destruction" that give rise to different economic sectors, as well as change old ones are heralded by pioneering entrepreneurs, who tend to congregate in urban centers.

It is widely accepted that taking risks and seizing possibilities for innovation are fundamental to the entrepreneur's success (Schumpeter, 1934), to promote a particular initiative. Entrepreneurs commonly refers to those who participate in the activity of launching and developing a business. Entrepreneurship as Laclé (2010) stated, *“plays two major roles in economic growth”* (p.13). The first one deals with "new entry," while the latter “newness” is more generic. The entrepreneur, or business founder firstly is *“... someone who creates and then, perhaps, organizes and operates a new business firm, whether or not there is anything innovative in those acts”*. Second, entrepreneurship contributes to economic activity in a variety of innovative ways *“... the entrepreneur as the innovator – as the one who transforms inventions and ideas into economically viable entities, whether or not, in the course of doing so they create or operate a firm”* (Baumol, 1993: p. 198).

### ***7.2.1 Entrepreneurship and Economic Growth***

Entrepreneurship has long been viewed as a vital engine for socioeconomic development (Schumpeter, 1934). In macroeconomics, some scholars consider entrepreneurship as a fourth, and independent pillar of production (Audretsch & Keilbach, 2004). Entrepreneurs, according to Timmons (1994), are those who perceive possibilities in the midst of chaos or disarray. The term "entrepreneurs" was used to describe people who start businesses and generate employment at record speed

*“Entrepreneurs are the decision makers who will help shape the free-enterprise Centuries, entrepreneurs were frequently not distinguished form managers and were viewed mostly from an economic perspective. economic system of the new millennium by discovering market needs and launching new firms to meet those needs. Much of the impetus for change, innovation, and progress in our economy will come from entrepreneurs – energizers who take risk and spark economic growth”* (Longenecker et al, 2000: pp.3).

In his definition of entrepreneurship, Low (2001: p. 21) states that it is *“the process of identifying, evaluating, and capturing an opportunity”*. According to Carland et al. (1984), entrepreneurs have a propensity for "innovative behavior,". Katz and Green (2009) state that an entrepreneur is *“a person who owns and initiates an organization”* with an emphasis on profits and expansion. For Green (2006: p.40), *“people who own, operate, and take the risks of business ventures are called entrepreneurs”*. According to her, entrepreneurs look for opportunities in the marketplace and seek to fill such opportunities through the provision of goods or services. The French economist, Say<sup>41</sup>,

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<sup>41</sup> Jean-Baptiste Say (5 January 1767 – 15 November 1832), a liberal French economist and businessman who argued in favor of competition, free trade and lifting restraints on business. He is best known for Say's law.



described entrepreneurs as those who move economic resources from a low-productivity area to a high-productivity one (Drucker, 1985). Coincidentally, Wickham (2004) attests that entrepreneur, *“are significant because they have an important effect on the world economies. They play a critical role in maintaining and developing the economic order we live under”*. Stam (2015) differentiated between the “average” entrepreneur and “ambitious” entrepreneurship. Ambitious entrepreneurship, as Stam (2015: p.1) argued, *“can be interpreted as the basis of a Schumpeterian variation on traditional welfare theory, where new value creation is at the centre”*.

In recent years, entrepreneurs have rejuvenated the American economy, and drawn international attention to the idea of using free enterprise as a paradigm for economic growth. According to Strokes and Wilson (2006) *“Entrepreneurs can exist in large as well as small economic units, and in the public as well as the private sector. Small business does not have a monopoly of entrepreneurial talent. There is a perception, to some extent confirmed by research that small business is more innovative and therefore more entrepreneurial, than large organizations”* (Strokes& Wilson, 2006: pp.34). In times of change, new companies not only fill the void of their predecessors but also tap into previously undeveloped or uninteresting sectors, so significantly boosting GDP. This entrepreneurial growth process, as Stam & Van Stel (2011: p.11) stated, *“is facilitated by the relatively high levels of human capital in combination with relatively low opportunity costs of self-employment of the adult population”*.

Various forms of entrepreneurship have been recognized, such as social entrepreneurship. "Social entrepreneurship" describes establishing and expanding organization focusing on socio-environmental welfare rather than financial gain (Shockley et al., 2008), public sector, and policy entrepreneurship (Stough& Haynes, 2009), in addition to other functional specializations such as technology. Entrepreneurs may be found in every economic system and all forms of economic activity. Indeed, Career Guide (2020) lists 9 different types of entrepreneurships including.

- 1- Small business entrepreneurship
- 2- Large company entrepreneurship
- 3- Scalable startup entrepreneurship
- 4- Social entrepreneurship
- 5- Innovative entrepreneurship
- 6- Hustler entrepreneurship
- 7- Imitator entrepreneurship
- 8- Researcher entrepreneurship
- 9- Buyer entrepreneurship

According to Baumol (1990), there are three types of conventional entrepreneurship, productive, unproductive, and destructive. According to the ECE study (2015) Unit - 4: Entrepreneur: Types and Functions -, various types of entrepreneurs based on certain basis are also explained.

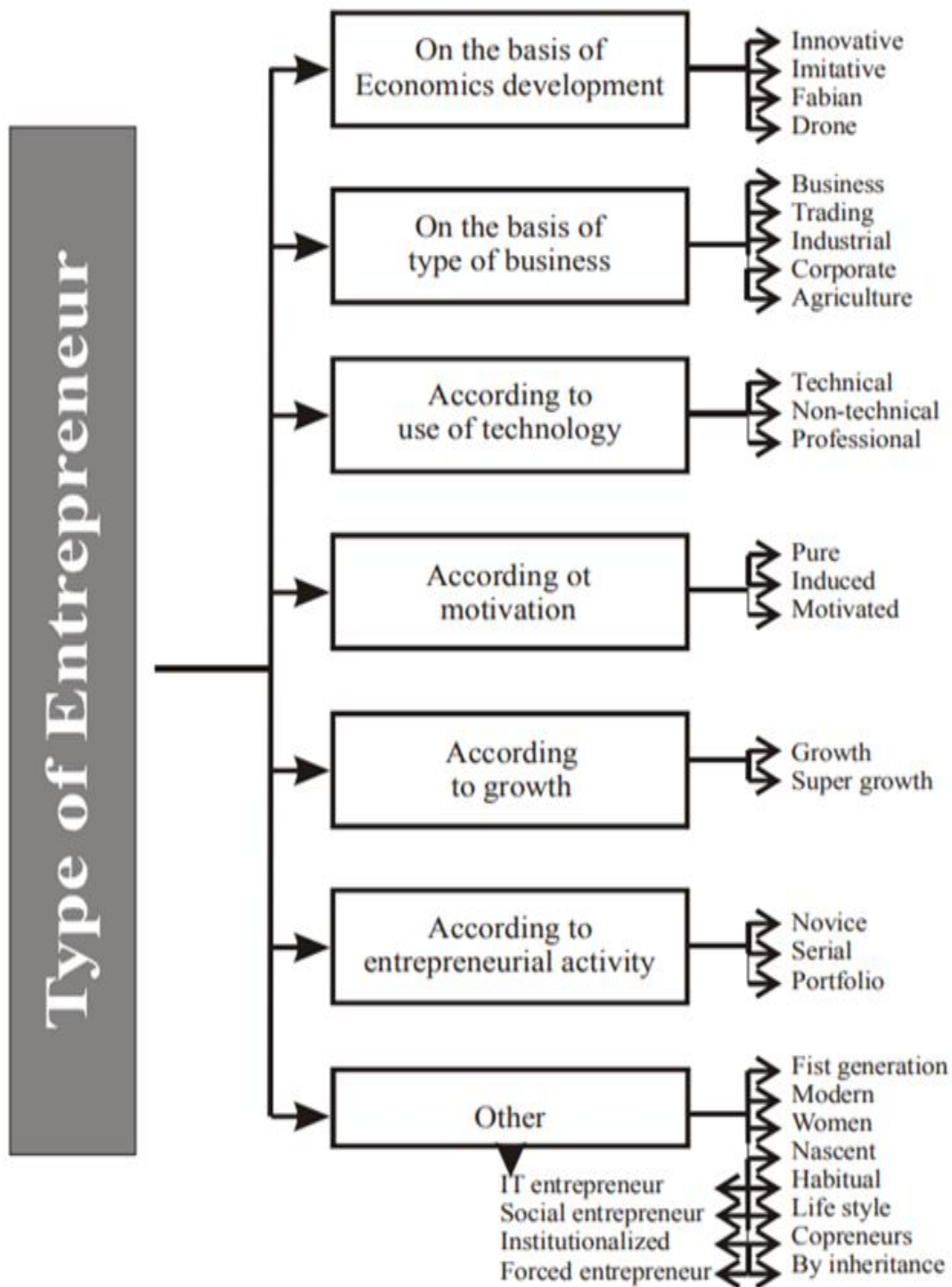


Figure 49: Types of Entrepreneurs. Source ECE study (2015: p.61)

Green (2006: p.19) claims that studies have revealed a number of traits that set successful entrepreneurs apart from those who fail including “*independence, self-confidence, determination and perseverance, goal-oriented, a need to achieve and set high standards for themselves, creative, and able to act quickly*”.

Entrepreneurial ecosystems are a new approach that is quickly gaining currency and popularity among entrepreneurship policymakers, practitioners, and academics. In the 1990s, James Moore coined the term "ecosystem". Businesses, as he asserted, don't expand in isolation. Moore also stressed the competitive side of how businesses interact with providers, consumers, and venture capitalist (Moore, 1993). It is hypothesized that new enterprises founded in vibrant ecosystems are seen to have a greater potential for expansion and job creation than others (Roasted, 2012).

According to Colin Mason and Dr. Ross Brown<sup>42</sup> (2014: p. 5), entrepreneurial ecosystem is

*“a set of interconnected entrepreneurial actors (both potential and existing), entrepreneurial organisations (e.g. firms, venture capitalists, business angels, banks), institutions (universities, public sector agencies, financial bodies) and entrepreneurial processes (e.g. the business birth rate, numbers of high growth firms, levels of ‘blockbuster entrepreneurship’, number of serial entrepreneurs, degree of sellout mentality within firms and levels of entrepreneurial ambition) which formally and informally coalesce to connect, mediate and govern the performance within the local entrepreneurial environment”.*

Ecosystems are a conceptual term that refers to interconnected factors for the advantages and resources produced by a consolidated local entrepreneur and those who support them to launch, sustain, and develop new high-growth ventures. The entrepreneurial ecosystem is comprised of clusters, industrial districts, innovation systems, and learning zones, among other relatable ideas which all pay attention to the external business environment. Rather than starting with the firm, the entrepreneur is at the center of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, highlighting the importance of the entrepreneurial setting. The focus of the most recent popular literature on entrepreneurial ecosystems is less on academic readers and more on the ecosystem's important participants, including entrepreneurial leaders and policymakers. It is frequently the successful entrepreneurs, who can serve as mentors or advisors and have showed a continuing devotion to the ecosystem are most able to assess environmental potential and constraints and act accordingly. Any opportunities or setbacks are considered along with the "feeders" of the ecosystem, who play a significant role in leading and directing the development.

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<sup>42</sup> Entrepreneurial ecosystems and growth-oriented entrepreneurship, OECD

Increases in both the availability of information and the breadth of its applicability are attributable to developments in information technology and communication. The enormous expansion of information has also increased prospects for entrepreneurship and innovation. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, in conjunction with the rise of so-called "informational cities" and "technopoles," the concept of high-tech companies aligning with cities and regions evolved, and the phenomenon of "Siliconization" of urban and regional economies swept the globe (Bunnell, 2002; Castells, 1989). The proliferation of innovations throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s according to Florida and Mellander (2016), was "primarily *“something that happened in suburban outposts like California’s Silicon Valley home of Intel, Apple, Google, and Facebook; the Route 128 corridor outside Boston, Microsoft’s vast headquarters in suburban Seattle; the cluster of high-tech enterprise in suburban Austin, and in the North Carolina”*. Scholarly attention in suburban "nerdistans" and "edge cities," have expanded fast, emerged following World War II.

Silicon Valley is popular for its distinct structure and culture, which fosters business and academic spin-offs, as well as networks that link entrepreneurs and venture capitalists (Kenney, 2000; Lécuyer, 2006). Replicas of Silicon Valley introduce economic theories, management fads, and guidelines. Strongly technologically focused cities in the United States, and other developing economies in a globalized world, serve as engines of expansion and technological advancement. (Florida, 2012). Since 2010, government officials and business leaders in Beijing, Milan, Helsinki, and New York have prioritized the transformation of cities into "tech hubs".

Cities, and especially their downtown regions in the United States and other capitalist economies, later have become important hubs for the rapid growth of technical start-ups in the years following the Great Recession. The "urban shift," and the back to the city of talent and jobs from the outskirts, has helped to document the demographic change. The phenomenon has been called "the great inversion" by Alan Ehrenhalt (2012), in which highly qualified talent is attracted to be in the company of other talented people and to enjoy ample facilities. Also, Richard Florida confirmed the clustering of high-tech start-up businesses in inner-city neighbourhoods instead of suburbs. As Florida argued, this pattern is undermining the Silicon Valley paradigm or, at the very least, offering a geographical and socioeconomic alternative (Florida, 2014).

The growth of urban tech economies emphasizes the role of multidimensional spatiality of ecosystems made up of individuals and organizations that create modern digital infrastructure. Typically, the "high-growth start-ups" are the primary target of the entrepreneurial ecosystem paradigm, which contributes significantly to productivity, society development, and the creation of jobs opportunities (Mason & Brown, 2014). Entrepreneurs at all levels contribute to the development of a startup's ecosystem that includes a large number of players, institutions, and various types of organizations in a location (physical and/or virtual).

Feld (2012) lists nine elements of a flourishing entrepreneurial ecosystem beyond the essential role that entrepreneurs play.

Attribute	Description
leadership	Group of entrepreneurs who are visible, approachable, and dedicated to promoting the region as an excellent location for startups to get off the ground and develop.
Intermediaries	Numerous well-known mentors and advisers across a wide range of industries, demographics, and territories along with well-integrated, well-visible accelerators and incubators.
Network density	Deep, well-connected startup and entrepreneur community, as well as active and visible investors, consultants, mentors, and supporters. There are persons and groups that straddle industries, demography and cultural participation. We all have a responsibility to give back to the communities in which we live.
Government	Entrepreneurial start-ups are encouraged and supported by the government. To further support economic development, tax and investment policies should be in place.
Talent	There is a large and diverse pool of talent available for positions at all levels and in a wide range of specialties. Universities are a great source of start-up talent and should be strongly connected to the local community.
Support services	Legal, accounting, real estate, insurance, and consultancy services are well-integrated, easily accessible, and reasonably priced.
Engagement	Numerous occasions and events for entrepreneurs and the general public to interact, with participants who are both well-known and genuine (e.g. meet-ups, pitch days, start-up weekends, boot camps, hackathons and competitions)
Companies	In order to foster collaboration with high-growth start-ups, large firms that are the city's anchor should develop dedicated departments and programs.
Capital	Venture capitalists, angels, seed investors and other forms of financial assistance network should be readily available and visible to everybody from any sector or demography everywhere in the world in order to help entrepreneurs and small businesses succeed.

Nine attributes of a successful start-up community. source: Field (2012, pp. 186– 187)

In the backdrop of economic contraction and the current state of technology-driven capitalism, the global startup boom displays a reawakened appreciation for “urban centrality”. As a result of this phenomenon, start-ups are often referred to as the “happy business” (Davies, 2015). The neoliberal government rationalism associated with startup urbanism intends to establish a “enterprise society” that is self-governing (Lazzarato, 2009). They are considered a strategy for regional economic development centred on facilitating the growth of creative startups. A Cambrian moment, the headline of a special report by The Economist on the start-up boom, emphasizes the inherently urban nature of high-tech start-up companies.

Start-ups are a big part of a new movement back to the city. Young people increasingly turn away from suburbia and move to hip urban districts, which become breeding grounds for new firms. Even Silicon Valley’s centre of gravity is no longer along Highway 101 but in San Francisco south of Market Street. (The Economist, 2014: p. 2)

Recent literature on urban economics, from notable scholars, brings into focus the value of urban agglomeration, density, and variety as core drivers of innovation. The lively environment inspires and draws artistic staff and students. It is good for establishing relationships and transferring knowledge. It also connects the cluster to the surrounding neighborhood. Furthermore, the popularity of the “creative city” and its marketing based on the work of Jane Jacob and Richard Florida, influenced the actions of the mayors, developers, and planners. As Florida (2013) pointed out, gentrification occurred in cities like New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco due to the large expansion of the creative class. To Neal (2010), gentrifiers are “*pioneers who seek to tame the wilderness of rundown urban neighborhoods*” (Neal, 2010: p. 557).

### **7.3 Heritage, Entrepreneurship and Creativity as an Innovative Approach for Generating Sustainable Values**

*“In a world increasingly dominated by global styles of architecture and building technology, historic centres provide a unique sense of place which differentiates them one from another” (European Commission Green Paper on Urban Environment - June 1990).*

The “environment” in which an aspiring entrepreneur operates can have both positive and negative effects. Strokes and Wilson (2006) identified two key environmental factors. The macro-environment includes aspects that have an impact on national and worldwide businesses including political and regulation, economic conditions, social and demographic influences, and technological shifts. While the micro-environmental factors included the local-socio-economic conditions, the expansion and prospective growth of a certain market, customer needs and demand, and rivalry.

The ability or power to produce or create something different into being, to invest with a new shape, to generate via inventive talent, and so on are all characteristics of creative practice and innovation. Fast-paced, ever-changing business environments demand entrepreneurship to turn creative ideas into value. Jacobs (1961: p. 188) believed “*new ideas must use old buildings*”. Hence, creativity draws on the past's creative output, which has aggregated as a heritage, while also contributing to it. Heritage provides a competitive advantage and fosters the growth of creativity and innovation. Cultural heritage is significantly enhancing the urban experience especially if it's incorporated with a creative activity. The successful and effective management of heritage assets relies on the creative reuse of these key assets in order “*to retain value and remain relevant to current and future generations*” (Ashour, 2019:P.333) through the introduction of new functions/activities. Most people see cultural heritage preservation as an obstacle to economic progress, but the creative class use of dilapidated historic buildings and territories might avoid further decay, contribute to regeneration's long-term sustainability, and boost economic growth.

According to Petzet (2004: p.19), the rehabilitation process aimed at upgrading the building with “*necessary modernization measures which go beyond purely preservation-oriented repair work*”. Consequently, the process could embody changes in the building's use determined by “*the building's function and by special requirements and that are regulated by the relevant provisions and standards, including fire walls, emergency routes, new staircases, elevators, etc.*” (Petzet 2004: p.19). Additionally, reusing old structures is crucial for preserving their historical significance. Adaptive reuse is one of the functional category methods for reuse. Adaptive reuse necessitates a degree of structure modification to accommodate a new use in a harmonious manner with the original design and architectural concept (Practice Guidebook, 2016).

Cooper (2001) argued that adaptive reuse can lead to increased efficiency in the use of materials and resources (environmental sustainability), decreased costs (economic sustainability), and the preservation of existing building stock (social sustainability). Accordingly, in western Europe many distinctive historic buildings have been adapted and reused rather than demolished (Wilkinson et al., 2009).

Adaptive reuse schemes must have the following criteria in order to be successful:

- 1- Preserving the building's aesthetic and symbolic qualities.
- 2- Strengthen the heritage building's structure.
- 3- The identification of a new function and the space distribution.
- 4- Economic Feasibility Analysis

### ***7.3.1 Adaptive Reuse Policy for Historic and Heritage Buildings in Egypt***

Despite the importance of adapting heritage buildings for modern use in contemporary conservation theory and practice, the adoptive reuse of Cairo's heritage buildings is regarded as a reverse process for all types of heritage obsolescence (El Kerdany, 2002). On the one hand, modern heritage conservation, according to "Law No. 144 of the year 2006," is lacking a clear definition through a scientific and orderly process, regarding building maintenance, preservation, adaptive reuse, management, sustainable development, and compensation policy. Historic Cairo, on the other hand, boasts a plethora of adaptively reused historic structures. However, most projects have failed to realize the full potential of adaptive reuse (Gharib 2011 & 2012). The failure of these projects was due to a lack of maintenance, and the utilization or underutilization of these conserved buildings. Furthermore, some projects have ignored the surrounding local community's needs and demands (Gharib, 2011) and have seen low levels of community participation. In this chapter, we'll examine the role of the creative class and entrepreneurs in revitalizing downtown Cairo, their efforts in preserving downtown Cairo's identity through the innovative reuse of Khedivial Cairo's iconic buildings, and how it affects gentrification in downtown Cairo.

### **7.4 Entrepreneurship and The Startup Ecosystem Scene in Downtown Cairo**

Egypt's startup ecosystem culture is still relatively new, but it has a lot of promise, especially in Cairo and Alexandria. According to the Magnitt investment study (2019), Egypt is a “*very promising market*” despite political unrest, a sluggish economy, a general shortage of market liquidity, and a burdensome bureaucracy.

*“Egyptian startups are the most accelerated on the continent, with an impressive 38.6 per cent of them having taken part in some kind of acceleration or incubation programme. This is a remarkable statistic, and one that dwarves any of its regional competitors. The likes of TIEC, Flat6Labs, Athar, the AUC VLab and Falak Startups are responsible for most of these, but Egyptian startups have also taken part in renowned international accelerators such as Y Combinator and 500 Global”* (ITIDA, 2021: p.11).

Egypt is considered a major player in the ecosystem of Africa's tech startups. According to Digital Africa (2021, n.p) based on Magnitt investment' report, “*the Egyptian startup ecosystem is among the top 50 global ecosystems, while Cairo is positioned, in 2020, among the top 10 affordable global ecosystems for talents*”. In the past, economic innovation models were limited, but the start-up scene has erupted in the last few years. Egyptian policymakers are currently looking at ways to help SMEs in Cairo realize their full potential by adjusting the policy mix to support large-scale commercialization that serves African and global markets.



In the last decade, the demand for start-ups in Cairo has grown increasingly, benefitting from the macroeconomic condition and structural improvements. In 2019, the city witnessed the most start-up investment growth. Unlike many other cities that are attempting to join the entrepreneurial race, Cairo serves as the central player in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA),

*“The entrepreneur who selects Cairo as their headquarters is positioning themselves in one of the most exciting marketplaces in the world”* (Luenendonk, 2019: n.p).

Cairo's entrepreneurial culture and innovation scene are increasingly being recognized on a worldwide scale (Partington, 2019). Most new start-ups in Egypt's capital are based in the city because they recognize the advantages of agglomeration and direct access to a large market of consumers and customers. As a result of recent legislative improvements and policy reform, the process of launching a firm has become easier. The Global Startup Ecosystem Report lists Cairo as one of the top ten cities in the world to get talented workers at a reasonable price (Startup Genome, 2020). Cairo, according to Startup Ecosystem Report Egypt 2019, is *“have the most mature startup ecosystem with an overall SFI score of 37.7 out of 100. In the global SFI, Cairo ranks 24th out of the 45 researched cities and 6th in the MENA region”* (Embaby et al., 2019: p.9). The Startup Friendliness Index (SFI) was the focus of the study, and the scores are calculated using 80 metrics across six domains for 45 global cities. Cairo is strengthening its position for the startup world as an ever-booming center.

## 7.5 The GrEEK Campus

Egypt's Smart Village Project, which mimicked Dubai's Internet City (Elsheshtawy, 2006), has had a severe impact on Cairo's central area. Several multinationals' firms from Europe and the United States are based in the Smart Village, which is operated by the ITIDA, a government IT promotion organization for the private sector. These venues appear to be secluded and distant, if not fully detached from the vibrant social and economic life of Egypt. Recently, the GrEEK Campus is considered to be the world's first heritage-driven technology hub. It has become a "mini-Silicon Valley" in downtown Cairo (Awad, 2016). The GrEEK Campus is a spur for innovators, creators and GEEKs and a propeller of new-age Start-up value hub. The GrEEK Campus was founded in December 2013 and has developed into the fastest growing community of resilient start-ups, venture capital representation hub, and academic collaboration center in the Middle East. The campus includes 392 resided tenants since its inception.

Entrepreneur Ahmed Al-Alfi, the founder of the GrEEK Campus, is a private investor. He is a cofounder of a well-known venture capitalist firm, Sawari Ventures, "*Sawari Ventures is led by Ahmed Al-Alfi, Hany Al-Sonbay and Wael Amin, and so far, has invested in more than 30 companies, including SWVL, Instabug, and Si-Ware (Wamda, 2021)*. Sawari ventures is one of the country's first VCs to make investments in locally oriented tech and digital startups. Investors in the Sawari include the startup accelerator Flat 6 Labs, which assists MENA entrepreneurs.

*"The GrEEK Campus, Flat6Labs and Sawari Ventures pioneered the development of the Egyptian entrepreneurial ecosystem, launching the first tech hub, seed stage investment vehicle and one of the first venture capital firms" (El Alfi, n.d: p.9)*

In the rapidly developing Cairo tech sector, both companies are major participants. Al Alfi's initial goal was to create an incubation space, a creative-inducing hub for entrepreneurs in the IT industry, to help fill a void in the startup and tech communities. Ahmed Al-Alfi chose downtown Cairo because of its central location and distinctive architecture, which he believes would become an ideal location for the entrepreneurial ecosystem (Interview with Al-Alfi, 2019). Downtown Cairo's central position and infrastructure, including the metro, Azhar tunnel, Azhar bridge, Kasr El Nil Bridge, and the 6 October Bridge, make it accessible to all parts of the city, unlike most new developments that are located outside of Cairo. In addition, it is only a 30-minute drive to Cairo's international airport and a 10-minute drive to the main railway station. Cairo's central district is a center for economic development because of its wide variety of transportation modes, as well as its proximity to businesses and entertainment. When the American University in Cairo (AUC) moved to its current location outside of Cairo, the university shut down its original campus. The Greek Campus in downtown Cairo was the perfect setting for his endeavor. In 2013, an ex-Wall Street investor leased the GrEEK campus from the AUC.

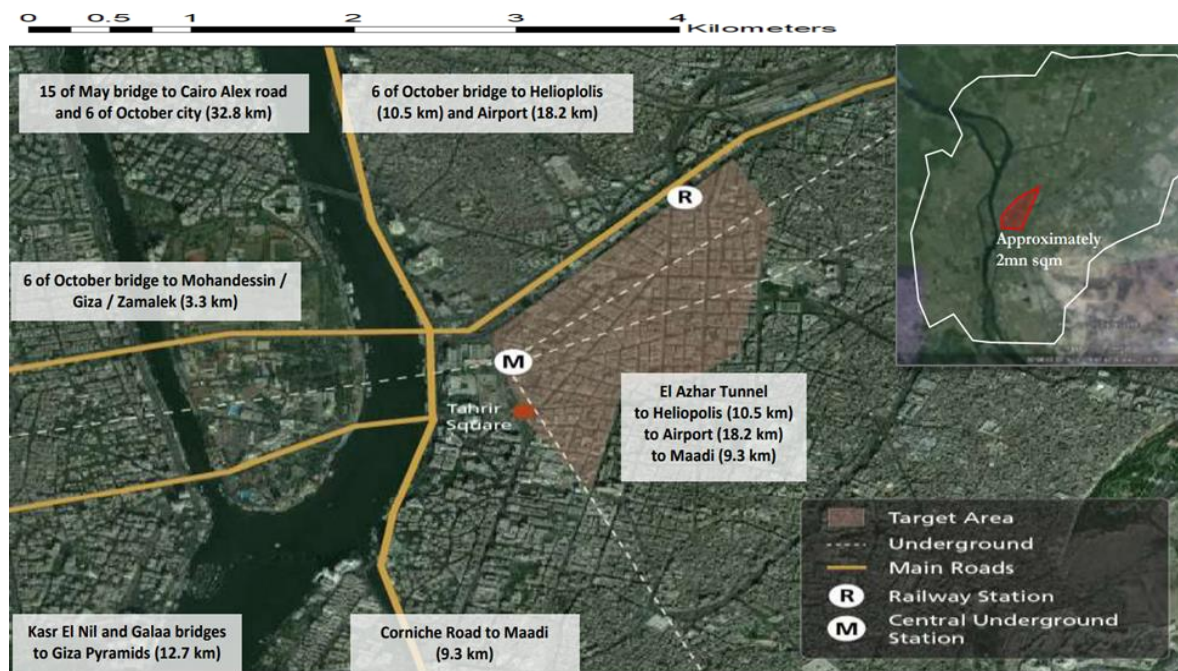


Figure 50: Downtown Cairo central location. Source: Al- Ismailia Company for real estate investment

What is currently known as GrEEK Campus, was once the home to two Greek schools, a prominent Cairo landmark in the early 1900s. The Greek Campus, as it was nicknamed, was sold to the American University in Cairo (AUC) in 1964 to expand and accommodate a larger student body. The Greek Campus was the AUC's hub of activity and affairs for more than half a century now. Additionally, it has been home to the AUC's library and the Social Sciences building, among other facilities. Later, it becomes a GrEEK Campus. The name represents the historical significance of the Greek university campus in central Cairo and the notion of sophisticated technological savvy (geeks). The campus is home to a wide range of local, regional, and international ICT firms, including some of Egypt's most influential start-up ecosystem players, such as AlMaqar, one of Cairo's oldest co-working spaces, the Start-up bootcamp FinTech, a world-class accelerator for innovative early stage fintech start-ups in Egypt with a focus on financial inclusion, and Uber with its "Uber Bus" model for shared transportation, The campus encompasses five buildings covering 25,000 m<sup>2</sup> more than 130+ companies and 1,000+ employees.



*Figure 51: The GrEEK Campus. Source: The GrEEK Campus's website*

The Egyptian Centre for Economic Studies (ECES) (2018) used comparable comparative benchmarks like Berlin (Berlin-Hamburg-Sofia), Barcelona (Factory Berlin), Paris (Fabric Paris), Eindhoven (High-Tech Campus), Amman (Zain Innovation Campus), Tunis (Cogite) and Shenzhen (E-Hub), to assess the GrEEK campus's experimental approach to innovation. Based on certain factors, including community requirements, geography, the availability of other institutions, and the country's degree of development, the evaluation identifies some commonalities while also highlighting the differences. The ECES assessment is also based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative data (questionnaires and interviews), a sectoral approach, and connections to various stages of a company's development. A questionnaire was conducted from June to August 2018, with an average of 55% of total current tenants responding. According to ECES (2018), in 2017, the average number of employees has risen by more than three times for enterprises who have moved to the GrEEK Campus.

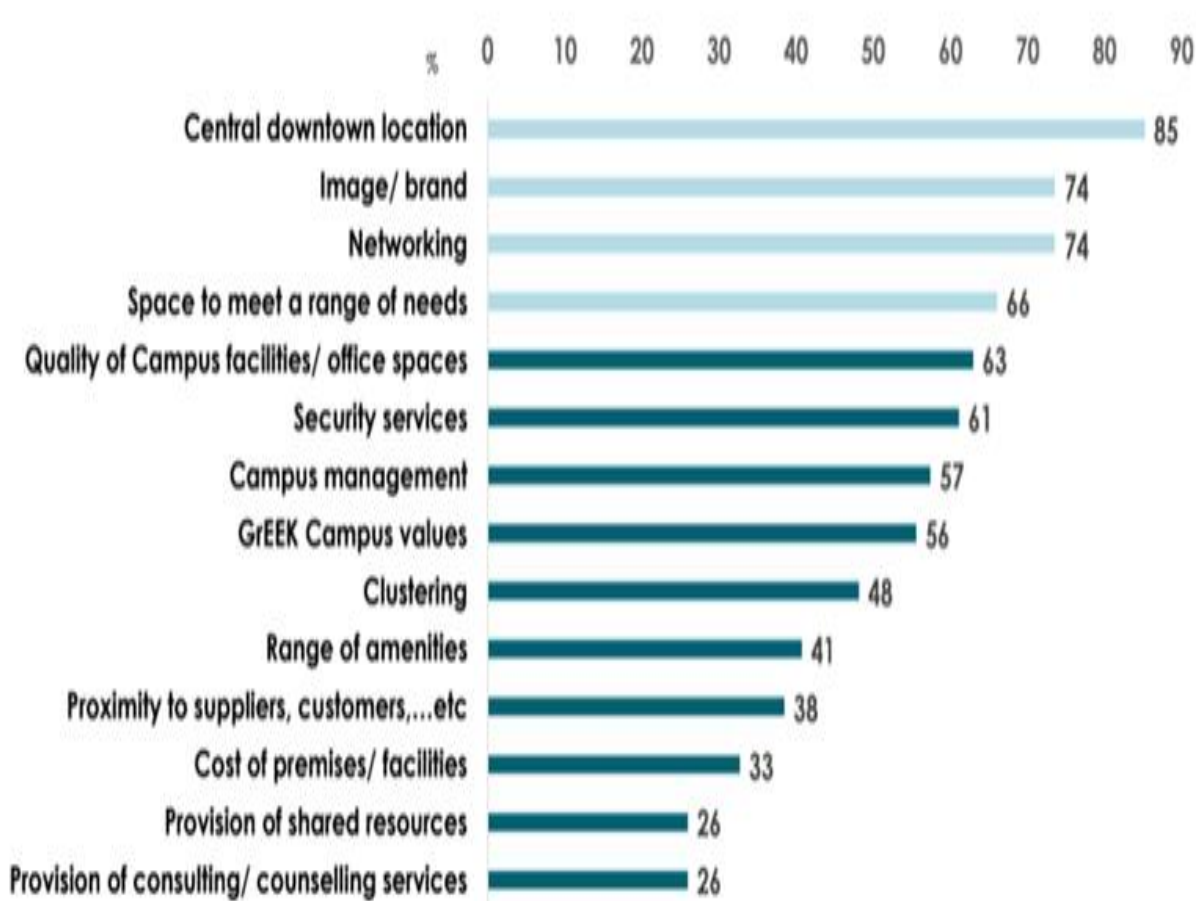


Figure 52: GC contribution to the companies' development. Source: ECES, 2018 report.

The report also highlighted the contribution of the GrEEK Campus in improving several areas of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Egypt such as cultural and social norms, market dynamics, infrastructure, networking, business environment, women entrepreneurship, labour market, education and training, media exposure and financing (ECES, 2018). The GrEEK Campus is a high-end tech hub that is dedicated to specific types of propulsion technologies. Early-stage enterprises, particularly those in the technology industry, benefited greatly from their support in joining the official sector. Additionally, the GrEEK Campus contributed much to the value and vitality of the downtown region.

The GrEEK campus introduced the "Rise Up! Summit," one of the region's most important entrepreneurship and innovation events. The event was launched in Egypt in 2013 by Sharara and the co-founder, Con O'Donnell, as a means of bringing together the country's fledgling, yet fragmented entrepreneurial ecosystem at the time (Thomas, 2018). The event is renowned for bringing together, for the first time, the whole ecosystem of entrepreneurship in Egypt and the

MENA region. The summit is held on an annual basis at the GrEEK Campus in Cairo. Entrepreneurial-minded and tech-savvy individuals attend inspirational speeches by seasoned experts with backgrounds in technology, finance, business administration, property law, and social media marketing at the event every year. Partners so far have included global firms like Uber, Microsoft, and Pepsi; as well as international donors like the World Bank and GIZ (Germany) (Rise Up LLC, 2019). In 2013, the event drew in over 2,000 attendees from across the MENA region, Europe, the US, and even Asia, including investors, entrepreneurs, and tech enthusiasts. In 2018, more than 6,000 attendees joined the event. The event includes talks and workshops with global industry leaders, and acts as a showcase of MENA's best startups. In terms of revenue, the firm generated EGP600,000 (about US\$33,000) in its first year, and it has increased to EGP23 million (roughly US\$1.25 million) in 2018 (Thomas, 2018). It is widely believed in Egypt that the GrEEK campus serves as the hub of a thriving local entrepreneurial community with a unique apolitical and technocratic identity. As a "narrated space" (Munoz et al., 2020: p.3), the campus has an impact on how participants in the ecosystem interact with institutions (Lowe & Feldman, 2017) in a post-revolutionary context. As a result of the Rise Up Summit and the GrEEK Campus, downtown Cairo has become the privileged site for technology-intensive interactive economies.

## 7.6 Fin Tech Hub

In an effort to accelerate the entrepreneurial startup ecosystem development and increase the sector's share of GDP, the government of Egypt is implementing a number of “*investments, capacity building and training programmes, digital government service reforms, and infrastructure upgrades*” (ITIDA, 2021: p.51) under its ICT 2030 strategy. The FinTech Hub as stated on the Central Bank of Egypt official website, is a comprehensive hub for fostering and connecting the FinTech ecosystems many stakeholders through technological innovation, including Fin Tech startups, financial institutions, regulators, service providers, mentors, and investors. The Fin Tech hub received EGP1 billion (about US\$64 million) from the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) to provide financial backing to cutting-edge financial technology companies and fintech-enablers (ITIDA, 2021: p.51).

The Central Bank of Egypt picked its iconic historic edifice in the heart of Cairo to host its FinTech Centre, profiting from the building's historical value. The aim is to become an internationally renowned FinTech hub, a leading platform for financial technology' stakeholders in the Arab world and Africa, to highlight creativity and innovative growth. An agreement was signed between the two, Al-Alfi, the founder of the GrEEK Campus, and the Central Bank of Egypt. Al-Alfi, the founder of the GrEEK Campus and the Central Bank of Egypt reached a deal to acquire and rehabilitate their historic headquarter in downtown Cairo, which would become a hub for aspiring entrepreneurs in the domains of financial technology.<sup>43</sup> The GrEEK Campus is engaged with decision-makers and professionals to offer legislative changes and policy measures to support start-ups and entrepreneurs without becoming involved in politics. Al-Alfi believes, the partnership with government “FinTech” would be an added value for entrepreneurs, whereby the government could support and sponsor along with its capacity to reach a wide spectrum.

The ECES assessment report (2018), referred to the Chinses model in Shenzhen China which includes 1000 of the technology and innovation hubs owned by the government (municipality) and serve approximately 20 million citizens. In this example, the government rents out the spaces to citizens for symbolic sums and does not interfere in its management, creating a community where they benefit each other. This model could easily be implemented in Egypt in order to support growing companies with an adequate governmental subsidy to afford the latest technology instead of the numerous obstacles related to bureaucracy and taxation that entrepreneurs currently face. The project is currently on hold because of the epidemic crisis.

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<sup>43</sup> Personal interview with Al Alfi, June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019

### 7.7 The Ouzonian Building and the startup Haus by Enpact

Enpact Egypt, with the help of the Drosos foundation, opened Startup Haus Cairo, a coworking space in downtown Cairo. Enpact covers four fields of activities: innovative international and national mentoring programs for young entrepreneurs, the construction of multipurpose and holistic startup spaces, the analysis of the startup friendliness of cities, as well as the organization of international entrepreneurial ecosystem expeditions. Since its foundation, Startup Haus has become one of the most important active spaces in downtown Cairo. According to Rawan Bassem<sup>44</sup>, the Community Manger at Startup Haus, Enpact, the hub aims to promote entrepreneurship and support the local ecosystem through their mentoring programs. At the end of the mentorship program, the entrepreneurs meet at startup-centered events such as RiseUp Summit.

Startup Haus is situated in the modernist landmark Ouzonian building on Talaat Harb Street (formerly Soliman Pasha Street), right close to the renowned Metro Cinema in downtown Cairo. Architect Sayed Karim designed the structure that shares different architectural features and was erected in 1950. Out of the 980 sq/m land, the building takes up 800 sq/m and has a variety of uses. The building has been acquired by Sigma property along with three other buildings in downtown Cairo. Additionally, the company has a large portfolio in Alexandria. The company's goal as stated in their official website, is to "*build a sustainable business model to create new urban narratives, where disused buildings are being redeveloped to meet modern needs and generate new business opportunities*". Startup Haus includes three main spaces. The arena, which is 250 sq/m for events with a main speaker or a panel discussion and a big audience, the coworking space and the terrace for meetups, events, and parties.

Coworking pioneers in Egypt have different visions of how a shared economy might develop, yet all believe in its future success. While coworking spaces began as technologically equipped places for entrepreneurs, they later started to offer programs to help build startups. The total number of coworking spaces in Egypt is unclear.

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<sup>44</sup> Personal Interview, June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019



The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology released Egypt Innovate website. The initiative listed 91 coworking sites, 63 in Cairo and eight in Upper Egypt. However, the Database for Students and Entrepreneurs in April 2017, states that the number of coworking spaces went from 12 in 2011 to 210 last year, surging 33.7 percent in 2016 alone (Nabil, 2018). Many experts see the growth of coworking spaces is tied to the rising number of startups. After 2012, as a part of an entrepreneurial movement, a significant number of young people started to launch their own businesses and sought ready-to-use, low-cost spaces. The success of coworking spaces may be attributed to their involvement in and support of the entrepreneurial community, as well as their propensity for holding numerous activities and events. Several coworking spaces have been established in Cairo's downtown area such as Garage El Mahrousa, 'Consoleya among others.

### **7.8 Garage El Mahrousa**

Garage El Mahrousa is the coworking space launched by Nahdet El Mahrousa for both startups and all entrepreneurs seeking a creative space to establish their businesses. It targets the handicrafts and performing arts startups and mainly support arts and cultural scene in Egypt. Nahdet El Mahrousa is an NGO established in 2003 by Ehaab Abdou. The NGO specializes in social development. Egypt's pioneering Nahdet El Mahrousa was the country's first incubator for budding social entrepreneurs providing them with the skills, funds, know-how, and technical assistance they require to establish and run their social enterprise. Part of the experience that Nahdet ElMahrousa (NM) provides, is a space where startups can work and innovate and provide consultations for young entrepreneurs seeking direction. Alia Mostafa and Felix Schmiege (2018: p. 60), noted that Nahdet El Mahrousa has incubated over 70 social startups in different fields. The startups that have worked with NM in the past could be categorized “*either the clean and green sector such as waste management, energy, and agricultural businesses, in handicrafts and performing arts sector, or the tech for the social sector*” (ibid). Account management, capability development, mentoring and consulting, network access, and legal protection are the five pillars of their support structure.

One of their prominent initiatives is 'Sekketak Khadra'. 'Sekketak Khadra is a biking initiative launched in Cairo that aims to increase cycling's popularity in Egypt as a viable, environmentally friendly mode of transportation and transform Cairo into a green, bike-friendly city. The primary goal of this programme is to get people out of their cars and onto bicycles. It is partnered between Nahdet al-Mahrousa (NGO) and The United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN Habitat Egypt Office), in cooperation with Cairo Governorate and the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP) and funded by the Danish Embassy. Downtown Cairo and Heliopolis were the best places for the bike tracks according to conducted surveys. Therefore, fifty bikes were installed so far in downtown streets as an initial phase. Through the installation of traffic lights, the restriction of vehicles to certain areas, investments in the development of public spaces, and the launching of a campaign to promote the sidewalk as a public place, this initiative has enhanced the urban environment.



*Figure 53: 'Sekketak Khadra' the biking initiative in Al-alfy Bey Street. Source: Sekketak Khadra Facebook official page*

## 7.9 The French Consulate known as 'Consoleya. Maisons de France au Caire

In November 1925, the French consulate-general known as “Maisons de France”, moved from Djelāl street in Ezbekieh to the address 5, al-Fadl Street in Downtown Cairo. The French architect Paul-Conin Pastour<sup>45</sup> (1855-1933) was assigned for the construction of the new premises of the French consulate. The ground-breaking ceremony took place on March 13<sup>th</sup>, 1925, in the presence of H.E. Mr. Henri Gaillard, Minister Plenipotentiary of France in Cairo.

### 7.9.1 French Diplomatic Mission:

In 1876, the French diplomatic mission moved to Cairo in a building located diagonally opposite to the old Shepherd’s Hotel on Naguīb al-Riḥānī street (ex-Kantaret al-Dekka). During 1884, the Department of the French Foreign Affairs leased, then bought in December 1886, the villa with Neo-Mamluk and Neo-Ottoman elegances, of baron Charles Gaston de Saint-Maurice in Ismā‘īliya quarter (today part of Downtown Cairo). The building is characterised by a neo-baroque aesthetic style. The Consoleya building, which first opened its doors in 1925, has served as a venue for a wide range of institutional, cultural, social, and artistic activities. The building’s renowned ballroom has served as the backdrop for photoshoots of both domestic and foreign scenes and is a preferred site for filmmakers.

In 2014, the building was acquired by Al-Ismailia for Real Estate Investment. Later the company renovated the building and launched its project, Consoleya, as a part of its strategic plan. It is a fully furnished coworking space that suits the modern requirements of remote work. The project is a partnership between the Al-Ismailia company for Real Estate Investment and the well-known entrepreneur Hanan Abdel Meguid.

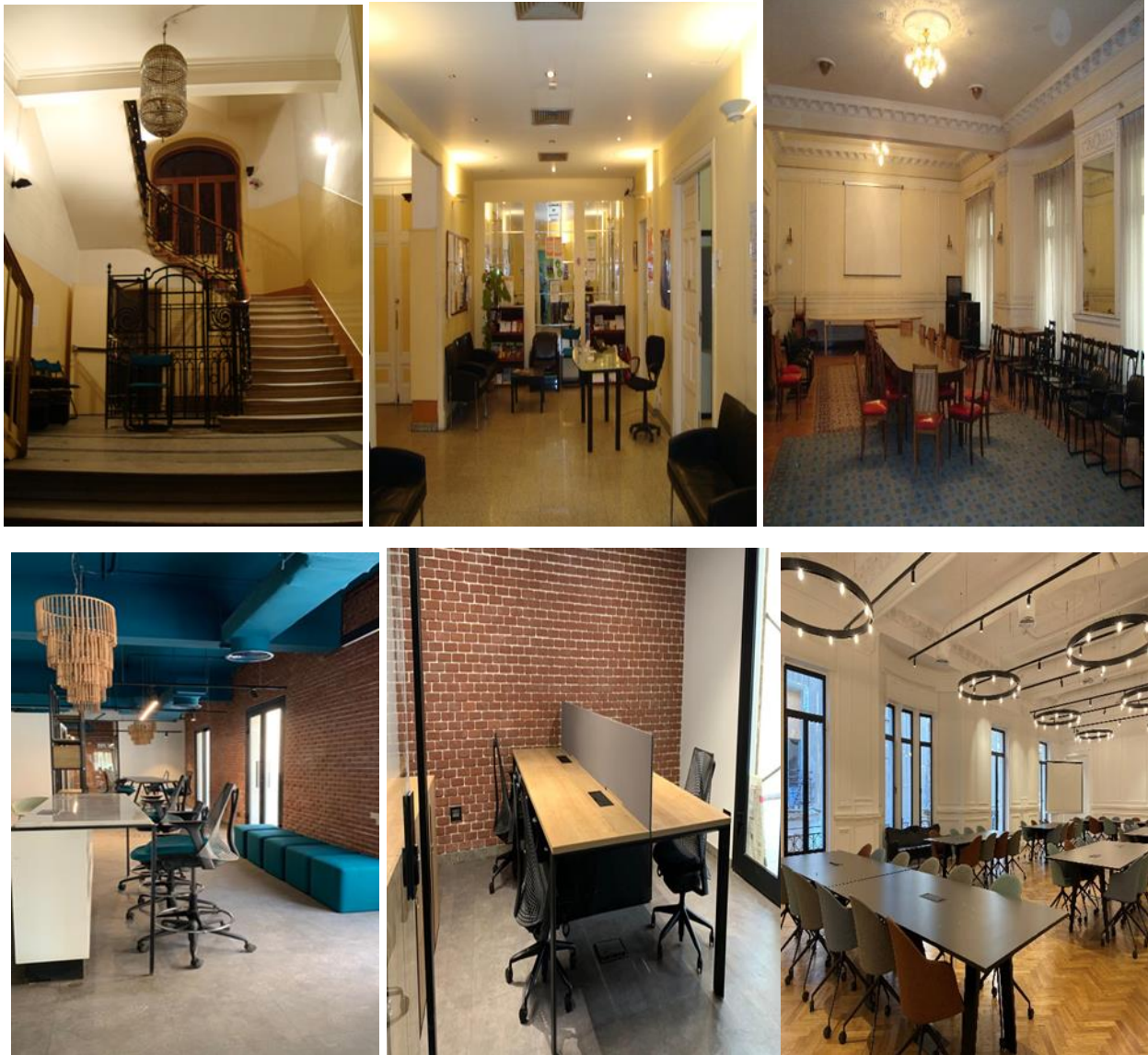
*“Since we acquired the French Consulate in 2014, we have worked tirelessly to introduce a newly designed co-working space that caters to the growing segment of passionate entrepreneurs in Egypt. We are extremely thrilled to see our vision come to reality and to create a “Downtown for all”.”<sup>46</sup>*

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<sup>45</sup> Paul-Conin Pastour:

Pastour was active in the service of the Egyptian Government since 1881. From 1927, he was appointed as Chief Architect at the State Buildings Office from 1907 and then Director-General from 1924-1927.

<sup>46</sup> Karim El-Shafi the Co-Founder, Chairman & CEO of Al Ismaelia, Press Paper



*Figure 54: Consuleya before and after renovation. Source: Al Ismaelia company, marketing department*

Similarly, we will continue to shed light on various creative and entrepreneurial projects that have contributed to downtown Cairo's bustling environment and have ingeniously repurposed Khedivial Cairo's particular legacy.

### 7.10 The American University in Cairo, AUC's Tahrir Cultural Center (TCC)

The American University of Cairo was historically one of the most prominent landowners in the city center. Although the university moved to the New Cairo campus away from central Cairo in 2008, the university still owns a range of buildings along the southern areas of the city center. The Tahrir Square nine-acre campus includes 3 complexes: The Main Campus, Falaki Academic Center, and the Greek Campus. AUC's School of Continuing Education, Management Center, Engineering Services, and Center for Migration and Refugee Studies are all located in the Tahrir Square campus. The American University is a spectacular example of the Mamluk Revival style that by the end of the 19th century was an expression of the nascent Egyptian nationalism. Since its establishment in 1919, it has grown to become the top and most prestigious educational institutions in all of Africa and the Middle East. Historic palace serves as primary campus and is home to Oriental and Ewart Memorial Halls, Margo Veillon Gallery of Modern Egyptian Art, and two additional smaller exhibition spaces. Ewart Hall has a long history, as it hosted many influential Egyptian intellectuals such as Taha Hussain. Om Kolthoum, the famous Egyptian singer, and French vocalist Edith Piaf also performed in this space. In addition, the hall hosted leading dignitaries and diplomats from all over the globe. The halls of Ewart and Oriental remain the main downtown destination for a variety of university conventions, workshops, seminars, and public activities today. In addition, the two-story AUC Bookstore and Café, and lecture rooms are all located on the main campus (AUC, 2015). Due to a lack of available space, the university decided to maintain ownership of the existing buildings and use them as cultural hubs, most notably the Greek Campus. The Greek Campus is a home to Egypt's first technology park in downtown Cairo, GrEEK Campus (as previously mentioned), while Falaki Theatre in the Falaki campus was operated by Studio Emad Eddin Foundation (AUC, 2015).



Figure 55: The main buildings inside the American University in Cairo. Source: AUC website

The AUC was formerly the center of the downtown area's activity. A void was left when the university relocated to New Cairo (a suburb east of Cairo). The leading role of Egypt in art and creativity motivated the AUC's President Francis Ricciardone in Egypt to establish the AUC's Tahrir Cultural Center in the AUC building in downtown Cairo *"to reviving Egypt's place as a regional fountainhead of arts and culture..... how the center's mission will be to stimulate intellectual exchange and serve as a cultural hub for the greater community-- the beating heart of culture in the Arab world"* (Davenport, 2019). The opening of Tahrir Square campus as a cultural center *"illustrating the catalytic role universities can play in invigorating cultural life in their communities and neighborhoods"* (AUC, 2015: p. 22).

The cultural center is fully owned, operated, and programmed by the American University in Cairo. They have a strong vision *"to become a leading cultural hub, inspiring and cultivating both the public and the artists through a well-tailored engaging strategy that TCC offers to Egypt's community while developing strong links with Egypt's regional and international cultural activities"*<sup>47</sup>. Hence, the TCC mission according to the AUC official website is *"...Spreading, Creating & Preserving Culture by creating a Cultural Movement that nurtures The Past, The Present and The Future"*. According to Ali Mourad,<sup>48</sup> the TCC director, the center does not only target youth where Egypt's greatest potential lies but different age groups as well. The Tahrir Cultural Center (TCC) opened its doors in February to coincide with the AUC centennial year-long celebrations in 2019.

The Tahrir Cultural Center renovations had been funded by Naguib Sawiris, the prominent Egyptian businessman, investor, and chairman of Orascom Investment Holding (AUC, 2018). According to Hanna (2020), Sawiris aims to strengthen Tahrir Cultural Center as the *"center for cultural and historical dialogue in Egypt"* by funding its development. He expects that the center will serve as *"a vital venue for cultural exchanges between Egyptians and expats alike"* (Davenport, 2019).

*"I believe in the power of arts and culture in transforming communities and creating a long-lasting positive impact on youth and children, and I believe that we are in utmost need for this positive impact in today's Egypt,"* (Naguib Sawiris<sup>49</sup>)

The partnership agreement between the AUC management and Naguib Sawiris included, the refurbishment of the campus buildings and spaces used to house the facilities, support the establishment of AUC's Tahrir Cultural Center (TCC) on its Tahrir Square campus. The initial phase of the Tahrir Cultural Center's inauguration comprised the remodeling of six gallery spaces,

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<sup>47</sup> TCC official webpage

<sup>48</sup> Personal interview, May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019

<sup>49</sup> In, culturally connected, AUC's tahrir cultural center will be a dynamic arts and culture hub downtown., 2019

including Margo Veillon, Future, Legacy, Marriott, Howard, Armenian room as well as El Falaki Art Gallery.



*Figure 56: TCC before and after renovation work. Source: Tahrir Cultural Center (TCC)*

TCC is an accessible comprehensive cultural hub while also being affordable and meaningful. TCC Heritage Film Series screenings, art exhibitions, Cairo's largest independent arts and culture festivals and theatrical performances have all taken place in the renovated site since its inauguration. The Tahrir Cultural Center (TCC) has resurrected the former AUC campus by hosting several workshops and exhibitions for intellectuals and artists along with a wide range of traditional and innovative activities, events, and services to meet the community's cultural requirements. As a result, there has been an increase in both the number of visitors and the amount of traffic on campus.

### 7.11 Heritage Cinemas In Downtown Cairo

Several historians agree, it was on January 27, 1896, at the Continental Hotel in Cairo where the first cinematographic screening was taken place (Farrugia, 2002). While others noted, the projection of the short film by the Lumière Brothers took place in Alexandria in November 1896. The early shows' popularity prompted the establishment of several small cinemas in various Cairo and Alexandria neighborhoods. Many of these movie theaters were owned by foreign residents. For a long time, the French and the Italians dominated the Egyptian cinema industry through Lumire and Path. Cinemas were the most inexpensive leisure attractions. Between the 1930s and the 1970s, downtown Cairo was one of the most popular hubs for Egyptian moviegoers. Cairo's downtown cinemas are masterpieces of architecture, most often Art Deco architectural style. One of the first architects that expressed interest in the cinemas was Robers Mallet-Steven. He specialized on cinema sets, and Art deco is the predominant architectural style of Cairo's movie theatres (Dadrian, 2011). The cinemas were built between 1935 and 1945.

*With its sleek forms and zigzag designs, the art deco architectural style conquered the imagination of many architects in Egypt. Embracing the style as reminiscent of ancient Egypt, architects excelled in creating the most luxurious movie theatres in Cairo. A stroll through downtown Cairo, and a quick glance at the surrounding architecture, easily shows that most of the cinemas, the likes of the Rivoli, the Odeon and the Miami, were built during the glorious era of art deco (1935 – 1945). (Dadrian, 2011)*

In the cinemas, only new releases were screened, with a focus on Hollywood blockbusters from the United States, and golden age movies from around the world. For example, in early 1940, Metro Cinema on Soliman Pasha Street designed by the American architect Thomas Lamb. The cinema inaugurated with "*Gone with the Wind*," and it continued to play only Metro Goldwyn Mayer releases during its run in Cairo until the nationalization in the mid-1960s (Ibrahim,2018). In addition, these cinemas witnessed different important historical events.

Downtown cinemas and theatres were a hive of activity throughout the 1950s and 1960s, as film production flourished. In the 1960s, many cinemas as Ashour (2019: p.232) noted, "*were nationalized under the auspices of Egyptian General Organization for Cinema*". Most of downtown's cinemas deteriorated due to the mismanagement and corruption inside the cinema industry (Ashour, 2019). Since 1970, the importance of the cinemas and theatres started to decrease largely due to the emergence of television. This deterioration intensified when municipalities banned the demolition of cinemas unless a new cinema was constructed on the same site. In the name of progress, many old cinema buildings were destroyed and replaced with unsightly office buildings, etc. Since the mid-1980s, some well-known cinemas closed silently, while some of downtown Cairo's cinemas are still operating. Emad Eddin Street used to be the epicenter of Cairo's entertainment business. The Kursal and Lido cinemas are derelict and deserted, despite still showcasing the majestic art deco architecture of their former glory. Other cinemas,



such as the Cosmos and the adjacent Le Pigale, remained open, but their facades and interiors have been converted. The art deco features of the restored Le Pigale were mostly destroyed during the renovation. Unfortunately, contemporary cinemas with several screens have recently replaced many of the older, more historic one. However, Zawya's initiative called attention to the creative class's pivotal role in revitalizing downtown Cairo's many rundown movie theatres which is crucial for downtown Cairo's urban regeneration.

### ***7.11.1 The Panorama of the European Film Festival and Zawya***

The Cinema industry has been a disputed domain in Egypt for a long time. The once-thriving film industry continued to descend since 1966 after its nationalization. According to Maria Golia (2017), "*Following its nationalization in 1966, a formerly flourishing film industry ran steadily downhill and movie theater operators were subjected to censors' increasingly puerile whims*". Youssef Chahine, an Egyptian director, established Misr International Films in 1972. It was the only independent company that was able to maintain operations. More than 45 movies, docs, and TV series were produced by Youssef Chahine and Misr International Films (MIF), believing that "*Cinema should remain a constant presence in the cultural fabric of society and, particularly during dire political times, serve as a medium for expression and an art form of resistance*"<sup>50</sup> (Afifi& Hassan, 2013). A public view of foreign films was provided at the annual State-run Cairo International Film Festival (CIFF Est.) that was founded in 1976 (Golia, 2017).

Over the past decade, the culture of independent cinema has gained prominence in Egypt, drawing progressively more people than the handful who would search for such films in cultural centers and embassies financed internationally (Awatta, 2015). The emergence of the independent film culture in Cairo has been more recent, only dating back to the 1990s, and resulted from the downturn in creativity, and the subsequent drops in the quality of productions in film industry. In Egypt, the word "independent film" has come to refer to a genre that seeks to break free from popular cinema's conventional formula. In the 2000s, independent film culture started becoming more popular. These indie films are typically more creative, tackling delicate subjects in new ways through storytelling. In the aftermath of the January 25, 2011, revolt, the independent film "The Square," which tells the story of the revolution and shows many of the subsequent struggles and violence, earned an Oscar nomination in 2014. A few Egyptian-made films, including "The Square" have been prominent exceptions to this pattern in recent years (Wolf, 2014).

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<sup>50</sup> Marianne Khoury in press

In the 1990s, smaller independent manufacturers were forced out of the industry due to their inability to compete with larger corporations. In Egypt, it is difficult for filmmakers who are not part of the state patronage network to fund and receive the opportunity to have their films screened. In addition, members of the official cinematic arts syndicate are also given special treatment by the constitution, with law 35 of 1978 excluding non-members from producing films. However, Egyptian independent films are screened at cultural centers in Cairo, such as the Egyptian Catholic Centre for Cinema, which hosts an international independent film festival to help young filmmakers who fight to get their message out to the public, and the French Cultural Center, which hosts an annual spring festival by Egyptian filmmakers. In 2015, Independent Egyptian films screened at international film festivals and received positive feedback (Deyaa, 2016).

In, 2004, Misr International Films production company launched their annual Panorama of European Film festival, as an independent European film festival. The initiative has attracted an increasing number of spectators due to the quality of its selection. The Panorama of the European Film is a 10-day film festival held annually, showcasing a few new award-winning narrative and documentary movies, in addition to cinematic landmarks and classics. In March 2014, Zawya was established by Misr International Films (MIF) as a year-round venue for screening alternative cinema, or non-Hollywood films due to the rising demand for alternative cinema. Zawya, a new cinema initiative, was one of Egypt's first art-house cinemas for international films, documentaries, and films *“that would not be showing at the city’s commercial multiplexes”* (cairoobserver, 2014). Local independent filmmaking is another area of focus for Zawya's initiative, which aims to encourage and promote the work of creative Arabian and Egyptian filmmakers through a variety of channels. According to the opening announcement on Misr International Films MIF's website, *“A cinema for films that do not make it to cinemas”*, was the slogan, along with *“cinema from a different angle”* to promote independent film culture and to provide an alternative to the commercial film experience in Egypt. The idea was modelled after the Curzon Cinema chain in London, a UK-based chain of theatres dedicated to showing films from art houses (Zohdi, 2018). Additionally, Zawya takes its cues from the Cinémathèque de Tanger (CDT), a movie theatre in Tangier, Morocco that first opened in 2006 (Elshahed, 2014).

Downtown Cairo (as previously mentioned) was home to huge and magnificent movie theatres until the mid-1990s, when a steady stream of commercially rewarding blockbusters began to appear, mostly controlled by a handful of film distributors. Since then, shopping malls have grown, and movie theatres have followed suit. Zawya opted to situate its theater in Cairo's downtown district, despite the fact that there were a number of underutilized or non-existent theaters in the vicinity. Instead of becoming a part of an entity or organization that many people consider unreachable, Zawya wanted to be easily known, reasonably priced, and widely available. Zawya's first location was at Cairo's Cinema Odeon. The initiative was housed in the smallest of the three auditoriums.

The Odeon Cinema first opened its doors before the 1950s, and it was originally specialized in Russian and Italian films. Odeon Cinema in downtown Cairo is next to other cultural institutions such as the Townhouse Gallery and the Contemporary Image Collective (CIC), as well as iconic downtown hangouts like the Odeon Palace pub, the Lotus rooftop bar, and the Greek Club. Therefore, it was the ideal site for them<sup>51</sup>. Zawya endured back-to-back full-house screenings at the cinema following the release of Amir Ramses' sequel to *The Jews of Egypt* (2012), and just after, the first Chahine retrospective. Later, Zawya landed a 10-year contract, after a long and exhausting negotiating period with New Century who had purchased the two-screen Karim Cinema. The deal gives Zawya 50 percent of ticket sales and complete control of the space, also during both Eid holidays.

Zawya moved to Karim Cinema in downtown after a full-force renovation process. Karim Cinema was initially two cinemas, Karim one and Karim two, housed within one another. Currently, Karim cinema is only one cinema after Zawya modified the interior design. Originally, Karim Cinema one was accessible via Emad El-Din Street, while Karim Cinema two was reached from a back side street occupied by various informal activities. Now both are connected through a corridor. The soundproofing and redesigning of the two screening halls were also incorporated in the refurbishment for better screen viewing through double doors and stadium seating. The refurbishments also include Emad Eddin Street's lobby, café, and cinema façade.

Mahmoud said the director Zawya<sup>52</sup> gave various reasons behind the decision to move to Kairim cinema, such as the theater's defective sound system and screen. The small hall at The Odeon Cinema was only for 175 people, which is too small for them and sometimes not enough, especially during the festival days and big events. They occasionally needed to use the other large hall in the Odeon Cinema, which was not always available. Additionally, the small corridor that served as a cafeteria was tucked away in a tiny downtown nook that was difficult to get to, as well as not sufficient for Zawya any longer. The current site is more visible and appealing than the first one. Overall, the move ensures a larger audience and, as a result, will better restore Emad Eldin Street's former glory.

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<sup>51</sup> Interview with Zawya manger, June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

<sup>52</sup> Interview, June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019



*Figure 57: The smaller screening hall in Zawya's new venue. Credit: Lamis Magdy. Source (Zohdi, 2018).*

Zawya has a limited but devoted fan base, including university students and senior citizens. It has recently widened its scope by introducing a distribution arm focusing on local indie films. Zawya also hosts several screenings as part of the Downtown Contemporary Art Festival's program. Many cinemas have emerged in the area since Zawya's opening, however this theater retains its unique atmosphere as a meeting point for the city's filmmakers. In comparison to other art and cultural venues in downtown, Zawya has been one of the most popular.



*Figure 58:Zawya in Cinema Odeon. Credit: Christine Dancausse. Source : (El Gibaly, 2017)*

However, since its inception, Zawya's operation has been plagued by technological, financial, and bureaucratic difficulties. The main challenges include issues of screening licenses, and Egypt's censorship authorities. In general, any film screened publicly in Egypt must receive approval from the censorship board. Furthermore, film copies can be lost in customs for up to two weeks at a time and Egypt's financial system makes sending and accepting transfers difficult. Additional hurdles are created by the limited funding options from the grant agencies and corporate sponsors to sustain their programs and activities. Nonetheless, Zawya's inherited the MIF festival reputation, increased access to international copies and paved the way for the launch of similar initiatives.

## Chapter Seven Conclusion

The neighbourhood drew businesses and entrepreneurs from the creative class to what scholars termed "the Power of Place," or a preference for the area's cultural, recreational, and potentially economic qualities. Florida (2002) verified the significance of the quality of place depicted in the architectural and urban context for reinforcing creativity and innovation (*technological and cultural as well as economic*) as a key to economic growth. Immediately following the 2011 revolution, downtown Cairo underwent political-economic restructuring. The 2011 revolution has provided a creative climate that stimulated creativity and entrepreneurial spirit. Downtown Cairo's allure and vibrancy have been bolstered by creative initiatives, which have successfully carved out a third space between a public institution and the private sector to spearhead comparatively small urban regeneration projects that are more diverse and inclusive.

Recently, downtown Cairo has become a privileged site for startup hubs and technology-intensive interactive economies. Indeed, the GrEEK Campus, Cairo's first technology and innovation park, and the RiseUp Summit, an annual entrepreneurship and innovation event that brings the MENA region's entrepreneurial ecosystem have played critical roles in fostering a self-propelled startup economy in downtown Cairo. The current scene is transforming downtown Cairo into a more livable and dynamic place, promoting public space as a key to innovation. In addition, the Egyptian startup scene has attracted several well-known foreign entities to support the rising Egyptian entrepreneurs through seed capital investments and mentorship. Some of downtown 's architectural landmarks have been saved thanks to revitalization efforts and creative usage that have tapped into the area's dynamism. In addition, the Zawya and other creative art initiatives have had a noticeable positive impact on the cultural scene of downtown Cairo. As a result, more well-off and educated citizens move to settle there. It also entices people to come (visitors and tourists alike) and spurs the expansion of local businesses. As a result, gentrification is obviously found in these spaces.

## **8 Chapter Eight: The Role of Al-Ismailia Company for Real Estate Investment in Revitalizing Downtown Cairo and Gentrification Process**

### **8.1 Introduction**

According to Geltner et al. (2007), the real estate market can be divided into three categories: space (rental markets), assets, and development. However, the development of the real estate market is influenced by national and international factors, such as economic growth, overall international trends, and financial activities. Households, corporations, and governmental entities make up the demand side of these marketplaces as they look to use space for production or consumption. Landlords provide the supply by renting out their properties to companies and individuals. As Clark (1992: p. 359) noted, on the production and supply side, “*builders, developers, landlords, mortgage lenders, government agencies, and real estate agents involved*”. Burton (2000) argued that real estate developers must have a notion concerning a residential real estate development that they consider the market needs to surpass market supply built on their own experience. Hence, real estate developers must be entrepreneurs.

In Downtown Cairo, Al-Ismailia Company for Real Estate Investments stands out among other private heritage developers like Sigma Properties and Alchemy Design. Since 2008, Al-Ismailia Company has been firmly entrenched in downtown conditions while simultaneously speculating about the area's potential. Before the government regeneration schemes, the company capitalized on the low long-term resident density and the deteriorating conditions of numerous downtown properties by acquiring them at below-market rates for future renovation. Al-Ismailia for Real Estate Investments seeks to benefit from the historical and architectural value of downtown Cairo's real estate, which it depicts as a testament of Egyptian modernity and historical development, while simultaneously evoking Egypt's fictitious previous glory days (Abaza, 2011). To achieve this goal, Al Ismailia Company is supporting an expanding number of arts and cultural initiatives and galleries in downtown Cairo to stimulate (high-end) economic activity to boost their investment returns beside buildings repurposing. Hence, gentrification is the company's primary goal. As a result, the residential properties in downtown Cairo that were stagnating, underutilized, or exploited by the informal economy have seen a significant increase in market value because of the company's efforts. This chapter focuses on the role of Al-Ismailia Company and its strategy in revitalizing downtown Cairo. Deep investigation indicates how the company uses neoliberal processes of nostalgic heritagization and securitization to gentrify downtown Cairo.

## 8.2 Al-Ismailia Company Overview

Al-Ismailia Company is the largest possessor in the downtown area and “*the most influential in terms of its capacity for social transformation*” (Duffield, 2019). Al-Ismailia Company has recently acquired 25 signature heritage properties in downtown Cairo adding up to 76,000 square meters, which is estimated at 5% of the area's total real estate (Al-Ismailia, 2013).

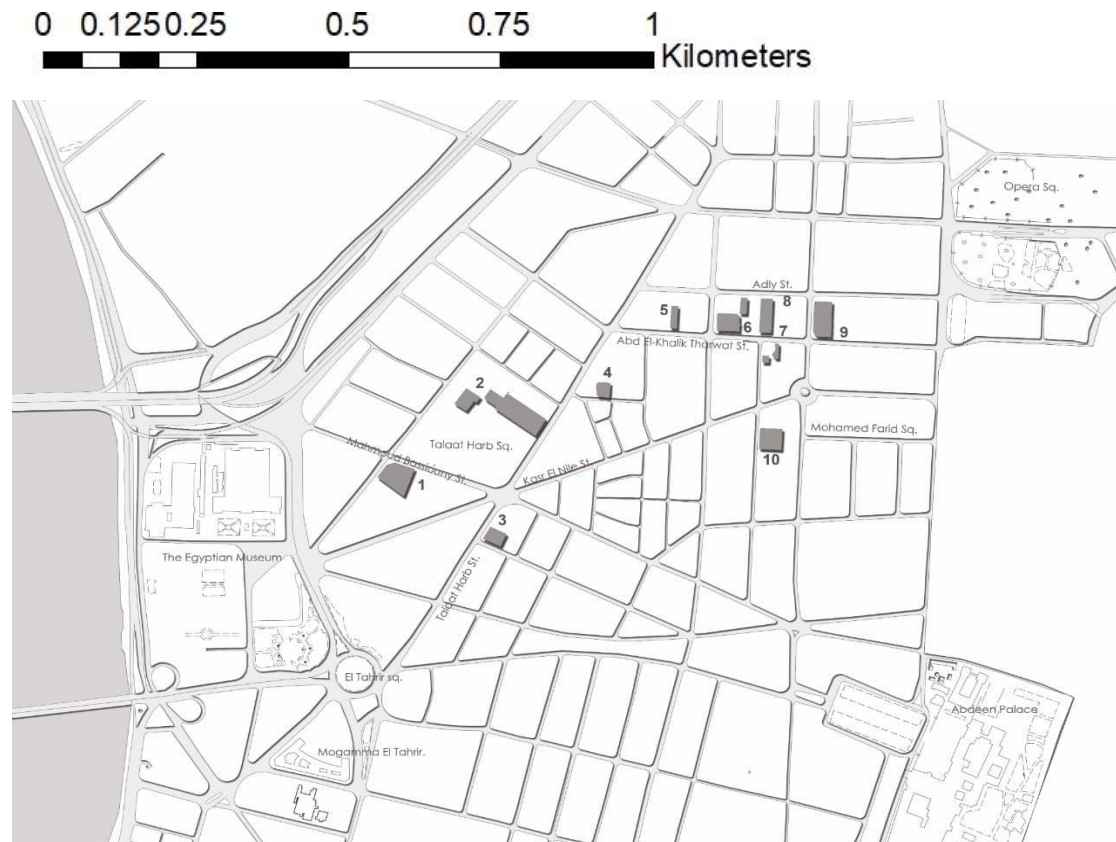


Figure 59: Al-Ismailia Company iconic buildings in downtown Cairo. Source: Al-Ismailia Company

Belton Private Equity (BPE) Partners manage the company completely owned by Samai Hills Ltd. Samih Sawiris own the rest, 35 % of the shares. The board of directors include Karim Shafei, the chairman of Al-Ismailia Company; Hazem Barakat, cofounded and managed BPE partners and B investments; Alaa Saba, the founder of Belton Financial and the co- founder of BPE partners; Samih Sawiris, the Egyptian real estate tycoon behind Orascom Hotels, a leading developer of fully integrated worldwide destination like El Gouna on the Red Sea, Andermatt and Lustica Bey,; Ammar Al-Khudairy , the managing partner of Amwal Al-Khaleej, and the chairman of SAMBA Financial Group; Karim Saada, the founding partner of Amwal Al-Khaleej; and Eman Hussien, an expert in Real Estate Consulting and Management. Al Ismailia Company is self-financed through private direct investment and loans. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development most recently gave the company a USD 8.5 million loan (Fayed, 2009). The company seeks "to restore & revive Downtown Cairo to be the global face of Egypt". In this



sense, the company's mission focuses on "*the acquisition of prime real estate in Downtown Cairo for the purpose of restoring the buildings and upgrading the infrastructures to suit contemporary requirements for residential, commercial and cultural spaces while celebrating the original edifices that comprise Downtown 's architectural significance*"<sup>53</sup> . Through the acquisition, maintenance, renovation, and leasing of downtown Cairo's historic buildings, Al-Ismailia Company aspires to become a premier real estate investment firm to provide "*a comprehensive contemporary experience that merges Downtown 's historic legacy and modern culture*"<sup>54</sup>. Therefore, Al Ismailia's model for revitalization inspired by the romanticization and "*nostalgia of a bygone "golden age" of cosmopolitanism and culture*" (Duffield, 2019), as well as the preservation of downtown's belle époque architecture.

The company's official publications outline a two-pronged approach to regeneration.

- 1- Building concepts revolve around the different buildings in downtown and
- 2- Creating new concepts to use the massive spaces in introducing modern uses that count on facilities in the space rather than large scales.

The company has a diversified portfolio of concepts for refurbishing its buildings, including office spaces, co-working spaces, retail stores, food and beverage concepts and serviced apartment spaces. For instance, Al-Ismailia is planning to accommodate the F & B concept in the retail space of the Kodak Building. While CIB building in 33 Sherif St., KFC building in 22 Abdel Khalek Tharwat st., Shourbagi building in 16 Adly St. and Tamara building in 17 Gawad Hosny St., the company is planning to accommodate new office spaces in the building's refurbished apartments targeting Startups and Multinational Companies. For café Riche, building 29 Huda Shaarawi St., Al Ismailia is planning to accommodate a semi-furnished apartments concept or an office space concept in the building's apartments targeting affluent residents or startups and multinational companies.

The company's comprehensive development model is based on three main pillars: urban, social, and economic development. In this context, the Harvard School of Architecture and Urban Design's spinoff, the International Institute for Urban Development, and Mona Zakaria, an Egyptian architect and conservation expert, were hired by the Al Ismailia Company to study downtown Cairo's unique characteristics and planning requirements, assess the preservation potential, and propose a pilot project.

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<sup>53</sup> Al Ismailia official website (about). who-we-are/

<sup>54</sup> Ibid

The first stage: includes the study and evaluation of the Cairo Khedivial District:

- 1- Land distribution and ownership
- 2- Resident social and economic metrics
- 3- Changes in urban fabric characteristics
- 4- Infringements forms
- 5- Recommendations and problem-solving solutions

In this sense, according to Revitalization Strategy for Areas of Khedivial Cairo Al-Ismailia for Real Estate Investment Assessment Report (2011), three intervention approaches for improving downtown have been identified.

- 1- Improving the pedestrian circulation network
- 2- Preserving the high standards of the region's numerous historic structures from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
- 3- Maintaining and repairing the heritage buildings' façade

The first two approaches are concerned with pedestrian traffic and how it might boost cultural and economic opportunities. The third focuses on facade renovation and maintaining the structural integrity of historic structures. As highlighted in the Assessment Report on Al Ismailia's revitalization strategies for areas in Khedivial Cairo (2011: p.6), the revitalization of Khedivial Cairo *"depends on both the willingness of the private sector to invest in the rehabilitation of its historic buildings and the readiness of the Governorate to undertake specific improvements and support private initiatives that contribute to the preservation of its valuable building stock and restoring its environmental quality"*. So, the study suggested a pilot project to assess the effectiveness of the strategies mentioned above, primarily the rehabilitation of Hotel Viennoise and Cinema Radio.

### **8.3 Al Ismailia Rehabilitation Projects**

In 2014, the Egyptian government defined their ambitious plan for developing the district. The comparatively prosperous political climate has inspired Al Ismailia company to pursue its goal with vigor. The rehabilitation model of Al-Ismailia Company is designed to conserve and maintain the architectural grandeur of downtown Cairo, save them from deterioration and create an economic interest in them to maximize their profit despite the legal roadblocks. Al-Ismailia Company would fund the costs of retrofitting the spaces for these uses, reducing the startup expense and financial burden for new customers by spending a limited amount of money to prove the idea (Awatta, 2015).

According to Mohamed El-Taher,<sup>55</sup> the renovation and development stage of the buildings included:

- 1- Study the history of the building.
- 2- Hire consultants to restore the original architecture of the building.
- 3- Prepare a complete plan for the development of the buildings and the surrounding area.
- 4- Restore the facade of the external building and set a plan for exterior lighting.
- 5- Renovating the building interiors and changing its use if needed.

#### 8.4 La Viennoise Réhabilitations Work

On the corner of 7 Champollion Street and 11 Mahmoud Bassiouni, the long-standing building was built in 1896. La Viennoise structure is eclectic but reveals the Italian Renaissance Revival style of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.



Figure 60: Old photos for La Viennoise building. Source: Al-Ismailia company for real estate investment.

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<sup>55</sup> The director of Al-Ismailia company, interview on May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019

The building was first owned by Hanna S. Sabbāgh Bey, from a wealthy family of Syro-Lebanese origin established in Alexandria. Sabbāgh Bey was one of the stakeholders of the Heliopolis urban development project, and the private secretary of Baron Édouard Empain, the promotor and founder of Heliopolis suburb, during his first stay in Cairo. From January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1912, to September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1914, the ground floor served as a consulate for the k.u.k. (kaiserlich und königlich): "imperial (Austria) and royal (Hungary)", referring to the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867–1918). In 1940 the building has been acquired by Abdallah Mirshak, Egyptian-Lebanese businessman. Then the building was appropriated by the government. The five daughters of Abdallah Mirshak; Baladi's great grandfather took it back in 1981 and have been managing the building which hosted the Viennoise hotel since then. In the 19th century, Pension Viennoise was one of the numerous European-style hotels in Cairo when Egypt became the top travel destination for the European elite.



Figure 61: Pension Viennoise. Source: Al-Ismailia company archive

#### **8.4.1 Structural repair works**

After a thorough inspection of the building, which is composed of wood floor slabs resting on massive stone retaining walls, several serious vertical cracks in the walls, as well as several parts of the floor slabs that were either totally damaged or in a very bad condition and needed urgent repair/replacement. These floor slabs have been replaced completely with steel structures, in other cases we just added steel beams as an additional support for the old slabs. Regarding the wall cracks, they were treated as well by clearing them thoroughly before re-filling them with grout-based mortar and applying the notches. The corners of the building were treated with shotcrete for extra strengthening and stiffens were implemented for extra protection against earthquakes and landfalls, which has prepared the building for a new and long future to come. In addition, a new

roof floor slab has been installed to make sure the roof can safely host any events and activities in the future.



*Figure 62: The exterior state of the building. Source: Al-Ismailia Company*

All main stairs have been revised and additional support elements have been installed wherever it was needed. The damaged marble stairs have been replaced by new ones of the same material and the original ones treated with epoxy. Steel beams have been installed underneath all service stairs as well for extra support.



*Figure 63: The interior state of the building before and after rehabilitation work. Source: Al-Ismailia Company*

All recently added elements – both external and internal – that do not originally belong to the building and were added over the past years, have been removed to return the building to its old beauty. All decorative ornaments on the facades of the building have been fully and completely restored after the production of molded pre-casted replicas of these ornaments. In addition, all balconies including the corbels underneath them have been either restored or replaced by new solutions that maintain the same old look.



*Figure 64: The state of the decorative elements before and after restoration work. Source: Al- Ismailia Company*

#### **8.4.2 Rehabilitation and restoration work**

New noise-proof and insulated double-glazed aluminum windows have replaced all building windows and balconies. All original main wood doors have been restored to their original designs, and the missing ones have been produced accordingly. New floors of the same material have replaced all internal wood and marble floors. New and updated networks have entirely replaced all internal plumbing and electricity infrastructure, and a new fire alarm system has been replaced. New electricity panels for the whole building have been installed, and new places for all water and electricity meters have been designated. The small old lifts have been replaced by new state-of-

the-art and spacy lifts installed on modern steel structures in a fusion of styles that reflects the timeless and unique potential of the building over its long history. For the air-conditioning of the building, a new VRV system has been installed to ensure the best efficiency regarding energy consumption and to keep all facades free of any compressor units by installing them on the roof in a designated area. A modern LED façade lighting system has been installed to show the beauty and uniqueness of the decorative ornaments during nighttime. For all new interior lights, energy-efficient LED lighting units have also been installed. The ground floor façade has been completely restored and unified and returned to its original design, and the shop signs have been re-designed with a unified font.





*Figure 65:La Viennoise before and after rehabilitation work. Source: Al-Ismailia company*

Building renovations were completed after a lease agreement was signed between AL-Ismailia Company and Tharwa Company for Investment. Tharwa Capital Company is a renowned provider of financial solutions and a significant player in Egypt's debt capital markets.

## **8.5 Cinema Radio**

### ***8.5.1 Historical Background***

Cinema Radio of Cairo, located at 24 Talaat Harb Street, was founded by the RCA Corporation (Radio Corporation of America). The Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company of America's assets were incorporated to form the Radio Corporation of America, founded in 1919. The building of the Cinema Radio Cairo branch was completed in 1932. The massive five-story building that now houses Cinema Radio was designed by the three architects, Max Edrei, Garo Balyan, and Victor Salma. Their office was in a detached building next to the movie theatre. The building's namesake is the famed entertainment venue Radio City Music Hall in New York City. On December 6th, 1951, the Egyptian Diva Umm Kulsūm, chanted for the first time on Cinema Radio's stage, her celestial song "Arafāt sings to God". She also sang the famous patriotic song, "Egypt tells for itself". On May 1st, 1952, the movie entitled "Zeinab", based on the first modern Egyptian novel written by the Egyptian writer, journalist, politician and Minister of Education in Egypt Muḥammad Ḥusayn Pasha Haïkal (1888-1956) was screened in the cinema. On December 31st, 1973, the movie made after the theatre comedy "The Rebels' School" was staged for the first time. On July 14th, 1999, the theatre performer Moḥammad Sobḥī acted in the dramatic play "Carmen" for the first time. Cinema Radio front and passage are still branded with some landmark boutiques.



### ***8.5.2 The Building's Architecture***

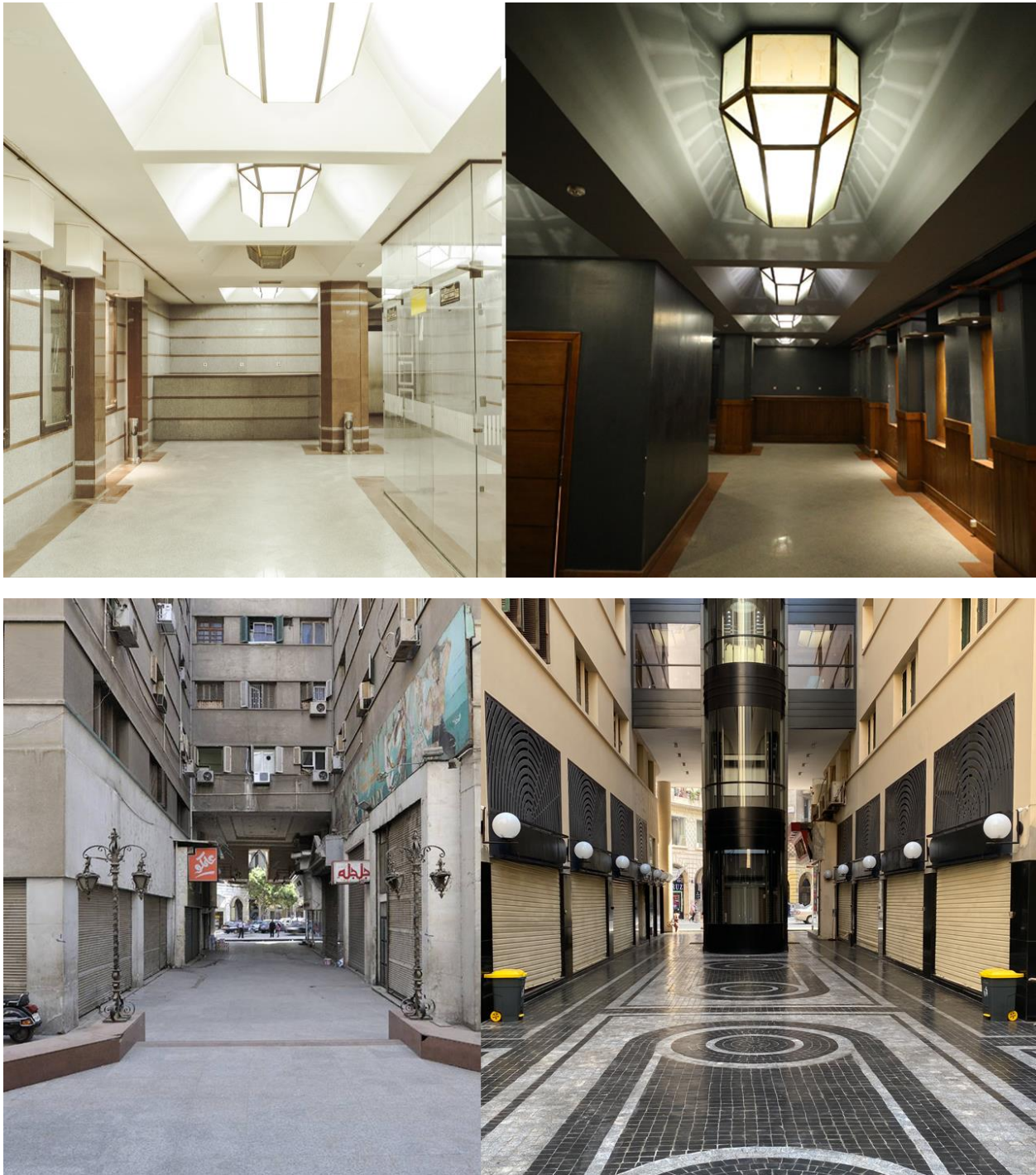
Cinema Radio structure is split into two distinct halves, with an office building facing the street and a movie theatre accessible via an interior corridor. Over 120 offices make up the office building, while the cinema building's 5,000 square metres are split between a cinema and a theatre (it used to house Cairo's largest screen). The passageway runs through the office building leading to the cinema, with commercial space on both sides (Cairoobserver, 2012). The buildings emphasize the fashion of American cinemas of the 1930s, especially the fashion of the New Yorker motion picture halls. The facades reflect a sober Art déco style gained with balanced modern lines à *l'avant-garde*.

The cinema's office U-shaped annexe is a simplified version of a fascist character with modest Art déco lines. A tower in the middle of the significant façade offers the building a monumental perspective. The ground of the exterior passage entrance driving to the cinema is covered to date with the original rosy terracotta. It remains adorned with the cinema's brand in modelled Art déco Latin letters, defined with copper outlines, while the tag's Arabic version is carved in the heart of the letter "O". The cinema structure itself retains a modern portico with delicate Art Deco lines, while the arrangement of protruding and recessed volumes reveals the era's bold look.



Figure 66: Cinéma Radio. Source : (Cairoobserver, 2012)

During the 1970s, when the theatre was experiencing severe financial difficulties, it was divided into separate sections, cinema, and theatre. Later, the structure deteriorated and was taken over by new tenants. The theatre entirely relied on the private sector to implement new functions. In 2009, Al Ismailia acquired Cinema Radio Complex to transform it into an Egyptian theatrical entertainment nightclub to revive Egypt's 1950s to 1970s era. With the large size of the Radio cinema, it would be challenging to line such a space with film screenings. Hence, it cannot be financially sustainable. Architect Hassan Abouseda has created some preliminary proposals for renovating the building and seeks to exploit the office building and the commercial spaces in the passageway leading to the cinema. Currently, the building hosts multiple screenings, events, and office and retail spaces. In addition, radio now serves as the headquarter for BPE Partners.



*Figure 67: Cinema Radio before and after the renovation work. Source: Al- Ismailia company marketing department*

## 8.6 Al- Ismailia and the Flourishing Art Scene in Downtown Cairo (second concept)

Art and entrepreneurship are inextricably linked. Art is a focal point of almost any form of industry. Art is a source of creating new market opportunities and promoting products and existing markets for business. The art-business relationship is efficiently implemented and managed. There has been a long-held, unidirectional assumption about how business and the arts interact. However, *The Value of the Arts in Business* disputes this idea by demonstrating how arts-based initiatives (ABIs) may be implemented to enhance value creation and productivity in businesses (Schiuma, 2011). Zukin (1982) demonstrated the idea of the "artistic mode of production" decades ago, where artists are paving the way for potential real estate reinvestment by entrepreneurs and creative-class and higher-income members suitable for their economic benefit. Hence, art and cultural activities have been used in the real estate market to "humanize" real estate development space (Zukin, 1995: p. 22) via the conceptual exploitation of space by artists and then appropriated by developers to encourage capital reinvestment in the built environment. Furthermore, the quality of public life and public places can only be improved through gentrification; hence, art and culture are crucial for stimulating and enhancing this process.

Since the 2011 revolution, the creative art initiatives in downtown Cairo have become an alternative to the formal cultural scene, enabling different segments to pursue their interests. As stated by Hossam Nassar<sup>56</sup>, "*Arts and culture are the only thing that has developed and improved since the revolution and must be supported,*" (Montasser, 2012). As a result, downtown Cairo has been revitalized partly because of increased cultural venues and events.

*"We see downtown Cairo as a natural meeting point for artists from East and West ... The cityscape, with its melting pot of architectural styles and historic narratives, is an inspirational setting for this kind of cultural exchange,"* El-Attar in press (Montasser, 2012).

After the primary target market demonstrated interest in the district, the Al- Ismailia company started to promote their properties as places to live, work & play (the company official presentation). Al Ismailia company's marketing strategy aims at creating positive associations with downtown as an independent brand (ibid), invigorating interest in its properties and creating positive traffic for sparking (high-end) economic activities to create housing demand from their target groups for higher returns for their investment. Al- Ismailia company for Real Estate Investment believed "*a key steppingstone for reviving downtown is art and culture across different market segments*" (Strasser, 2010). Intellectuals, artists, and talented youth were incorporated into the company's strategy for reinvigorating local creative practices and social spaces as an integral component of their revitalization agenda to instill downtown's image as

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<sup>56</sup> The deputy head in the Ministry of Culture's foreign cultural relations department

Cairo's hip arts district. Al-Ismailia company aspires to revive downtown Cairo's identity and prominence as a cultural nexus, high-end retail district, and economic hub to provide a comprehensive living experience. Al Ismailia has honored downtown's cultural significance and historical value by embracing independent and innovative art and the 1990s' flourishing cultural scene and once more in response to the 2011 revolution (Abaza, 2014). As a result, Al Ismailia's approach emphasized the intangible value of downtown Cairo's social and cultural wealth besides the tangible value of the district's architectural heritage.

The company's vision, as Berger (2014) claimed, "*centered on cultural gentrification*". To do so, Al-Ismailia provides lower rent and, sometimes, free rent to younger and beginner artists, NGOs, and entrepreneurs. The Townhouse Gallery, CIC, and Studio Emad Eddin are all tenants of the Al Ismailia company. It also supports magazines that promote downtown and heritage interests. In addition, the company provides spaces for film and photographic production companies and directors to integrate downtown 's historic legacy with the city's contemporary culture. Many derelict buildings bought by the company in downtown Cairo have been turned into labs for artistic production and have become a unique paradigm of cultural consciousness in real estate ventures. These initiatives provide comprehensive contemporary experiences. For example, La Viennoise was a unique space for iconic art exhibitions and experiments, an alternative art institution. Since its acquisition in 2009 until its renovation, the building has hosted several exhibitions and events, such as the Cairo Documenta exhibitions in 2010 (El-Wakil, 2011) and 2012; Studio Viennoise, from November 14 to December 16, 2012 (Cairo observer, 2014). These initiatives helped sustain La Viennoise as an active, creative venue. In March 2020, in their Egyptian version of #LadiesFirst, Al Ismailia partnered with the international initiative and the private diplomacy program Love & Lobby. The project honours the women who have championed Egypt's creative industries, including fashion, art, design, and media. The initiative has been hosted in La Viennoise Rooftop. In addition, the first summit of Startup boot camp and Pride Capital Demo Day were also hosted at the same place.

CineGouna's Dakhli Wust El Balad is the first dedicated locations platform, having debuted in 2016, offering a wide variety of settings and location in the center of the city to filmmakers and artists from all over the world. Al- Ismailia cooperated with Dakhli Wust El Balad and offered a variety of locations in some of their assets scouted for filmmakers and creators in downtown Cairo to meet various production requirements and their artistic needs (Al- Ismailia Initiative online). Al Ismailia for Real Estate Investment also collaborated with Photopia (the first photography school in Egypt) to launch the first photography festival in Egypt, which offered a wide variety of photography, videography and cinematography educational experiences led by experts from Egypt and the region. The photography week welcomed over 90 keynote speakers and instructors who gave around 80 talks and panel discussions, 15 workshops, 15 portfolio reviews and four photography exhibitions. In March 2021, Al Ismailia hosted Cairo Photo Week, a photography festival at two large venues. The newly reopened Rawabt Theatre and the factory in Townhouse Gallery hosted the bulk of Cairo Photo Week's discussions and exhibitions. In addition, Kodak

hosted numerous of experimental workshops and studios. The festival included many local, regional, and international photographers and picture makers from all fields and genres. These international festivals draw the national/ international communities' attention.



Figure 68: Cairo Photo Week. Source: Instagram

In addition, Khotout West El Balad Reviving Downtown Cairo's Calligraphic Heritage; Launched with J.Walter Thompson Advertising Agency in 2015. The goal of the inspiring initiative is to restore downtown Cairo's calligraphic heritage by saving the neighborhood's typefaces and reintroducing them in a new and modern context. The cooperation led to the introduction of six brand-new fonts into the digital world. Several prestigious honours were bestowed onto the project in 2016; some of these include the Cannes Lions, Dubai Lynx, D&AD, and Clio Awards (Al-Ismailia initiatives website)

Furthermore, Art D'Egypt is a platform to encourage Egyptian art in different historical settings to shed light on Egypt's heritage and cultural tourism. In October 2019, Art D'Egypt took over the Tamara building in downtown Cairo and held an exhibition of five different galleries that collaborated and presented the works of over 40 artists. In addition, there were several cultural and art events, such as the 4th edition of the Biennial of Architectural and Urban Restoration Award Ceremony, Heritage of Our Country, under the auspices of the Ministry of Youth & Sports; "Because I am a Father", Egyptian and Swedish Dads' Photography Exhibition; MOON DUST, Photography Exhibition, "KHATT: EGYPT'S, Calligraphic Landscape" Book Launch & Exhibition; and CROSSROADS, Photography Exhibition by Sherif Tamim.

Cinema Radio brought its theatre back to life in 2011 with "Al Bernameg" by Bassem Youssef and the iconic puppet show "Abla Fahita", a weekly live television show. These performances drew crowds downtown and developed the theatre as an art venue. In addition, the TV show "Al Bernameg" by Bassem Youssef helped shape the public's political opinion before it was banned (see chapter nine). The venue also hosts several photoshoots for well-known brands, including PUMA. In addition, Al Ismailia for Real Estate Investment partnered up with Mint by EG Bank for the 'MINT Incubator Fall 2019 Demo Day', which took place in the newly refurbished Cinema Radio in downtown Cairo. It was a day full of Egypt's most innovative young entrepreneurs and startups over several days. Radio Cinema passageway also hosted regular art exhibitions. In 2017, Weltformat, the poster design festival from Lucerne, was invited to Cairo to exhibit in Radio Cinema.



Figure 69: "Al Bernameg" of Bassem Youssef and the iconic puppet show "Abla Fahita" in Radio Cinema. Source: Al Ismailia company

### 8.7 The Cooperation Between Al- Ismailia Company and CLUSTER

After the January 25th Revolution, Cairo Lab for Urban Studies, Training and Environmental Research (CLUSTER) was established. It is an interdisciplinary platform founded by an Egyptian architect and an American curator for urban research, architecture, art, and design initiatives. The initiative aims to “*establish a critical space for urban discourse, engaging questions of public space and urban informality*” (CLUSTER, 2018). CLUSTER's practice involves four sets of activities: architecture and urban design; research and mapping; networking events, web-platforms and public programs; and workshops and trainings. CLUSTER Projects (2018) include:

- Investigating new approaches to informal practices that would generate alternative modes of urban development
- Developing a platform integrating art and culture as urban catalysts
- Establishing a networking hub, promoting interdisciplinary modes of practice that would bring together architects and planners, designers, artists and social scientists, to work with stakeholders and local communities
- Establishing a collaborative research framework, open to local and international universities and research groups, that offers research backup to groups and individuals in terms of resources and logistical support

To avoid gentrification, the private initiatives of CLUSTER (private entrepreneurs) worked painstakingly to restore certain abandoned areas and marginal passageways as possible seedlings for new urban ideas and social relationships to grow. Passageways in downtown are spaces between buildings that link major streets away from the main traffic arteries and act as nodes for conflicting interests and claims to space. Passageways may be used to reimagine downtown as a web of 100 to 150 paths that house commerce and recreation. These spaces can be used for greenways for biking and walking, as well as art and cultural events, relieving pressure on the city's congested streets (Nagati & Stryker Eds. 2016). Kodak Passageway renovation project was a part of Cairo Lab for Urban Studies, Training and Environmental Research CLUSTER's more extensive study of Cairo's downtown passageways.





Figure 70: Passageways in Ismaileya in 2006. Source: El-Kadi (2012: p.167)

### ***8.7.1 kodak passage refurbishment project***

At MSA University in Cairo, in 2011, a group of academics led by Omar Nagati, Jan Braker, and Bedour Braker began a design course concentrating on downtown Cairo's In-Between' spaces. The team guided a group of 30 students to investigate the area's hidden passages and forgotten alleyways, and they came up with a wide range of solutions that would improve the state of such passages and lead to more integrated contact amongst its users. The stellar outcomes inspired Ngati to put in even more effort with his CLUSTER team in 2014 to implement some of those recommendations, such as the Kodak Alleyway, a long-forgotten passageway (Matroos, 2017). The initiative provided an alternative strategy for downtown's growth and revival. Kodak Passageway is a pilot urban design and art project carried out by CLUSTER, in collaboration with Danish organizations CKU and DEDI, in 2015. The downtown Kodak Passageway Renovation Project is committed to fostering a more diverse, inclusive, safe, environmentally- enhanced, and easily accessible public space (CLUSTER, 2015). The 'Green Oasis' for Kodak was picked by a jury and referred to as such. Al-Ismailia for Real Estate Investment, which owns two buildings

overlooking Kodak, and other landlords such as Babel Shoe Store, and Sarwat Abdel-Shahid Law Firm, contributed financially to the renovation work. Previously, the Kodak passageway was a dead-end service alleyway between Adly and Abdel Khaliq Tharwat Streets. The synagogue's proximity to the passage made it impossible for the space to be used for any activities because of the synagogue's sensitivity and the danger of terrorist attacks. Later, Kodak Passageway became a pop-up gallery for visual artist Hassan Khan's comprehensive show during the 2014 edition of the Downtown Contemporary Arts Festival (D-CAF). The renovation work of the passageway included re-tiling, refurbishing the passage with modern benches and streetlights, and improving the irrigation.



Figure 71; Kodak passageway after renovation. Source: CLUSTER

The renovation work of kodak passageway highlighted the role of the existing and emerging urban and artistic initiatives in activating the underutilized public spaces. The model represents the importance of using the consistent state of negotiation that could take place in such spaces “*a combination of local experience and local knowledge along with an outside perspective*” (“The Cluster Effect”, 2015). For Nagati, “*this is the right format that can be very regenerative*” (ibid). The effective participation enhanced the sense of loyalty and responsibility within the stakeholders of the kodak passageway and still behind the lasting outcomes of the renovation project.

*“It doesn’t start from an artist's vision in an abstract way; it starts from interviewing many people in the area — trying to get an idea of what people need, and bridge gaps between the different stakeholders.” (El Shimi, 2014)*

As Nagati<sup>57</sup> noted, the project manifests "*the gray area between public and private space in Egypt*" (El Shimi, 2015). In addition, their approach highlighted a sociological technique that would introduce new users and encourage a more active relationship with the local community. In 2017, CLUSTER won the Cairo Design Award for its creative design project, "Cairo Downtown Passages-Kodak Passage".

### 8.7.2 Kodak Building

In 1928, André Godard, a French archaeologist, architect, and historian, designed the Kodak building. The seven-story Kodak building has two primary entrances, marked A and B. George Eastman, the founder of Kodak, selected the Kodak building as the location for the first Kodak branch in Egypt and the Middle East in 1912. In 2008, Al Ismailia acquired the building for Real Estate Investment. Initially, the company headquarter was on the 5th floor of the building. Al Ismailia for Real Estate Investment's ongoing collaboration with the design studio ABn'G resulted in decorating the Kodak passageway in seasons like Ramadan, Christmas, and Spring. As a result, 'I Love Cairo' has been installed at the Kodak passageway for the first time in Egypt, crafted from vintage and original wooden door shapes.



Figure 72:Kodak passageway' decoration. Source: Al Ismailia company marketing department.

Furthermore, the space hosted different art initiatives such as "See Another Side". "See Another Side" is an exhibition held by Gyptian, a platform for art, photography, culture, and more. The photography exhibition featured 14 uprising artists in Egypt that showed different perspectives from around the country. In collaboration with Hadi Badi Children & YA, Ismailia company hosted "Downtown Cairo Through Their Eyes". In November 2019, the exhibition showcased the unique perception of kids of downtown Cairo with their writings, drawings, and photographs taken during an exclusive Downtown Tour for kids. In addition, "Once Upon A Dream", in December 2019, and Dots exhibition Art D'Egypte in 2020 showcased different forms of visual

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<sup>57</sup> Downtown in-betweens engage in urban development dialogue.

art by 24 artists, featuring a unique collection of contemporary artworks. The art exhibition, as Arvanis (2020) claimed, “*adds a refreshing pop of color and intrigue to a downtown stroll*”.

### ***8.7.3 Downtown Cairo Tour (D-Tour)***

In addition to the CLUSTER research efforts to document the rapid political and urban change in downtown Cairo after the January 25th Revolution, CLUSTER mapped the activities of downtown Cairo, urban morphology, and Cairo's architectural heritage with walking tours. The Al-Ismailia company has funded a walking tour of downtown Cairo (D-Tour) based on CLUSTER mapping for the downtown 's passages. It is a free, guided weekly tour inviting locals and tourists to discover downtown Cairo's hidden gems. There are two different walking tours available in downtown: the Tawfiqia Tour, which explores the hidden legends of downtown's past, and the Ismailia Tour, which highlights the revitalization of downtown. The tour is intended to draw visitors and Egyptians to downtown Cairo's history, distinguished architectural heritage and spaces, and cultural and arts venues. The D-Tour walking tours include Maidans/Squares, Heritage Sites, Art & Culture Cafés & Restaurants, Nightlife & Entertainment, and Vintage Hotels. In addition, a City Art Walk with Art D'Egypte, powered by Al Ismailia, a part of this year's exhibition Reimagined Narratives, tours Downtown Cairo to witness some of the city's art and come across some iconic landmarks.

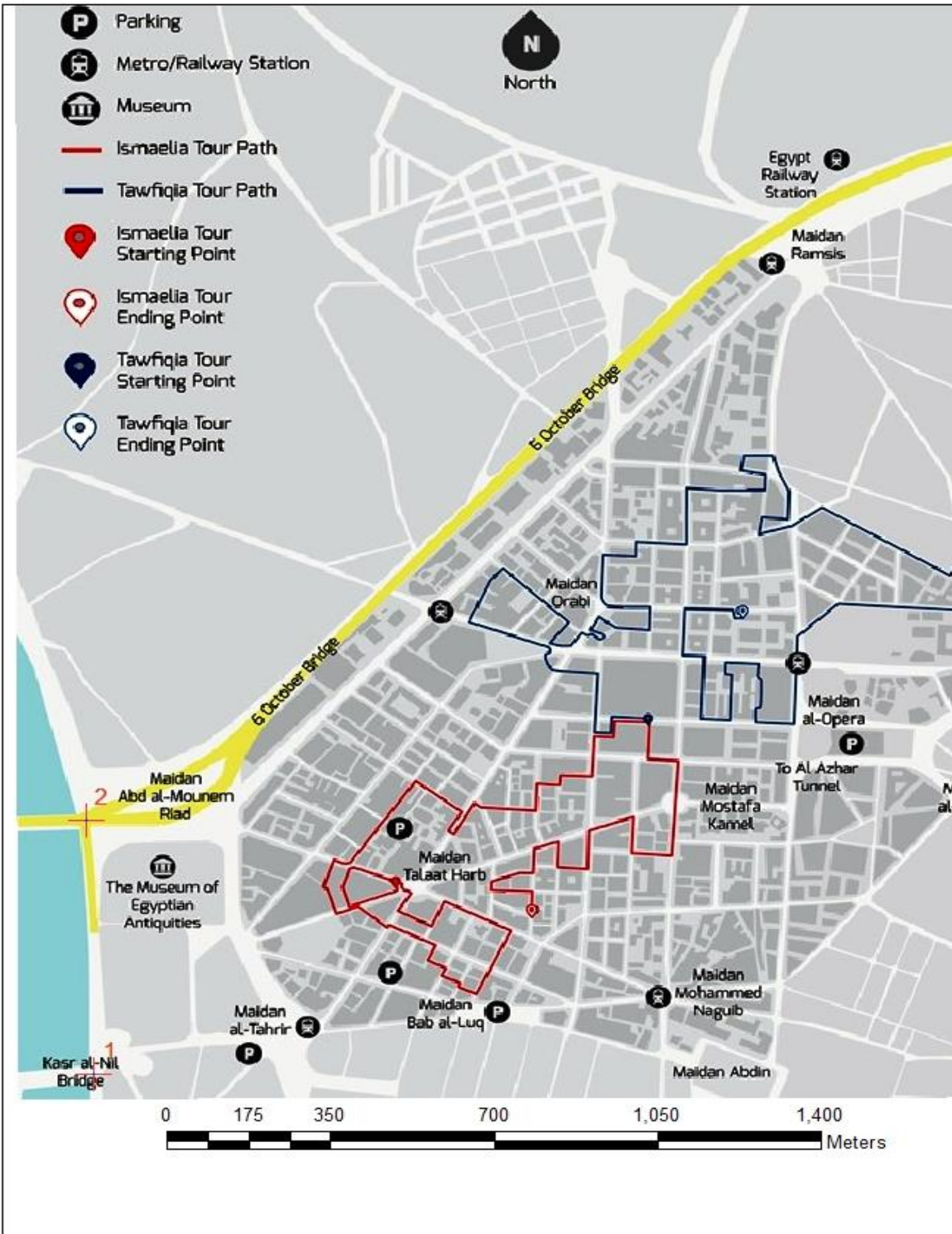


Figure 73:D-Tour Walking Tours. Source: Al- Ismailia company

### 8.8 Downtown Cairo Contemporary Art Festival (D-CAF)

The Al-Nitaq art festival inspires the Downtown Cairo Contemporary Art Festival (D-CAF) (see chapter three). Initially, D-CAF was promoted as a revival of the famed downtown contemporary art festival Nitaq, that first drew Shafei to the neighbourhood in 2000 and 2001. As El-Attar, the founder of D-CAF, stated in the press, the festival was Karim Shafei's idea to enhance the image of the downtown and revitalize its cultural vibrancy (El-Batraoui, 2012). As a co-founder of the festival, A-Ismailia provided financial assistance and some of their iconic assets for exhibition and performance, including the Hotel Viennoise, the former French Consulate building among others. As Ania Szremski (2012) claimed, Al Ismailia Company "*is invested in a speculative waiting game, sitting tight on its properties until the market improves, counting on events like D-CAF to provide downtown with the cultural cache needed to drive up market values*".

Ahmed El Attar from Studio Emad Eddin is the creative director of the festival and the division's head of performing arts. The music was curated by Mahmoud Refaat while the visual arts were handled by Mia Jankowicz, the Contemporary Image Collective's director. The creative team was inspired, in part, by the 2011 Egyptian revolution to create a contemporary version of Egypt's culture. In its first edition, D-CAF used non-traditional spaces besides its planned art galleries and theatres. Performers used cultural venues and unique spaces like some alleyways around Tahrir Square and building rooftops as sites for performances and events. The festival capitalizes on downtown Cairo's social, cultural, and political heritage to engage audiences in these architectural spaces in new and creative ways and to push the audience and performers to rethink their relationship with the city. As a further goal, the festival aims to make art more accessible to the public.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> El-Attar, personal interview, February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019



Figure 74:EE Dance Studio in Kodak passageway. Photo credit: Bassam Al-Zoghby). Source: D-CAF

Egypt's Downtown Contemporary Arts Festival is the country's first international contemporary art festival with multiple disciplines represented. The festival hosts a collection of contemporary art events arranged by D-CAF and occurs at multiple sites in downtown Cairo. It also includes regional and international musicals, theatrical and dancing shows, visual arts, and movies presented by young generations of artists worldwide. However, the founders seek to build a connection between Egyptian and Arab artists. Hence, they chose the dates (March 29 to mid-April) based on other Arab countries' artistic calendars. El-Attar mentioned, "*We noticed that at this time of year, there is the Sharjah Biennial, the Dubai Art Fair, the Forum in Lebanon. We thought it would be good to fit into this dynamism, to give an interesting stopover in Cairo for someone who goes to Dubai (to attend the festival of course)*" (El-Batraoui, 2012). In addition, the organizers aimed to increase the region's participation in international festivals and provide a stage for D-CAF artists to perform by inviting international festival curators ("D-CAF Brings Middle Eastern Art", 2014). As a result, the Downtown Contemporary Arts Festival (D-CAF) became one of the most prominent urban festivals in downtown Cairo in the spring. The Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC), the European Union, the cultural agencies of the Member States of the European Union, the British Council, and private sponsors contributed to the festival's success. According to the British Council in Egypt's assessment (2018), D-CAF contributed EGP 1.2 million to the economy of downtown Cairo in 2017. However, the festival has been criticized for its social and cultural exclusivity. The festival is mostly geared toward English-speaking and well-educated audiences. Some festivalgoers felt that Nitaq's experimental spirit was lacking from this more official event. Al-Nitaq sought to extend over "*elitist private gallery audience to the streets*

*of downtown Cairo, the lobbies of its buildings, its narrow lanes, cafes, restaurants, apartments and shop windows, to further increase the accessibility of contemporary art and reach a wider public”* (Francis, 2013)

Besides Al- Ismailia's attempts to revitalize the city's art and culture scene and their collaboration with and support of a wide variety of downtown Cairo's art and culture initiatives, the GrEEK Campus and Startup Haus play an essential role in elevating cultural and creative events. Sameh Ibrahim<sup>59</sup> argues that cultural and artistic events promote the startup environment and creativity and that these events might be used as a marketing strategy to differentiate a company's brand and attract new entrepreneurs, investors, and consumers. In addition, these events could foster positive bonds among the creative class's members, which would boost the class's performance. According to Al-Alfi, the startups and businesses that operate within the complex's innovation ecosystem thrive when they are immersed in a context that blends technology and art.

The GrEEK Campus hosted several successful events and reaped the benefits of the neighborhood's burgeoning cultural scene. In addition, other organizations were allowed to harness various campus spaces for daily music, craft, and market events. As a result, the GrEEK Campus' calendar of events has proven itself since inception to be the number one event destination for the youth in Egypt and MENA region<sup>60</sup>, 200+ Entertainment Event / Year and 40K+ Attendees / Year. The GrEEK Beats is a music festival hosted at the GrEEK Campus in downtown Cairo. The Greek Beats festival is seeking independent music bands and singers. The festival aims to integrate different music to build more awareness of the independent music scene in the Middle East. In the last couple of years, the festival has reached many people and become popular in the Arab region. Having the highest percentage of their fans based in Egypt, their live presence in the country has always been highly anticipated. They targeted all segments and students from 16 to 40. In addition, some of the D-CAF shows, including musicals and dance recitals, were held on the GrEEK Campus's library stage and in the open area of the campus. Even though startup Haus is not as focused on arts and culture as it used to be, music events have been held in the courtyard, which has a mural on one of its walls. (Ahram Online, 2019). This helps Haus connect to the cultural scene.

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<sup>59</sup> Program coordinator at Startup Haus Enpact, personal Interview in November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019

<sup>60</sup> Source; Sherif Yousry, The GrEEK Campus' Sales & Events Manager (personal interview, Jun 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019)





Figure 75: The Startup Haus 'arena. Source: Startup Haus report

### 8.9 Cairo Jazz Festival (CJF)

Amro Salah<sup>61</sup>, launched the first Cairo Jazz Festival (CJF) in 2009. The festival seeks to commemorate and honor one of the world's most distinctive musical genres, jazz. Indeed, Jazz is more than just a musical form; it is a human experience. Jazz bands, including “*Cairokee, Massar Egbari, El Dor El Awal, and Cairo Steps*” (Raafat, 2021), have emerged in Egypt during the past decade. These bands have had significant success and performed at several international festivals and events. The Cairo Jazz Festival is a multi-national jazz festival that aspires to introduce the international professional event to Egypt's cultural and tourism calendar, engaging the social scene in a unique event that blends culture, entertainment, and education<sup>62</sup>. CJF is expanding jazz & music fans and the culture of the genre to include more people, not just as a type of music but as a lifestyle that encourages freedom of expression, inventiveness, and spontaneity, providing an effective music platform for aspiring musicians, with a focus on music production and cross-cultural collaboration as crucial components. Cairo International Jazz Festival has become one of the most significant jazz gatherings in the MENA region and a platform for many worlds’ top artists and bands. Cairo International Jazz Festival is invited every year to significant music expos and meetings such as The Dutch Jazz and World meeting, Jazzahead, Womex and MediMex; as the leading promoter to World Jazz artists in Egypt and vice versa, as a cultural ambassador to present Egyptian Jazz abroad. The festival has hosted on its stages Jazz from all over the globe.

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<sup>61</sup> A pianist, composer, and producer

<sup>62</sup> Amro Salah, personal interview, June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019



Figure 76: Cairo Jazz Festival. Source : <https://www.cairojazzfest.com/gallery>

CJF take place at the grounds of The GrEEK Campus and AUC Tahrir Cultural Center in downtown Cairo. Agwa Productions collaborates with the Egyptian Tourism Authority, embassies, cultural organizations, and corporate and media partners to put on the event. In its 13th edition (2021), the festival witnessed the revival of cultural collaboration between the event and the United States. The festival included various events such as workshops, photography exhibitions, film documentaries, and musical performances to enhance the Egyptian cultural scene and raise general musical awareness. The increase in CJF's attendance is a blatant manifestation of the festival's increasing self-assurance and success in recent years. The festival has garnered widespread media coverage. Every year since 2009, the Cairo International Jazz Festival has fulfilled its goal to display the greatest of the world's jazz by bringing cutting-edge performances to the Egyptian capital. Cairo Jazz Festival is one of the first major cultural events scheduled in the capital since the revolution—Deutsche Welle. Cairo Jazz Festival continues to redefine Jazz—Daily Doha. It showcases the incredible and often breathtaking variety in the jazz genre—Ahran Online. The festival crowd was young, educated, and cosmopolitan—The Guardian.

## Chapter Eight Conclusion

Investing in real estate can yield significant returns, especially in tourist-heavy cities like Cairo. Urban cores that are in disrepair are, therefore, viewed as undervalued real estate treasures by investors. The AL Ismailia Company for real estate investment plays a significant role in revitalizing downtown Cairo. Al- Ismailia's attempts to repurpose 150-year-old structures into high-quality mixed-use developments have contributed to Egypt's 2030 sustainable development strategy (see discussion and conclusion).

Increasing competition as Ramos (2012) claimed, forced the markets to “*differentiate their products by transforming them into 'experiences'*”.<sup>63</sup> Pine and Gilmore's "experience economy" concept claims that experience is a valuable economic good that provides an incomparable advantage in the marketplace that cannot be copied or replaced. The experience could also be linked to Florida's description of a thriving city, where the streets are “*hard to tell the difference between participant and observer, or between creativity and its creator*”. The unique qualities of a location stem from the assemblage of people, their activities and interactions, and the place's geographical or functional boundaries. The place's ambience or noise is essential for vitality and economic growth. Since the revolution of 2011, downtown Cairo's creative art initiatives have emerged as a counterpoint to the state's traditional cultural scene. By funding the city's "symbolic economy," (Zukin, 1995: p. 22) which includes the arts and cultural activities, The AL Ismailia Company seeks to “humanize the space of real estate development” (Zukin, 1995) to increase profits through gentrifying neighborhoods and meeting the housing needs of higher-income demographic groups.

In addition, Downtown Cairo’s entrepreneurs sought to use the flourishing art scene and attract intellectual, creative, and talented young people to provide the visitors with a comprehensive, and high-quality tourist experience. The entrepreneurs’ efforts seek to brand the district as Cairo's up-and-coming arts hub. Therefore, the downtown Cairo creative industries have been subjected to a continuous process of capitalistic conditioning, in which art and culture are reduced to cultural pockets of activity within sanitized public space aimed at an exclusive group to satisfy the aesthetic preferences of a minority.

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<sup>63</sup> Luís Moura Ramos. (2012). in Cultural Heritage and ICT in the Experience Economy, INVTUR 2012 Conference, Aveiro, Portugal, 17 May 2012



## **Part Four**

### **Khedivial Cairo State Led -Gentrification Process**

#### **Khedivial Cairo Third Gentrification Phase**

**(Generalization Wave)**

## **Part Four Introduction**

In Egypt, most of the city's land is owned by the state, giving them complete control over urban planning and development. After the election of President Al-Sissi, the state and the military exercised unchecked authority over all decisions pertaining to the cities' development and the land's distribution. As a result, downtown Cairo is undergoing a massive state-led urban transformation along with other diverse geographies and economic sectors in Greater Cairo. The first phase of state-led efforts to revive Khedivial Cairo began in 2014 and continued through 2016, while a second phase began in 2017 and continues to this day. Various strategies designed and implemented to enhance the economic attractiveness of downtown Cairo have validated the characteristics of gentrification. The political will of the state leader and authorities to gentrify downtown Cairo is a major driving force in its revitalization. In that phase, the gentrification of Khedival Cairo is a state-led process. State-led gentrification results in the re-differentiation of urban space along class lines and the displacement of existing people and businesses through regeneration or redevelopment plans with economic development and national aims (Hackworth and Smith, 2001).

In this part, we examine the geopolitical and economic aspects that shaping Egypt since 2014, highlighting their most salient characteristics and evaluating how they have influenced Egypt's development strategy and the regeneration of downtown Cairo. It also discusses gentrification through the lens of a state capitalism paradigm in which the state itself takes on an entrepreneurial approach. During a period of fiscal austerity, the government's overarching goal is to create the conditions for the built environment to become a lucrative market for private investment. Chapter nine examines the state's role in capital accumulation through space production. In the final three chapters, the study delves further into the following state capitalist model-related topics: The impact of Egypt's sovereign fund and the construction of the New Administrative Capital on the neighborhood's gentrification. The significance of aesthetics and branding strategy in creating the image of Khedivial Cairo and fostering gentrification. The Cornish El-Nile redevelopment project has also been utilized to demonstrate the significance of "flagship development projects" in Cairo's gentrification trend.

## **9 Chapter Nine: The State Efforts In Downtown Cairo Regeneration Scheme, Regeneration and Space Production**

### **9.1 Introduction**

Urban and state authorities see public space as a literal and figurative power base through which they establish and develop their country's political system (Berry-Chikhaoui & Deboulet, 2000). Conflicts trigger them to express their dominant power structure. According to Lefebvre (1974/1991), contemporary political struggles increasingly revolve around space; it is no longer merely a "medium" or "theatre" for socio-spatial conflicts but one of their essential components. "City substance" refers to the sociologist Lefebvre's (1970) conclusion that capitalism can only thrive if it is supported by space production. As a result, gentrification is a panacea for the problem of surplus capital. Through gentrification, the city's existing but underutilized city substance is restructured. Besides being a substantial capital investment, gentrification signifies the accomplishment of non-economic goals, such as political ones, that contribute to overall success.

Since 2014, downtown Cairo has been struggling between the demands of a bustling populace in public spaces, state development goals and plans, and the financial and investment interests of a burgeoning class of tycoons. The state used a wide range of space production tactics to maintain control over downtown Cairo's public space while achieving the optimal convincing image. The state has extensively used the securitization of urban space and the enforcement of emergency legislation to disenfranchise people from exercising their right to the city, suppress their newly discovered freedom of expression, and achieve economic and political goals. In addition, as part of the state's efforts to revitalize downtown Cairo as an open museum, the state is investing heavily in traffic regulation procedures, pedestrianization, refurbishing squares and streets, and regulating car parking spaces. Downtown Cairo regeneration process reveals the strong involvement of the state in space production and urban management. To fully understand the mechanism of the urban regeneration process in downtown Cairo, we also need to look at the involvement and interaction of key stakeholders. The analysis is essential because it aims to determine the extent to which the state has facilitated economic development initiatives that have supported gentrification rather than developing a long-term regeneration scheme.

## 9.2 The Right to The City and Space Production

*“Public space is today perceived as a property belonging to the state and not to the community. In that sense, the use of public space strongly reveals the relationships between the state and its population”* (Dris 2002: p. 184).

Don Mitchell (2003) believed that current neoliberal practices reduce the democratization of public space, *“Space, place, and location are not just the stage upon which rights are contested but are actively produced by — and in turn serve to structure — struggles over rights”* (Mitchell, 2003: P. 81). It is widely acknowledged that space is a battleground where perennial struggles for dominance and exclusion are played out. Lefebvre (1970) argued that the production of space is a must for capitalism and capital accumulation and was the first to use the term *“city substance”*. *“City substance”* refers to Lefebvre's conclusion that capitalism can only thrive if it is supported by space production. In the 1980s, Harvey followed Lefebvre's footsteps, using his urbanism theory as an engineering and social science field of study. Urbanization, as Harvey argued is a must for capitalism's renewal. In Harvey (2012), he demonstrates how capitalist surplus is generated through the production of space. Also, the design of a public place is influenced by neoliberal economic tendencies. Both writers agreed that gentrification was the only solution to the problem of surplus capital, as space functions as *“the ultimate object of exchange”* (Lefebvre cited in Merrifield, 2006: p. 97).

Lefebvre (1974/1991) wrote extensively on the production of space and daily rhythms in cities. According to Lefebvre (1991), space can be categorized into three forms: representations of space, spaces of representation, and spatial practices. Power relations and top-down entrepreneurial management strategies are embodied in representations of space (or perceived space) through their profit-motivated homogenization. Spaces of representation (or lived space) are the actual places where people go about their daily lives. As Lefebvre stated, it *“need obey no rules of consistency or cohesiveness”*. Users' ordinary activities, according to Michel De Certeau (1984), are an expression of defiance and a source of alternative narratives. They assert the *“right to difference”* based on Nietzsche's preference for diversity and lived space rather than abstractly conceived space (Merrifield, 2006) and the diversity of practices (Lefebvre, 1991: p. 115), where social behaviors happen unhindered by prevailing ideas and take on new forms. Lefebvre (1991) claims that spatial practices serve as a link between conceived and lived spaces. However, the definition of *“spatial practices”* is vague.

As Lefebvre stated in *The Production of Space*, *“The transformation of society presupposes a collective ownership and management of space founded on the permanent participation of the “interested parties,” with their multiple, varied and even contradictory interests”* (Lefebvre, 1991/1974: p. 422). The transformation seeks to *“de-alienate” urban space in terms “to the ouvre, to participation and appropriation”* (Lefebvre, 1996: p. 174) and to reintegrate it into the web of social connections and reclaim city space on its own again. However, the production of space is



founded on "*whoever controls the streets, controls the city*" (Madanipour, 2003). In class-based societies, public space, as Mitchell (2003) claimed, is "*not so much a site of participation as one of expropriation by a dominant class (and a set of economic interests) that is not really interested in making the city a site for the cohabitation of differences,*" (Mitchell, 2003: p.18). Mulgan (2007) theorized the state's ability to control public spaces by violence, money, and trust. For Weber (1970), states have the right to govern territory in a partnership bolstered by aggressive legitimation that provides empowered actors legal authorization to exercise their power on three levels: rational, traditional, and charismatic. Habermas (1976) believed that the state legitimizes its authority by creating shared meaning in a nation through the public sphere, thus stabilizing its dominance.

However, the right to the city emphasizes the necessity to adjust the power relations that underpin the production of urban space, taking control back from the capital and the state to urban residents (Purcell, 2002). Mitchell (2003) saw the right to the city as a call to revise how existing legal mechanisms and narratives stifle and exclude the voices and interests of a substantial number of urban dwellers. Violence ensues when underprivileged and marginalized populations are denied access to public spaces.

*In a class-based society, locational conflict can be understood to be conflict over the legitimacy of various uses of space, and thus of various strategies for asserting rights, by those who have been disenfranchised by the workings of property or other 'objective' social processes by which specific activities are assigned a location* (Mitchell, 2003: P. 81)

Politicians usually blame unwanted and unfavorable groups for all the problems that burden the city. During the 1990s, Mayor Giuliani of New York backed the development of Business Improvement Districts after he condemned the homeless, prostitutes, squatters, graffiti artists, and disruptive teenagers and called them "public enemies" (Smith, 2001), to keep public areas cleaned, secured, and aesthetically pleasing (Zukin, 2010). Almost all public places in urban areas are designed to keep their inhabitants from interacting with one another. Policymakers have been trying for a long time to get people out of public places, to suffocate public life, dry up channels that can show genuine pulses of the population, and turn certain spaces into traffic arteries with almost no public seats (Barfi et al., 2011).

State security forces in Egypt have worked diligently since the 2011 revolution to maintain their power in the public space by emphasizing the presence of the state and preserving order, especially in the politically volatile downtown of the capital city.

*“Egypt’s new authoritarian regime is rapidly closing the public space—cracking down on autonomous civil society and independent political parties, asphyxiating the practice of pluralist politics, and thwarting citizens’ peaceful and active engagement in public affairs. The government’s primary strategy is to institute wide-scale repression through lawmaking and justify its behavior through conspiratorial and populist narratives. With unprecedented resolve, it has passed new protest and terrorism laws, introduced legal amendments targeting nongovernmental organizations, and extended the military court’s jurisdiction. Essentially, the regime is adapting lawmaking for its own purposes”* (Hamzawy, 2017: p. 1).

Different measures have been utilized regarding representations of space, such as securitization including physical barriers, restricted mobility, and the evacuation and relocation of street vendors to limit mobilization and congregation. These tactics resulted in the suppression of political speech and freedom of expression attained during the 2011 Revolution, particularly in downtown, which hosted an average weekly demonstration during 2012- 2013. By suppressing the social and creative components of space usage, Lefebvre believed that the homogenizing rationality of capitalism drives to *“the impoverishment”* of daily life (Trebitsch, 1991: p. xxiii) by removing the "living substance" from human relationships.

### **9.3 The State’s Role in Space Production in Post January Revolution**

Since January 2011, the public space in downtown Cairo has seen several transformations that resulted from the country's political unrest and succession of regimes. A few years after the 2011 and 2013 revolutions, the hope and euphoria of the Revolution have vanished into despair. When President Abd al-Fatah Al-Sisi was elected in 2013, he revived the idea of military dictatorship, which is much more severe than Mubarak's era, to consolidate his authority, and affirm and deepen the military's involvement in Egypt's political and economic arenas. The strategy of Egypt's current president, Abd Fattah Al-Sisi, has been centered on projecting an image of regularity and stability to both local and international audiences (Sowers& Rutherford, 2016). Downtown Cairo as a consequence has struggled between the powerful presence of popular life in public spaces, state goals in developing the area and the interest of the marching tycoons who have invested in downtown Cairo. Since 2014, the state adopted different measures to produce the space to ensure their control over downtown Cairo's public space and achieve the optimal convincing image. The state has extensively used the securitization of urban space along with other measurements including the eviction of "undesirables" and investment in traffic-control measures, to disenfranchise people from exercising their rights to public space and achieve political and

economic goals. Physical interventions carried out by the Cairo Municipality, and NOUH sought to “*upgrade several sites in downtown Cairo*” (Attia et al., 2017) to restore the "lost identity of Downtown Cairo" as a tourist and capital investment center. The "Restore the cultural values of Heritage Cairo" initiative also supported the Khedivial Cairo heritage preservation.

### ***9.3.1 Accessibility and securitization of Downtown Cairo***

Marcuse (2006: p. 925) believes the state might politically manipulate "existential insecurity" to enhance its control over space. So, the security apparatus restructures urban spaces (Graham, 2012) and arbitrarily restricts public access and use under the guise of "security" (Marcuse, 2006) to suppress potentially disruptive political action and indirect dissuasion vulnerable groups from engaging in it. This approach, as articulated by Stephen Graham (2012: p. 136), might be labeled as "new military urbanism," which Graham and Marcuse (2006) consider a societal threat.

After the 2011 Uprising, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces took immediate control of the country. On February 11, 2011, a committee of twenty senior generals took over all administrative and legislative responsibilities after suspending the constitution and dissolving parliament. Because of the threat posed by Tahrir Square's rallies, the square was constantly monitored. A series of new restrictions and measures to strengthen securitization were put in place for the (re-)appropriation of public space, including a three-meter towering metal gate topped with iron bars bristling with spikes, erected near the Shura Council, by the army-backed authorities that replaced many temporary concrete walls "to prevent demonstrators or rioters from entering the streets that lead to the nearby Ministry of Interior, parliament and government headquarters"( "Gated Metal Barrier", 2014). These barriers enabled the State to reinstate its authority and control the use of public space. According to Hany Abdel Latif, spokesman for the Interior Ministry, "These gates were put up temporarily. In case of any security incidents, they will shut the street," (Perry, 2014). These gates, as Ruweida Omar, a rights activist, described "When I saw the gate, I really thought that we were living under siege<sup>64</sup>." Sadat Metro Station was shut down for about two year (2013-2015)



Figure 77: security gate at the entrance of Tahrir Square. Source: (Aljazeera news, 2014)

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid

Additionally, the securitization process included the continuous enforcement of the emergency law after it has been removed on May 31, 2012. Emergency Laws remain notorious for their restrictions on freedom of assembly and expression. Public assembly in Egypt was formerly governed by the Illegal Assembly Law 10 of 1914 and the Public Assembly Law 14 of 1923 (Human rights watch, 2013). Mubarak's security forces utilized these regulations to suppress and outlaw demonstrations in public spaces. Later, the law was substituted by the controversial Assembly Law of 2013, proposed by the military-backed government, which went much deeper than mere censorship. On November 24, 2013, the interim president of Egypt enacted Law 107 of 2013 on the Right to Public Meetings, Rallies, and Peaceful Demonstrations based on his legislative powers under the July 8 Constitutional Declaration (HRW<sup>65</sup>, 2013). The law sharply restricted the “*citizens’ rights of peaceful assembly and demonstration in public spaces*” (Hamzawy, 2017). It also tightly restricts freedom of all sorts and legalizes and bans artistic and political activities in public space. The law delivers a message: the public space is for the state, and the state has the right to determine regulations. Strict conditions must be fulfilled before a demonstration, political gathering, or rally may take place, as detailed in the law. It criminalizes demonstrations that take place without prior government permission. It also allows the Ministry of Interior to disperse, even by force, any “*meeting of a public nature of more than 10 people in a public space*” (HRW, 2013). In addition, according to Article 19, heavy prison sentences of two and five years and a fine of 50,000-100,000 Egyptian pounds (US\$3500-7000) are imposed for violation of Article 7 which states:

*“Participants in public assemblies or processions or demonstrations are prohibited from violating security or public order or impeding production or calling for this, or impeding the interests of citizens, or harming them or exposing them to danger or affecting their ability to perform their rights and their work, or influencing the course of justice, or public facilities, or blocking roads or public transportation, or ground, sea, or air transportation, or blocking traffic, or assaulting individuals or public or private property or endangering them”* (HRW, 2013).

On an ill-defined basis, the Anti-Terrorism Law 94/2015 (Official Gazette, 2015) expanded the spectrum of actions that can be punished as violations of civic peace, which could be extrapolated to political demonstration or journalism. According to Abaza (2015), “*Cairo typically witnessed what Stephen Graham argues in his brilliant futuristic work ‘Cities Under Siege: The New Military Urbanism’, is a growing process of urban militarization, which merges military and surveillance strategies with civilian and consumer urban life*” (Abaza, 2015: p, 269).

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<sup>65</sup> Human rights watch

The role of Street art in a democratic society has been debated in the social sciences, with one central question being whether or not it contributed to the rise of urban unrest and the consequent shift in power. Freedom of expression and the freedom to express oneself via art was an aesthetic outcome of resistance. According to Lefebvre (1991), "revolutionary" activists and artists must produce new places through creative and reactive actions to reclaim and re-appropriate the people's right to space.

*"A revolution that does not produce a new space has not realized its full potential; indeed It has failed in that it has not changed life itself, but has merely changed ideological superstructures, institutions or political apparatuses. A social transformation, to be truly revolutionary in character, must manifest a creative capacity in its effects on daily life, on language and on space." (Lefebvre,1991: p. 54)*

For Lefebvre (1970/2003), writing the city was an essential theoretical and methodological endeavor that goes well beyond his original demands for action. According to Lefebvre (1996: p, 115), *"there is the writing of the city: what is inscribed and prescribed on its walls, in the layout of places and their linkages, in brief, the use of time in the city by its inhabitants"* (Lefebvre, 1996: p, 115). In Egypt, street art, mainly graffiti and murals, successfully established a new public visual culture, generating a new interactive form, which is unquestionably essential to the transformation of the city's public culture and art scene that coincides with the space production.

### ***9.3.2 Criminalization of Street Art***

During the Revolution, downtown Cairo's urban space may be envisioned as a place of representation. Tahrir Square's art and freedom of expression dynamics could be understood through Lefebvre's social perspective of space production, which identifies the material spatial components of social life, the symbolic meanings of space, and the enactment and opposition to prevailing social-space orders. As a paradigm of space production, Tahrir Square became a place of collective performance, social dialogue, and freedom of expression that highlighted various forms of social inclusion, public administration, and organization. To recap what we have previously explained: the January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011, revolt in the Arab world was the catalyst for an artistic and creative revolution that included graffiti, street performances and underground music and documentary web films (see chapter six). However, the continued security crackdown on opposition and the restrictive climate regarding anti-government forms of expression marked the end of provocative art and creativity. These actions seek to avoid future civil confrontation aimed at sweeping away the current regime. As President El-Sisi threatens, "What happened 7 or 8 years ago will never happen again in Egypt" ("What Happened", 2018). These policies articulate a democratic antagonism that allows for authoritarian measures in the name of security. These actions are prevalent in military regimes that could not accept any form of political freedom or criticism.

Street graffiti has widely spread and gained a mesmerizing new dimension after the Revolution. Graffiti used the street walls "as a newspaper" (Abo Bakr, n.d). Graffiti sprayers and painters make the walls speak "Graffiti tells our story and no matter how many times it's erased we continue to paint, as we continue to revolt and breathe, in spite of the law against street graffiti. Music, poetry and tweets fight for Egyptians' collective memory"<sup>66</sup>. It was accompanied by fascinating street poetry, mocking insults, jokes and biting sardonic drawings as a form of peaceful political demonstration, among other forms of street art, against the SCAF and the figures of the ancient régime. Graffiti, as Abaza (2013) stressed, creates a "memorial space". On December 17, 2014, Surti Singh<sup>67</sup> stated that "a new set of questions is crystallizing about the role of art in contemporary Egypt,". Singh asked "Can art still preserve the revolutionary spirit that spilled out in the graffiti and murals that covered Egypt's streets? Should this even be art's focus?" (Singh, 2014). However, street graffiti has been banned and a sentence of up to four years was enacted. Today, no signs of the Revolution left after the walls have been painted over.



Figure 78: Cairo Graffiti. Source : August 21, 2014. Amr Abdallah Dalsh/Reuters/Corbis. Source: (Kotb, 2016)

<sup>66</sup> Sally Toma in Mada Masr. Video clip showing the graffiti paintings at Mohamed Mahmoud Street, 23 February 2012.

<sup>67</sup> An assistant professor of philosophy at the American University in Cairo (AUC).

Artists can no longer express their ideas freely for fear of arrest. Since the election of President Al-Sisi, the space for freedom of artistic expression has been shrinking. Several powerful tweets have been sent, directly and indirectly, expressing zero tolerance when the military, police, or the President are the targets for mocking. The detentions and prosecutions are the fate of artists after the short-lived period of freedom in the early days of the revolution. In 2014, Ganzeer, one of the famous street artists, was forced to flee Egypt for the United States after they named him a "terrorist" in the state-owned media because of his continuous satirizing of the military. The same can be said for Bassem Youssef, a TV presenter who fled to the United States after mildly mocking the President in his TV show *Al-Bernameg* "Sisi-mania". Nader Sadek, an Egyptian-American artist, was arrested in 2016 and detained for four days for his role in organizing a concert presenting Brazilian heavy metal band Sepultura. As a result, artists have become more cautious about using imagery and symbols in their work for fear of being arrested.

In addition, several independent artistic events since the end of 2013 were forced to retreat gradually because of the authorities' relentless pressure, justifying any kind of surveillance, censorship, and suppression under the guise of security. *Al-Fan Midan* (Art is a Square), as previously mentioned, was a monthly street festival featuring alternative theatre and music performances that was first supported by the Ministry of Culture. Later, the organizers were prompted to collect donations and personal contributions to cover installation costs after the ministerial funds dried up. In the summer of 2014, Egyptian authorities cancelled *Al-Fan Midan* festival twice. After they insulted the military and police forces during their event, the organizers could not obtain permission from the local government to run and were rejected for security reasons. In April 2014 as mentioned in *ArabLit* magazine, the event in Alexandria was dispersed by police. The organizers and the sound technician were arrested for violating the anti-demonstration law ("Can Egypt's 'Al-Fan Midan'", 2014). In addition, in 2018, concerts by *Cairokee*, an Egyptian rock band whose song "Sot el Horreya" (Voice of Freedom) became the Revolution's anthem, were cancelled even after their tickets were sold out. Due to the frequent cancellations, the band focused on international tours. Later, a new committee was established in July 2018 to regulate festivals and award permits for cultural activities. Capital of at least 500,000 Egyptian pounds is required from organizers. Permits are only available in June each year. The arts and music were again subject to strict censorship, with increased restrictions on the organization of cultural activities. As a result, it is not easy now to find any form of these cultural awakenings that marked Egypt's freedom of expression post-revolution.



In Egypt, more specifically in post-revolution downtown Cairo, all forms of non-governmental or independent cultural and artistic activities and creative industries became increasingly problematized as they are considered a rendered synonymic with dissent. Since 2014, the independent art scene has been facing significant challenges. Many new galleries were opened in Zamalek rather than in downtown Cairo. Cultural performance and production spaces represented in long-standing NGOs and cultural organizations in downtown Cairo, or those established after the Revolution, such as Al-Balad Bookstore, and Merit Publishing House, have increasingly been subject to various forms of government attacks and strict regulations such as temporary or permanent enforced shutdowns, license revocations, raids, etc. CIC, one of Cairo's arts organizations, was charged with using pirated software in their offices. Studio Emad Eddin was also accused of making online videos for the Muslim Brotherhood—a severe claim that was quickly released. Multiple agencies raided the Townhouse Gallery. The gallery went through a long battle since 2016 to keep the space functional until it was forced to shut down its Rawabet Theatre space in 2019. As previously mentioned, Rawabet was one of the most renowned spaces that support independent artists, plays and performances for the past 15 years. The reason was that the rental agreement expired and could not be renewed. In addition, foreign funding dried up entirely after being criminalized and made it impossible for nonprofit organizations to function. According to Naji (2016), Cairo's downtown has drastically changed. Everything connected to Tahrir Square, and the recent history of the Revolution has vanished. Everything associated with the area's past as an epicenter for the Egyptian cultural movement will eventually disappear (translated by the researcher). Naji also believes that downtown Cairo according to the government regeneration scheme, will be transformed into a museum, but a "museum for ghosts".

Moreover, the government policy aimed at excluding undesirable and informal activities that the government considered detrimental to the capital's economic, financial, or exclusive interests.

### *9.3.3 Evacuation of Downtown Street Vendors*

In the post of 2011 Revolution, the sense of informality, chaos and noise spread throughout Cairo's urban public spaces but was more pronounced in downtown Cairo and Tahrir Square. The neighborhood is no longer regarded as Cairo's cultural hub. In downtown Cairo, the distinctions between public and private areas were blurred, and the main streets were clogged with vendors, leaving no space for social interaction. Tahrir Square and surrounding areas during the 2011 Revolution and after Mubarak's departure turned into camping areas, supplied with different informal facilities and services. According to Reuters (2012), Tahrir has evolved into a large open market where vendors are peddling goods inspired by the Revolution (Reuters, 2012). The chaos and public space disorder resulted from a lack of police presence, proper governmental supervision, and the security gap in downtown Cairo due to the sudden breakdown of police authority. This scene increased street vendors and hundreds of stallholders who set up their goods in the heart of Cairo streets, such as Talaa't Harb, El-Bostan, Sherif, and Adly streets, where many commercial, recreational, and administrative activities occurred. Architects Omar Nagati and Beth Stryker (2013) have chronicled the rise of the informal street vendor in public places, detailing the strategies and methods of these vendors and how their presence marked the beginning of a new era in the utilization of public areas.

The Street Vendors Initiative was launched in late 2011 in collaboration with a human rights group (Awatta, 2015). CLUSTER's research project aimed to provide a forum for discussion and serve as a mediator in negotiation using its technological design skills. Unfortunately, in 2014, the project halted after 100 street vendors were forcibly removed. The extensive use of the open space as a multi-functional social space “*24-hour living-cum-informal-commercial area*” (Abaza, 2014: p. 168), resulted in severe congestion and blocking of many downtown pavements and roads, causing severe deterioration and damage to the streets, passages, and squares. In addition, sexual harassment of female passers-by and insecurities were key issues.



Figure 79: street vendor and informal activities in downtown Cairo. Source; Jihad Abaza (2014)

Following Mubarak's ouster, many efforts were made to limit the massive development of street vending. These efforts, as stated, "*meant to restore public order to the streets and more importantly to regain the image of a powerful state and of the 'respectability' of Egyptian society, which, following the logic, was being threatened by the occupation of public spaces*" (Abdelrahman, 2013: n.p). In September 2012, the street vendors were moved from downtown Cairo to the historic Al-Azbakeya Park. Unfortunately, the relocation caused irreparable damage to the park. Street vendors still occupy Attaba Square and Al-Azbakeya Park's walls, with no free space. During President Morsi's short reign, his government issued a decree by Law No. 105 of 2012 amending a Law No. 33 of 1957 (Kafafy, 2016: p. 105) "*that limited undeclared street vendors' activity, but not necessarily guaranteeing any alternative for a livelihood*" (Stadnicki, 2015). The law as Abdelrahman (2013) claimed was "*to increase punitive measures against street vendors*". However, it was a powerless effort to reassert his dominance. The new legislation imposes a three-month jail sentence instead of one month, and a fine of EGP 3,000 instead of EGP 1,000 for illegal vending in Law 33/1957<sup>68</sup> (Abdelrahman, 2013). In addition, the intended plan for additional urban markets on the outskirts of Cairo was a resounding failure (Nagati & Stryker, 2013; Stadnicki, 2015). After President Al-Sisi was elected, the government sought to restore and reinforce their control over the public space and civil society by "*Returning the city centre to its normal state is a popular demand among all Cairo residents*"<sup>69</sup>. Therefore, the massive eviction

<sup>68</sup> According to Kafafy (2017: p. 225), Law 33/1957 criminalized "peddlers who trade without a license and prohibit[ed] vendors from selling on public transport, standing next to shops selling similar goods or in places identified by the police as needed for traffic or public security, or causing a disturbance"

<sup>69</sup> Cairo Governor, Jalal Al- Saied in (Marei et al, 2014)

of street vendors from downtown Cairo has been justified as “*state prestige*” (Kingsley & Berger, 2014)<sup>70</sup> The evacuation process as Cairo’s Governor, Galal Saeed, mentioned in an interview with Xinhua “*will not allow one vendor to busy the street,*” (Xinhua, 2014: Kingsley & Berger, 2014).

"Cleaning Cairo" is a massive campaign that views street vendors as a threat that necessitates violent treatment "*It is an attempt to clear whatever is considered a threat to its image,*" (Malsin, 2015). The campaign, led by the Cairo Governorate, forcibly evacuated thousands of street vendors using armored vehicles, bulldozers, and military police. Every time vendors are forcefully evicted, violent conflicts break out, and every time, the vendors are held responsible. However, a tiny proportion of vendors were transferred to the "Turguman Garage Complex," a less-frequented neighborhood heavily depending on passing traffic. Thus, it’s tough for a vendor to keep making ends meet (Tariq, 2014).

Street trade in several cities in the MENA’s region is “*an increasingly important component of urban informal economies, and a crucial livelihood strategy for the poor and very poor*” (Brown et al. 2017: p. 284). The number of Egyptian street vendors based on International Labour Organization, is estimated to be between 1.5 and 5 million (Nagati & Stryker, 2013: p. 34–5). This informal commercial activity occurs in public spaces, “*often consider themselves the informal owners of the commercial streets*” (Bouhali, 2018). As they constitute a challenge to the authority of city officials, street vendors are regularly persecuted by the police (Blot & Spire 2014). Graaf and Ha (2015) noted, “*by using space to survive better their living conditions, vendors demonstrate how the city, in particular the street, is a concrete space for politics*” (Graaff & Ha 2015: p.7). The street vending process is a politicized practice not for coping with socio-spatial injustices.

#### **9.4 Downtown Cairo Urban Regeneration Process**

Since the last decade, the historical significance of downtown Cairo and the significant role that the area's public space and spatial memory play in civic mobilization and urban regeneration has come to the fore and drawn considerable attention. The integrated planning vision of the downtown Cairo regeneration project and the Ministries Area in downtown Cairo, as reported in UNDP Annual Progress Report (UNDP, 2014: P.6), aims to turn the area into a distinguished cultural, historical, and entertainment hub in Cairo by:

- 1- Maintaining and re-purposing heritage and historical buildings.
- 2- Controlling the activities, land use and densities.
- 3- Solving traffic congestion & developing traffic network.

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<sup>70</sup> This how the prime minister Ibrahim Mahleb describe it ,

Hence, Cairo governorate and NOUH sought to upgrade several sites in downtown to restore the lost identity of downtown Cairo as a tourism destination and a center for capital investment. These actions included the investment in traffic regulation procedures to disenfranchise the public from reclaiming their right to public space, pedestrianization, refurbishing squares and streets and regulating parking spaces, and façade lifiting.

#### ***9.4.1 Pedestrianization And its Role in Revitalizing Downtown***

Pedestrian zones, usually referred to as pedestrian precincts, are "*squares, plazas, streets or street networks reserved solely for pedestrian use*" (Button, 2010: p. 302). The development and diversity of transportation means led to the emergence of a wide range of associated issues, such as congestion, pollution, high population density, noise, Etc., which increased the need for enhancing the mobility and environment in such specific areas to create a safe environment for pedestrians. Therefore, pedestrianization is considered a low-cost and sustainable solution, particularly for the central business district. Hence, pedestrianization has been extensively addressed by architects, urban planners, designers, and social scientists. However, the "pedestrianization" approach is frequently associated with the practice of transforming dilapidated historic neighborhoods into pedestrian plazas and tourist destinations. In developed countries, urban heritage has been protected from the harmful impacts of modernization by enhancing walkability and creating a pedestrian-friendly environment. The pedestrianization approach aims to preserve the heritage and promote local culture and architecture to offer a qualitative urban experience and improve urban quality. In recent decades, pedestrianization has been increasingly integrated with urban planning and development schemes in Europe and North America to rejuvenate downtowns and achieve broad environmental, cultural, economic, and social objectives.

The notion was first proposed by Sir Ebenezer Howard in 1898 and evolved around the Garden City Movement model, in which pedestrian zones (green spaces, such as parks and gardens) or areas adjacent to public buildings are separated from vehicle zones (boulevards). Later, various models relating to pedestrian precincts and safety through the separation of automotive traffic from the pedestrian mode of transport were developed. Between 1937 and 1938, Eric Rowse used the concept as an urban strategy, "Tomorrow Town," for designing the street network and separating different types of traffic. Finally, the strategy has been used as a tool for revitalizing the downtowns of American cities from the late 1950s to 1970s, when urban planners introduced pedestrian malls.

Urban renewal efforts since the 1970s have paid particular attention to the relevance of pre-World War II downtowns and their pedestrian-friendly orientation in three different contexts: historical preservation, central street transformation, and waterfront development. Suburbanization and urban sprawl sparked the late 1980s resurgence of New Urbanism, which merged with several popular variants like Transit Oriented Developments, also known as Pedestrian Pockets, by architect Peter Calthrope, and Traditional Neighborhood Development, explained by Andreas Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zylber firm. In the framework of the car-oriented communities they develop, they are also aimed at mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods. There are three types of pedestrianized areas: full-time, part-time, and traffic calming. The positive impacts of pedestrianization can mostly be characterized into the categories of health, social, environmental, and economic benefits.

### **9.5 Khedival Cairo Pedestrianization and Regeneration Phases**

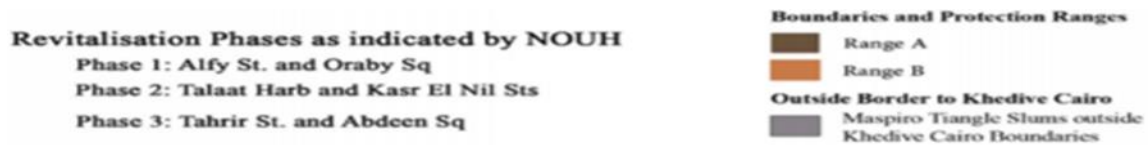
On January 26, 2008, the first Board of Trustees to revive downtown Cairo was formed and led by the Cairo governor. In addition, the Board included the chairs of several banks, the Governor of the Central Bank of Egypt, the Chairman of Misr Insurance Holding Company and Misr Real Estate Assets Company, and the head of the National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH) (Awatta, 2015; El Kerdany et al., 2019). The Board aimed to highlight and maintain Khedivial Cairo's distinguished architectural heritage and unique urban features, while overseeing and managing the redevelopment of the area into a tourist destination. Hence, the Board intended to provide the required funds, so a bank account has been opened for that purpose. Several banks participated in the regeneration process, including the National Bank of Egypt, the Central Bank of Egypt, the Bank of Alexandria, Misr Bank, and the Arab African Bank. The project consisted of three phases. The first stage included the renovation of 56 iconic buildings, carried out by the Matrix Office under the supervision of Dr Sherif Hazem. The second phase covers 19 properties in downtown Cairo, which were accepted for a direct award of 35 million to the Arab Contractors Company under the oversight of Matrix Company's Consultancy Office. The National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH) prepared the shop designs. In the third phase, the sponsor banks, in collaboration with the Board of Trustees, had to renovate the façade of their assets in downtown Cairo. In 2010, the initial phase of the downtown Cairo regeneration plan was issued. Unfortunately, the 2011 Uprising abruptly halted the Governor's plans for central Cairo.

## 9.6 Museumification of Downtown Cairo

In October 2014, the government launched “The State of Downtown”, a multiphase development project focusing on key locations in downtown Cairo such as Tahrir Square, to restore the “lost identity of downtown Cairo”. Another board, “*the Executive Committee for the Khedival Cairo Development Project*”, has been created. The committee led by Cairo Governor, Galal Said, approved a comprehensive plan to transform downtown Cairo into an open museum. At a press conference on March 17, 2015, the Cairo Governor was quoted as saying “*If funding is available within six months, Downtown Cairo will become a museum, a museum of architecture*” (Amin, 2015). Atef Abd El-Hamid, Governor of Cairo, confirmed that later in 2018 (Yiazou, 2018). The plan focused on two areas of intervention: façade and public space face-lift, as well as addressing traffic flow and management.



Figure 80: khedival Cairo boundaries as protected urban area, and protection level which is divided in to two categories- grades A and B, and the heritage buildings within and revitalization phases as indicated by NOUH. Source: (Elsorady, 2018)





### 9.6.1 First phase, Al-Alfy Street and Oraby Square

The Egyptian Council of Ministers and Cairo Governorate chose Al-Alfy Street, Oraby Square, El Shawarby Street, Saraya El Azbakeyia Street, and Kodak Passage to pedestrianize after consultation with urban planners (Attia et al., 2017). Several top-down strategic planning exercises have taken place on Al-Alfy Street from the 1990s to 2017, with a particular emphasis on resurfacing the pavement, freshening up the storefronts, and enforcing laws against sellers who encroach the property line. According to Hawas (2002), Al-Alfi Street was established during the opening of the Suez Canal. The street is part of the downtown shopping district and connects Emad Eldin Street to Orabi Square and the Azbakeya Gardens. Al Alfi Street is 20 meters wide and 165 meters long. The average building heights vary from 2 to 3 floors and 3 to 4 floors. At the end of the street, a group of taller buildings overlook Orabi Square and Emad El-din Street (Attia et al., 2017).

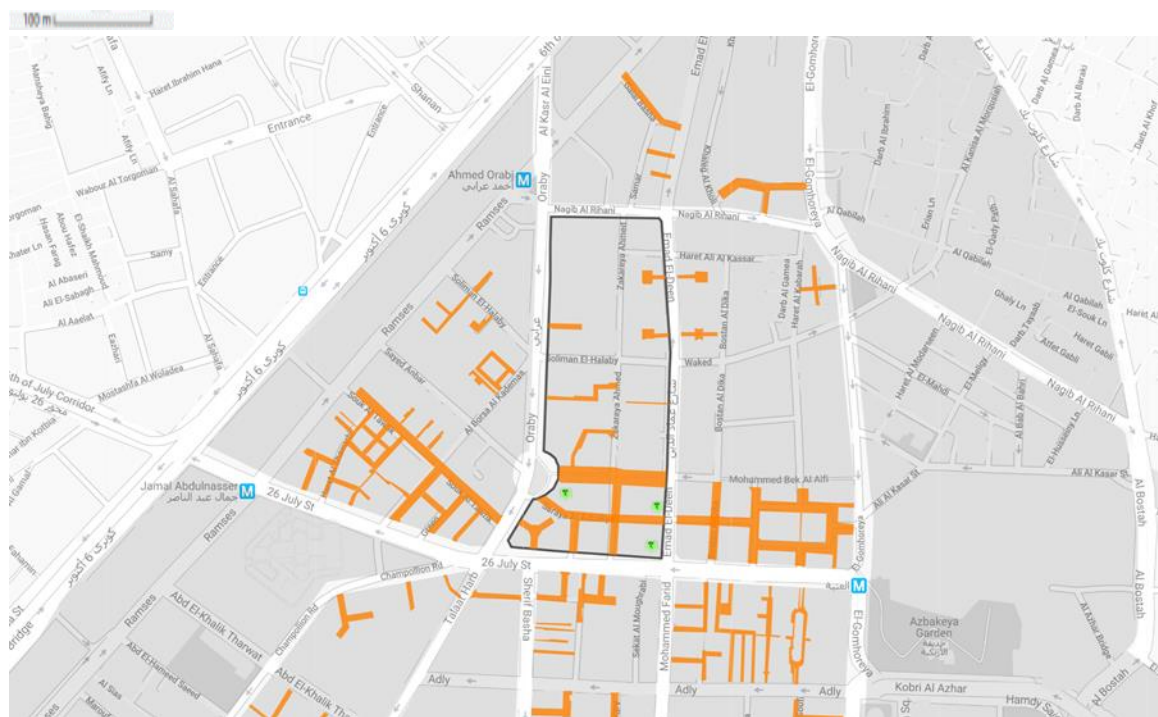


Figure 81: the delimitations of the area from the north: Nagib al-Rihani St, south :26th of July St, from the east: Emad al-Din St and Orabi st. from the west. The area is about 66436m<sup>2</sup>.Source: cluster initiative.

Mohammed Bey El Alfy was one of the Mamluk era's wealthiest noblemen. Al-Alfy was known for his alliance with the British and effort to depose Mohammed Ali Pasha. During the French occupation of Egypt in the late 18th century, Napoleon Bonaparte had picked one of El Alfy's palaces as a headquarter. Consequently, the Street was named in his honor. In 1920, the Street was renowned as an old hub for nightlife and gambling. Hence, it was the perfect choice for foreigners. In the 1930s, Al Alfy Street's urban fabric witnessed a new phenomenon as downtown Cairo became a prestigious neighborhood. As a result, the area has been turned into a mixed-use district.

Many of the properties' local occupants turned their flats into offices. The commercial activities on the Street are wide between entertainment and consumer activities, such as Akher Sa'a, Alfy Bek Restaurant, and food kiosks with many sidewalk cafes such as Umm Kulthum, Sabah El-Khier, etc. Shahrazad Nightclub and the Cairo Palace Cinema are the most notable landmarks on the Street. The Street is lined with over 50 shops offering a wide range of goods and services.

In the mid-1990s, Al-Alfy Street, was designated as a pedestrian area in Cairo. The Governorate envisioned this as a prototype for a pedestrian-friendly city center and was implemented accordingly. To provide a safe environment for people, traffic was restricted, allowing restaurants, cafes, and cabarets to open all day to fit the street's new character. Due to the lack of defined traffic, urban design and activities, the approach was more experimental than a well-studied strategy. In addition, the decision-making process did not include stakeholders (Attia et al. 2017; El Khorazaty, 1998). In 2009, when an international competition to revitalize downtown Cairo was announced, Al-Alfy Street was perceived as a worthy model of admiration. Close benches, a few shrubs, concrete and tiling of pavements were all part of the street's suggested regeneration plan. Although the outdoor spaces were used as extensions of cafes and restaurants (Ashour & Braker, 2020), there was no clear boundaries or precise layout. People on the street complained about the lack of seating, faulty lighting, and lower security due to teen-instigated street fights, jobless youth, and a lack of universal social norms (Abdelhadi et al., 2009)

In 2014, a team of researchers surveyed the current drawbacks of Al-Alfi Street. In the findings of their surveys, a lack of security, sanitation, and maintenance was noted. They also pointed out that the wood seats attracted homeless people and promoted irresponsible attitudes in young lovers, and the lack of stakeholder's participation in the decision-making process. In addition, pedestrian activities were limited since café owners "*deliberately removed the public seats for the purpose of placing their own seats and renting them out to passers-by*" (Attia et al., 2017: p. 455). The Governorate also reserves the right to rent out spaces in front of any café or store to anyone willing to pay regardless of any predetermined criteria (Attia et al., 2017). As a result, the Al-Alfy Street regeneration project launched in 2014 aimed to improve the street's urban quality and image and impose the state's power on the public space. Before the project's launch, there was a call for social dialogue. Weekly meetings, led by the Governor and attended by members of the Governorate, local authorities, and specialists from various organizations and institutions, were held in the Cairo Governorate (Attia et al., 2017). Cairo Governorate aimed to raise the stakeholders' awareness about the street's importance and value and demonstrate the development project and what the government intends to accomplish and seek their involvement. However, the Governorate and local government were instrumental in the planning and funding stages of the street's regeneration process.

In this context, the National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH) offered the Cairo Heritage Development Committee two proposals for the Al-Alfy development plan (Ashour & Braker, 2020). Both concepts incorporated kiosks, seating areas with built-in chairs, billboards, and lamps. The work included:

Upgrading the whole street pavement,

Improving the street infrastructure and piping system,

Changing the damaged street furniture and replacing it with a newly designed one.

Installation of storm water drainage networks

In addition, facades were lifted, store signage was removed with their odd colours, while side streets and passageways were left rundown. (Attia et al. 2017; Nagati& Stryker Eds. 2016).



Figure 82: Al-Alfi Street and Oraby square development stages. Source: Cairo Governorate

### ***9.6.2 The second Phase of Khedival Cairo's Regeneration Process***

In June 2015, Cairo Governorate started the second phase of the Khedival Cairo regeneration project. According to the work plan, the project's missions covered the restoration of the area's buildings by banks, and the active engagement with the shop owners to ensure their support. In this regard, the NOUH and Cairo Governorate planned a small-scale project in Khedivial Cairo to refurbish Talaat Harb Square's facades and encourage property owners to comply with the signboard regulations and the public view. The project included the façade lifting of 72 buildings in Talaat Harb, Mohammed Farid, and Kasr El Nil streets, enhancing the capability of streets and sidewalks along major corridors, mainly in Talaat Harb and Mohammed Farid Squares. In that phase, NOUH played a technical and consulting role, ensuring that all the activities complied with

the 2011 heritage regulation. In continuation of these efforts, Mohammed Abu Sa'da introduced the 'Aash Hena' (Lived Here) Project, to chronicle buildings and places that were home to prominent social and cultural figures in the history of modern Egypt to honor their contribution to the consolidation of the social and cultural fabric of society. This project was carried out in association with several art organizations, bodies, and experts in the history of modern Egypt to apply the QR code mechanism. QR code enables visitors to know more about the origin of the building, designer and events through any portable device like a cell phone. ([http://www.urbanharmony.org/ar\\_home.asp](http://www.urbanharmony.org/ar_home.asp))

### ***9.6.3 Third Phase: Abdeen Square Development Project***

As part of the development of the Square, the Garden of Abdeen Palace was remodeled. The work included the plantation of Palm trees to decorate the garden and the installation of several colored water fountains, the painting of the surrounding buildings and shops, the pavement of several streets, and the conservation of the historical buildings' pedestrian-oriented streets.



*Figure 83: Abdeen square development stages. Source: Cairo Governorate*

### ***9.6.4 Tahrir Car Park Project***

This project was a phase in the action plan to relieve the mass traffic and congestion in downtown Cairo. The project is situated in Tahrir Square and includes two sites. Site 1 is located in front of the Egyptian Museum with a total area of 21,000 m<sup>2</sup> for EGP 30 million. The capacity of the parking areas is 1,500 cars and 50 tourist buses. The garage comprises four multi-story buildings, including a retail area, a game area, an internet cafe, and a four-hall cinema. Afterwards, it planned to accommodate 1,200 people, a large international restaurant, an open food court, and an ice-

skating arena. On September 7, 2009, the responsible company (Arab Contractors) started the work on site<sup>1</sup>. It took about six years to complete half of the required work. When Cairo Governor, Galal Said, came to power, the rest of this phase was completed only six months later (Gala Said, personal communication). The garage opened on January 31, 2015. The Cairo Governorate has dedicated 21 buses that cover three routes in downtown Cairo to transport users from the parking garage to specific head points near their area of interest. The ticket costs only EGP 1, and the bus is supposed to run every 5 minutes. Unfortunately, these shuttle buses do not offer service returning to the central point. In addition, the service is still unknown to the majority due to the lack of marketing and clear signage.

According to NOUH, since 2009, several attempts have been made to revitalize downtown Cairo. However, as Abo-Seda, Head of NOUH, described, these efforts are still in their early stages and cannot achieve remarkable success due to certain hindrances and challenges including:

1-Lack of funding

2- Lack of coordination and dialogue between traditional and modern entities

3-Difficulty in reaching the authorities (multi-governmental bodies) from the consultant firms or sponsors that want to offer their support (source: M. Abo-Seda, Director of NOUH, personal contact, 2017).

Due to the importance of revitalizing downtown Cairo, Abo-Seada suggested a single official entity to plan and supervise the development work performance and deal freely with bureaucrats, investors, and the public. In addition, the NOUH consultants suggested a development project of four phases:

1-The First Phase included Talaat Harb Square.

2-The Second Phase included Kasr Al-Nil Street, between Talaat Harb Square and Mustafa Kamal Square.

3-The Third Phase extended from Mustafa Kamal Square to Opera Square.

4-The Fourth Phase expanded from Talaat Harb Square to Tahrir Square.

The aim is to restructure these squares and the surrounding space in alignment with their urban, architectural, artistic, entertainment, and tourist value. The development concept also focused on improving the street's technical topography, reinforcing the visual and spatial sequence, and removing misrepresentations and informal additions that destroy the area's visual image.

## **9.7 Downtown Cairo Regeneration Work in Response to the Establishment of The New Administrative Capital**

In late 2016, President Sisi stressed the significance of reviving Khedivial Cairo after announcing the construction of new administrative capital and relocating ministries and other administrative buildings from downtown Cairo. As a result, the Cairo Heritage Development Committee (CHDC) was formed under Presidential Decree 604/2016. The CHDC was assigned to examine strategies "*for a better future for Downtown and Historic Cairo*" (Shahine, 2018) and drafted a comprehensive master plan that balances the area's historic preservation and potential economic growth. The Committee was chaired by H.E. Ibrahim Mehleb (Former Prime Minister and the President's Senior Advisor for National Projects). Members were the Governor of Cairo, Head of the National Urban Planning Organization, CEO of the New Administrative Capital, Head of the General Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH), and two private-sector figures, Mahmoud Abdallah from MMA Global Investments and Hisham Ezz Al Arab, Head of the Federation of Egyptian Banks (OHK, 2020).

Again, the Committee selected to renovate Al-Alfy Street and Saraya Alazbakya, along with El-Bursa Street and Alsherfeen, as a pilot project for many reasons:

- The project will not need considerable funding, as these areas have been developed several times, as mentioned above.
- It will not take too long to complete the task.
- They were expecting more participation from the local stakeholders.
- The outcome of this work will be easy to notice and recognize, as most of the suggested work will not be more than a beautification effort.

### ***9.7.1 El-Bursa and Al-Shreefin Street Renovation Work***

Qattawi Pasha, the original Bursa's promoter and financier, had his palace and gardens built on El-Bursa Al-Gadida Street, between Qasr Al-Nil and Tal'at Harb Streets. The district was renowned as a commercial and symbolic administrative center. The Stock Exchange (EL-Bursa), a hub of economic activity, inspired the street's name. The iconic Stock Exchange (EL-Bursa) building was constructed in the Art Déco style by the renowned French architect Georges Parcq in 1928. The edifice is a superb illustration of Neo-Classicism due to its huge columns that are similar to Greco-Roman architecture. The old Stock Exchange (El-Bursa) hosted a museum displaying the history of one of the leading exchanges in the world. The district also includes the Central Bank, National Bank, and Suez Canal Bank, the Cosmopolitan Hotel- one of its iconic buildings established in 1903- and the National Radio station (Attia et al., 2017). Additionally, the street's buildings from the 1920s and 1930s are landmarks due to their historical and architectural importance and their display of a variety of diverse architectural styles, complementing the eclectic street furniture and the palm trees.

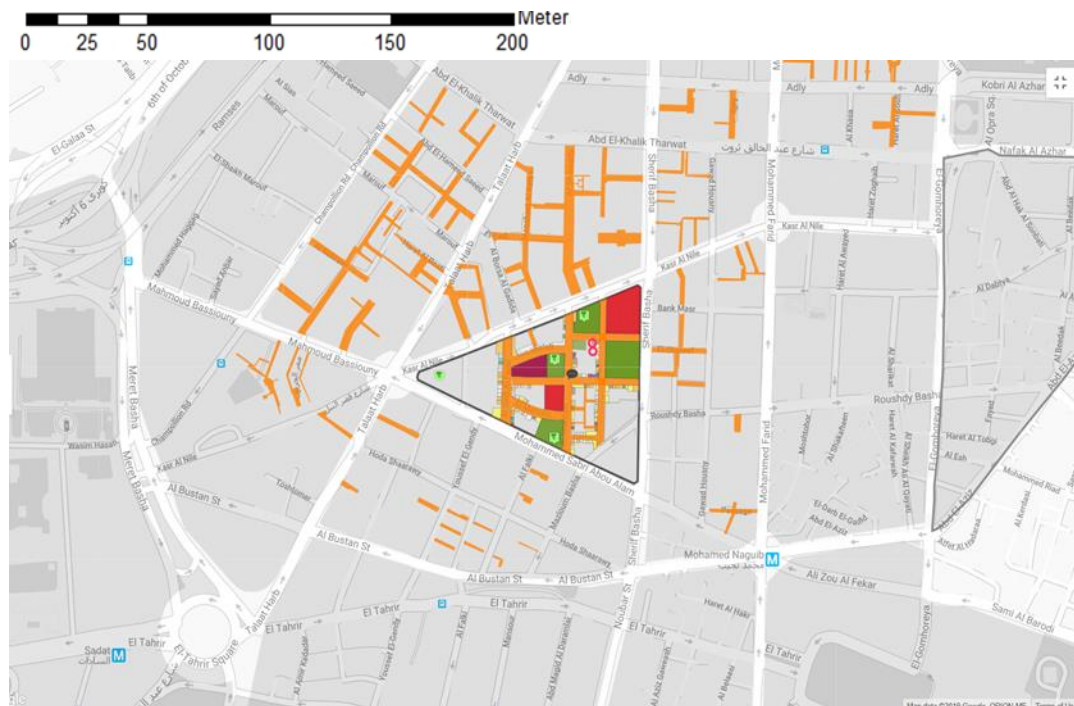


Figure 84:EL-Bursa Street delimitations. Source: Cluster initiative 2015

EL-Bursa Building was closed between 1984 and 1994 due to the overflow of underground water. The renovation project for El-Bursa Street was initiated in 1999 by the Secretary of State for Governmental Affairs and took place in 2001 (Attia et al., 2017). The project aimed to protect the Stock Exchange building from rising underground water. The private sector, such as consulting firms, entrepreneurs, and businessmen, provided the required funds for the project (El Kadi & El Kerdany, 2006). In addition, the renovation process turned the surrounding areas into a pedestrian path.

Unfortunately, since 2011, the area has deteriorated to become a home for prohibitive practices and drug abuse. As a result, it was nominated for renovation by the national committee as a pilot project in 2017. Redesigning the area as "The Art District" will make it a hub for cultural activities in the heart of downtown Cairo, discouraging these unlawful activities and bolstering the district's image. Funding for capital and operating costs were shared by the Cairo Governorate and heads of the leading Egyptian financial corporations such as the Central Bank, Misr Real Estate Assets and Misr Insurance Holding Company, Banque du Caire, and some other well-regarded banks, such as National Bank of Egypt and Suez Canal Bank as they own buildings in that triangle. Providing funds is essential for safeguarding the heritage and improving the quality of life. Consequently, the responsibility of regeneration is delegated to the community of stakeholders. It is one of the most significant issues that face the development process, mainly in downtown Cairo.



Figure 85: El-Bursa Street, and the number of the renovated building. Source: NOUH

- 15 buildings have been renovated, and 17 are pending.
- Registered buildings □ non- registered buildings

The street area was split into three primary sectors. Throughout the phases of the plan to revitalize the streetscape, different actions, such as upgrading the public space to ensure the safety and physical accessibility for the street users and pedestrian paths, refurbishing facades of some of the district's registered buildings and the Cosmopolitan Hotel and installing innovative new lighting to enliven up the area, were carried out. The project has been halted again because of a lack of funding (interview with Said El-Bahr, Executive Engineer of Khedivial Cairo regeneration works, April 2018). The government seeks to transform the street into a cultural centre; however, there is no clear plan or agenda defining the activities that will take place there.

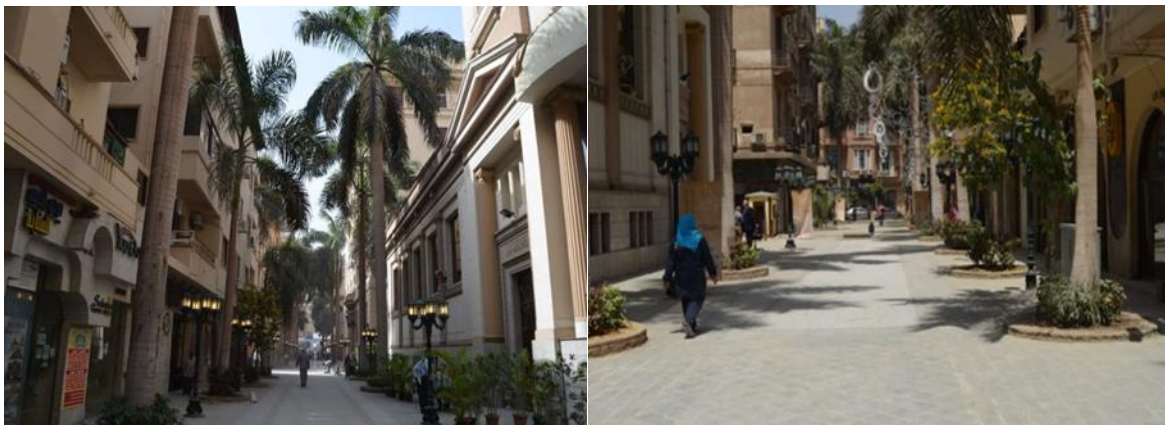


Figure 86: El-Bursa Street after the renovation work 2018. Source: Cairo Governorate & NOUH



### ***9.7.2 Al-Alfy Street& Saraya El-Azbazia Renovation Work***

Despite the earlier urban interventions in Al-Alfy Street, the street has severely deteriorated due to a lack of maintenance and management. As previously mentioned, the early development stages of the street started in 1997. The street has been transformed from a vehicular thoroughfare to a pedestrian mall. The pedestrian project, alas, did not provide for any sort of improvement work. In 2014, the government developed the street as an appropriate model for testing regeneration principles. However, despite the considerable development efforts, the project failed to achieve any economic or real social benefits for the area. Lack of follow-up and maintenance led to a partial deterioration of the street. In addition, the lack of law enforcement increases the cafeteria owners' acts of trespassing against public spaces after they paid their dues to the government and been granted permission to occupy a public place. Indeed, coffee shops were the main beneficiaries of the regeneration effort.

In 2017, the National Committee (CHDC) chose the street once more as a pilot project, along with Saray Al-Azbakia Street. The street's current situation triggered the committee to find practical solutions and alternatives to deal with these challenges. In this phase, the plan focused more on improving the street's urban and architectural visual quality, repaving the pedestrian street, and providing it with appropriate furniture to reinforce the street identity. A "sidewalk café" is a part of a licensed restaurant that operates on a public walkway. An unenclosed café is one of its types. This type of café is the key commercial activity in Al-Alfy Street. As a result, the committee decided to use fences adorned with plant pots to prevent the café owners from exceeding their boundaries and trespassing into public space. The work also included a façade renovation, refurbishing the street with new furniture, and using wooden seats instead of the other granite ones used in the previous development stage. In addition, three security cameras, two security kiosks, and the employment of security agents were all put in place to keep a close check on the street. The Egyptian International Company for Contracting and the Tenants Association of Al-Alfy Street, which included cafes, shops, and residents to address the street violations by café owners, participated in the second phase, which lasted from April 2017 to July 2017 (Ashour & Braker, 2020).



Figure 87: Al-Alfy Street after the last renovation work 2018. Source: (El- shinawy, 2017)

### 9.8 Khedival Cairo Regeneration Project Key Stakeholders

Castells (1977) suggested that conceptualizations and theories are required to better comprehend the complexities and dynamics inherent in urban planning due to the interconnected nature of urban issues, spatial management, and political power and governance (p. 57 & 167). Castells (1977: p. 83) maintains that urban planning is best understood as an "urban political process" which negotiates competing economic and social goals. Clarence C. Stone's (1989) comprehensive framework for the power and politics' role in urban development has led to urban regime theory's increasing application as a useful analytical tool for studying urban politics (Gendron, 2006).

Decision-making in Egypt's urban development and planning initiatives is a top-down process, starting at the national level. Hence, the Ministry of Housing, the General Organization for Physical Planning, the National Organization for Urban Harmony, and Engineering Departments at governorates and local municipalities are all part of this decision-making process. Furthermore, urban space is controlled by multiple ministries, agencies, organizations, authorities, a complicated administrative system, and infrastructure components. Regarding downtown Cairo regeneration, there is consensus that government ministries and organizations are the driving forces for this process. In this context, two main actors are included in the regeneration process of downtown Cairo. The first one is dominant, along with other subordinate entities. The dominant actor is the governmental institutions that plan, design, and implement the regeneration schemes and promulgate the laws related to urbanism and public spaces. Each of these institutions is governed by laws that endow them with authority. While the other actors are secondary participants play essential roles as well, but they are rather subject to the rules and regulations of governmental institutions.

Therefore, the analysis is crucial to differentiate between the central government's executive power, the administrative authority in the Cairo Governorate, and other stakeholders to understand the regeneration dynamic in downtown Cairo. The assessment also aims to determine the extent to which the state encouraged the economic development initiatives that underpinned gentrification rather than achieving a sustainable regeneration scheme. Therefore, the power relationships and modes of interaction between the key actors involved in urban regeneration policies in Egypt and downtown Cairo regeneration are addressed according to the current legal and institutional framework.

## **9.9 Khedivial Cairo Regeneration Primary Actors (Executive Power of Government at The Central Level)**

### ***9.9.1 Ministry of Planning, Follow up and Administrative Reform***

Historically, the Ministry of Planning, Follow -up and Administrative Reform has been assigned to coordinating government programs and the state budget, as specified in Law 70/1973. It is the state's second-generation instrument for improving the general framework through different additional programs and short-term plans in the economic, social, and environmental sectors to become legally binding and capable of being promulgated as law. The Ministry has recently developed a sustainable development strategy: Egypt Vision 2030 (Sustainable Development Strategy). Egypt's Vision 2030' Sustainable Development Strategy is a significant stride forward in Egypt's long-term development, one that draws on the ancient Egyptian civilization's achievements while forging a link between the present and the future.

*“By 2030, Egypt will be a country with a competitive, balanced, and diversified economy, depending on knowledge and creativity, and based on justice, social integration, and participation, with a balanced and varied ecosystem, a country that uses the genius of the place and the citizens in order to achieve sustainable development and improve the quality of the life for all. Moreover, the government looks forward to lifting Egypt, through this strategy, to a position among the top 30 countries in the world, in terms of economic development indicators, fighting corruption, human development, market competitiveness, and the quality of life.” (UNESCO, 2016)<sup>71</sup>*

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<sup>71</sup> Sustainable Development Strategy: Egypt's Vision 2030

### ***9.9.2 General Organization for Physical Planning (GOPP)***

Following Presidential Decree No. 1093 of 1973, the General Organization for Physical Planning (GOPP) was founded (GOPP, 2012: p. 4). The GOPP is a state institution charged with formulating broad guidelines for long-term urban planning and development plans and initiatives at the local, regional, and national levels, as well as evaluating and ratifying urban plans at the municipal level. The GOPP regional center oversees city planning and development in each country's economic region. In addition to providing technical assistance to the governorate's departments, the regional centre monitors the execution of city and village development plans. Regional centres assume GOPP's obligations in the economic areas to further the authority's decentralization (GOPP, 2012: p. 5). For example, the Greater Cairo Region is overseen by the area's regional hub, Greater Cairo Region Urban Planning Center (GCRUPC).

The GOPP ensures that such plans and programs are implemented following the mentioned aims and policies. Per Article 5 of Law 119/2008, the authority is obligated to transmit its reports to the relevant minister, who will then present them to the Supreme Council of Planning and Urban Development. Various departments under GOPP specialize in a wide range of fields, including regional planning, urban and infrastructure development, and social science. The Human settlement planning and development centres are developed in each of the seven economic areas based on the GOPP legal framework. The GOPP is also authorized to supervise of implementation of the city planning initiatives. In addition, the GOPP is tasked with the following responsibilities:

- To plan and initiate development plans and strategies (e.g., regional, master, structure, and detailed plans)
- To develop standards and appropriate planning criteria and norms for urban, rural, and industrial development, as well as offering technical support to local entities.
- To provide legislation recommendation, drafting and reviewing for managing and directing urban development.
- To train and research to build the capacity of GOPP and local unit staff members.

From a legal vantage point, GOPP stands out because of its mandate under the Unified Building Law to “improve and develop the capacities of [provincial-level ministries directorates] and support them in detailed planning.” The Unified Building Law was promulgated in 2008. The law addresses the following five areas:

1. Urban planning and development (includes the provision of "urban observatories," enhanced opportunities for involvement in planning, and more authority for the GOPP)
2. Building code (and building guidelines)
3. Conditions under which structures can be demolished (as well as the reclassification of some regions as "unplanned" or "planned")
4. Conservation and preservation of residential properties
5. Preservation of historically or architecturally significant buildings

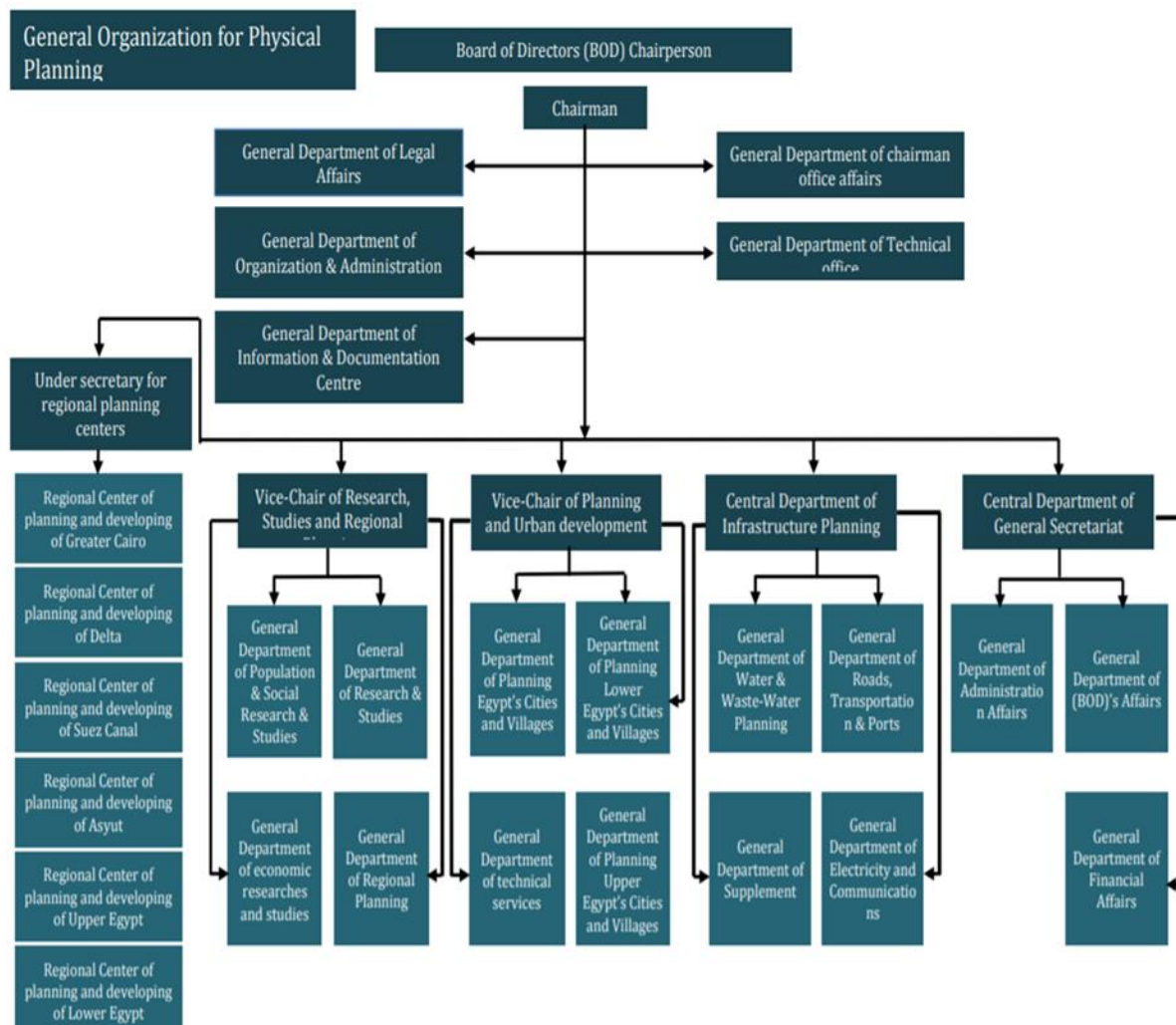


Figure 88: GOPP Organization Structure. Source: (GOPP, 2012)

### ***9.9.3 Ministry of Culture and The National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH)***

In Egypt, the Ministry of Culture is one of the most significant government agencies in charge of conservation and urban regeneration at all planning and implementation stages. After the Ministry of Culture, NOUH is the essential organization regarding urban and open space issues. With a Presidential Decree (no. 37 for 2001), the National Organization for Urban Harmony (NOUH) was formed. The NOUH aimed at improving Egyptian urban space's aesthetic values. It was opened in 2004 at Saladin Citadel in Cairo. Under law 119 of 2008, NOUH develops the general policy for urban harmonization and drafting legislation. It is also responsible for creating future development guidelines with other stakeholders. This legislation mandates NOUH to be in charge of designating heritage areas and buildings, establishing regulations and guidelines for their preservation, and proposing essential property rights measures. It also aims to preserve the aesthetic and urban qualities of the building exteriors, urban and historical spaces, and visual fabric throughout all the State's urban regions, as well as the architectural and urban typology with conservation of the natural environment sites and components.

#### ***9.9.3.1 NOUH Goals***

The organization's primary objectives are set forth in Presidential Decree 37 of 2001, and includes:

- Creation of broad strategy for urban harmony; develop specific and executive plans and programs in collaboration with relevant agencies. General policies and plans must be approved by the Supreme Council of Urban Planning and Development in compliance with the processes set out in this Law's executive regulations.
- Making recommendations and comments on proposed organizational regulations, legislation, and policies relating to Urban Harmony.
- Establishing guidelines, norms, and criteria for Urban Harmony projects that will be ratified by the Supreme Council for Urban Planning and Development. When granting approvals for Urban Harmony-related projects, the appropriate administrative entities should adhere to them. The preceding should be carried out in accordance with the terms of this legislation and its executive rules, as well as the permission conditions.
- Conducting research and studies in the area of Urban Harmony. Coordination with relevant authorities to ensure that rules are implemented in accordance with Urban Harmony's objectives.

### 9.9.3.2 NOUH Tasks

- Redefining the whole areas of the country' aesthetic vision and eradicating current distortions.
- Set norms and regulations to maintain the architectural integrity of all buildings in the Republic's many provinces by compiling a complete database.
- Preventing architectural additions that affect and alter the overall view of the existing buildings by enforcing regulations.
- Provide feedback and suggestion on proposed rules and regulations that aid in the harmonization of society.

The NOUH founding legislation does not use the phrase "urban regeneration". However, the Unified Building Law states that the authority formulates a comprehensive plan for urban coordination and proposes laws, appropriate guidelines, and criteria for development in heritage areas and structures. Therefore, the authority's role in urban regeneration in downtown Cairo is inextricably linked to the unified building law in four sectors:

1. Demarcation of a historical area within which Downtown Cairo, over which it has authority, is located under the Unified Building Law.
2. Establish an inventory and database of historic buildings and building codes.
3. Issuance of twelve guidelines for urban management principles and standards, many of which are relevant to Downtown Cairo.
4. Holding urban design competitions to renovate parts of Downtown Cairo

However, NOUH is a non-binding policymaker despite being mandated by law, with few of its urban redevelopment proposals put into action.

### 9.9.4 Cairo Governorate.

According to Law 43 of 1979, local government is divided into three subnational levels: the governorate, the city, and the city districts (or villages, in the case of rural governorates). The President of the Republic is vested with the power to establish governorates. Experts, scholars, and professionals in the field of municipal governance/administration have noted that local governance is often perceived as a "crisis management" in Greater Cairo (which comprises the governorates of Cairo, Giza, and Qalyubia) and throughout Egypt (Sims, 2011). The macro-administrative framework considers Greater Cairo as a single entity in Egypt's governorates (Sims, 2003) is missing. Within the governorates, several overlapping administrative entities have varied sources of jurisdiction, authority, and relationships (UNDP- INP, 2010). Local Administrative Units (LAUs) deal with all issues of governorates, including the role of the local, open-space legislators. Their tasks include the following:

- 1- Evaluation of the present state of the open spaces
- 2- Defining the size and dimensions of existing open spaces.
- 3- Keeping tabs on and analyzing the issues in open and public areas.
- 4- Making comparisons between present and target conditions to identify what open areas are needed
- 5- Providing open spaces: -
  - Estimating the target increase in open areas.
  - Addressing issues with open and public spaces.
  - An inventory of the open spaces that need to be developed and research on how to develop along with scheduling development & addition.
- 6- Caring for and design of open spaces: -
  - Defining forms of elements and activities & uses and users in the space.
  - Determining the space's entrances and accessibility.
  - Ensuring that all materials, finishes, and landscaping adhere to architectural standards for quality and beauty.

Due to a lack of inter-agency coordination between governorates, service authorities, important ministries, and civil society in the Greater Cairo Region, concrete projects, processes, and transformative strategies have trouble completing or even getting off the ground (Sims, 2011). The relation between the different government entities, as Arram noted, *“Unless there is a specific article of law that determines the role of each person and entity, then no one will shoulder the responsibility”* (UN Habitat, 2016: p.56<sup>72</sup>). Governorates have extensive local administration authority, although they have almost no revenues. They rely on government funding for recurrent and capital costs (Sims, 2003). In downtown Cairo regeneration process, Cairo Governorate is the responsible entity. According to Ahmed Mansour (2015: p. 56<sup>73</sup>) *“Nothing happens in Paris without the knowledge and approval of the Mayor of Paris. However, in Egypt, the Governor of Cairo’s powers are distributed among many partners and thus it is very difficult to move things forward”<sup>74</sup>*. There are two administrative districts in Downtown Cairo: Gharb (West) and Abdin. Each district oversees its own city property and public services.

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<sup>72</sup> The first Egypt urban forum 2015, Identity, Culture and Heritage.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid

<sup>74</sup> ibid



## **9.10 Government agencies with secondary roles**

### ***9.10.1 Misr Real Estate Asset Management<sup>75</sup>***

Misr Asset Management (MAM) is a public joint stock company established in 2007 in accordance with Capital Market Law 95 of 1992 and is subject to the provisions of the Public Business Sector Companies' Law 203 of 1991. Misr Real Estate Asset Management is the company of the Ministry of Public Business Sector and part of Misr Insurance Group. Managing and maintaining the public insurance company's real estate portfolios and assets, such as Misr Insurance Holding Company (MIHC), Misr Insurance Company and Misr Life Insurance, which is estimated at EGP 2.2 billion, is the company's initial mandate to maximize their values and returns.

It is estimated that more than 9600 units (MREAM, 2020), are under the Management of Misr Real Estate Asset Management. These properties are spread over six Governorates and provide first-class assets and premium asset locations. The total market value of the whole real estate portfolio amounts to EGP 10 billion. Investment banking services offered by MAM include Management of funds, Investment advisory services, Portfolio management, and Private equity.

According to Misr Real Estate Asset Management annual report (2020), the company shall

*“Maintain and preserve these properties as well as augmenting their value through inspection of real estates, classifying them, preparing engineering reports, estimations and implementing works; studying and implementing repairing decisions; studying how to use the vacant plots of lands included in such real estates. and implementing the reclaiming and maintenance works required for the real estate properties as soon as possible to maintain the value of such real estate properties.”*

The company owns 351 properties, of which 140 properties have a distinct architectural value (MREAM, 2020). Over 140 confiscated properties in downtown Cairo, 75 of them have a “distinguished architectural character”. The company is parting with Cairo Governorate and the National Organization for Urban Harmony and handled the renovation and painting of many of their properties in Khedivial Cairo.

### ***9.10.2 Holding Company for Tourism, Hotels and Cinema (HOTAC)***

HOTAC is an Egyptian joint stock company founded in compliance with Egyptian Law No. 203/1991. HOTAC holds nine affiliated companies, seven of which are entirely owned by various entities, including the Egyptian General Company for Tourism and Hotels "EGOTH" and Misr Company for Sound and Light. The Egyptian General Company for Tourism and Hotels, or EGOTH, was founded in 1976. According to CEIC's 2016 report, the company is responsible for investing in and/or managing government-owned tourism assets and institutions. Its portfolio in Egypt includes 25 hotels, including the Shepherd Hotel, the Nile Hilton Hotel, and the

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<sup>75</sup>Information is based on Misr Insurance Holding's annual report 2018.

Intercontinental Hotel in downtown Cairo. In addition, Misr Company for Sound and Light has been charged with carrying out the Tahrir Square lighting project as part of its regeneration scheme.

### **9.11 Non-Governmental Actors as Third Parties**

In Khedivial Cairo regeneration process, they are players with distinct visions and a significant impact.

#### ***9.11.1 Cairo Lab for Urban Studies, Training and Environmental Research (CLUSTER)***

Since its inception in 2011, the laboratory focused on documenting and mapping downtown Cairo's usage and urban morphology, with an emphasis on informal settlements and negotiated areas (for more detail see Chapter Eight).

#### ***9.11.2 Non-governmental cultural Institutions and Independent artists***

The neighborhood is home to many significant cultural activities and artistic initiatives. However, the prolonged lack of public support of arts, aggressive censorship measures, and a heightened police presence in the city center posed a threat to downtown Cairo's cultural prosperity and metamorphosis into an artistic and cultural zone.

#### ***9.11.3 Real Estate Investors (Al-Ismailia Company for Real Estate Investment), and The American University in Cairo***

For further information about Al-Ismailia Company for Real Estate Investment, see chapter eight. The American University in Cairo has historically been a prominent downtown landowner. Although the university moved its campus and most of its activities and operations from the downtown Cairo campus in 2008 because it could not obtain the necessary spaces for its expansion, the university retained ownership of the buildings along the southern areas of downtown. The Tahrir Square nine-acre campus includes three complexes: The Main Campus, Falaki Academic Center and the Greek Campus. The Greek Campus is home to Egypt's first technology park in Downtown Cairo the GrEEK Campus, while the AUC's Main Campus is home to Tahrir Cultural Center (TCC) (See Chapter 7)

#### ***9.11.4 Others***

The others include Donors and financial institutions, including National and International Banks. The Residents' Union is an additional important stakeholder in downtown Cairo. The Landlord and Tenant Law of Egypt has effectively safeguarded the interests of Egyptian landlords and their families. Tenants had the right under the old rent legislation to form a Residents' Union (RU), an occupant's Union that served as the primary point of contact for the distribution of organizational information and had a corresponding administrative division at the neighbourhood level. These associations have the authority to decide on renovations, modernizations, and maintenance and to collect the fees charges. Residents' organizations in downtown Cairo collect the expenses of

construction amenities (typically paid directly by renters rather than owners) but are not recognized for their proactive commitment to upkeep and cleaning. Finally, downtown Cairo's residents and visitors. In Downtown Cairo, visitors and consumers can be divided into several types: 1) visitors to residents or businesses, and 2) employees in businesses and other economic activities. 3) shoppers, 4) guests "transiting" through downtown Cairo through autos, 5) scroungers, and 6) tourist



Figure 89: The main stakeholders in the Khedivial Cairo regeneration process. Developed by the researcher.

While participation in the top-down approach is only focused on single disciplines and reductionist paradigms (Johnson & Walker 2000), genuine participation recognizes the value of local indigenous, and exemplifies the shift from top-down strategies that govern early development initiatives to more locally sensitive approaches (Storey, 1999). Cleaver (1999) stated that participation as an "end" approach viewed community involvement as enabling the community in planning, implementing, impacting choices, and managing resources to address structural disparities and challenges of social justice. However, mostly, community engagement in urban planning and regeneration has been considered a "means" for achieving specific tasks and objectives to increase project efficiency, such as mobilization (Moser, 1989) or for "maintaining relations to the rules, for neutralizing political opposition and for taxing the poorest" (Cornwall & Brock 2005: p. 1046), rather than an "end" process (Nelson & Wright 1995), because of the ingrained power relations and structural inequities inside the spaces.

Numerous stakeholders are involved in Khedivial Cairo regeneration project, each with its own development goals and visions for the downtown area in the future. This inevitably leads to tension between these diverse stakeholder groups, since they lack genuine conversation and communication between them. The gap between the two parties (whether governmental or non-governmental mainly represented in the local community and non-governmental cultural institutions and independent artists) has widened due to the lack of integrated and comprehensive visions and plans for overhaul. Additionally, due to the divergence of interests between the State and civil society, another form of conflict is imposed on public space. The lack of community engagement in decision making, which is necessary to resolve the conflict of interest between many stakeholders to ensure long-term success is also evidence, for instance in El-Bursa and Al-Shreefin Street renovation work. The residents and community stakeholders were anxious that the area would end up like El-Alfy Street, another hub for harassers and destitute congregate (interview with many of street residents, April 2018). The inadequate time to conduct the necessary investigations before the project launch event reflects the lack of community engagement,

Nevertheless, there are some examples of agreements between the government and civil stakeholders for the rejuvenation of some public places. For example, the government and Al-Ismailia Company for Real Estate Investment had one goal in common, which is to restore the area's heydays by celebrating the area's *belle époque* architecture and creating an amicable atmosphere for investors and tourists alike to achieve their desirable social, political, and economic outcomes rather than achieve sustainable and cohabitant spaces with social diversity.

### **Chapter Nine Conclusion**

Economic opportunities of downtown Cairo revitalization have piqued the state's interest, along with the political significance of its symbols which cannot be discounted. The state-led efforts targeted the imposition of authority over citizens, with a manifest and visible dominance, especially over public spaces. Consequently, no forms of freedom of expression or independent art events have been permitted in public places since 2013 onwards. In private spaces, however, cultural and art initiatives are viewed as a marketing tool and gentrification means for promoting these spaces or properties, as previously explained in chapter 8. In brief, downtown Cairo urban regeneration process reveals the strong involvement of the state in space production and urban management to restore its power and provide a clean slate for private development.

Revitalizing downtown Cairo is part of the state's ongoing endeavor to reassert its authority over the city's public spaces. For instance, the need to address uncontrolled encroachment motivated the revitalization of Al-Alfi Street. Today, trespassing is legal for these coffee shop those who ask permission from authorities and are willing to pay a fee to the state for using public space. As a means of fostering urban regeneration, city centers have become increasingly pedestrian-friendly malls. Accordingly, urban space has become more economically viable and livable. However, when the pedestrian schemes are successfully implemented, property values and small businesses

increase. Hence, it should be taken into account that regeneration can become a disguised code for undesired gentrification, as revealed in the discussion and results.

Urban regeneration process should be an integrated approach characterized by collaboration of different actors. However, in Egypt, the state and its governmental institutions enjoy absolute power. The urban regeneration policy of downtown Cairo is not subject to any act or administrative law. Therefore, governmental entities (at the central or local levels) and non-governmental stakeholders are not bound by such laws. Nevertheless, the Khedivial Cairo Revitalization Project is the ultimate policymaker in downtown Cairo, mainly based on the guidelines and visions of the Cairo governorate and NOUH. Therefore, the project's success is tied to political will. The promulgation of law does not necessarily guarantee the implementation of policy, especially as Egypt struggles to enforce laws particularly in the urban realm. However, with Presidential decrees having the force of law, different challenges in urban planning could be overcome. For instance, Decree no. 458/1993 stipulated that rural areas can be converted into urban areas for tourism development and infrastructure investments. Moreover, Presidential Decree no. 37/2001 concerning the establishment of NOUH and other authorities has been ratified by Parliament. In the present time, the decisive role of political will in planning and regeneration is clearly manifested in the New Administrative Capital Project.

## **10 Chapter Ten: Improving the Visual Image of Tahrir Square as a Part of Aestheticization Process in Downtown Cairo**

### **10.1 Introduction**

Tahrir Square serves as the epicenter for the revolution's symbolism, where diverse meanings, feelings, and events were imprinted on Egyptians' minds and became part of Egypt's contemporary history. The revolution syndrome enhanced the architects and urban planners' visions with innovative new approaches to urban practice. Conflict over the use of space as a repository for memories and a tool for molding the future caught people's attention.

Despite the state's sustained effort to suppress the revolution, several institutions and academics called for developing or redesigning the Square via "Democratic Urban Space Design" to match the Square's modern revolutionary spirit. However, in light of the space production, the Square has systematically been transformed and redesigned by the state in accordance with the ruler's vision and goals. The produced urban areas include a homogeneous aesthetic and a high level of regulation. Based on Lefebvre's view, "abstracting" space from its social context increases its "exchange-value" by establishing a potentially "neutral medium into which disjointed things, people, and habitats might be introduced." (Lefebvre, 1974/1991: p.308). The extensive use of visual and discursive elements to produce new urban images and propagate a new official narrative as means for city marketing is a part of the state-led gentrification process for reviving downtown Cairo. Urban amnesia thereby increased the residents' sense of alienation.

## 10.2 Public Squares and the Quality of Urban Design in Space Production

In the urban context, public squares are essential since they serve as a structural component of the urban fabric. Additionally, public squares reflect the cities' identity and culture. In Arabic, squares are translated into Midan, which means *"An open space, or esplanade, in or near a town; an open grassy plain; a parade-ground; among the Arabs, a racecourse, or a place for exercising horses. Also spelled midaun"*<sup>76</sup>. Public squares in cities are large open spaces bordered by constructions such as buildings and other landmarks that have a significant impact on the city's mass and void composition. According to Lynch (1981, p. 443), Urban square *"is the activity focus in the center dense of urban areas, enclosed by high density structures and surrounded by streets or in contact with them. It contains features meant to attract groups of people and to facilitate meanings"*. Levy (2012: p. 157) differentiates between a public park and a public square, *"on a square, citizens are not connected to manifestations of nature, but to the heart of urban culture, history and memory"*.

Squares, as Abbasian (2016: p. 9) stated, have been employed differently in a variety of context, *"in past, most economic activity and various religious activities social a governmental have been done in open space while nowadays it is more for walking, refreshment, eating, drinking, shopping and watching surrounding"*. The Greek "Agora" is a well-known early example of what we now call a public square, where democracy played an important part in modeling the cities of Greece. The Agora served as a hub for a variety economic activities and social and political gatherings, such as political meetings, as well as sports and musical events, and theatre shows (Hölscher, 2007). Roman Forum is another similar large space model in this vein. As Mumford (1961) argued, the Roman forum resulted from combining agora and acropolis, where different activities were formally included, such as memorials, temples, and chapels, as well as the court and the council houses (Xing& Siu, 2010). The forum served as the city's beating heart throughout the republican era. The Roman Forum's significance and popularity began to wane during the end of the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire's demise led to the rise of cathedrals and churches, which have become the focal points of everyday life. The majority of public places in the Middle Ages were designed to accommodate religious rituals, as most of the spaces were centered on nearby religious structures. There has been an increase in commercial activity in public spaces such as marketplaces (Xing& Siu, 2010). A new type of public space evolved during this period, including civic piazzas and squares in some European countries.

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<sup>76</sup> Based on wordnik.com

City morphology experienced several noticeable alterations throughout the neo-classical era (the Renaissance and Baroque periods) due to economic, political, and philosophical shifts. Urban planning and design approaches reflected the rationalization of this shift during the Renaissance. There was a lot of emphasis on traditional designs and planning throughout this time. Symmetry and order played a huge role in the design process. The Renaissance public squares that we are most familiar with today are Italian piazzas. Aesthetic elements like monuments and fountains were incorporated into the design to improve the overall experience and to make the space more visually appealing.

The cities' attempt to elevate their status and to distinguish themselves in an increasingly competitive environment is supported by serious investments in architecture, landscaping, and design. As public space usage has shifted over the last few decades, many urban squares have become less functional and significant. As a result, designing urban squares that serve as both public and open spaces is becoming increasingly important and requires greater consideration. Public spaces with thoughtful design could significantly enhance the aesthetic value of the surrounding environment and landscape. However, urban squares' design as an integral part of development schemes should be based on the place identity; otherwise, public squares will be disconnected and irrelevant.

### *10.2.1 The Design of Urban Square*

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, the late Modern Movement in architecture served as a cultural cradle for urban design in the United States (Mumford, 2009). However, different themes created a striking contradiction to the Modern Movement's main ideas in urban design since the 1960s, such as the heart of the city, and the significance of historical built heritage, among others (Hebbert, 1991). According to Carmona (2014), urban design is "mongrel discipline" as it examines and shapes the cities' form. It focuses on individuals, groups, and society in the past, present, and future (Krier, 2009), and urban form delivery on various degrees of granularity. As a result, the role of urban design in today's cities and the urban shift has significantly increased (Gospodini, 2002; Julier, 2005).

*“Contemporary cities, mostly a product of the political economy of the manufacturing era, have been thoroughly remade in the image of consumer society. Design professionals have to adapt to a neoliberal political economy in which progressive notions of public interest and civil society have been all but set aside”. (Knox, 2011: p.129)*

The urban design aims to create urban significance by coordinating the design of spatial elements' settings or interactions. Urban design is a tool that local governments use to build or support the city's-built environment as a market value. In highly competitive economies, policymakers have altered the physical environment to reflect their ideas and visions to reduce "visual and functional forms" to a handful of key elements and images in order to focus tourists' attention and activities



on specific sites and qualities rather than "extraneous chaotic components" (Rojek, 1995: p.62). The physical urban spaces and their associated meaning are reproduced for ". . .*the outsider, the investor, developer, businesswoman or – man, or the money-packed tourist*" (Swyngedouw et al., 2002: pp. 550–551). According to Duany (2001), the link between high-quality urban design and gentrification's consequences has been underlined, as "*the most sure-fire technique for permanently preventing gentrification is to provide dismal architectural and urban design.*" (Duany, 2001: p. 38)

### 10.3 Tahrir Square Renovation Work

Tahrir Square, Cairo's most famous landmark, has languished for decades, neglected, and unprotected from the city's escalating instability and deterioration. For many years before the revolution, Tahrir Square was an abstract area, a generic and socially fractured space that served as a public open area for vehicular traffic. As time passed, Cairo's central square devolved into chaos of traffic, pollution, and noise in the city. Tahrir Square was not intended to be a public debate forum but a place for people to congregate and circulate freely. Later, the square has become synonymous with democracy, equality, and liberty in Egypt's post-revolutionary period.

From 2011 to November 2013, the square was the site of violent protests as the country descended into political upheaval. The emergency law effectively prohibited protests, with offenders risking up to five years in prison, as we previously explained (see Chapters 6 and 9). During the first revolution, the square was the site of several protests and political rallies that had a considerable impact on the square's spatial settings and functions and the surrounding area. As a temporary space for political debates, Tahrir Square offered an exciting model of the power of public space. The square was a testament to how virtual, physical, and geographical stages are integrated unexpectedly to enhance democratic performance, and Tahrir Square became a central focus for it. A shared vision was built into Tahrir Square, making it a symbolic environment, a "*space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols*" (Lefebvre, 1991; p39). Tahrir Square was transformed into an evocative of what Doreen Massey (1994)<sup>77</sup> described, '*a global sense of place*'. According to David Hummon (1992: p.262), sense of place could be "*both an interpretive perspective on the environment and an emotional reaction to the environment*". People in every country watched satellite television broadcasts and news reports along with social media channels about Tahrir Square and the associated activities that took place there on networks such as CNN and BBC. As a result, the Square has been ingrained in people's minds as a symbol of liberty in the Middle East, especially in Egypt, as a hotbed of democratic debate. Artistic-related interventions have also emphasized the importance of creative resistance as social memory and reaffirmed the notion of place attachment. There have nevertheless been visible alterations to the

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<sup>77</sup> PP.146-156.

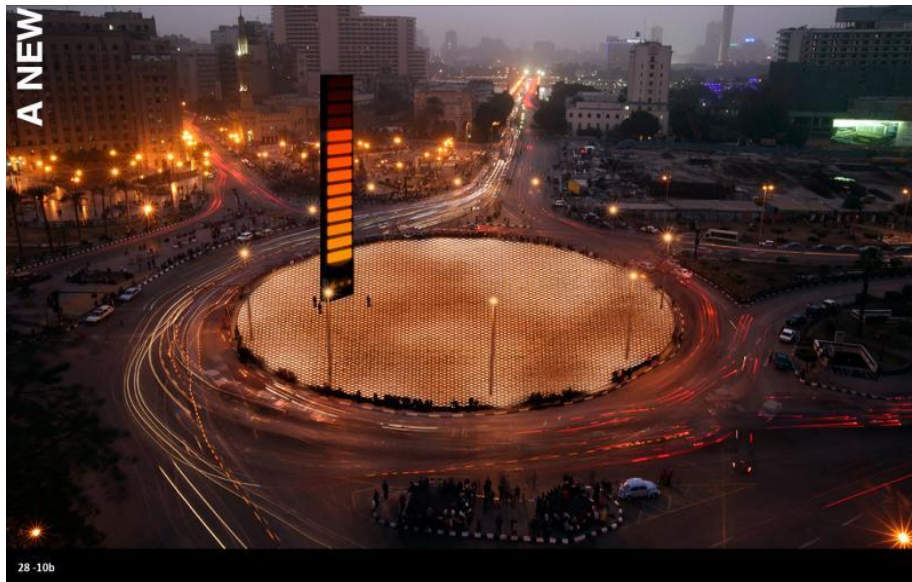
Square's appearance and skyline since 2011 resulting from the construction and destruction work, such as the demolition of the National Democratic Party (NDP) building, the construction of the Steigenberger hotel, and the subterranean parking garage with greenery on top.

Reclaiming the square sparked a renewed interest in placemaking. On one hand, A New Tahrir Square competition was announced in late 2011 by ICARCH, the international design and architectural competition platform, inviting participants from the globe to submit concepts for a new Tahrir Square design. The ideas for A New Tahrir Square were revolved around four fundamental concepts:

1. As the vox populi (the voice of the people), new media serves in all senses of the word "internet user."
2. Instead of focusing on space, time is an important aesthetic consideration.
3. Symbols of democracy and unification
4. Reversal of symbols symbolically.

First place went to Esefeld and S. Bostanci/Scala Architekten – Germany, followed by Francesco Garofalo/Openfabric – Italy/The Netherlands in second place, and Prof. Wolfgang Rahm / Atelier Rahm – Germany in the third

Scala Architekten from Germany suggested a massive digital obelisk, to demonstrate the virtual activity on the square, including an exhibition documenting the Internet Revolution. The social and political components of the digital world were encapsulated in the project as a common space. However, it's not quite in the proper spot, as it was lack of contemporary communication technologies (Schäfer& Visser, 2012)



*Figure 90: A New Tahrir Square (political – digital), Source: I C A R C H, International Competitions in Architecture*

Planting Democracy, by Francesco Garofalo of Open Fabric in Rotterdam, took the second place in this year's Design Award. The concept is a landscape design with a botanical report that evokes an earthy garden. It's rather impressive, a symbol of liberation and participation. The layout accommodates a wide range of activities while also providing room for the square's social and economic features.



*Figure 91: Planting Democracy. Source: I C A R C H, International Competitions in Architecture*

Third place was awarded to Light Mirror by German architect, Atelier Rang at the World Architecture Awards. The structure is an Enlightenment-style utopia that incorporates elements such as air, sunlight, light, and shadow. Just like the pyramids, it's purposefully out of proportion to heighten its expressive strength. The jury dubbed it an enlightened utopia because of the way it incorporates air, sun, light, and shadow. Sadly, it's only operable after dark, ignoring the square's 24-hour accessibility.

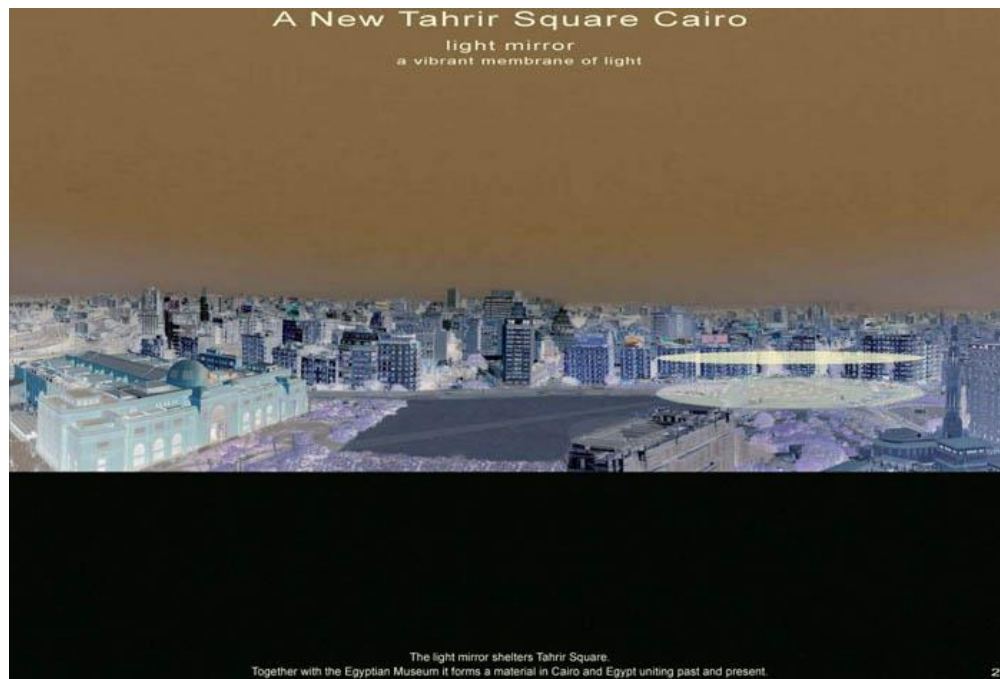


Figure 92: Light Mirror. Source: I C A R C H, *International Competitions in Architecture*

On the other hand, Egyptian architects, and planners (scholars and practitioners) experienced a surge of optimism following the revolution, which sparked new ideas in teaching and professional practice. Cairo University's Architectural Department sponsored an endeavor to turn the class of 2011's graduation projects into contributing to the city's ongoing redevelopment and public space repurposing process. These initiatives were meant to be a citizen-driven and inclusive approach, laying the framework for new social and political regimes to emerge (Elhady& Nagati, 2014). One of the study's aims was to investigate the possibilities of community-based initiatives for promoting and legitimizing citizens' rights in the city. The class's goal was to create critical design approaches to the function of space and space making in such transformational processes through particular interventions that engaged existing political and social developments. In addition, the rapidly unfolding political events influenced the architectural academic institutions to redesign Tahrir Square as an emblem for the revolutions. In 2012, the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) established a working group. Different ideas were presented and exchanged between the presenters and participants from many fields—including urbanists, artists, academics, and journalists. Indeed, none of their hopes came true.

#### 10.4 The Government Efforts in Developing Tahrir Square

According to the State Information Service (SIS, 2019), Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly during a Cabinet meeting in the presence of Housing Minister Assem el Gazzar and Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities Mostafa Waziri, he issued his commands to renovate Tahrir Square as part of the Historic Cairo projects as "*The government is interested in turning the square into a tourist destination,*". The objective is to maintain Tahrir as Egypt's most prominent square and a symbol of modernity (Marie, 2019). Shehab Mazhar, a prominent Egyptian landscape designer and engineer, known for his lavish landscape work, was commissioned by Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly to remodel Cairo's historic Tahrir Square. Tahrir's overhaul began in September 2019, nearly \$10 million was invested by the government to renovate Tahrir Square and its surrounds, turning it into a tourist attraction and archaeological site. Tahrir Square's refurbishment aims to imitate other prominent squares around the world.

Initially, a defaced state memorial to the dead demonstrators in the middle of the square was dismantled and replaced with a high flagpole with a bare concrete base carved with meaningless Pharaonic and Arabic lettering. The flag was then removed and replaced with an obelisk and four ram-headed sphinxes carved from sandstone displaying one's Ancient Egyptian identity. As stated by President Abdel-Fattah El-Sissi, the obelisk's relocation to Tahrir square is comparable to that of other obelisks in Western capitals. So, the relocation attempted to replicate the European squares of the 19th century.



Figure 93: The transformation of Tahrir Square's central area. Source:(skyscraper city, 2019).

Notably, Egypt lacked the authority to approve or reject the transfer of ancient Egyptian obelisks to Western cities during Egyptian colonial rule. However, relocating four ram-headed sphinxes from Luxor to Tahrir Square sparked a debate among Egyptian and foreign scholars and activists about the government's stewardship of Egypt's archaeological legacy and garnered local and worldwide support condemnation. According to Egyptian MP Haitham Abuoul Ezz Al-Hariry, removing a genuine relic from its native archaeological location violated Article 7 of the Venice Convention on the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites. In 1974, Egypt signed the UNESCO World Heritage Convention. Articles of that convention serve as the major reference for the convention provisions and interpretations. As a result, in December 2019, Egyptian MP Haitham Abuoul Ezz Al-Hariry filed an urgent declaration to Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly (Al-Masry Al-Youm, 2019), condemning the contentious relocation from Luxor to Cairo's Tahrir Square of an obelisk and the ram head statues. As well, a letter from UNESCO's Arab World Heritage Centre President, Sheikha Mai Al Khalifa has been sent to Egypt's Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, expressed her displeasure with a transfer without contacting the UNESCO World Heritage Center's leadership ("Egypt Moving Luxor Sphinxes", 2020).

According to recent research, Cairo is one of the world's most polluted cities. As cited by Monica Hanna, the relocation of these antiquities there will put them in jeopardy.

*"The sphinxes are made of sandstone, they are part of the dry environment in Luxor, when they would be moved to Tahrir Square with all the pollution, they will deteriorate as a result of the reactions with the carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide in the air,"* (Magdy, 2019)

In an interview, Salima Ikram, an Egyptologist at the American University in Cairo, supported Monica Hanna's concerns *"it will be more dangerous for the sphinxes as they are made of sandstone, and the rain, mixed in with pollutants could prove damaging"* (Lewis & Ebrahim, 2020). In addition, a lawsuit was also filed by the Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights against the Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism in the Administrative Judicial Court to cancel the ministerial decree as it *"contravenes the nature of an archaeological monument"*<sup>78</sup> and to stop the transportation of artifacts. Unfortunately, the government's plan to transfer the monuments was not considered even in the parliament and only came to public attention after archaeologists complained.

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<sup>78</sup> The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological. Sites and Remains Act 1958... – UNESCO.

#### 10.4.1 Renovation of Facades Overlooking Tahrir Square

The Tahrir Square's renovation work is a part of a larger plan to rehabilitate downtown Cairo squares, including Talaat Harb Square, Mostafa Kamal Square, and El-Ataba Square. The project aims to confirm downtown Cairo's unique identity, enhance the functional efficiency of the space, using the distinctive elements for furnishing the site to match downtown Cairo's architectural and historical context, and improve downtown Cairo's visual image<sup>79</sup>. According to NOUH General Director, M. Abo Seada, there are 25 properties overlooking Tahrir Square, as shown in the following map. The project includes renovation of the façade of 20 different buildings. The design of 13 property shops has been finished. Billboards atop the Art Deco buildings and other commercial trespasses on real estate facades have been completely removed thanks to the efforts of the director of the West district office. The buildings' exteriors Façades received a fresh coat of paint in a single, coordinated shade.



Figure 94: The buildings overlooking Tahrir Square. Source: M. Abo Seada, General Director of NOUH.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with Mohamed Abu Seda, NOUH' director, May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019

■ non-registered buildings ■ Archaeological buildings ■ registered buildings,

A new sign in classic typefaces mimicking the old signage was given to stores to go along with their historical significance and artistic value. KFC and Hardee's, two well-known fast-food chains in Cairo downtown, were forced to replace their typical red signs with off-white ones to blend in with the neighborhood.



Figure 95: Building No, 9, Tahrir Square before and after the recent renovation work, Source: NOUH

#### ***10.4.2 The Use of Urban Lighting Design to Improve the Aesthetic Quality of Urban Space***

Light's illumination, color and tenderness have physiological and psychological effects on people (Birren, 1969: p. 12). According to Alves (2007), lights "may give a space, which has been broken up by disorderly urban growth, physical coherency" and "helps to identify urban structure and increase the speed and the capacity needed to control or get to know a given territory" (Alves, 2007: p.1255). Ebbensgaard (2015) noted that "illumination is neither to be understood as mere lighting design nor as light art practice, but rather lighting that aims at beautifying and improving the livability of urban spaces" (Ebbensgaard, 2015: p.1).

Baroque festivals in the 17th century saw the first organized use of lights in the open area and the first human-created nightly landscape visuals (Narboni, 2004: p.12). Both internal and external spaces have been lit by electricity since the early twentieth century (Mahkne: 1987: p. X). There are many levels of city illumination due to advances in light technology and changes in urban architecture in the twenty-first century, including lighting for public places and roadways as well as pedestrian, signage lighting and architectural lighting etc. The usage of urban lighting for buildings, historical structures, parks, and landscape components has been around since the 1940s to enhance the aesthetics and security of the city's nightly scene (Sirel, 2006: p. 64). Other countries, such as France (Lyon) and North America (New York City), have used urban lighting master plans in the 1980s as part of a holistic approach to ensure the historical characteristics of their cities and heritage premises.



This approach also seeks to develop unique nocturnal identities while improving safety (Narboni, 2004: p.66).

Any development, whether new or existing, must have adequate lighting. The site's lighting should complement the overall aesthetic while also enhancing the site's security and safety without being too obtrusive. The style and theme of the site's primary buildings should inform the design and structural support of the lighting fixtures.<sup>80</sup>In the last decades, exterior lighting practices have shifted drastically, as operational illumination has made way for a higher-quality vision of light for enhancing cities' aesthetics along with its traditional role for security purposes. In contemporary cities, lighting design is becoming a distinguishing characteristic. In the contemporary cultural economy, lighting is being used more theatrically, and novel lighting patterns are being employed to improve the nocturnal urban experience (Edensor& Lorimer, 2015). In this regard, Egyptian authorities opted to adopt the successful formula of the other city. Accordingly, Misr Company for Sound and Light carried out the Tahrir Square lighting project. The company is an affiliate of a Holding Company for Tourism and Hotels of the Ministry of Public Business Sector. As a result, Tahrir Square is now a well-polished tourist attraction that harkens back to Egypt's ancient identity rather than its modern one, thanks to the addition of palm trees, gorgeous lighting, and expansive stretches of lush green turf, and the erection of a water fountain.

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<sup>80</sup> Mercer Island Municipal Code, A Codification of The General Ordinances of The City Of Mercer Island, Washington, Code Publishing Company, Seattle, Washington, source: <http://www.codepublishing.com/wa/mercerisland/html/MercerIsl and19/MercerIsland1911.html#19.11.090>



Figure 96: Using lights for illuminating the heritage buildings and edifices in Downtown Cairo. Source: (skyscraper city, 2019)

#### 10.4.2.1 Inauguration of Tahrir Square

In April 2021, Tahrir Square was reopened with a ceremony that featured the procession of around 22 ancient royal mummies that had been relocated from Tahrir Museum. Under tight security, the mummies were transported seven kilometers south across Egypt's capital in magnificent, pharaonic-styled vehicles to the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization. The Pharaohs' Golden Parade, as it was dubbed, included 18 kings and four queens of ancient Egypt's most prominent monarchs, such as King Ramses II. Over 400 global networks broadcasted live coverage of the event, which was also streamed online. Hashtags for the Golden Parade in Arabic and English were used around 73 million times per hour, which is an incredible usage level (El-Sayed, 2021). Daphne Osea-Paez, a Filipina Canadian UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, shared her thoughts on Twitter. "I can't believe this is real and not a movie. Wow. So incredible. Twenty-two royal mummies parade from Egypt Museum in Cairo to the new one. Hair raising... shivers." Egypt's

Golden Parade has reverberated throughout the whole Middle East and North Africa area, reigniting nationalist sentiments in several countries in the region (Fayed, 2021).

### Chapter Ten Conclusion

Public places can be interpreted as an economic-political product that exemplifies the state authority, wherein the (re)design of public space is frequently based on the interest of the political will to fulfil certain politico- economic goals within specific spatial areas at a specific time. While the 'aestheticization' process could be viewed as a series of cosmetic actions to give the square a more coherent visual narrative and emphasizes aesthetics of gentrification, it could also "*gives the city a certain readability, making it more accessible, especially to non-local public*" (Gravari-Barbas, 1998: p. 178). As Zukin (1995) stated in her definition of commercialized spaces for visual consumption, "aestheticization" tactics transform spaces into visually discernible and identifiable with a specific location that visitors and investors highly recognize. The process goal is to entice the visitor with its aesthetic attributes, influencing the visitors' actions and impressions. (Edensor, 2001).

City marketing and branding strategy contribute significantly to the consuming economy and physical restructuring. The local governments determine visitors' experience through the city images and use them for place promotion. However, governments may create images of cities to erase views of industrial decline (Ward, 1998) to minimize racial tensions or position themselves nationally or globally (Neill et al., 1995). The goal is to promote the symbolic and economic value of the urban space (Mommaas, 2002). In the experience economy, Lorentzen and Jannerat (2013) claimed, the sites may be used as a value-adding aspect to raise the overall value of consumption as part of, or as a destination on, the place planning process.

The goal of the Tahrir Square redesigning is to reproduce the space to prevent future demonstrations and deprive ordinary people of space. Khaled Fahmy<sup>81</sup> think that "*the main message is that people do not belong to the square and the square does not belong to the people. This is a square that belongs to the State,*" (Lewis & Ebrahim, 2020). Pedestrian spot inspections in and around the area became more prevalent, along with security guards who sped up their pace when people gathered around the monuments (Lewis & Ebrahim, 2020). Tahrir Square renovation and aestheticization process have also created a new place branding experience. Promotional images of Tahrir Square during the legend ceremony "Pharaohs' Golden Parade" have appeared in a variety of international print media or widely broadcast. The positive impact of the scene enhances downtown Cairo's economic value. It also illustrates how serious the Sisi regime is about erasing all traces of the 2011 revolution and putting a halt to future upheavals. Indeed, the

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<sup>81</sup> A Cambridge University history professor who participated in the 2011 uprising and established a hastily disbanded official committee to document it.

evolution of Tahrir Square and the surrounding area is a microcosm of the societal and political changes in Cairo and Egypt.

## **11 Chapter Eleven: State Capitalism and Urban Development**

### **11.1 Introduction**

Contemporary state capitalism has emerged as a result of neoliberal globalization. In recent decades, the political form of global capital accumulation has shifted toward state capitalism, although the impact of neoliberal ideology on this agenda has remained unaffected. State capitalism has a substantial skepticism of markets and comprehensive economic liberalization compared to liberal market capitalism. State capitalism in the twenty-first century is a dynamic force that covers a variety of capitalist systems in which the state continues to play an essential role as a promoter, director, and owner of capital. Most contemporary forms of state capitalism depend on state leadership to direct and strengthen economies. States with capitalist economic systems develop their economic management philosophies on a solid belief in the potential benefits of state authority. Establishing sovereign wealth funds and domestic financial and urban policies are all means. Singapore has become a paradigm of effective and growth-oriented urban development for city planners and politicians globally.

Despite widespread criticism of neoliberalism during Egypt's 2011 uprising, the country has since reverted to an economic growth model that promotes authoritarianism. Since 2013, Egypt has been experiencing rapid development and a discernible shift in its economy. The military became Egypt's exclusive mediator for large-scale investments following the military's return to financial stability. In 2014, the development of national projects such as the New Suez Canal development project; the National Roads project, which targets the construction of around 4000 kilometres of new roads all over Egypt; and Egypt's New Administrative Capital, followed by the establishment of the Egyptian Sovereign Fund, quickly became the dominant topic of debate. As a result, downtown Cairo is experiencing a substantial investment in their prospective underutilized and underdeveloped governmental historic assets in partnership with foreign investors, including Tahrir Complex (Mogamma), the old Ministry of Interior headquarters, and the land-plot of disbanded National Democratic Party headquarters, after their relocation to the New Administrative Capital and the transfer of ownership to the Sovereign Fund. The recent governmental initiatives to revitalize Cairo's central area is also spurred by gentrification.

## 11.2 Neoliberalism and State Capitalism

Since the financial crisis, analysts have attempted to explain the role of state-backed businesses in the current global economy (Musacchio et al., 2014) and a concurrent geopolitical shift in which developing countries are altering the global order (Bremmer, 2010, Kurlantzick, 2016). These endeavors have contributed to the rising popularity of "state capitalism." State capitalism reflects the government's authority and involvement in the global economy. According to Ian Bremmer (2010: p.41), state capitalism is "*a system in which the state functions as the leading economic actor and uses markets primarily for political gain*". For Bremmer (2010), State capitalism "*.... is not the reemergence of socialist central planning in a twenty-first century package. It is a form of bureaucratically engineered capitalism particular to each government that practices it. It's a system in which the state dominates markets primarily for political gain. As this trend develops, it will generate friction in international politics and distortions in global economic performance*" (Bremmer, 2010: p. 5).

Singapore has become a model for successful growth-oriented urban development for city planners and politicians worldwide. Singapore's state capitalism dispels notions of a conflict between public policy's role as a tool for development and political control and the market economy's role as a means of carrying out both functions. It also highlights how the government uses commercial real estate to exert political influence and economic growth. Singaporean state-owned enterprises and government-owned shares in other private firms have been engaged with hundreds of large urban redevelopment projects worldwide as investors and consultants (Keppel Land, 2010; Surbana, 2010). Governments in developing nations found the Singaporean development model highly advantageous to adopt. The paradigm grants the state control over the planning process and its utilization for political purposes by owning, managing, and redeveloping the land.

Despite the broad rejection of neoliberalism and authoritarianism following the political upheavals in 2011, Egypt has returned to a neoliberal economic development model with a strong emphasis on authoritarianism. The struggle between the Inter-elite and the public failed to displace the neoliberal development model away from Egypt (Haddad, 2013). Since 2013, Egypt is experiencing rapid development and a discernible shift in its economy. From 2013 onwards, urban governance appears to have been taken over by the Egyptian authorities. The priorities of President El-Sisi were largely predetermined. According to Sayigh (2020), the new regime focuses on generating capital while maintaining the current political regime. A novel form of "*Egyptian state capitalism*" is emerging because of the state's expanded role. Following Egypt's 2013 coup d'état and the subsequent election of President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, the military's roles and responsibilities have shifted. Under El Sisi's leadership, military-economic ventures in Egypt have seen a radical transition in their activities, reflecting the trajectory of this shift in policy. To oversee and direct Egypt's economy, the army was allowed to reestablish its financial health and become Egypt's exclusive mediator for significant investments as a public actor with private interests tied to it. In contrast to the traditional neo-liberalization of urban governance, military leaders in Egypt,

along with other public authorities, have taken advantage of the recent economic recovery to strengthen the state's role and increase their political legitimacy by asserting control over urban space.

In Egypt, military regime's dominant ideology is the cause for its survival and continued strength. The Egyptian military, as Sayigh (2019) stated in the Carnegie report, is the "*Owners of the Republic*" (2019: P. xv)<sup>82</sup>, "*transformed its role in the national economy, turning it into an autonomous actor that can reshape markets and influence government policy setting and investment strategies*". The Egyptian military's presence in key industries stifles private investment and alters the country's trajectory toward social and economic development and political change (Ibid: p.1). In President Al-Sisi's regime, the military engagement in five economic sectors, including real estate development, the establishment of industrial and transportation centers, exploitation of natural resources, strengthening ties with the private sector and leveraging private investment to fund the public sector, was crucial for establishing state capitalism (Sayigh, 2020). Rather than re-creating Mubarak's rentier economy, the latter two sectors signal a more substantial shift in Egypt's economic policy.

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<sup>82</sup> 2019 Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

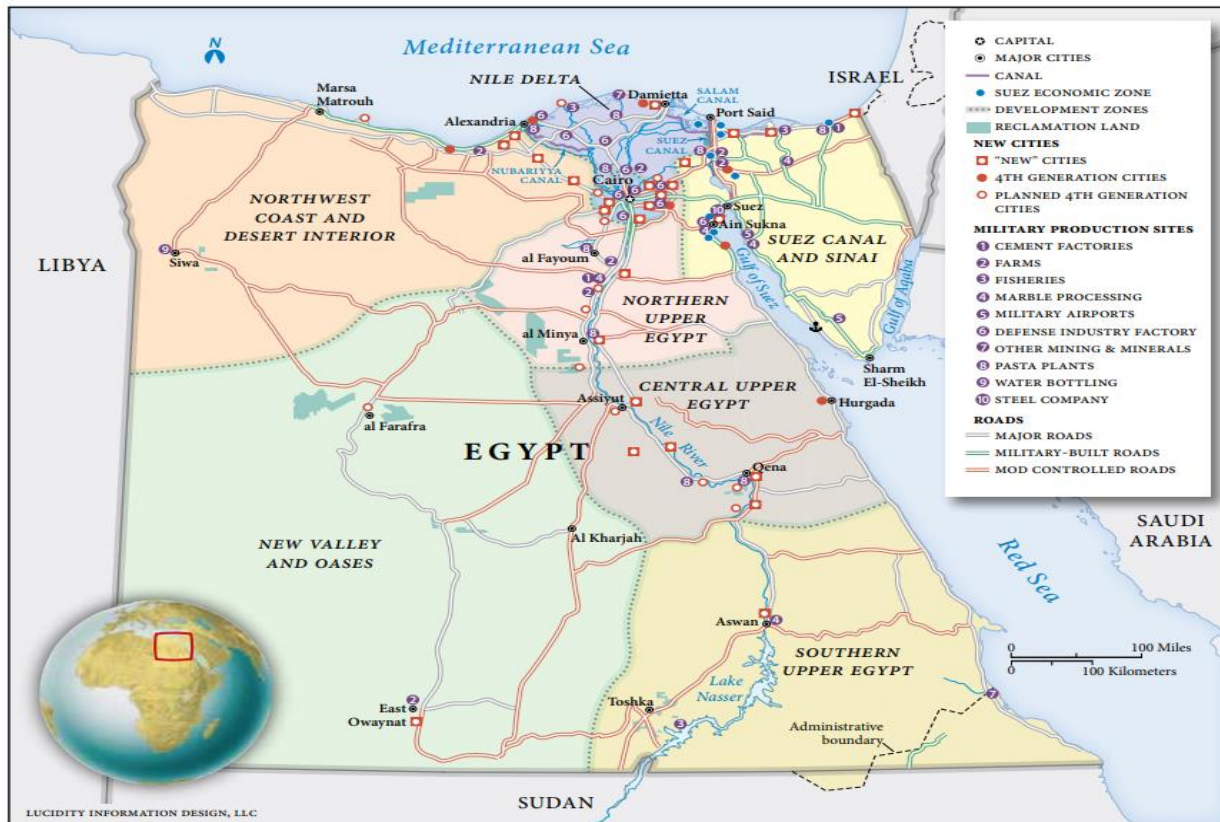


Figure 97: Principal Military Economic Activities and Interests. Source: Sayigh (2019)

Some see the military strength of power as a return to the nationalist/socialist period of Gamal Abdel Nasser's administration to reclaim the regime's image as a supporter of the poor and disadvantaged socioeconomic forces. Unlike the market-oriented paradigm, the state capitalist model allows the State to allocate a portion of the development surplus to address social needs. However, the neoliberal paradigm continued to define Egypt's economic policies based on the Mubarak regime's economic framework to promote rapid economic growth and accumulation of capital. Since 2015, the government of Egypt has been implementing economic reforms agreed upon by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to address the country's budget deficit, official expenditures, state subsidies, and currency devaluation (Hamzawy, 2016). That is why the policy of Sisi is not considered an “*integrated strategy*” but a commitment and determination to expand capital by consolidating the State and military authority led by the President (Sayigh, 2020). As a result, the domination of the State, rather than the market, has been strengthened, despite supporting economic development and increasing public budget efficiency.



### 11.3 Urban Planning/ Development Under State Capitalism

In Egypt, the use of urban planning and development as a political instrument revealed larger political realities. City planners have long sought to establish new settlements in Egypt's deserts, notably to the east and west of Cairo. According to Sims (2015), the authorities in Egypt are obsessed with reclaiming the deserts. In Egypt, the state or the military owns these lands. At the best of times, managing public land in Egypt is a complicated and ambiguous procedure. According to the 1981 law, the Minister of Defense has absolute powers over desert territories, including determining and allocating land, whether for the private sector, military, or strategic use<sup>83</sup>. The Armed Forces Land Projects Organization (AFLPO) was established in 1982 by a presidential decree to oversee the sale of military-owned land.

Under Mubarak's rule, urban planning and development became a product of Egypt's neoliberal political economy based on market demand. According to Wahdan (2009), urban planning has evolved into a tool for real estate development. "Urban Entrepreneurship," which emphasized the importance of the private sector "who build gated districts with names like *Utopia, Dreamland, Belle Ville, Hyde Park, El-Rehab ("Spacious") City, and Palm Hills*" (Lindsey, 2017), was at the heart of this political shift. Upper socioeconomic strata and middle-class families were the primary targets and the beneficiaries of the official housing market in the past two decades (1990: 2000). Gated communities, as a new building trend, were the means to meet the official goal. Although these new city projects dominate media narratives on urban growth and are often viewed as a threat to urban sprawl, they have only developed 2% of the populated land mass (Shawkat & Hendawy, 2016). Since then, Cairo has been constantly in "demolition/reconstruction/densification" state (Al Kadi 2012).

Massive infrastructure investments and public planning have increased private sector participation in public megaprojects and local political discourse. As a result, new forms of empowerment and disempowerment have emerged in a crucial area of urban governance. However, in urban development projects headed by the state government, strategies such as centralization, privatization, partnership, and empowerment are all employed through legislation to promote market-driven development. As a result, uneven spatial morphologies are exacerbated even further. In times of political upheaval, political stability is both a goal and a significant economic growth instrument for regimes. As a result, President Al-Sisi quickly reverted to the Mubarak-era development model for long-term rent sources to stimulate local and international private investment and partnerships to enhance economic growth and restore stability. Since President Mohammed Morsi was deposed in July of 2013, the military's capacity to consolidate its control and tighten its grip on the economy has been aided not just by security assistance, but also by the broader foreign backing and financial aid provided to Egypt after Mubarak. President Sissi' regime

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<sup>83</sup> Desert Lands Act of 1981 (Law No. 143).

have received considerable economic and political support from the Gulf specially from United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. Contrary to the common assumption, Cairo's expanding regionalization results from the government's increased emphasis on urban production, not global financialization. Desert development continues to dominate the State-led urbanization approach. Another presidential decree issued in December 2015 directed the profits from relinquishing military territory to the establishment of "new military zones," creating a legal framework that permits the Armed Forces to invest in arid terrain (Sawaf, 2016). Over 90% to 95% of Egypt's surface area has been allotted to the Ministry of Defense for use.

The state and foreign capital prioritize the real estate and construction markets in Egypt. According to Tadamun Urban Initiative, "*the national policy in Egypt for decades has been to rely on the real estate and construction sectors as drivers of GDP growth*". (TADAMUN, 2015). Laws that foster close collaboration between governmental planning bodies and the private sector have led to the privatization of the construction and real estate sectors (Ansari, 2011; Sims, 2003; Serag, 2015). The real estate market in Greater Cairo has seen a resurgence since 2011 after it had been stagnant, thanks to several loans, grants, and announcements of massive real estate projects from GCC countries as geopolitical partners. In this context, President Al-Sisi has committed a large portion of the state's resources to real estate construction, such as constructing three smart cities targeting upper-middle-class customers. These beachfronts luxury housing is emulating Dubai's concept. For the less well-off middle class and employees in the new industrial zones, various urban projects are being developed. According to Carnegie Middle East Center's published report, the volume of real estate and infrastructure projects highlights the Ministry of Defense's "*uncontested and broad regulatory control over planning, allocation, and management*" (Barayez, 2016), wherein the government "*subordinated the private sector as the economy's subcontractors, also serving as the nation's general contractor*" (Aziz, 2016). The total cost of these urban construction projects is unknown, but they are part of a major government-funded programmed that has already raised 4 trillion Egyptian pounds (almost USD 200 billion) from 2014 to 2019.

In 2014, the idea of significant national development projects, such as the New Suez Canal Development Project and the National Road project, which target the construction of around 4000 kilometers of new roads all over Egypt, and Egypt's New Administrative Capital, quickly became the dominant topic of debate. With national projects, Al-Sisi stands out from the others. Al-Sisi's national projects are notable for their magnitude and his ambitions to transform real estate into mega financial investment in which the state maintains and holds a majority share. The current government of Egypt uses size, quantity, and a short implementation period to quantify and verify performance and achievement (Elmouelhi, 2019).

### 11.4 Egypt's New Administrative Capital and the Narrative Behind Relocating the Capital

Each country is represented in the world by its capital city. The capital city has a crucial role in shaping a nation's political, economic, social, and cultural identity. The rise of a new wave of capital cities may be linked to political and social changes on global and national scales, or it may result from countries' independence from European Empires (Schatz, 2004). According to Lawrence Vale (2008)

*"Although all capitals, beginning with the earliest citadel, have had symbolic roles that fortified and magnified the presence of government, nothing seems quite comparable to the manifold pressures of modern nationalism.....In the emerging postcolonial world of the middle and late twentieth century, the leadership of newly independent states frequently attempted to use architecture not only to house a new form of government (parliamentary democracy), but also to proclaim the worthiness of the new regime and advance its status. The professed goal of such government buildings is to forge something most often termed national identity or national unity; yet...the design of these buildings remains closely tied to political forces that reinforce existing patterns of dominance and submission' "* (Lawrence, 2008: p.10, 17).

Many countries in the South and North believe that the solution to the urban housing crisis is creating brand new cities to answer the urban housing issue, as well as ease a city's overpopulation *"Higher urban quality has come onto the planning agenda in most world cities, from New York to Singapore. This high quality can mean a better physical environment but also a more varied and exciting cultural life"*. (Newman& Thornley, 2011: p.274). However, it ignores the city's underlying issues, such as the inequitable distribution of resources or the deprivation of public space, which is the exact problem. Cairo, Egypt's capital city, is plagued by overpopulation as a major issue. This issue resulted in traffic congestion, pollution, increased informality and slums, extensive urban sprawl, and lack of public space. History of Egypt has seen a wide range of attempts to transfer the administrative capital of Egypt (approximately 28 times), from more symbolic shifts in ancient times (up to 960 A.D.) to more literal relocations in modern times (Graham, 2011). The idea of a new administrative headquarters outside of Cairo's expanding boundaries is not new or peculiar to Egypt. However, some of these relocation attempts were more successful than others.

Nasr City, a new suburb east of Cairo, was established in 1958 to move government institutions there under the tenure of President Nasser. In 1978, President Anwar Al-Sadat intended to develop a new administrative capital in the desert 96 kilometers north of Cairo and move all government institutions there. The new capital, dubbed Sadat, aimed to encourage a sizable population to move there by creating a solid industrial economic base. After a brief flourishing and the partial relocation of some ministries to Sadat City, these ministries, such as the Ministry of Housing, moved back to Cairo after Sadat's assassination (Serag, 2017). Mubarak's rule saw yet another effort to create a new capital in line with the GC 2050 strategic plan, which had been abandoned because of the 2011 revolution. These cities' development strategies were founded on the principle of functional separation. Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak's attempts to transfer the governmental institutions to the desert west and east of Cairo ultimately failed due to political factors, lack of funding, and widespread opposition (Stewart, 1999).

#### *11.4.1 The Necessity of establishing New Administrative Capital (NAC) and the future of Downtown*

Egyptian officials announced their plans to create Wedian City as the country's new global capital at Sharm El Sheikh Economic Summit in 2015. The New Administrative Capital is officially promoted as a national project to address Cairo's challenges. The project is a means to solve Cairo's uncontrolled urban expansion issues (Serag, 2017; Khorshed, 2017) and urban development problems such as environmental deterioration, excessive pollution levels, and lack of convenient transportation and infrastructure (Adham, 2014). This project became one of Egypt's 2030s highest priorities since the beginning of its construction in 2017 and continues to this day.

The New Administrative Capital (NAC) is 45 kilometers from Cairo. The NAC's total area is around 170,000 feddan, even larger than Washington, DC. The project is consistent with Egypt's long-term policy of expanding new constructions and communities toward the desert, away from an increasingly complicated, populous inner city and the Nile Valley. The NAC's layout was designed by the American engineering and urban planning company (SOM, 2015). As announced, in ten years, after all phases of the project are done, the plan is to have up to seven million citizens living on 700 Km<sup>2</sup> (GLL, 2018).

The city is between Greater Cairo and the region of the Suez Canal. Egypt's Minister of Housing, Mostafa Madbouly, claimed in December 2017 that there were two key factors in determining the NAC's strategic location: First, according to a recent review of Cairo's urban expansion, most planned districts are located in Cairo's eastern side. Second, the proximity of the NAC location to the newly established project in the Suez Canal zone, in which significant investments have been made (Ahmed, 2015), affords various investment opportunities (Marie, 2015). Construction of the New Administrative Capital is anticipated to enhance the profitability of the Suez Canal project, offering thousands of employments and absorbing Cairo's overpopulation (Motawei, 2015).

The NAC and its peripheral lands are under the direction and supervision of the Administrative Capital for Urban Development (ACUD), a joint venture between the Ministry of Housing (49%) and the Egyptian military (51%) (Lindsey, 2017). The New Administrative Capital was considered a paradigm for large-scale urban development projects, wherein the private sector real estate developers and the state collaborated. Capital City Partners, a private investment firm in the United Arab Emirates, was expected to provide financial aid for the project, but negotiations ended after subsequent discussions failed to reach an agreement. In addition, Mohamed Alabbar, the former CEO of Emaar, was supposed to be one of the project's primary backers, but he left Emaar in January 2016. Subsequently, two of Chinese companies (CSCEC<sup>84</sup>) and (CFLD<sup>85</sup>) were potential partners, both of which later stepped down. In the end, Egypt had no option but to rely on Egyptian private enterprises, so the government and local contractors would share the financial risk.

Deliberations on the need and appropriateness of building Egypt's new administrative capital have heated up at a crucial juncture in the nation's history. It also raises the question of how cash-strapped Egypt can finance such an ambitious construction project during this critical era in Egypt's history. Although establishing new administrative capital is critical for various reasons, including economic and environmental factors, it is mainly a political imperative. One of the key rationales behind it is the necessity for a large vision for justifying and legitimizing the authority of President Al-Sisi and his desire to evacuate and move the governmental institutions from downtown Cairo as an epicentre of unrest. The plan of the New Administrative Capital, as Lindsey (2017) claimed, perceives the open space as *“décor for political pageantry, or as a suburban amenity, rather than as a contested public realm. The new capital will be so far from the urban center, and the spaces within it so vast, that it's hard to see how citizens could ever congregate in large numbers to express political demands”*. According to Sayigh (2020), President Al-Sisi *“openly disdains economic feasibility studies and needs to purchase the loyalty of the state institutions that constitute the governing coalition he heads. So, the military presses ahead with schemes such as the new administrative capital, even though it does not know how to supply water for the 7 million inhabitants it is designed to host”*. As projected by Serag (2017), the NAC's development plan would result in a single huge swath of developed land. He also suggested that the 500-kilometer distance between the new city and Central Cairo would eventually prevent daily communication, turning the NAC into a city of ghosts at night. Despite the public outrage and widespread criticism over the absence of a socio-economic effect analysis, the government nonetheless proceeded with the build, assigning 80% of minor-league contractors to finish it in record time<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> China State Construction Engineering Corporation

<sup>85</sup> China Fortune Land Development Company

<sup>86</sup> Aleasimah al'iidariah aljadidah: alaiqtisad almsri bikhidmat mashrue Alsisi. The new administrative capital: the Egyptian economy at the service of the Sisi project, 2017.

The framework for "Capital City Outsourcing" was the pattern of city development originated in the Cairo 2050 project, even if it has been informally abandoned in the aftermath of Egypt's political upheavals in 2011 (Elmouelhi, 2019). The plan is centered mostly on the branding of New Cairo and the relocation of governmental funds and investments away from Cairo's historic core. Here, the problem of branding comes into play. In recent decades, Dubai has emerged as a role model inspiring national governments and planners to a great extent in the Arab region "*Dubai, as a model of urban development, is based primarily on images and icons rather than sustainable concepts and process*" (Alraouf, 2006). According to El-Sheshtawy (2006), "Dubalization" became the means of developing cities around architectural masterpieces that are incongruous, such as Cairo's development plan, as he dubbed "The Dubalization of Cairo's skyline."

The NAC project includes 100 districts hosting governmental institutions and ministries, a district for foreign diplomatic representation, a financial and business center, and 21 residential zones. It will also include metro lines to link the city with Cairo and Suez and an international airport of about 15 km<sup>2</sup>, larger than London Heathrow. It is also prepared to host medical and sports facilities and educational services such as international universities and a regional park four times the size of Disneyland. In addition, towers and skyscrapers up to 450m tall were depicted (Loewert & Steiner, 2019).

*"The city is planned to have skyscrapers and home to Africa's tallest tower and would become the new administrative and financial capital of Egypt, housing the main government departments and ministries as well as foreign embassies. The city will also have a green river with artificial lakes and 90 km<sup>2</sup> of solar energy farms. It will be built as a smart city that relies heavily on automated services instead of manpower to supply its citizens with services such as, traffic and transportation systems. It is planned that the transfer of parliament, government ministries and foreign embassies will be completed between 2020 and 2022 at a cost of US \$45 billion for the first phase".* quoted the Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly in press.

With NAC's approach, it is reasonable to deduce that branding is vital to reaching the desired profitability of investors, mainly through architecture. Symbolism and logic play a significant role in the selection and presentation of particular items or structures to be developed in the initial phase, such as the religious complex as a symbol of unity, the parliament as an emblem of political power and democracy, and the Massa Hotel, which represents luxury and high-end quality. These benchmarks, which act as marketing criteria, are used to increase the desirability and desirability of units sold.

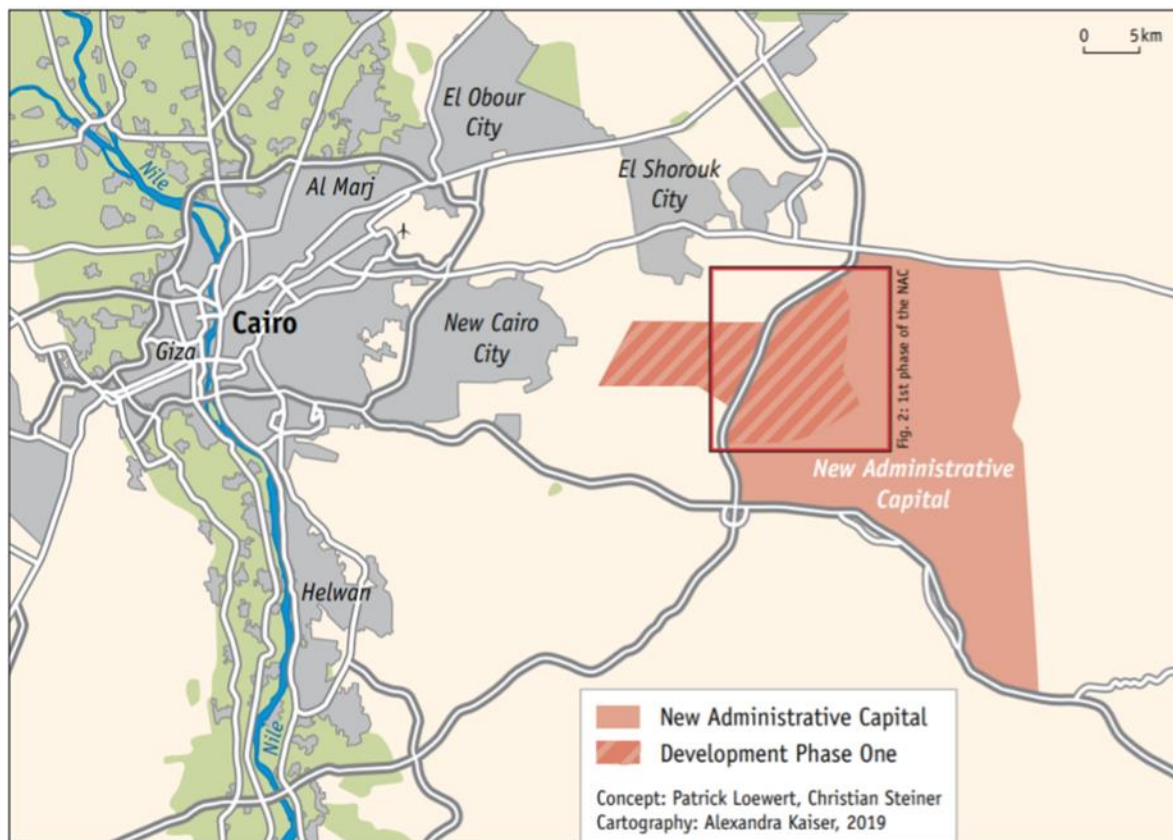


Figure 98: Location and Size of the New Administrative Capital in Relation to the Greater Cairo agglomeration. Source: (Steiner & Loewert, 2019)

The officials of the Engineering Authority indicated that all the constructions in the New Administrative Capital have been completed, except the electromechanical and minor facade work (Abu Zaid, 2021). The first phase of Egypt's new administrative capital, with about five-year cost of USD 58 billion by 2022, consumed nearly 10% of overall expenditures in January 2020 (EGP 300 billion or \$USD 19.05 billion) (Sayegh, 2020).

Since real estate is a vital sector, there is a fundamentally different paradigm of state capitalism in real estate-dominated countries than in resource-rich countries. The state's engagement in real estate markets gives it an exceptional degree of power over the planning and management of urban space and the predisposition to consider urban form as a weapon to achieve state goals in national development and social and political engineering. While the value of natural resources is mostly determined by global supply and demand, the value of real estate largely depends on the government's capacity to create an ever-increasing wave of economic and real estate innovation.

The impact of the New Administrative Capital's development on the real estate market is clearer now. As mentioned in the JLL Research Report (2019), Cairo Real Estate market, “*Cairo’s real estate market continued to improve in the fourth quarter of 2019. .... further progress on the New Administrative Capital is driving the continued shift to East Cairo, which is applying upwards pressure on New Cairo rental rates. Secondary sale prices continued to grow in New Cairo over the quarter, with prices of 6th of October villas jumping onboard*” (JLL, Mar 22, 2020).

In the project's first phase, 34 Egyptian ministries and 76 government buildings would be relocated to the new government district. It is anticipated that these locations will be evacuated and relocated within the next 18 months. Due to the digitization of many government services and the relocation of significant government activity outside of the city center, several administrative offices have been relocated. The government is working according to a comprehensive strategy to maximize the use of all its resources. According to ACUD, the revenues from these empty buildings will be reinvested in the Administrative Capital for Urban Development. Hence, the Egyptian Sovereign Fund was established following the Singaporean model. Real estate has long been a popular investment choice for sovereign wealth funds with their means and expertise ability to manage an internationally diversified portfolio.

### **11.5 The Sovereign Fund of Egypt**

Even though sovereign wealth funds are relatively few and secretive in form, their expanding assets under management and influence on global financial markets continue to attract attention. The development of Sovereign Wealth Funds (SWF) has heralded a significant restructuring of the global economy. Sovereign wealth funds, or sovereign portfolios, are investment portfolios that manage a portion of the state's wealth and government's financial reserves (Wafi, 2021). Sovereign wealth funds focus on long-term investments of 5 to 15 years or strategic investments in economic diplomacy and national security rather than short-term earnings and quick profits. As a result, it is frequently handled with great caution to achieve the highest possible return.

According to Law 177 of 2018, Egypt's Sovereign Fund was created. Its articles of organization (IFSWF, 2019)<sup>87</sup> were made public in February 2019 in virtue of Prime Minister’s Decree No 555 of 2019<sup>88</sup>. In Egypt, the SWF’s legislation presented an authoritarian paradigm of controlling and transferring ownership of public land and assets. The right to transfer ownership of any unused or exploited state-owned assets is granted to the President and his government by law. In addition

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<sup>87</sup> Under its articles of association, the Fund’s mandate is to contribute to the sustainable economic development of Egypt by managing its assets to maximise their value for future generations.

<sup>88</sup> The Sovereign Fund of Egypt official website <https://tsfe.com/>



to allowing them to purchase, exploit, and benefit from the assets, the SWF gives them the right to borrow, sell, rent, lease, or issue shares and financial bonds to raise funds with the intention of transferring ownership. The transactions of the fund and the entities in which it participates are exempt from all taxes and fees under the law and its amendments (Wafi, 2021). In June 2019, the Fund has been registered as a member of the International Forum of Sovereign Wealth Funds (IFSWF). According to the Global Sovereign Wealth Funds Institute's categorization, the Egyptian Fund quickly moved up to 43<sup>rd</sup> place among global wealth funds<sup>89</sup>. The institution calculates an estimated USD 11.959 billion or 0.14 percent of global Sovereign Fund assets (Abdeen, 2020).

A surplus of money, such as the surplus of oil revenues in the GCC and oil-producing countries to ensure multigenerational equity and economic stabilization, and GDP surpluses in China and Russia, are the basis for all Sovereign Funds. The Sovereign Fund is a way for states and their governments to diversify their economic and revenue resources, pursue their economic and political goals outside their borders, and safeguard against currency fluctuations. Investments in real estate have traditionally been favored by sovereign wealth funds that have the resources and expertise to oversee a globally diversified portfolio. Egypt has no financial surpluses and suffers a severe budget deficit (Alsawy, 2018)<sup>90</sup>. However, the unused assets are worth billions of Egyptian pounds. In addition, the negative ramifications of privatization strategies undertaken in the late 1990s and early 2000s prompted a policy shift toward a new approach of acquiring the government's shares in real estate assets. The fund's principal objective is to invest in the state-owned assets, manage them with local and foreign investors to raise their value and effectiveness for the Egyptian economy, and foster cooperation with the private sector. The Egyptian Sovereign Fund adopted Singaporean model to recover the Economy of Egypt (Elleithy, 2019).

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<sup>89</sup> The Global Sovereign Wealth Funds Institute includes 93 funds with a net asset value of \$8.229 trillion.

<sup>90</sup> As it has a funding gap of 438 billion pounds (\$24.5 billion), which is managed through internal and external borrowing, as well as a cumulative public debt of 3.4 trillion pounds at the local level and \$92.1 billion at the external level. Moreover, Egypt plans to borrow from 8 to 10 billion dollars during the fiscal year 2018/2019.

In 2010, the sovereign wealth fund in Singapore (*Temasek*), as Shatkin (2014) stated in his article, “held about US \$74 billion in assets in Singapore-based companies that had a total capitalization of more than US \$150 billion (*Temasek Holdings, 2010*). Given that the total capitalization of the Singapore stock market stood at approximately US \$400 billion at the time of this writing, this represents a substantial stake in the economy (*ADVFN, 2011*)” (Shatkin, 2014: p.117). Singapore is now at the epicenter of a number of lucrative real estate development industries, allowing the country to fund its own goals through the reinvestment of the proceeds in urban development activities. The government has made sizable financial gains while retaining control over the urban space production via economic exploitation of and intervention in the world's most active real estate market, shares in publicly held and privately-held firms, as well as landholdings through the selling of land leases.

The Prime Minister's Decree states that Egypt's SWF was created for “*Contributing to sustainable economic development by managing its money and assets and achieving optimal utilization of them according to the best international standards and rules, to maximize their value for the sake of future generations, and for the sake of that, the Egypt’s sovereign wealth fund has the right to cooperate and participate with Arab and foreign counterpart funds and various financial institutions*”. (Wafi, 2021). Ayman Soliman, CEO of the Sovereign Fund of Egypt, indicates that the fund's investment portfolio is determined by the appetite of the potential investors. According to the fund's CEO, the process of selecting the assets that will eventually be included to the fund's portfolio of assets is a “*cherry-picks to lure investors*” (Werr, 2019). The real estate assets have been selected from the massive stockpile held by a number of government entities such as ministries, without letting down the ownership of many of their economic assets. These assets also include the neglected historic buildings and the other untapped state-owned assets managed by the state's insurance companies and other government entities with the intent of leasing them out to private investors (Fazza, 2020). Finance Minister, Mohamed Maait, stated that there is a conflict of interests between the ministerial administrative authorities over the ownership of real estate assets, which prevents their disposal and exploitation and, therefore, delay their use. Hence, “*The political will does exist to unlock those assets.*” (Werr, 2019). Ayman Soliman, CEO of the Sovereign Fund in Cairo, stated, “*We will be a catalyst to try to do things differently, unshackled from all those bureaucracies, and improve the way of doing business itself and work with the checks and balances within the government management that investors cannot navigate,*” (Werr, 2019). In order to foster public-private partnerships, the Fund is governed by an executive board and general assembly, both made up mostly of individuals from the private sector. Sub-funds and subsidiaries are intended to generate long-term revenue and create value through investments made directly by the Egyptian SWF. Investments made by Egypt's SWF as Ayman Soliman stated in (“Our Exclusive Talk”, 2019), are critical to the long-term strategy for creating more Egyptian multinationals' expansion.

In many aspects, Egypt's SWF differs from ordinary commercial firms in terms of procedures and privileges. The Egyptian Parliament gave its first official assent in June 2020 to amend Law No. 177 of 2018 in several respects to contribute to long-term economic growth by effectively managing its finances and assets and assets of state-owned companies and state-affiliated organizations. The proposed 26 amendments of articles, such as Articles (3), (6), and (19), are mainly focused on increasing the authority of this fund and its personnel and attempting to sidestep the existing bureaucracy among government entities. According to these amendments, it is now illegal for anybody to initiate a lawsuit against the fund to nullify any of its agreements. There are also no appeals or claims that may be filed before courts regarding these conflicts. Others, however, believe that these amendments pave the way for corruption because there is no oversight or accountability even by Parliament.

#### *11.5.1 The Sovereign Fund and Privatization in Egypt*

Recently, privatization or outsourcing has become a widespread practice because of financial limitations to raise revenues, rethink the state's role in the commercial sector, and increase calls for more government accountability. Governments are increasingly seizing the privatization opportunities created by globalization, market deregulation, and technological progress. Formerly public goods and services have been privatized or outsourced to the private sector. The devolution of public services is a global phenomenon, regardless of origin.

Privatization is a process by which the ownership of public and state-owned assets is transferred to the private sector, or government-run services are handed over to private administration. The private sector's involvement in the economy grew until it attained a certain level of dominance. The term "privatization" covers a wide range of different service delivery models such as contracting through competitive bidding, franchises and concessions which grant the state and their government agencies monopoly privileges to the chosen private provider, grants and subsidies directly and indirectly provided by the government entities and public-private partnerships (PPP), etc.; At the same time, a lesser-used technique is asset sales to private and for-profit companies to finance other public services. The investment climate and financial infrastructure are critical factors in the success of privatization of state-owned assets and the desirability of state-owned assets for potential purchasers and investors.

In Egypt, since the net foreign direct investment rate dropped 23.5% from USD 7.7 billion in the fiscal year 2018 to around USD 5.9 billion in the fiscal year 2019 (Eid, 2019), with the nearing end of the IMF reform program, the government concentrated on soliciting foreign investments. As a result, the Egyptian authorities have played a significant role in encouraging privatization and commodification. Indeed, throughout the Fund, Egypt is taking its first step toward privatization. The establishment of the Sovereign Fund as a single-handed decision maker was a tool for speeding and reinforcing privatization. The state shielded the fund's sale contracts to entice Arab and foreign investors who are wary of government bureaucracy and want their interests protected. The fund's purpose was to help the government make structural changes that contributed to boosting economic development in various industries.

The Fund plans to modernize and develop downtown Cairo into a tourist destination by investing in the government's most potential under-used and untapped assets owned by ministries in partnership with public and private sector enterprises (Ayman Soliman, CEO of the Sovereign Fund in Cairo, in Werr, 2019). According to Article 5, the law allows the president to transfer ownership of the un-exploited assets from the state to the Sovereign Wealth Fund, as well as, the unused assets, including the ministries, authorities, and other state-run agencies in coordination with the Ministry that owns the assets according to the regulations approved by parliament, such as vacated premises in downtown Cairo after being relocated to the New Administrative Capital.

According to Official Gazette, President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi transferred the ownership of seven public buildings and land to the Sovereign Fund of Egypt. The properties include the Tahrir Complex (Mogamma), the old Ministry of Interior headquarters, and the land plot of the disbanded National Democratic Party headquarters. After the recent presidential decree on Thursday, September 3, 2020, the buildings are no longer subject to public service rules. The Misr Sub Fund for Tourism, Real Estate Investment and Antiquities Development invests in tourism, real estate and the development of monuments and buildings with distinguished architectural character in compliance with the best international standards and norms.



Figure 99: The location of Tahrir complex and Ministry of Interior in downtown Cairo. Source: (BBC news, 2011)

#### 11.5.1.1 The Mogamma Complex

The Qasr Al Nil area's Mogamma Complex was the outcome of a series of master designs. Following the departure of British troops in 1945, King Farouk ordered the destruction of the barracks, which sparked a number of urban development suggestions (Stadiem, 2009). The 1945 blueprints introduced the concept of a single, centralized administrative structure. This project started in 1946 and was completed in 1949. Art Deco government buildings like Buffalo's City Hall have inspired the design of this new structure (Lang, 2015). The Mogamma Complex is a colossal building complex with a centralized government function and a classically inspired arcade entrance. The architect who designed the structure, Mohamed Kamal Ismail, described its architectural style as a streamlined Islamic style. The building was initially intended to house only 4,000 employees. Later and up to this day, the number of employees has increased rapidly between 25,000 and 30,000 to include people who are working in the same facility every day. Furthermore, the building receives between 60 and 70 thousand visitors per day. The floor area of the 13-story skyscraper is about 3000 square meters per level, with an extra 2000 square meters of landscape in front of the arc-shaped structure. The building has been known as a symbol of Egyptian bureaucracy as it houses a slew of administrative and governmental offices and is designed in a logical manner. The building houses a total of 1310 offices, all of which are close to each other.

Besides its scale and purpose, the Mogamma is intriguing because of the void it will leave after relocating its personnel and core government functions to the New Administrative Capital and digitizing many government services. Adapting the Mogamma building for new uses could be a springboard for new interactions with the surrounding structures and as a blank canvas for additional support services to get the ball rolling on various possibilities for the future. However, working within the parameters of an existing building necessitates a high level of expertise. For local and international investors and developers, the Sovereign Fund has created an offering memorandum that explains its vision for developing the Mogamma complex. Plans for a major renovation include retooling the three-acre-plus facility so that it may serve as a hotel, commercial, administrative, and cultural center, guaranteeing constant long-term financial returns for the state.



*Figure 100: The suggest renovation plan for Tahrir complex. Source: (Nile FM Staff, 2021)*

## **Chapter Eleven Conclusion**

In the state capitalism era, the state can serve as a planner and land speculator because of the state's hegemony in the land and real estate markets. Through the urban regeneration process, the state finances the built environment via the mandatory contributions of the public and private sectors and recently through partnerships with the private sector as a key player benefiting from the state-owned land or properties. In addition, the state-owned land and property lease generates profitable revenue from the private sector actors. Hence, the Sovereign Fund was established for this purpose. These factors enhance the use of the gentrification process. The gentrification process in downtown Cairo is intertwined with the state capitalism model and private sector investments. Relocating the ministerial and administrative operations to the New Administrative Capital significantly impacted the downtown Cairo regeneration project. It exemplifies the military's increasing influence on urban development as evidenced by the New Administrative Capital and the influx of high levels of state-sanctioned Gulf investment represented in the US-UAE consortium for refurbishing the Mogamma Al-Tahrir complex in downtown Cairo (see discussion and analysis chapter). The state, along with the Sovereign Wealth Fund of Egypt, is currently the largest owner of downtown properties, and its decisions will have far-reaching implications for downtown Cairo's socio-economic future.

## **12 Chapter Twelve: Waterfront Redevelopment (Ahl Masr Walkway)**

### **12.1 Introduction**

The link between existing and natural resources, open spaces, constructed forms of architecture, and infrastructure must be balanced for sustainable regional development. For example, city waterfronts are vibrant spaces that offer environmental, aesthetic, and economic benefits. Contemporary waterfront developments could enhance social inclusion and the right to the city because of the accessibility to nature and high-quality public spaces they frequently provide. However, the surge in waterfront development is due to increased tourist demand and the middle class for recreational activities. In this context, high-end projects may exclude a large part of the residents from the regenerated area and prevent undesired users from claiming the space directly or indirectly. As a result, gentrification can be accelerated due to waterfront development's spillover effects.

Since the 1970s, waterfront redevelopment has taken place across the world. However, connecting Cairo to the Nile was never a key priority for Egyptian city planners; instead, at first, just a few studies on the subject were conducted by academics. The idea for downtown Cairo's revitalization aimed to improve resource utilization, focusing primarily on public space. The GC 2050 vision and strategic development plan served as the basis for this aim. The development of Cornish El-Nile process as a flagship project included two phases. The first phase has been completed by Cairo governorate in coordination with NOUH in 2017. From September 2019, "Cornish El-Nile" underwent a new development phase. The current waterfront development project is a profitable-led approach driven by business interests. The state-led gentrification model has entailed the radical transformation of Khedival Cairo's built environment through the redevelopment of Cornish El-Nile as a flagship project for enhancing downtown Cairo's economic attractiveness.

According to Evans (2003), cities have adopted a hard branding strategy through various tactics, such as implementing flagship development projects that show repetition or a lack of distinction (Relph, 1976). The development of the corniche El Nil enhanced water access and allowed for various uses and commercial activities, but accessibility became an issue. For the state, premium and high-end private developments take precedence over public access to the riverfront. Barriers, including fences, have been removed from waterfront areas that had been previously inaccessible. However, new barriers have been erected in their place to attract high-end consumers, including luxurious restaurants, cafes, and tourist attractions.



## 12.2 The Evolution Of Waterfront Development As A Flagship Project

According to Akköse (2007), the formation of cities depends on three factors including city's social, physical, and natural structure. These variables form the city's overall system and their interaction with one another. The availability of water resources, as Hamamcolu (2005) cites Kİç (2001) stated, contributed significantly to the development of communities and their identities across the world and transportation, industry, sanitation, food production and subsistence (Pekin, 2008). Urban waterfronts can be natural (Shaziman et al., 2010) or artificial. They are renewable yet finite resources encapsulating each community's unique history and character.

According to their distance from the water, urban waterfronts can be divided into five distinct categories (Wrenn et al., 1983). The first two lines, on peninsulas and bays, symbolise coastal cities, whereas the last three lines, on riverbanks or another substantial body of water, represent inner cities (Al Ansari, 2009). Each urban waterfront has its distinct history (Akköse, 2007). There has not always been regular and meticulous planning of waterfronts. As more and more industries, activities, and government regulations have merged, development has expanded and become increasingly disconnected. According to Wrenn et al. (1983), the waterfront evolved over time into four distinct phases.

- A) Rise of Waterfront Cities
- B) Expansion of waterfronts.
- C) Waterfront deterioration.
- D) Rediscovery of waterfronts

The return and rediscovery of waterfronts in cities have triggered several changes in urban development, including the necessity to reinvest capital in regions with declining returns in inner cities and emergence of entrepreneurism in urban governance, the shifting role of urban planning to become more responsive to developers' needs and the globalization of redevelopment enterprises (Knox, 1993). Waterfront redevelopment is frequently discussed as part of urban or cultural regeneration schemes (Smith, 2007; Jones, 1998). Governmental urban policy, sustainable development and redevelopment approaches are all tied to waterfront regeneration. Other comparable terms have been used in urban redevelopment to refer to waterfront development projects, including "waterfront regeneration" (McCarthy, 1996), "waterfront revitalization" (Hoyle, 2001), and "waterfront rehabilitation" and "waterfront redevelopment" (Gospodini, 2001). However, between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s, these efforts were primarily focused on the development of post-industrial port cities and the regenerative functions that spurred revitalization of the city's center and inner areas (Goddard, 2002). Regeneration involves public and private efforts, investment decisions and development prompted by community aspirations and demands for implementing a waterfront plan that enhances urban, social, environmental, and economic qualities.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, waterfront redevelopment projects in North America were largely regarded as an effective strategy for combating urban degradation in inner-city waterfront districts. According to Tunbridge (1988), several factors have stimulated the revitalization of American port cities, including demography shift, the discovery of old dockland areas, availability of low-cost residential property, increased heritage awareness, the growing importance of urban tourism etc. Redevelopment of the American waterfront includes a variety of land uses, mainly “*residential, recreational, and tourist-related uses*” (Özyavuz, 2013). The term “Central Waterfront” was frequently used to describe these newly developed urban waterfront areas. These pioneering projects often served as a foundation or model for subsequent waterfront revitalization efforts worldwide. As a result of Baltimore's Inner Harbour's rehabilitation, the phenomenon of waterfront regeneration gained widespread recognition and acceptance worldwide. The project transformed the declining port area into a recreational area for urban dwellers and visitors (Al Ansari, 2009). The Baltimore Syndrome is a term coined by scholars and academics, including Hoyle (2001a) and Shaw (2001), to describe this phenomenon. During the 1980s and 1990s, urban intervention and national politics in Europe significantly affected waterfront redevelopment as one of the most prominent goals of urban regeneration. It played a crucial role in inner-city revitalization. Hoyle (2000) asserts that North America's urban renewal strategy includes water redevelopment. In Europe, it is more of a byproduct of improvements to marine transportation. However, in the UK, post-industrial urban regeneration process included water redevelopment projects as an integral part of its urban strategy. The local and national settings in which waterfront regeneration initiatives are carried out have influenced their development.

Waterfront redevelopment has become a “mindset” for developers, city municipalities, development agencies, and national governments as the benefits of “waterfront development” were increasingly obvious in the early 1990s. According to Jones (1998: p.434), “*since the mid 1980's the vocabulary of urban waterfront regeneration has been clearly established in the minds of developers, local authorities and national government departments*”. Later, the trend that originated in North America spread to all major cities in Western Europe and was adopted widely in other countries (Tastsoglou & Dimitra, 2012), such as Australia, Hong Kong, Japan, and Mainland China. Since the early 1980s, more and more study has been conducted on this topic (Hoyle & Pinder, 1992; Jauhiainen, 1995). The improvement of the postindustrial waterfronts as a series of cultural contexts has also impacted developing countries, thanks to studies like these (Gunay & Dokmeci, 2012).

The emphasis on neoliberal competition elevates specific urban spaces over others. In the era of neoliberal urbanization, the waterfront is a crucial spot of planning intervention (Hoyle, 1988, 2000), led by "*neoliberal competitive city paradigm*" (Oakley, 2011: p. 234). Different strategies incorporated the waterfront's transformation from public space to leisure, retail, and residential areas. For example, in Baltimore's Inner Harbour, Barcelona's Port Vell, and Sydney's Darling Harbour, where the waterfront has been developed as a tourist destination; in London's Canary Wharf, where the waterfront was an expansion of the financial district; and in Rotterdam's Kop Van Zuid, where the waterfront has been developed as a residential district. Recently, waterfront development has become part of an ecological and sustainable development platform (Malone, 1996).

Prestigious projects feature local boosterism, city marketing and intense demands on funds and financial risk management, which are more prevalent in waterfront regeneration (Fields, 2017; Ward, 2017). Beneficiaries of the new economy are expected to enjoy these urban sceneries generated by regeneration. For many companies, waterfront has emerged as the solution to their quest for an eco-friendlier workplace. Others viewed waterfront regeneration as an undertaking designed to privatize space and commodify culture (Moore, 2008; Harvey, 1989). In addition, regeneration projects along the waterfront are a part of a broader entrepreneurial agenda and serve as a platform for forming public-private, multi-stakeholder partnerships for promoting specific projects. As a result, community engagement is no longer considered an asset but a hindrance.

Having long waterfronts near to the city centre is advantageous for cities located on headlands, peninsulas, or small islands. Similar arguments may be for the cities along rivers, estuaries, and deltas that meet at a point in their development. For creating streets, parks, and other public spaces in cities, rivers have taken on a crucial role as the spine. Moreover, since rivers have played an essential role in the history of many cities, social connectedness between the city's residents and the river can help to cement further the city's identity. According to European center for River Restoration (ECRR, 2019) "*Rivers play a vital role in the community by encouraging social interaction and bonding.*" Extensive waterfronts mean more public places on the waterfront that link them to additional interior public areas (Al Ansari, 2009). The Riverfront's regeneration is a promising opportunity for growth, establishing itself as a central axis in a newly structured public space and attracting a wide variety of activities and people.

### **12.3 The River Nile and the Regeneration process of Cornish El-Nile**

As one of the world's most ancient rivers, the Nile has been Egypt's lifeblood since the dawn of civilization. The Nile is derived from the Greek "Neilos", a valley or river valley. The length of the Nile is approximately 6,853 km, 3126 km in Egypt. It runs from Abu Simbel in the south to Damietta (Domiati) and Rosetta (Rasheed) north through most of Egypt's major cities. It also runs through Cairo's Greater Cairo Region (GCR), which includes the governorates of Cairo and Giza. In Cairo, the Nile has always been considered the symbol of life as it used to serve as the main transportation route. In the 1970s, the Nile became an investment opportunity. As a result, massive structures began to spring up along the Nile, undermining the connectedness of districts with the surrounding natural environment. The Riverbanks of the Nile were exposed to unplanned privatization for building luxury hotels, private clubs, restaurants, and police/military stations. The Greater Cairo Region (GCR) riverbanks are littered and appropriated with private and government-owned constructions and activities. Consequently, the Nile was walled off from the public physically, visually, and symbolically (Gabr, 2004). Due to the lack of public spaces in Egypt and other avenues for citizen interaction, the social gap between Egyptians is widening (Attia, 2013). Since there is not much open green space and poor pedestrians, street vendors who offer plastic chairs to those who cannot afford better choices have increased the informality of the river's bridges until it has become a common sight. However, linking Cairo to the Nile was never a top priority for city planners; only university scholars did a few studies on the topic. Also, for renowned projects like the Maspero Building, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and well-known hotels, the Nile was always on the opposite side of the road, leaving no room for a secure pedestrian crossing.



Figure 101: The river Nile extension in Egypt along with other African countries. Source: Wikipedia

### 12.3.1 “Cornish El-Nile” Main Stakeholders

The word "corniche" typically refers to “a coastal or cliff-side road. Cairo's "Corniche Al-Nil" refers to the wide boulevard running alongside the Nile with between three and five lanes of traffic in each direction” (Kondolf et. al, 2011: p.3), the longitudinal spaces- width 8 up to 20 m. On the one hand, the Cairo Governorate (CG), the Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources (MIWR), and the Ministry of Transportation each have various Nile-related tasks regarding the utilization of the Nile. The overlapping tasks weakened the ability to regulate the Nile's banks, leading to various types of appropriation and denying the inhabitants their right to access the Nile. On the other hand, the owners of Nile Boats represent a variety of stakeholders, including the five-star hotels that line the riverfront and those who benefit from the Nile. Sailing boats, popular with tourists and locals, were phased out in favor of motorboats, mirroring a similar change in Cairo. However, the new sailing mode causes noise and Nile pollution and sometimes threatens the lives of the citizens. Due to a lack of vision and the assumption that the riverbanks should be inaccessible to protect them, the idea of a lower pedestrian Cornish walkway has languished for too long. Connected visions could not be developed due to the authorities' lack of interest in the Nile's function in city practices, whether as a transportation route or a public realm.

### 12.4 “Cornish El-Nile” Development Work First Phase (2016-2017)

As previously mentioned, the riverbanks are primarily the most public spaces, with numerous levels of social interaction. Therefore, reclaiming access to the Nile's banks may be an excellent means of attracting people back to the city's center, as it creates much-needed green space and reintroduces the river into the heart of a vibrant city (Kondolf et. al, 2011), and ensures safe and smoother accessibility for pedestrians, individuals with disabilities, and bikers.

*“The river and its banks are becoming a brand, a location factor, image enhancer, a landscape feature of cultural and historical significance and are taking on the erstwhile role of harbors as showcases and gateways to the world” (Holzer et al., 2008: p. 24).*

Attia (2017) asserted that improving the use of current resources while focusing on the open spaces was the main goal of the revitalization vision for downtown Cairo in the proposed plan in March 2010<sup>91</sup>. The planners' principal aim is to develop downtown Cairo as a world-class destination and the development of open spaces for pedestrians since it will enhance the quality of life and boost the local economy by providing a vibrant social space. Hence, a planned ecological route from the Nile to the Azbakiyya garden has been suggested to achieve sustainable development without

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<sup>91</sup> The revitalization of downtown Cairo was a conceptual Master Plan project competition initiated by the General Organization for Physical Planning and the National Organization for Urban Harmony. The winning prize was presented by AECOM, and Associated Consultants. After the uprising events in 2011 the government of Egypt reconsidered the priorities of projects, downtown regeneration was delayed, and revived back during September 2014.

compromising downtown Cairo's identity and unique architecture to reduce traffic and create a pedestrian-friendly environment.



Figure 102: “Corniche El Nile” suggest proposal for development. Source: Revitalization and Upgrading of the Central Zone of Khedive’s Cairo - Master Plan Report, prepared by: (ANA33, 2010)



Cairo Governorate (CG) and the Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources (MIWR) announced the development of El Cornish in 2015 as one of the direct results of the Khedivial revitalization plan to improve the quality of the public realm. The project aimed to connect downtown to the Nile bank, known as “Cornish El-Nile”, and reclaim the public space overlooking the Nile. Two parties were interested in funding the project: Cairo Governorate, as Kasr El Nil district is affiliated with it, and the Ministry of Tourism, which believes such works will positively impact tourism. However, the National Organization of Urban Harmony (NOUH) focused on downtown buildings and spaces rather than Cornish. The Cornish El-Nile regeneration plan included three phases, from May 15 Bridge to October 6 Bridge: from October 6 Bridge to the Nile palace (Qasr Al Nile) bridge and from the Nile palace (Qasr Al Nile) Bridge to Four Seasons Hotel. Across the city and out across the water, bridges are renowned for their breathtaking scenery overlooking the Nile. The Qasr Al-Nil Bridge is one of Egypt's most beautiful and unique landmarks, particularly for its vibrant nightlife. In addition, it is one of the favorite places for fishing. Although the October 6 Bridge is known for its relative calm, the wedding processions give him a unique joy (Nassar et al., 2013).

The first phase, which started from the October 6 Bridge to the Nile Palace (Qasr el Nile) bridge (0.6km), was deemed a complementary phase of the Khedivial Cairo regeneration project. The concept behind the project is to use "Almistah," also known as the lower Cornish, to build two levels of pedestrian pathways: the upper Cornish, which is the primary promenade along the Nile, and the lower Cornish, which will provide a safe and recreational stroll for pedestrians along the Nile edge. The work also involved redesigning lighting poles (heights, spacing and form) and improving the bridge's promenade. In 2016–2017, the regeneration project was finally finished (Aly, 2017).

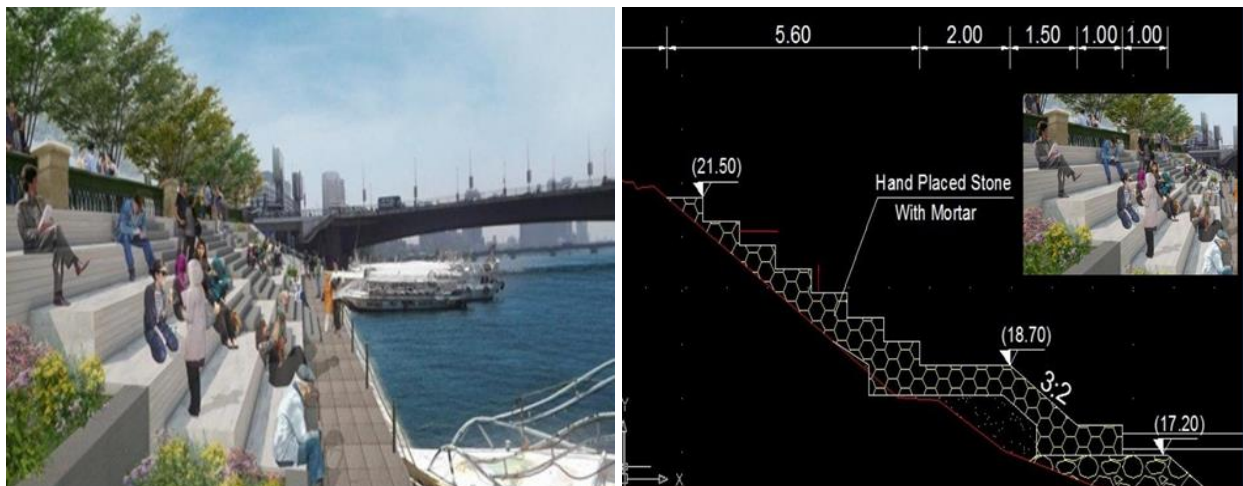
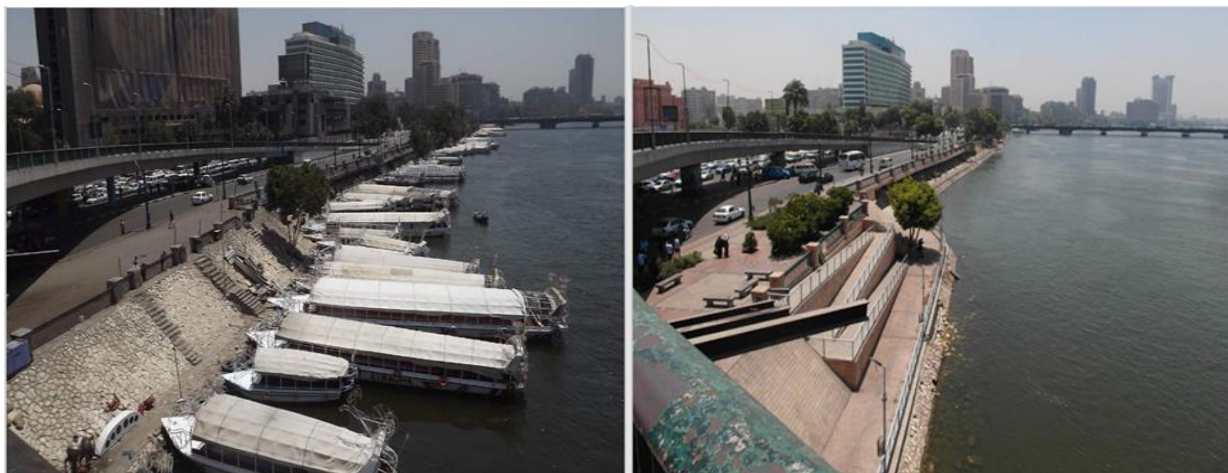


Figure 103: The suggested plan to revitalize Qasr El-Nil Bridge. Source: (Cairo Governorate, 2017)



*Figure 104: Corniche El-Nil before and after regeneration work. Source: (Cairo Governorate, 2017)*

While this project is not without its shortcomings, as coordination and cultivation were not always followed as planned, it sets a new standard for the process of collaboration between government agencies. For example, Cairo Governorate (CG) is the primary stakeholder and project manager; however, the Governorate's authority is limited in the lower Cornish. The MIWR is the entity in charge of these sites. Its mission is to safeguard them, prevent unapproved interference, and conduct comprehensive impact analyses. The successful collaboration between CG, MIWR and the Ministry of Tourism allowed for a smooth contribution from all parties. However, the last regeneration work, carried out by Cairo Governorate in coordination with NOUH in 2017, attracted more informality as street vendors used the pavement along the Nile from the city centre vigorously and extensively.



*Figure 105: The street vendors occupying the area after the last regeneration work, source: (Fathi,2017)*



*Figure 106: The street vendors in front of one Qasr El-Nil lions using his paws to carry his tools. Source: Sohir Hawas personal Facebook page*

The inadequate maintenance and sanitation and lack of irrigation system due to the absence of clear management policies and the responsible entity that manages the site and determines the services to prevent these informal uses and their consequences were behind the deterioration of the site. In addition, lack of appropriate gathering spaces and security presence, penalties and low enforcement, sexual harassment and violent accidents increased because of heavy pedestrian activity, mainly on national and religious holidays. The projects also highlighted the lack of coordination and collaboration between the government and various institutions<sup>92</sup>, and private initiatives such as Ahl Misr Promenade<sup>93</sup>, which confirm the absolute authority of the state. As Abd-al-Aziz (2017) maintained, *"The results confirm that the central dilemma is the vision and absolute authority of the Cairo governorate, which is the decision maker and the implementing institute"* (p.67). In addition, the project confirmed the lack of stakeholders' participation in decision-making, such as boat owners who initially refused to leave the docks and their forceful evacuation (El-Gundy, 2015).

### **12.5 "Cornish El-Nile" Development Work Second Phase**

Since September 2019, "Cornish El-Nile" has been experiencing a new wave of development. The recent waterfront regeneration project is a strongly commercially led approach. The "Ahl Misr Walkway" Project is implemented in accordance with the instructions of President Abdel Fattah El Sisi. The Arab Contractors Company, "Bridges and Specialized Structures Department", is a key participant in the "Ahl Misr Walkway" Project. The Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation, the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities, the Cairo Governorate, and the Armed Engineering Authority oversee the project. Taking inspiration from many other international cities that exist along riverbanks and have conducted similar initiatives such as Chicago River walkway, Copenhagen's Kalvebod Waves, Melbourne's Yarra River, and Zaryadye Park in Moscow, the ambitious large-scale urban development project plans to enhance the Nile Corniche walkway and increase the number of tourist destinations.

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<sup>92</sup> Saied El-Bahr, personal interview, May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019

<sup>93</sup> "Ahl Misr Promenade", is a local initiative aimed to connect the busy cities and citizens with Nile by upgrading the public space for recreational activities and socialization, besides preserving the Nile to enhance the city's visual image.



*Figure 107: international models in riverfront development project in the left Melbourne's Yarra River, on the right Zaryadye Park in Moscow. Source: Cairo Heritage Development committee presentation*

Based on the national vision of Egypt 2030 for sustainable development and considering environmental, economic, and social dimensions, the project aims to:

Improve the quality of the built environment.

Increase the per capita share of green spaces and open spaces in cities.

Promote social inclusion.

Providing tourist attractions in Egyptian cities

As a result, the government devised a comprehensive strategy to develop and improve the Nile to reap the benefits of eradicating trespass on the Nile path. The project seeks to ensure better access for the residents and users similar to the international waterfront models and the affiliated recreational facilities and to create a healthy and eco-friendly environment free of pollution. Again, the redevelopment plan divided the site into sectors. The first sector expands from Al-Gamaa Bridge in the south to Qasr El-Nile Bridge in the north, the Garden city area to the east, and the east bank of Roda Island to the west. This sector is the largest and longest sector within the area of study. The second sector extends from Qasr El-Nile Bridge as the southern border to October 6 Bridge as the northern border, and Sector 3 extends from October 6 Bridge in the south to May 15 Bridge in the north, bordering the Maspero area on the east bank and Zamalek Island in the west bank.

The main principles and the business strategy of the next phase include;

1 – Categorizing the districts overlooking the Nile

2 - Suggestion of typical models that overlook the Nile and Corniche sections and the flat

3- Preparation of specific strategies for each sector and their potential implementation with available resources

4-Creating marketing strategy for each economic model after completing a cost-benefit analysis.

5- Preparation of monitoring, management, and maintenance plans

The first phase reaches 8.2 kilometers between the 15th May Bridge and the Imbaba Bridge. The Nile Corniche development project includes a 4.7km promenade with successive levels from the May 15 Bridge to Imbaba, with an average width of 4.5m for the higher walkway and 6.5 meters for the lower walkway. Walking along the Nile River's verdant banks is a popular pastime for Cairo locals and tourists alike, and the pedestrian walkway is built with that goal in mind.

This phase is focused on achieving three specific objectives (SIS, 2021).

First: To provide public access to the Nile's waterfront, which might be challenging owing to the privatization of various Corniche sections designated as nightclubs and restaurants.

Second: To generate adequate returns to cover up the upkeep and sustainability of the projects through creating business options.

Third: To restore the aesthetic and physical characteristics of the Corniche and link it to Downtown Cairo.

According to the Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation, Nile Corniche Development Project is part of his mandate to the Nile Research Institute (NRI), which is to set up an integrated plan to benefit from clearing land along the Nile's banks and its branches (The Arab Contractors, 2020). Among the suggested works, a car lot will be constructed to generate annual returns for the government. The project also includes nineteen buildings, including five restaurants, five Cafeterias, sixty-two Shops and three garages with a total capacity of 180 cars, as well as three terraces with a total length of 315 meters that can accommodate 1240 people, besides a theatre with an area of 275 square meters that admits 772 people and a dockyard for yachts, along with landscaping works, and fountains. These activities facilitate the leasing of retail space that generates additional revenue. According to the Minister of Housing, the project is considered an experimental model for future implementation in the other Egyptian cities through which the river runs.

Activities and investment use are classified as follow:

activity	Indoor	Outdoor
Restaurant overlooking the walkway	430m	750m
Restaurants in front of Fairmont Hotel	175 m	280m
Cafeterias	255m	350m
Commercial activities and café	730m	1120m

Source, Cairo Heritage Development Committee (CHDC)



Figure 108: Detailed design of the third sector by proposing reproducible models along the Nile surface in the cities of the Republic. Source: Khedival Cairo regeneration committee

Cairo's 2050 strategic development plan included Maspero Triangle as an essential development project designated as a new Central Business District (GOPP, 2008). Maspero Triangle or Ramlet Boulaq on the northwest edge of downtown Cairo is a waterfront area overlooking the Nile River. Run-down dwellings and dilapidated structures make up the majority of the Maspero neighbourhood. The State Television and Radio Complex and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs headquarters are all nearby. There is also a significant five-star luxury hotel in the district. Maspero is a working-class neighborhood. Long-standing property law provides families with the long-term security of tenancy and maintains rents at levels set decades ago, with many families paying as little as EGP 10 to 20 per month for their homes and shops. Maspero Urban Development Company (a subsidiary of the Ministry of Investment) and Saudi and Emirati enterprises possess the majority of land in Maspero Triangle, while roughly a third is held by 200 people (Al Tawy, 2018). As mentioned, development of contemporary urban planning in Cairo has consistently privileged the development of real estate geared toward elite uses rather than projects that might serve as vehicles for economic mobility (Sims, 2011).

In 2009, according to the Informal Settlements Development Facility (ISDF), the area was categorized as an unsafe slum. As a result, in the middle of 2014, the Maspero Triangle Modernization Project—a part of Egypt's slum-improvement program—became the country's top priority development project. Foster and Partners Firm has been awarded the project to design the Maspero Triangle district. The project encompasses the Egyptian Radio and Television Union headquarters, Ministry of Foreign Affairs premises, and additional luxurious business towers.

*“The 35ha masterplan aims to introduce new residential, commercial and retail spaces while rehousing the majority low-income population in the same area and retaining its unique character and spatial attributes” (Foster + Partners, 2015).*

The master plan includes business and residential areas along the river and main street fronts, while mixed-use buildings and open communal spaces occupy the more private, central heart of the concept (Foster + Partners, 2015).

*“This space links directly to the food market, serving visitors and locals alike, which in turn leads to the retail spine and the hospital at the northern corner of the site. The settlement prioritises pedestrian traffic with its narrow, shaded streets, it also connects across the river to the exclusive neighbourhood of Zamalek via a footbridge that boosts the connectivity of the area. At the foot of the bridge, there is the ‘Lagoon’, lined with a number of cafés, restaurants and shops that will make this a highly desirable leisure destination” (ibid).*



Initially, local people were slated to be relocated to building complexes on October 6th and Nahda in Dar al-Salam. Many families were forced to leave their homes because of unsafe housing conditions (Khalil, 2018). In late 2017, the government began to relocate tenants who chose to stay and move to the Al-Asmarat project in Moqattam neighborhood until they returned when the project is completed. Al-Aamarat project is a residential complex and part of President Sisi's effort to rehouse Cairo's slum inhabitants. Al-Aamarat project aims to include 18,000 apartments. A considerable number of new residents who relocated there, as Al Tawy (2018) referred, "*are not so enthusiastic about their new life in Al-Asmarat and say the quality of living conditions in the sprawling compound, with its broad paved streets and well-planned buildings, do not make up for the communities they left behind*". While residents are permitted to remain, shopkeepers are compelled to leave for what they believe to be a pittance in exchange for their departure. In April 2018, the government has been systematically tearing down buildings, including heritage structures whose destruction is forbidden due to their historical or architectural significance. Some residents, as Aman (2018) stated, "*relayed their anger and frustration at the "arbitrary" demolition decisions they say were made without any consideration for the status or history of the buildings*".

The social media campaign "Inhabitants of July 26th—Khedival Cairo" was initiated by the residents of July 26th Street and the neighbourhood behind the Sultan Abu Ela Mosque to prevent demolishing of historic buildings (Aman, 2018). Architects and urban activists aided the initiative to preserve Egypt's architectural heritage. Despite their efforts, the government demolished the whole neighborhood. According to Omnia Khalil (2018), the gentrification of Maspero Neighborhood was disguised as a participatory development initiative, "development of slums" when it was a series of forced evictions.

*"Instead of using bulldozers to tear down houses while families are inside—as took place on al-Warraq island, leading to violence—the government played a game, touting the project as participatory, but then changing the terms to force families to choose to leave".*



Figure 109: Maspero Triangle borders. Source: Maspero Triangle Development Project

## Chapter Twelve Conclusion

The state's key role is no longer to provide and monitor policies merely; instead, it is an active participant in managing and shaping the built environment and facilitating better environments through successive deliberated interventions for capital accumulation and financialization. A set of designed legislations and regulatory frameworks reflect the vision of the political will and are the fundamental managerial mechanisms that allow the infiltration of financial capital into urban development projects. Changing the waterfront's image, making it more accessible, and maintaining environmental quality are the three main goals that should guide the planning, design, and administration of urban waterfront development projects (Gordon, 1996). However, in our case study, profit motives drive efforts to revitalize the riverside in downtown Cairo. In this context, new barriers, such as high-end eateries, cafes, and tourist attractions, have been placed in their place to target affluent customers. Furthermore, to keep the common people from enjoying the promenade, a fee was imposed.

By implementing the Maspero Triangle Project, the state has joined forces with the private sector to demolish a portion of the urban heritage. Hence, it might involve a process of accumulation by dispossession wherein state-led gentrification leads to the eviction and relocation of current inhabitants and users to attract more affluent groups. As a result, Egypt is currently caught between the development of the New Administrative Capital Project and the Al Asmarat project. The existence of social segregation is plain to see. The extensive use of the 'aestheticization' and 'securitization' strategies for space production to control the "right to the city" in parallel with the execution of large-scale urban development projects such as "Maspiro Project" and waterfront redevelopment project will change the area dramatically. As a result, the area's physical transformation, considering the frequent relocation, gentrification, securitization, and sanitization approaches, will end up as a high-end place that serves the capitalists and their interests. The area will lose its distinctive political and cultural spirit as a part of its distinctive intangible heritage.

### **13 Discussion & Conclusion**

Gentrification, as Hackworth (2002: p.815) stated, is “*the transformation of space for more affluent users*”. The concept of gentrification extended beyond its traditional definition and shifted to a more private market-driven and state-facilitated growth paradigm rather than being a sporadic, middle-class-led return to the city process (Smith, 2002). Gentrification has evolved from a local phenomenon to a generalized urban strategy that now affects the entire world (Atkinson & Bridge, 2005; Smith, 1996). According to Eldaidamony & Shetawy (2016: p. 108)

*“Gentrification nowadays is a generalized process, not anymore, a random process that could happen in different places haphazardly. It is rather systematic, planned and considered process” (Smith, 2010).*

Gentrification is a multifaceted process in different cities and countries (Lees, 2003: p. 2507), with political and economic decisions often being the driving forces. Smith (1986) argued that the gentrification debate “*is centered on four key areas of disagreement in the gentrification literature. These include debates about 1) how to define and, recognize gentrification, 2) how, where, and when gentrification occurs 3) gentrifiers' characteristics and motivations for engaging in the process, and 4) the gentrification's outcomes and consequences*” (Smith, 1986). However, it is crucial to understand gentrification within different contexts and to recognize the key actors, their motivations, and interests, along with their efforts that drive gentrification trends in each case and pattern. It is hard to generalize; sometimes, cases agree on some points, and others disagree. That makes each case a unique model to examine.

Since most urban strategies is focused on reinvesting in low-income neighborhoods in order to improve the quality of urban life, Khedivial Cairo's regeneration process priorities are to transform this decaying prestigious center into a tourism product and a promising investment destination with an emphasis on commodification, commercialization, and orientation toward luxury consumption that appeals to the creative class, elite, and urban tourism. The unique architectural value of the *Belle époque* era and a nostalgic vision of recapturing some of the glitz and glamour of the city's early 20th century are the driving forces behind the government regeneration initiatives and real estate developers' interest in developing downtown Cairo. While downtown Cairo's central location, architectural splendor, and lower rents due to the deteriorating physical conditions of its buildings all contributed to the influx of artists as neo-bohemians to downtown Cairo. The emergence of the gentrification waves is closely associated with the political-economic shift resulting from implementing neoliberal policies. The research reveals how gentrification has been used to upscale downtown Cairo as a powerful instrument of public policy. The Khedivial Cairo gentrification process reflects the powerful nexus of politicians and the economic elite. However, gentrifiers are motivated by various factors, including cultural preferences, political orientations, and economic needs.

## Gentrification Causes

Generally, gentrification studies are focused on two dominant schools, the "*liberal humanists who stress the key role of choice, culture, consumption and consumer demand, and the structural Marxists who stress the role of capital, class, production and supply*" (Hamnett, 1991: p. 174). It has been underlined throughout the past two decades, however, that we need to go further afield than the intersection of economy and culture, since they are "two sides of the same coin." (Lees, 1994: p 144).

Since its foundation, downtown Cairo has been the epicenter of Cairo's elite and bourgeoisie. Later, following the 1952 military coup, downtown Cairo witnessed a steady decline putting an end to its Golden Era. As a result, the neighborhood has undergone various transformations, particularly in the socioeconomic composition of its occupants and visitors. The affluent neighborhood has been transformed into an area dominated by street vendors and heavy traffic. Lower-middle-class residents supplanted the upper-middle-class ones. Investment in central Cairo was also affected by economic and political shifts in Egypt. Rent control, for example, has been stigmatized as a "financial backwater" for a long time (ANHD, 2009<sup>94</sup>). The Law was behind the private sector's disinvestment in downtown Cairo and the withdrawal from the housing market. A lack of rent revenue also made it difficult for landlords to keep up with maintenance on their properties. According to the Rent Frozen Law, the maximum monthly rent for an apartment in downtown Cairo cannot exceed 40 LE or around 2 Euros. Furthermore, the legislation also allowed tenants to stay in their rented home and pass it down to third-degree relatives, which many considered an attempt to nationalize Egypt's housing sector, resulting in fragmented ownership. The upshot has been the degradation and abandonment of many of downtown Cairo's most iconic structures.

In addition, De facto forms of housing abandonment occurred in downtown Cairo because of changes in urban planning legislation and people's desires to reside in suburban and gated communities. According to Al-Ismailia for Real Estate Investments Assessment Report (2011), "*By 2006, major changes had occurred in the Study Area. Foremost, was the sharp reduction in the residential stock, as apartments in older, multi-family buildings had been converted to offices*". Currently, downtown Cairo is marked by a high vacancy rate of apartments. According to the most recent census, Egypt has 12.8 million vacant homes, with 2.8 million owned units remaining closed. Cairo's vacancy rate is alarmingly high at 22.7% of all housing units. In addition, over 309,559 units are owned and closed as the proprietors have other units to live in (CAPMAS, 2017).

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<sup>94</sup> Association of Neighborhood Housing and Development (ANHD).

The deterioration of downtown Cairo's urban environment, the introduction of inappropriate commercial activities, and the lack of explicit statutory protections for *Belle Epoch* modern heritage in downtown Cairo contributed to the neighborhood's decline and subsequent disinvestment. Concurrently, these issues established the foundation for the subsequent emergence of gentrification as a panacea in downtown Cairo. Disinvestment and consequent deterioration in low-income inner-city neighborhoods are blatant signs of gentrification's potential (Lees et al., 2008; Hamnett, 1991; Lees, 2000). Gentrification as Marcuse (1985: p.196) suggested "*is the only realistic cure for abandonment*".

Smith (1979) presented the investment and reinvestment theory, proposing the rent gap model to explain why specific neighborhoods are profitable to redevelop and others are not. According to Smith (1987: P. 462), the rent gap hypothesis is supported by the discrepancy between the actual rent value and the expected profitable rent "*The actual capitalized ground rent of a plot of land given its present use and the potential ground rent that might be gleaned under a 'higher and better' use*". So, business-savvy developers took advantage of the rent gap caused by the area's decline due to a lack of investment. The purchase of downtown Cairo's historical buildings promises high returns for the investors if the neighborhood is later gentrified. Al-Ismailia for Real Estate Investments company is a good illustration. The company benefited from the deteriorated conditions of the buildings and their fragmented ownership to buy at lower than market price. Magdy Sabbagh an Architect at Sigma Properties<sup>95</sup>referred to four main factors behind the increased purchasing in downtown Cairo summarized as follow<sup>96</sup>

- 1- The steadily increasing market value of the real estate in Cairo's downtown
- 2- The drop in real estate value before the suggested development (GC 2050 strategic development plan)
- 3- The area's remarkable architectural and historical significance
- 4- The government has declared its intention to improve the urban environment of downtown Cairo.

In addition to implementing neoliberal policies in Egypt, nostalgia and the growing valorization of Belle époque era urban heritage trigger the interest of the media, government officials, investors, and artists.

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<sup>95</sup> Sigma property a leading real estate developing company has a large portfolio in Alexandria, own 4 buildings in downtown Cairo.

<sup>96</sup> Personal Interview, May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021

## Nostalgia & Heritagization

According to the stimulus-organism-response (SOR) theory, environmental cues induce emotional responses in potential consumers, resulting in approach or avoidance behaviours (Ezeh & Harris, 2007). People's behaviour is influenced by various emotions caused by nostalgic experiences (Merchant & Rose, 2013), particularly toward the loss (Turner, 1987). Nostalgia, from a psychological perspective, encompasses mental and emotional reactions (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2018). Many definitions of the term "nostalgia" suggest that it likely determines consumer satisfaction. Nostalgia could be divided into personal nostalgia and vicariously or historical nostalgia. As different academics and scholars argue, heritage elicits strong emotions such as attachment to a place, nostalgia, and grief (González, 2017). Heritage nostalgia is a reminiscence of the past made up of feelings and memories that can be passed down and shared amongst individuals in groups (Holak & Havlena, 1998).

Since 2003, different studies have supported the virtues of nostalgia in tourism. Chi and Chi (2020) designed a metric with three dimensions to quantify nostalgia for the bygone era elicited by heritage tourism. The theoretical model was then examined using facts and information that had been gathered in China and the United States. According to their research, heritage tourism uses nostalgic appeals to the past to appease customers' cravings for authenticity; doing so can significantly impact customer satisfaction and retention. Authenticity is a unique quality found in various issues like products, events, cultures, and locations, and is displayed to visitors as something external (Naoi, 2004). Authenticity in heritage tourism is frequently linked to things like substances, places, attractions, and feelings (Rickly-Boyd, 2012). In addition, nostalgia has been used to boost attractiveness in branding and advertising graphics for potential consumers. According to Catherine Vesey and Frederic Dimanche (2003), "*in destinations related to heritages, tourists desire the history via pictures of what they believe the history was like*". The production of space in large cities is a differential influence. Indeed, this is often the case in the cultural milieu, where nostalgia plays a significant role. Real estate developers and entrants reshape the neighborhoods' image according to their perspective with the help of pro-gentrification journalists and the promotion of the urban "growth coalition" public relations machinery (Rousseau, 2010). The process often involves rebranding to emphasize the location's historical significance, evoke nostalgia for a bygone era, or even wholly substitute the current name and its assumed unfavorable reputation with a new one. In this way, nostalgia-based location marketing becomes even more critical for gentrification.

Recently, there has been a new interest in downtown Cairo because of the neoliberal reinterpretation of Egypt's modern past, which is clear not just in its heritage and economic value but also in the current surge of popular nostalgia for the area. In Egypt, the preservation of Egypt's modern heritage was driven by the growing nostalgia among intellectuals, authors, and some state officials who considered themselves part of a superior "enlightened" society (Abaza, 2011). However, since the 1990s, the recent awakening nostalgia for a perceived bygone 'Golden Age of

cultural refinement and the growing international interest in the previously unvalued monarchy and the colonial period has had a profound impact on discovering downtown Cairo and Cairo's *belle époque* heritage, officially as a "*proud moment of Egypt's urban rebirth*" instead of being a symbol of foreign hegemony (El Kadi & El Kerdany, 2006). As a result, downtown Cairo has been declared a protected area under Law 119/2008. Accordingly, specific regulations, such as the solid-to-void ratio, construction capacity, street pattern, and particular urban standards, have been imposed on the district. Evaluation and data collecting were the first steps in the Khedivial Cairo heritagization process. In addition, (Law 144/2006 and Law 119/2008) were promulgated to provide additional protection as an extra management tool intended to safeguard and conserve the built environment from the late 19th century to the early 20th century. The nostalgic heritagization of downtown Cairo aims to give the area a new image. Only the Belle époque Era is associated with the nostalgic narrative for downtown Cairo and its enticing past. The "nostalgic narrative" has been utilized to portray the neighborhood's past brilliance. It is a form of "collective memory," (Halbwachs, 1992) prompted by a sense of loss. A nostalgia narrative is a fictitious version of the past that selectively includes certain aspects of personal history while excluding others to create a version of the past that is more flattering than fact. Using nostalgia by social actors has been identified by gentrification academics. The business model of Al-Ismailia company is a clear illustration. To emphasize downtown's aesthetic appeal, the model focuses narrowly on a handful of key features from the neighborhood's past. The company's policy that persists in referring to nostalgia, which is inextricably linked to downtown Cairo's golden days, was reinforced by the photo shoots' that stress featuring the area without the presence of low- and middle-income groups, who make up most of downtown's users and display them through their social media posts and overall entertainment media channels.

According to Harrison (2013), "*here seems to be a general perception that once objects, places and/or practices are gazetted, and hence transformed into a privileged class of 'thing' which we call 'heritage', that they will very rarely revert or transform into something else*" (Harrison, 2013: p.4). Heritage designation increases the built heritage's vulnerability to current interests, agendas (Daugbjerg & Fibiger, 2011), market norms and the stakeholders' objectives and aspirations (Pendlebury, 2002). Heritage areas is thereby could be transformed "*into a tourist destination, a business location, or a location for culture and creativity*" (Oevermann & Mieg, 2015: p. 20). Downtown Cairo's Bella Époque buildings have benefited from the process of heritagization, which has led to an increase in their market value. Since heritage and redevelopment are inextricably linked, they are frequently invoked to justify urban regeneration and, in certain cases, gentrification (Pendlebury & Porfyriou, 2017). Khedivial Cairo's gentrification process as "*a world-class destination of elegance, activity, history, culture, and livable neighbourhoods*"<sup>97</sup>, "went

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<sup>97</sup> AECOM, the Middle East company's proposal for revitalizing downtown Cairo, which has been selected and won the Ministry of housing contest



through three distinct phases, before the 2011 revolution and the post-revolution era. A transitional period during the revolution could be viewed as a second phase as it helped draw attention back to downtown Cairo on a national and international scale. The goal of the regeneration effort and gentrification process was to alter the socioeconomic composition of downtown Cairo by luring affluent tourists, well-to-do locals, the "creative class," investors and financial backers.

### **The State Role in Downtown Cairo Gentrification Process**

In 1991, President Mubarak aligned the state economy along neoliberal lines as a political rationale through a series of adjustments. Many academics believe that urban growth in Egypt results from the country's central government's facilitation of a neo-liberal political economy (Dorman, 2007, 2013) based on a top-down strategy. As a result, the government's top-down urban planning and development paradigm thrived. The "Cairo 2050" and "Cairo 2030" urban development plans, which the government led, were the pinnacle of this paradigm. The General Organization for Physical Planning, with the assistance of some local specialists and foreign organizations like UN-Habitat, prepared the "Cairo 2050" Plan, which was released back in 2010. According to the Strategic Plan, Cairo should be modelled after other global cities. The developed model has been maintained throughout the Plan, now dubbed Egypt 2052.

Cairo has recently been repositioned in many ways due to the worldwide competition between cities. In the middle of the twentieth century, Cairo was widely recognized as the most important Arab metropolis in North Africa and the Middle East because of the city's extensive past, highly qualified and crafted workforce, and cultural center renowned for its creative artistic output. Currently, cities like Dubai have supplanted the position that Cairo formerly occupied; scholars who have observed the emergence and development of cities like Dubai in recent decades have recently studied the degraded quality of life of Cairo today considering its cultural legacy, size, and population, and its impact on other Arab nations.

Many cities in the Arab world, including Egypt, have looked to Dubai as a model for urban development in recent decades, and many have become eager to follow Dubai's lead. The term "Dubaization" was coined by El-Sheshtawy (2006) to define and differentiate cities with exceptional and non-contextual architecture. Dubaization is also used to describe the urban shift in Cairo and the direction of the city's growth. Over several decades, the Dubai urban development model has significantly affected Egyptian policymakers and planners. Cairo 2050, the strategic urban development plan introducing the New Administrative Capital, is a resounding endorsement of the model's viability. In 2008, media outlets spread images of architectural renderings for the national project "Cairo 2050," which featured skyscrapers and other instances of futuristic architecture targeted at various areas of Cairo (Sims: 2015). Dr Mustafa Madbouly, the current Prime Minister of Egypt, has presented the plan (as an Ex-Chairman, General Authority for Urban Planning). Cairo's potential to develop and compete with other developed cities throughout the world, notably Dubai, was a goal of the project.

In 2008, the government revealed its intention to redevelop the downtown Cairo area. The Khedivial Cairo regeneration project is a part of a broader strategic plan (GC 2050) to develop the Greater Cairo (GC) region. According to the "GC 2050" strategic development plan, downtown Cairo will be restructured and developed as an open museum, a one-of-a-kind tourism destination, and a hub for global investment. Shafei<sup>98</sup> believes that the regeneration of downtown Cairo presents an opportunity to increase urban tourism in the area rather than relying primarily on cultural tourism. He compared Cairo to other global capitals like Rome and Paris, where downtown centers serve as a gathering place for the city's various social and economic groups. City centers are also popular business, tourism, and entertainment destinations and *"that is the direction we believe downtown should take"*<sup>99</sup>. According to Tarek Shoukry, Chairman of the Real Estate Development *"The intention is to turn some districts such as downtown Cairo into a touristic area to raise the investments, which will definitely reflect on the income of the country in the end."* (Fazza, 2020).

The regeneration project seeks to attract tourism and businesses back to the city's core and foster an entrepreneurial environment. In addition, the suggested plan pursues competitiveness and seeks to make the Khedivial Cairo district and the whole Cairo city attractive to overseas investment to revive the city's economy. Hence, the Khedivial Cairo regeneration plan primarily relied on market-based mechanisms articulated by the central government. Maspero Triangle was also included in Cairo's 2050s strategic development plan as a significant development project and designated a new Central Business District (GOPP, 2008). The JICA, World Bank, and the Institute for International Urban Development conducted several additional studies on the downtown area. The process is backed by business elite and public sector such as Insurance Companies, El Ismailia for Real Estate Investment Company, private sector businessmen, Banks.

### **Post-revolution Era & State Capitalism**

After the election of President Al-Sisi, the country embraced the state capitalism model popular in China and Singapore, significantly impacting the country's sluggish economic growth and lopsided urban revitalization. State capitalism, in which government ownership and influence affect private capitalism, has persisted in Egypt despite two significant waves of privatization since 1991. In 1961, Gamal Abd El-Nasser, Egypt's first president, used the term "Arab socialism" to describe the Egyptian state capitalism of this period. The subsequent version was characterized by private-sector crony alliance and the rule of former President Hosni Mubarak (Sayigh, 2020). However, Egypt's shift from a centrally planned to a private sector-oriented economy coincided with the advent of neoliberalism during Mubarak's leadership. As a result, the Egyptian ruling class collaborated with the private sector to create a system of "crony capitalism," in which politically

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<sup>98</sup> Karim El-Shafie (CEO), personal interview, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021

<sup>99</sup> Karim El-Shafie (CEO), personal interview, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021

connected actors reaped the benefits of privatization and deregulation of the economy. Marshall Stocker, in an interview with El-Sadek (2011), mentioned that "*Egypt is going through very massive and ambitious economic changes, moving from communism [socialism] to capitalism, the macro-economic change is phenomenal*".

State capitalism is a long-term strategy more concerned with the interests of the state and the ruling elite. Hence, markets increased political and financial leverage rather than an opportunity to benefit individuals. The current development paradigm did not necessitate total state withdrawal. The Egyptian development model is similar to China's in certain respects. The Chinese central government has not rolled out any regeneration strategies, although local governments are becoming more involved in developing and implementing such plans (He & Wu, 2009). The government of China has developed efficient procedures to regulate market-driven regeneration, such as determining intervention trajectory and maintaining essential resources. At the national and municipal levels, the state's authority rationale transcends market considerations (He, 2007). Sisi's version aims to reclaim the state's economic clout while simultaneously coercing the private sector to support the state's capital-investment objectives and professing a formal commitment to a free market economy in the face of criticism.

President Abd al-Fattah Al-Sisi has adopted entrepreneurial roles directly or through partnerships with private actors to execute many development projects for highly profitable spaces to achieve economic growth and competitiveness. Government participation in several economic sectors is so prevalent that it effectively dictates output, although these sectors are ostensibly in the hands of private decision-makers. Since President Al-Sisi's election in 2014, the Egyptian Armed Forces has been at the vanguard of Sisi's state-led economic strategy and investment agenda. The Egyptian military, which owns most of the country's desert territory for protecting the country as alleged, also controls urban development and other markets. (See Abaza, 2017). In addition, President Sisi relies on the Engineering Authority for the Armed Forces to carry out large-scale national projects under his direct supervision.

After the 2011 political turmoil and Mubarak's ouster, Greater Cairo 2050 urban strategic development plan was ignored (Sharp, 2012) until similar imagery reappeared as the New Administrative Capital (NAC) buildings in 2015 (ElMouelhi, 2019). To maintain Cairo's sustained role as the regional capital, the government of Egypt established the New Administrative Capital (NAC) as a nationwide project. The project, part of the "Cairo 2030" urban development plan, illustrates the new ruling class's desire to impose their development vision through a top-down approach, consistent with Egyptian government policy in this area throughout history (El Mouelhi, 2019). The proponents of the project argue that establishing a new administrative capital "like Dubai" as a successful model may entice foreign investment and funding. Such urban development plans would require substantial funding and the presence of heavy investments to be put into action. The establishment of the New Administrative Capital reinforced the relocation of government ministries from downtown Cairo. A sovereign wealth fund is another vehicle for the

state to use in managing state-owned assets and resources. Under the sovereign fund, Egypt took its first step toward privatization. However, President Sisi has unchecked authority over the military and the sovereign fund. State capitalism is best illustrated by the establishment of the New Administrative Capital, the relocation of government ministries from downtown Cairo, and the transfer of ownership of seven public buildings and their associated land to the Egyptian sovereign fund. Gentrification, as Brahinsky (2014) argues, is the capitalist form of urbanization. As capitalism evolves, so does gentrification.

The development of the New Administrative Capital and the relocation of state institutions and administrative buildings out of downtown Cairo present a unique opportunity to invest in the downtown Cairo neighborhood and reap substantial benefits for the country's economic development. Once again, President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi has prioritized the development of Khedivial Cairo as one of the capital's critical axes of development. Khedivial Cairo regeneration plans is also considered a national project to reassert state authority through space production via securitization, and aestheticization process. According to SOM, the New Administrative capital is no longer intended to replace the existing capital; rather, it is the evolution and natural expansion of the Greater Cairo Region (Madamasr, 2015). However, the attempts to reallocate the population and/or activities, and thus the displacement of residents, are justified for creating exclusive areas and encouraging European tourism and foreign investment. The Modernization Project of Maspero Triangle also quickly moved up to Egypt's list of must-do projects by the middle of 2014. In addition, "Ahl Misr Walkway" Project is implemented in accordance with the instructions of President Abdel Fattah El Sisi. The Armed Engineering Authority is using a profit-driven, business-focused strategy to lead the large-scale Corniche El Nile development project as a means of revitalizing the riverfront.

Gentrification is a remedy for long-term urban decay and has been employed to promote the khedivial Cairo neighborhood as part of the city's regeneration project. In that phase, gentrification is a state-led process. It is more market/profit-oriented, where capital is attracted, and a neighborhood develops rapidly and dramatically in a short time.

### **Property led regeneration and Real Estate Financialization**

Contemporary capitalism and gentrification are characterized by the expansion of real estate projects on a massive scale. Over the last half-century, real estate has grown in popularity as an investment vehicle. According to Henry (2020), "*When it comes to investing, Real Estate is king. There is a good reason why 31% of investors chose real estate speculation as to their top pick of investment options in a recent Bankrate survey*". Recent neoliberal urban studies (Heeg & Rosol, 2007; Ronneberger et al., 1999) have incorporated representations of new urban planning dominant structures and the impact of the real estate industry on urbanization.

Acquisition and long-term ownership are the keys to success in real estate investing. There are two return methods—Cash-flow property rentals approach, whereby profits are gradually accumulated. The second method is to upgrade and sell back for capital gain as an additional profit-making strategy. Fluctuations in supply and demand primarily determine the marketability of an investment. In terms of investment, real estate is a high-risk yet high-reward strategy. The financialization of real estate has produced "liquidity out of spatial fixity," allowing financial players to participate in the capital accumulation of urban societies (Weber, 2002). Investors in stock market bubbles are more likely to search for alternative investments and destinations like well-located urban real estate. The strategies typically involve the purchase of run-down buildings with the expectation of significantly increasing rents or betting on asset value appreciation. Investment tools offering a range of risk-adjusted returns are used to achieve this goal; their performance is tracked and compared to that of other investment products on a regular basis.

In the aftermath of the global financial crisis (GFC), much of the scholarly writing on the financial sector has focused on predatory practices, frequently expressed through David Harvey's theory of (capital) "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey, 2004). According to Fields (2017), rental housing has recently been labeled as "a *new frontier for financialization*," and regarded as a new 'wave' of gentrification. As Aalbers (2019) stated, this new wave of gentrification is '*the urban materialisation of financialized or finance-led capitalism*' through which gentrification has spread and deepened more widely than before (Aalbers, 2019: p. 5). Crosby (2020) believed it is a "*process of displacement (usually of lower-income residents) enacted by the corporate capture of housing and driven by the accumulation strategies of landlords governed by logics of finance capital*" (Crosby, 2020: p.186). Furthermore, several academic studies including Van Loon and Aalbers (2017), have also focused on institutional investors such as pension funds, banks, insurance companies, mutual funds, and private equity firms, as well as the international real estate transactions of super-wealthy investors (Fernandez et al., 2016). The financialization process is very selective regarding urban objects and locations. In this context, non-listed properties have a lower return on investment than listed properties. According to a 2011 Investment Property Databank (IPD) Index study, the IPD Listed Property Index has a higher total return over three, five, ten, and thirty years than the IPD Index (Colliers, 2011). Heritage properties in downtown areas became a popular alternative investment option. As yield-seeking capital, financial players have switched their attention from a property-based perspective to asset management, which includes heritage properties. These heritage properties and premises are treated as financial assets that may be traded on international markets and valued according to their yield to investors.

Because of the enormous potential profits, real estate investing is widely pursued in Egypt. Since fiscal year (FY) 2010/2011, the Ministry of Investment estimates that the real estate industry has received 14 percent of all investments, making it the second largest sector to receive investments.<sup>100</sup> The centralization of the Egypt's urban planning system enabled market-driven development and enhanced cooperation between government planning agencies and the privatization and real estate sectors. (Ansari, 2011; Dorman, 2007, 2013). The inclusion of capital flow into real estate market investment increased consumption-oriented activities in residential areas, hence driving gentrification. A new breed of financial actors has emerged, resulting from public investment in the built environment and the government's commitment to collaborate and reinvest the income streams from public assets in developing new financial instruments. Moreover, in the context of urban gentrification, policies based on state-led market-oriented development play a vital role in forming cities and allocating resources in terms of production and consumption.

When it comes to urban regeneration and landscape transformation, taking a property development approach is critical for transforming downtown Cairo into an economic hub and facilitating urban regeneration. Since 2008, downtown Cairo has become an area of high demand. The discovery of downtown Cairo was mainly focused on its residential and /or commercial buildings and the value of this heritage as '*as a pure financial asset*' (Harvey, 1982, p. 347) of speculative investment and its potential yield. Downtown architectural heritage could raise debates about financialization and the importance of creating solid investments through refurbishing real estate as an economic asset. Financialization and the "*corporatization and privatization of heretofore public assets*" (Harvey, 2003, p.148) are examples of contemporary modes of capitalism that reflect the avant-garde accumulation in advanced capitalist economies.

### **Al-Ismailia for Real Estate Investments**

Al- Ismailia Company for Real Estate Investment is a key financial player in Khedivial Cairo. it is a joint stock company registered in Egypt. In 2008, the newly formed corporation acquired 25 of Cairo's most prominent historical buildings in downtown Cairo. The historic and architectural value of the buildings in downtown Cairo has piqued the interest of the company as a viable investment option<sup>101</sup>. In Mubarak's Cairo 2050 (Berger, 2014), Al-Ismailia company was appointed as a key partner. Under Sisi government's vision for central Cairo's regeneration, the company still retaining its position. The Policy of the company was focused on key principles including:

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<sup>100</sup> Central Bank of Egypt, Annual Investments by Economic Sectors

<sup>101</sup> Karim El-Shafie (CEO), personal interview, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021

1- Acquiring various downtown Cairo property assets for less than Fair Market Value (FMV). The procedure includes (assessment, location status, Due Diligence, negotiation, and deal closure) and then working to resolve legal issues associated with the property's multiple inheriting owners.

2- Space management (eviction, relocation, and reuse)

3- Renovation process (structure repairs, wall bearing system and wooden slab); and Reutilization (assessing potential tenants and partnerships and leasing)

4-Development Strategy includes (Market assessment, technical assessment, and financial assessment).

For instance, El-Shafie claims that the rehabilitation and refurbishment of the La Viennoise building set him back EGP 55 million. A total of 30 million Egyptian Pounds were spent on the property's acquisition and subsequent investment of about 25 million EGP (Al-Aees, 2018). By refurbishing and renting out apartments, the firm provides long-term income for the founders, while investors get a respectable return on their investment. In addition, Al- Ismailia ambitious plan including the completion of the boutique hotel and open it for business, as well as to open more than 25 shops and invest around 100 million pounds in total by the year 2021. Egypt's 2030 sustainable development strategy has benefited from Al- Ismailia efforts to revitalize downtown Cairo and repurpose 150-year-old structures into high-quality mixed-use developments. In addition, the success of Al-Ismailia's business model in La Viennoise inspired both Misr for Real Estate Management and the Sovereign Fund of Egypt to invest in their real estate assets, whether owned or managed, through an innovative renovation as the only method to increase and maximize ground rents.

Misr For Real Estate Management Company has the largest institutional real estate portfolio. Misr Real Estate Asset Management (MREA) also owns over 140 properties in downtown, 72 of which have distinguished architectural characteristics. The company oversees and manages the state-owned real estate assets conservatively with a risk-averse approach. The company intend to offer a bundle of buildings, four to five buildings per transaction, for investment by the private sector to duplicate the Al-Ismailia model on a revenue-sharing basis<sup>102</sup>. It was anticipated that individual and large-scale investors would pool their resources in response to this trend, capitalizing on the potential high rental demand brought on by the new development wave. Partnership with the private sector, according to H.E. Hesham Tawfik. Minister of Public Business Sector<sup>103</sup>, is given priority to develop these real estate assets as one of the most effective means of achieving their development objectives. The goal of the redevelopment project was to give real estate development companies, businesses, and investors from the private sector usufruct rights to 70 state-owned

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<sup>102</sup> Hesham Tawfic, HE Minster of Public Investment, personal interview, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019

<sup>103</sup> personal interview, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019

heritage buildings in downtown Cairo for 25 years.<sup>104</sup> On June 11th, 2020, Misr for Real Estate Management Company announced the beginning of registration for interested companies and investors. As a public tender, this offer was then publicized on 12/22/2020 to guarantee transparency and entice different companies. The selected developer is expected to restore, maintain, and rent out the building in exchange for a percentage of the rental money. In addition to Al- Ismailia company for Real Estate Investment, The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development EBRD and the Sovereign Fund of Egypt deemed as key financial players in downtown Cairo.

### **The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development EBRD**

Cultural heritage investment has become an increasingly popular trend across the globe. According to the World Bank, heritage investment is essential for achieving inclusive green growth and long-term development. Therefore, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) intends to invest in the infrastructure and adaptive reuse of downtown Cairo by funding the rehabilitation of various commercially oriented real estate properties. In addition, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) backs public and private efforts to revitalize the city's historic center while protecting its cultural heritage. The EBRD contracted OHK to provide technical assistance for the comprehensive and sustainable revitalization of downtown Cairo. The 14-month initiative, which began in the third quarter of 2016, was supported by the Austrian Technical Assistance Co-operation Fund. The team was tasked with a wide range of activities, including real estate market analysis, energy, and resource assessments of key buildings in the downtown area, spatial planning, infrastructure investment scoping, and developing a strategic implementation plan for the area's regeneration. The OHK team designed a long-term urban regeneration strategy to attract long-term investment. The overarching strategy utilized downtown's three million square meters of distinctive qualities while restructuring the mix of uses, value-chain dynamics, and asset base of 1600 buildings. The plan reshaped entire neighborhoods, structured regeneration interventions into 46 urban districts, and designed solutions for transportation and mobility. It also offered 230 proposals for investing in infrastructure and rehabilitation of real estate ranging from 1 million EUR to several billion EUR. Under OHK's plan, the total investment is estimated at 6b EUR or 120 b EGP. In addition, OHK engaged directly with the Cairo Governorate and the Presidential Committee (CHDC). As a result, Cairo Heritage Development Committee (CHDC) has been assigned to implement 14 guiding principles of regeneration following OHK's plan, each of which deals with downtown conditions and meets specific needs of regeneration goals. However, thirty-two implementation strategies should be adopted within 1, 3 and 5-year timeframes. After evaluating all 46 zones, the Cairo Governorate focused on five.

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<sup>104</sup> The CEO, Abdel Nasser Taha, personal Interview August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021



In November 2016, The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development offered the Al-Ismailia company for Real Estate Investments a 145 million EGP loan with the stated project objective of "commercialization of certain historic structures" and "supporting regeneration and restoration initiatives (EBRD, n.d.). The estimated cost of the Project is 433,600,000 EGP. According to the 2014 EBRD Environmental & Social Policy, the Project was classified B as the Project's environmental and social impacts are obvious and can be addressed with appropriate mitigation strategies. A review of the completed Environmental and Social Questionnaire for Property Development and subsequent communications with the Company served as the basis for the Environmental and Social Due Diligence ESDD. It is worth noting that internal changes are permitted for Type B historical buildings, while changes to the façade are prohibited, rather than those necessary for restoration purposes.

### **Sovereign Fund of Egypt**

Privatization was maintained as a "state-led and state-controlled policy" despite the restructuring of the bureaucratic government by neoliberal reforms, as it served as a "*new source of patronage to reinforce and extend links between the political and economic elites*" (Bogaert, 2013: p. 223). As Julia Elyachar (2005) claimed, accumulation by dispossession is facilitated by policies such as enforced privatization and structural adjustment programs. In this context, vacant land and real estate properties are means of wealth accumulation. Since the 1980s, privatization of state-owned assets as a key economic policy has been practiced in various forms in several countries around the globe. For over three decades, the United States has actively advocated privatization within globalization and neoliberalism context (Mason, 2013). Markets and economic factors are seen as the primary drivers of privatization as a political instrument. However, over the past few decades, the institutional logic of the capitalist market and the bureaucratic state's institutional logic have become increasingly intertwined with 'globalization' and 'financialization,' processes. Given that the state indirectly acknowledges the influence of finance, governments are increasingly using special-purpose institutions such as sovereign wealth funds (SWFs) as essential investment vehicles for assets investment in private financial markets to improve their returns, regardless of the type of capitalism they practice.

Sovereign wealth funds are state-owned investment funds regularly founded from privatization proceeds. In the international financial markets, sovereign funds have emerged as a key player. The capital of these funds may be derived from several sources, including land, stocks, and commercial real estate, among other investment instruments. Other portfolios/funds hold some of the government's foreign exchange reserves (particularly the US dollar) and surplus foreign currency returns from assets like oil exports. The two primary drivers behind SWF expansion are increasing the market value of state-owned enterprises through the restructuring process and international investors. Currently, the SWF ecosystem is much larger and more diverse than it was previously. This procedure entails luring foreign capital, experience, and ownership to formal underperforming public sector companies. These funds have typically invested in external assets,

such as equities traded on major markets, for several reasons, including sterilization and a lack of adequate local investment options. However, after the financial crisis of September 2008, some SWFs turned their focus to supporting their local economies (Raymond, 2010). In addition, several governments in developing nations have also encouraged their sovereign wealth funds to invest locally due to a lack of infrastructure finance in developing nations. As a result, SWF has become appealing to investors because of their capacity to deliver long-term capital.

Egypt's Sovereign Investment Fund is an independent, privately managed entity. The Fund seeks to encourage private investment in Egypt's idle or underutilized assets, so their full potential can be realized, and the country's economy strengthened. Since 2018, the Egyptian Sovereign Wealth Fund has achieved great strides. The Fund's statute determined the board of directors and the general assembly's composition. The Fund's investment opportunities are handled through sector- or partner-specific sub-funds, each with its governance, legal structures, and investing mechanisms. Each sub-fund has its board of directors to ensure investment decisions are based on solid business reasoning and are directed by capable professionals. The statute gave the fund system the authority to develop its own investment option, marketing strategies, and promotional channels. The Fund's foundation law does not include the required controls for such a significant financial entity; as a result, the Fund enjoys unrestricted powers, unrestrained by Parliament, the judiciary, or monitoring agencies, and not subject to the state's regular governmental rules. The sovereign Fund of Egypt is presidential; the President has exclusive decision-making authority. The President appoints the Fund's members drawn from his cabinet and experts with competence in the most relevant fields from the private sector. In addition, the Fund gives the President and his government the right to transfer ownership of unused or exploited state-owned assets while also giving him the unstrained right to increase resources through borrowing, selling assets, renting, or leasing to transfer ownership or issue shares and financial bonds. This legislative framework permits the Fund to become Egypt's preferred investment partner by releasing assets to investors and aiding the government with structural reforms.

Egypt's real estate market as Egypt Real Estate Report | Q3 (2020) stated, *'is seeing robust demand, and as a result, the country has begun to introduce new cities with scope for large-scale real estate projects, including the New Administrative Capital, New Alamein City and New Mansoura City. The ongoing development and construction of 20 new cities, in addition to the development of the 23 existing new cities, present attractive investment opportunities in Egypt. Egypt is the second biggest recipient of FDI in Africa and the Arab world, according to the UN's World Invest Report'* (Fitch Solution, 2020). On October 25, 2020, President Abdel Fattah El Sisi emphasized the significance of the Egypt Sovereign Fund in boosting the added value of assets and properties owned by the state. Since Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates developed their economic and political ties with Egypt, private Gulf investment in Egypt's real estate sector has surged dramatically, sometimes in partnership with Egyptian developers and backed by the government (Abaza, 2017).

The Investment Law No. 17 Amendment of 2015 established a new method for determining the market value of real estate. The amendment allows GAFI, the General Authority for Investment and Free Zones, to provide usufruct rights to investors for the properties intended for commercial uses in conformity with the Investment Act. These rights can be conferred for up to thirty years and then renewed. This eliminates the need for investors to deal with various land allocation authorities, which can be time consuming. In May 2018, the Investment Law No. 72 of 2017 was signed into law, providing financial incentives and tax breaks for private sector investments in the country's less developed areas (Nabil, 2019; Xinhua, 2019). Considering the aforementioned legislative framework, it is clear that the real estate sector depends heavily on public-private partnerships; however, the vast majority of development projects built and advertised are targeted merely at the elite and high classes (Metwally & Abdalla, 2011).

The Greater Cairo 2050 vision and budget deficit have heightened the urgency of a broad-based private-sector mobilization. In achieving the Greater Cairo 2050 aim, no entity is better positioned than TSFE to fulfil its domestic development responsibilities. Egypt's Sovereign Fund Executive Director Ayman Soliman announced in September 2020 the launch of a plan to develop the downtown region into a hub for tourism, commerce, culture, and civilization. In addition, in September 2020, the ownership of seven public buildings and their lands were transferred to the Sovereign Fund of Egypt, according to presidential decree No. 459 of 2020 including, the Mogamma building in Tahrir Square and its land, which extends over three acres; the old administrative headquarters of the interior ministry and its land, which extends over 4.6 acres; and the 3.9 acres of land of the former National Democratic Party building on the Nil Corniche next to the old Egyptian Museum in Tahrir Square, which was partially damaged during the 25 January Revolution.

Misr Sub Fund for Tourism, Real Estate Investment, and Antiquities Development CEO Amr Elhamy<sup>105</sup> claims the Fund enjoy different privileges and greater versatility. As Elhamy stated, “We are trying to escape all the red tape and bureaucracy between various government agencies.” He also stressed the significance of long-term investments in partnership with the private sector for implementing sound market-based investment management strategies to achieve financial sustainability. In this context, the Fund intends to develop a wide variety of partnerships, most of which are based on shared revenue with minimal assurance, because our investment purpose is well-defined and flexible. For this reason, the Fund is distinguished from rival state-owned real estate management companies and similar organizations. In this regard, the sub-fund has conducted a study in collaboration with Colliers International searching for optimal use for El-Tahrir Complex (Mogamma El-Tahrir), which could be included a hotel (3 to 4stars), administrative units and non-retail stores (boutiques), along with Art Center in 700 square meters.

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<sup>105</sup> Interview August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021

As a result, the sub-fund received seven bids from interested investors in Mogamma El-Tahrir Complex for potential partnerships. Two are international investors, while the rest are well-known regional investors. Regarding the Ministry of Interior and its associated buildings, the primary building at the Ministry of the Interior and its related facilities will house a French business school associated with IPAC School of Management, a top-tier European Union institution of higher education in management (France). The other structure is planned to house a variety of companies involved in Business process outsourcing (BPO), such as RAYA and TE Data, and Data Storage Centers beside each other, imitating Station F in Paris as a benchmark<sup>106</sup>. For El-Tahrir Complex (Mogamma El-Tahrir), the bid has been awarded to A US-UAE consortium including Global Ventures, Oxford Capital Group, and UAE-based Al-Otaiba Investment for refurbishing the building. According to HE Hala Al-Said, the Minister of Planning and Economic Development *“This consortium has transformed many buildings in Chicago<sup>107</sup> into modern attractive commercial centres and apartment hotels,” (ibid)*. In terms of valuation, over LE3.5 billion (\$200 million) will be invested in the deal (Essam El-Din, 2021).

Despite the importance of the Sovereign Fund strategies in enhancing economic growth, the fund, turning into an investment entity, seeks to increase investment opportunities in downtown Cairo through the utilization of state-owned assets. As a result of the fund's well-diversified portfolio, foreign investors' demand to invest in state-owned real estate assets has significantly increased. Rather than merely repositioning structures, institutional investors and other investors would actively gentrify by upgrading. They offer funds and advanced asset management strategies to convert run-down structures into luxurious ones. The strategy aims to create exclusive enclaves to attract more affluent newcomers and an emergent financial class who will pay the steeply increased rent. Amr Helmy also noted that downtown Cairo has become an irrefutable destination for investment. The current development work in Tahrir square, as Amr Helmy<sup>108</sup> referred, push up asset values and improve the profitability in downtown Cairo. The government's efforts aim to revitalize downtown Cairo's urban fabric, promote the prerequisites of the financial investors for whom they assemble buildings, and create conditions for the investors and developer to partner with us. According to Amr Helmy, the Fund received offers from different tycoon investors in Egypt to invest with them. In addition, other investors, such as Onsy Sawiris. invested in his own property which is located Infront of the ministry of interior and turned it into a co-working Space.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Amr El-Hamy personal Interview, August5<sup>th</sup>, 2021

<sup>107</sup> the London House building in downtown Chicago

<sup>108</sup> Interview August5<sup>th</sup>, 2021

<sup>109</sup> Amr El-Hamy personal Interview, August5<sup>th</sup>, 2021

In sum, the flows of capital into the real estate development and heritagization of downtown Cairo for enhancing tourist experience have fostered the activities that are consumer-oriented in the residential areas and the production of urban space that reinforces gentrification. Tourism and real estate development provide the theoretical correlation between the production and demand sides. While capital investment in the production domain, including a wide range of real estate development funding and the establishment of consumption areas, the socio-physical spaces on the demand side which are associated with gentrification considered “*highly visual expression of changing patterns of consumption in cities*” (Carpenter & Lees, 1995: p. 288).

### **Art, Creativity & Entrepreneurship**

Downtown Cairo is home to a plethora of cultural institutions, publishing houses, theatres, newspapers, and bookshops (both large and small, private, and state-owned) that have attracted many artists and intellectuals. So, downtown Cairo became a cultural hub for 1970s's literary bohemians, although none of them lived there. Others frequented downtown Cairo for its cultural offerings, where they could engage in cultural and political discourse in many bars and cafes that had evolved into their own de facto cultural institutions. As a result, downtown Cairo on a cultural and political level has become a focal point of the social movement.

From the 1990s till 2010, the prestigious district supported new cultural waves. Downtown Cairo has become a favorite place for young artists and cultural pioneers. Unlike commercial facilities on the street level, downtown apartment units were easier to find for cultural and artistic purposes. Downtown Cairo's architectural splendor and affordable rents made possible by rent regulation attracted independent artists. However, these art spaces in Cairo's downtown are a challenge to the typical gentrification theories emerging from the Global North, where policy controls transactions between renters and landlords to limit and regulate personalized relationships directly under the control of the local government (Elshahed, 2015). Through these policies, independent arts groups could secure long-term leases with municipalities and thrive while promoting the regeneration of their urban environments. In Egypt, rent regulations that control tenant-landlord relationships have led to an underground black market where negotiations are made between individuals rather than under the auspices of a government agency.

In the early stage of gentrification, the creative initiatives and the pioneers of counter cultures and artists who carved out their cultural characteristics in downtown Cairo's urban environment, nooks, and decayed buildings failed to move the stagnation of downtown Cairo. However, the thriving independent art scene in Cairo's downtown area shows that gentrification may take other forms, not explicitly supported by the mainstream theories of gentrification. In our case study, the influx of newcomers, such as artists, has not resulted in an increase in rents or a shift in the demographic make-up of the surrounding area. However, the independent art scene in downtown Cairo challenged the state monopoly over the arts and enticed a younger generation that is politically savvy and well-educated, who were among the driving forces behind the uprising in Egypt in 2011. In addition, the Nitaq Festival and Townhouse Gallery injected the flourishing Egyptian contemporary art scene with new blood and helped place Egypt on the global art map by giving a platform to young artists whose work was not recognized in government-sanctioned spaces.

The Egyptian revolution played an essential role in the rediscovery of downtown Cairo. The influx of young students, activists, and artists enriched the 1990s-era contemporary art scene. As a result, a new visual culture has sprung up, bringing political awareness to the fore, and symbolizing the revolutionary struggle's enduring optimism. Street art has been displayed in public spaces such as squares as a visual manifestation that asserts the collective right to the city. The revolutionary art that dominated Tahrir Square in 2011 created and disseminated visual vocabularies and aesthetic patterns that were easily identifiable. It was a powerful weapon used to support resistance, awareness, and rebellion, leading to the rediscovery of the nostalgic charm of downtown Cairo.

The intersection of art and business is not a recent phenomenon but has evolved over time. Art in business, as Darso (2013) referred to it, is used for decoration and entertainment, as well as a tool for communication, leadership development, problem-solving, and innovation. In today's "Experience Economy," consumers are yearning for one-of-a-kind experiences rather than generic goods. As a result, the arts, along with consumer preference and marketing, are increasingly integrated into the strategic transformation process in the business domain. In recent years, the link between the artists' community and private investors has developed further, as private investors provide the independent arts and cultural scene with one of the limited financial options available locally. Hence, their dominance over the symbolic economy has expanded.

In downtown Cairo, culture is shaped and redefined by artists and culture producers (the creative class) in a way that aesthetically and visually celebrates the richness and beauty of downtown Cairo, socially transforms the historic neighborhood into a hot spot of high-end consumption, and financially discloses the dominance of the private sector. Entrepreneurs' investors and real estate developers have extensively leveraged art initiatives and cultural activities in downtown Cairo to revive and promote the urban neighborhood and create a business-friendly environment. As a result, the creative industries in downtown Cairo have been exposed to a continuous process of capitalistic conditioning. Art and culture are reduced to cultural enclaves in sanitized public spaces directed at an exclusive group to satisfy the aesthetic preferences of a minority.

During the period of political instability, the Al-Ismailia company for Real Estate Investments developed and apply their vision for downtown Cairo profiting from the dynamic image of urban disarray, distancing itself from the underlying difficulties that caused this struggle. They used urban development and cultural patronage as a strategy for enforcing spatial exclusion. The Company's business model is not only focused on refurbishment and property upgrading but also on creating a business-friendly environment. The Company leveraged cultural production and the thriving contemporary art scene for its gain as a disguise for real estate speculation. The Company's policy aimed to increase the demand for apartment rentals to increase real estate values for economic growth and enhance consumption among the affluent. Funding and sponsoring multiple selective creative cultural and artistic activities ranging between 100 and 120<sup>110</sup> initiatives per year was the means to enhance the users' flow to serve their agenda. As a result, the district's image as a hub of cultural innovation was bolstered. The Al-Ismailia Company's rehabilitation model of La Viennoise is emblematic of the company's commitment to downtown and the gentrification project, benefiting from the district's thriving cultural scene. The ageing historic hotel was transformed into an art space and eventually as an exclusive headquarters for an international investment company with plans for a boutique hotel on one of its floors and a rooftop restaurant and bar<sup>111</sup>.

In addition, in downtown Cairo, most of the art and culture spaces are owned by the Al-Ismailia company. The Al-Ismailia Company offers cheaper rent and, sometimes, free rent to emerging artists, non-profit organizations, and enterprises. The tenant is fully responsible for the renovation of the rented property. The Al Ismailia company is undertaking cultural and artistic endeavors to revive a long-abandoned structure into a well-known, lively space. Active mobilization may increase the interest in the company-acquired properties. When the company's goals are met, the art initiative will most likely not afford the rent, which will be raised per market pricing. However, there are two options: Either they must go, or the company will move them to another location under the same conditions. To quote Mohamed El-Taher, former director of Al-Ismailia company: "*I'm not a father*"<sup>112</sup>. Cultural spaces like 10 Mahmoud Bassiouny<sup>113</sup> with strong anti-capitalist non-conformist goals were the first to be shut down. As a result of mounting rent and dwindling support and participation, this problem eventually expanded to other initiatives like CIC. The Rawabet theatre at Townhouse Gallery shut down in 2019 for the same reason the Factory's did: the lease was up and could not be renewed. The Al-Ismailia company's collaboration and partnership with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development help to explain the widespread reluctance to lease spaces for long-term creative initiatives.

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<sup>110</sup> Karim El-Shafie (CEO), personal interview on August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021

<sup>111</sup> (Mohammed El-Serougy, personal interview, February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019

<sup>112</sup> Personal interview, May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019

<sup>113</sup> a cultural apartment or young subversive artists represent the revolutionary art

However, in the post-revolutionary period, the new art and cultural scene in downtown Cairo did not aim for the bulk of downtown users or the average Egyptian; rather, it catered to certain classes and art enthusiasts who followed and engaged with the scene avidly. Al-Ismaïlia has unwittingly promoted social classification and stratification through the promotion of this strategy. Unlike the El-Fan Meidan (art is a square) festival, D-CAF was criticized for its bounded socioeconomic and cultural inclusion attempts as “*the ‘usual’ D-CAF attendees: artists, downtown regulars, D-CAF staff and friends, embassy and cultural centre personnel, and foreigners... the audience, the performance and the venues seemed to be out of sync*” (Balata, 2015). Instead of being an interactive event, D-CAF festival is more a “pop-up” with the city and people serving as a background image. The Value of Arts for Business as Schiuma (2011) highlighted in her published book, “*showing how the arts, in the form of Arts-based Initiatives (ABIs), can be used to enhance value-creation capacity and boost business performance.*” In that phase, art has come to play a more direct role in gentrification as a business tool in the hands of capitalists.

Otherwise, cultural industries played a pivotal role in the economic redevelopment and the establishment of vibrant urban settings, making them an integral part of urban regeneration initiatives in North American, British, and Australian cities. In addition, development initiatives, such as marketplaces festivals and cultural districts (Boyer, 1992; Hannigan, 1998), are highly beneficial to regeneration schemes, city boosterism, and economic growth (Bianchini et al., 1992). However, the gentrifying influence of independent art venues in Western cities varies from downtown Cairo. The government's long-term strategy to revitalize downtown Cairo did not incorporate these art and cultural activities since the official cultural establishment is wary of supporting them as engines of urban regeneration. In Egypt, the authoritarian political system uses art and culture extensively as tools of political control to create a non-critical environment of the dominant ideology and vast economic disparities. The impact of the Ministry of Culture on the art and culture scene in Egypt is evident via controlling cultural spaces and the persistent allowance of authority abuse. The security-guaranteed approvals are only permitted for regime-aligned intellectuals to access public media and cultural venues. The national media and dedicated/ or state-aligned private media channels dejected and degraded dissident artists. Furthermore, various obstacles hampered art performances and development, including persistent harassment and state persecution. Almost all artist efforts outside the Culture Ministry are financially insecure since they depend on subsidies and funding beyond the country's borders to keep them going.

Artists and their freedom of expression are other issues. Artists have long been subjected to censorship and repression that are politically motivated to defend the governing authority against any criticism that could lead to reform or the exposure of abuses of authority. Since the enactment of Law 430/1955, Egypt's censorship regulations have not been revised. The law gives the Ministry of Culture the authority to regulate and evaluate audio and video productions before they are displayed, to permit or refuse them. For instance, the authorities can remove or change anything in the artwork's content that they believe is incompatible with public order, public morality, or higher state interests. The monitoring procedure is also enlarged to include any future changes the



creator might make to the artist's right to display his work publicly. Law 430/1955 was amended by subsequent legislation (Law 38/1992 and Law 162/1993) to implement regulations requiring rigorous bureaucratic processes to ensure state control over the substance of artworks. Since the election of President Al-Sisi, the space for freedom of expression in art has shrunk significantly in Egypt. Many forceful direct and indirect tweets have emphasized zero tolerance for mocking and satire directed at the military, police, or the president. After enjoying a brief period of freedom in the revolution's early days, artists are again subjected to imprisonment and prosecution. In addition, various measures have been taken to curb their activities that counter the government's interests. These measures disregard the fact that censorship has impeded the development of Egyptian culture by limiting artistic expression and having detrimental effects on the culture industry.

Since the end of 2013, public space has no longer allowed any form of freedom of expression, nor independent artistic events. Instead, private spaces see these initiatives as a marketing tool, a means of gentrification, to promote their spaces or properties as previously explained. However, only art events sponsored by corporations and featuring a global cast of participants and funders and perform behind closed doors are welcomed by the government. Despite the ongoing sanctioned arrest of artists, authors, and intellectuals and the raids on downtown Cairo's cultural institutions, the government has decided to collaborate with Al Ismailia and the international festivals in downtown Cairo, such as D-CAF, Cairo Jaz, and the Panorama of the European Film Festival to enhance their standing in the global community.

Meanwhile, entrepreneurs play a critical role in the gentrification of Khedivial Cairo, whether via their innovative use of downtown architectural heritage or the agglomeration of their creative initiatives in downtown Cairo. Theoretical and empirical research has demonstrated that agglomeration economies play a significant role in generating the indirect spillover effect, which is critical for both growth (Glaeser et al., 2014) and the emergence of new economies (Suddle & van Stel, 2008). Recently, downtown Cairo became a privileged site for startup hubs and technology-intensive interactive economies. Indeed, the GrEEK Campus, Cairo's first technology and innovation park, and the RiseUp Summit, an annual entrepreneurship and innovation event that brings the MENA region's entrepreneurship ecosystem together, have played critical roles in fostering a self-propelled startup economy in downtown Cairo. The current scene is transforming downtown Cairo into a more "livable" and dynamic place, promoting public space as a key for innovation. In addition, the Egyptian startup scene has attracted several well-known foreign entities to support rising Egyptian entrepreneurs through seed capital investments and mentorship. The current phenomenon enhanced the gentrification process in downtown Cairo.

## Gentrification consequences and Outcomes in Khedivial Cairo

As Zukin (1987) claimed, “most agree that when a low wealth neighborhood sees dramatic increases in property values over a short period of time, gentrification is at play”. The Al-Ismailia company's strategy of acquiring prime real estate in downtown Cairo has driven up prices and rents. Because of the increased demand and flurry of purchasing activity, landlords were motivated to sell their properties for maximum profit<sup>114</sup>. Shafei in press stated that “Owners were glad to find investors that would purchase their buildings, .....they come to us, we don't go to them. Tenants want to leave because either they have left their apartments closed for ages, or they don't like downtown. They don't want to be living here” (Fayed, 2009). According to Shafei, approximately two hundred properties were listed for sale to the Al-Ismailia company. Nowadays, the rent value has increased to reach 1200 Euro per month and more according to their location. Apartment prices start at 3000000LE and go up to at least 1500000 LE and more for sale. In addition, many apartments turned into small motels, hostels and or Airbnb-type.

Initially, the government's regulations, such as the rent freeze law, help long-time residents avoid displacement and replacement when the rent and property value increase. Despite the real estate developer and private investor efforts, the state was the only guarantee for not gentrifying downtown Cairo. In Egypt, around 1.5 million Egyptian families remain under "old rent" contracts, prompting landlords to exert pressure on the Egyptian government and parliament to repeal or dramatically change the articles of legislation. The government is now actively involved in revitalizing downtown Cairo, working in tandem with Al-Ismailia to improve the area significantly. Landlords in Egypt were required by a rule enacted during World War II to freeze rent at a 15–20% reduction. Former president Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized over 60 apartment buildings, and a 20% reduction was implemented with many other establishments. President Anwar Sadat's decision allows renters to sublease or exchange their rented property without contacting the landlord. As a result, the tenant-landlord conflict has arisen because of the old law's persistence and manipulation, particularly among landlords who own properties in historic structures. However, landlords have long objected to the legality of the Old Rental Law, considering recent developments and inflation in the market. Noteworthy, several attempts have been made to unfreeze old leases, all of which, according to Ihab Mansour, “went nowhere because there was no response from the government<sup>115</sup>” (Essam El-Din, 2021). Egyptian MPs in the House of Representatives Housing Committee debated a bill governing the old rent for non-residential units, such as commercial units and offices (Alkhuli, 2017). However, the parliament could not pass a bill that would have abolished outdated rent regulations because the government could not submit the requisite data and numbers on the number of commercial units controlled by old rents.

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<sup>114</sup> Ahmed Hassan, a broker in downtown Cairo, personal interview 10<sup>th</sup> of August 2021

<sup>115</sup> Ihab Mansour, deputy chairman of the Housing Committee of Egypt's House of Representatives

Currently, the old law's monthly rates are a pittance compared to the properties' market value and do not reflect their actual sizes. On August 14, 2021, President El-Sisi stated the importance of addressing the old rent legislation regarding the wide variety of economic and social concerns. According to the president, owners' and tenants' interests should be balanced "*The rent of some housing units in downtown Cairo stands at just EGP 20 a month though its market value exceeds millions of Egyptian pounds. This is completely unfair for landlords who should enjoy the value of their housing units,*" (Essam El-Din, 2021). Following President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi's urging for the unfreezing of old rentals, a debate on legislation governing landlord-tenant interactions is being planned by parliament's Housing Committee. Recently, the government is focused on reforming the outdated rent legislation and registering real estate.

### **Displacement & Replacement**

The term "gentrification" immediately sparked heated debate regarding its advantages and drawbacks after it was first introduced. Expansionist commodification of cities' public spaces is associated with gentrification and social exclusion, which has been related to neoliberal globalization (Smith, 2002; Hackworth, 2007). Different academics and scholars have confirmed displacement as an essential outcome of gentrification (Smith, 2002; Wacquant, 2008). It is a relative re-urbanization in which low-income residents are replaced or displaced, and residential enclaves are formed (Piccolomini, 1993). Some believe gentrification might unfold slowly and without displacing people (Diappi et al., 2008). Manzo (2012) contends that even if displacement does not occur as frequently as it does in the United Kingdom and the United States, the aestheticization of a location as a result of gentrification causes a form of moral displacement.

In downtown Cairo, findings indicate that the gentrification process did not include the massive displacement of the residents. However, direct and/or indirect residential displacement resulted from housing demolition, landlord harassment, evictions, intimidation, or deliberate vandalism to speed up decay and thus grant the issuance of demolition authorization. In our case study, refurbishing buildings requires speeding up tenants' eviction to enable renovations. For instance, the strategy of Al-Ismailia company for real estate investment company incorporated different tactics to push tenants or occupiers; willingly through negotiation and offering attractive incentives; or legally, through the court based on the fragmented ownership of these apartments to end the lease<sup>116</sup> and evict long-term residents lacking legal tenure. Awatta (2015: P.110) referred to Al-Ismailia's policy to control over the remaining 40% of their units whose agenda clearly signals gentrification "*There have been unconfirmed narratives that Ismaelia has intimidated several old rent tenants to evict them from their properties, one by preventing water access to units for prolonged periods of time and the other by hiring security companies with security dogs to intimidate the tenants*". As previously mentioned, Al-Ismailia's model inspired Misr for a Real

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<sup>116</sup> Mohammed El-Taher, The General Director of Al-Ismaelia company, personal interview, May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Estate management company to apply for its vacant properties. However, before redeveloping the structures to maximize profit, the selected developer has the legal and ethical obligation to evacuate the occupants.

In addition, the government's current efforts to pass laws to gradually de-regulate these lease agreements, at least for units used for non-housing purposes, will be immensely helpful. Hence, the quality of retail uses will change as a result of these measures, and commercial activity and small businesses that are not compatible with the district's future brand will be at risk of being displaced. According to Karim El-Shafi,<sup>117</sup> the commercial activity must be carefully chosen. When the company rents out space involving food, cuisine, and other retail spaces in his buildings, El-Shafi selects activities consistent with the building's identity and value. Shafe believes, as part of our efforts to refurbish our properties, to revitalize downtown Cairo, we attempt to enhance Egyptian-themed experiences through adoption of selective activities. Hence, downtown Cairo might improve the tourist experience by attracting visitors who are looking for something unique and more authentic, such as locally manufactured brands and cuisines.

In this regard, the Cairo Heritage Development Committee 's efforts to revitalize El Borsa aimed to turn the area into a Cultural and Arts District in the heart of Cairo. This district would serve as a cultural hub for creativity and a marketplace for handcrafted goods and antiques. The committee declaration marked the end of Cairene-favorite local coffee shops in El-Borsa and El Sharfeen Street. There are about 28 cafes on El-Borsa Street. Only five cafes have a legal license, and the others are unlicensed. Some of the cafes used the basements of residential buildings and later converted to cafés. Following the 2011 Egyptian revolution, some of the cheap cafes on El-Sharfeen Street became unwitting hubs for political activism in downtown Cairo. According to the committee's vision, licenses will be approved for all the closed cafés and even the unlicensed ones on El-Borsa Street if they accept to change their activities to suit the suggested cultural vision for the area<sup>118</sup>. Despite the government's desire to turn the street into a cultural hub, there is no clear plan or specific agenda to determine the quality and nature of these proposed activities. That led to widespread discontent among the street stakeholders. People were anxious about the economic repercussions of modifying their activities, which they anticipated would result in substantial losses. In addition, they feel uneasy about the upcoming because of the government's plan to amend Egypt's Old Rent Law and the subsequent emancipation of rental contracts during the 10-year transitional phase. Local stakeholders widely expected that Khedivial Cairo regeneration project will result in the selling of their proprieties to investors.

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<sup>117</sup> Personal interview, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021

<sup>118</sup> (Mohammed Anis, the head of Abdeen Quarter and Saied El-Bahr the executive engineer of khedivial Cairo regeneration work, personal communication, April 2018)

In addition, public places in major cities provide a perfect chance for socialization and community mixing. It fosters a sense of well-being among the general population, which is the primary advantage of these public spaces. Unfortunately, Cairo appears to be lacking in public spaces, and such venues are absent from the city for residents (Attia, 2011). Although there are a few designated public spaces in the city, sometimes people lack access to them. The findings indicated that the development of downtown Cairo's urban space is consistent with government objectives of control, protection, social filtration, and image production. The state-led gentrification process aimed to increase property values via regeneration actions regarding public spaces. Urban public space in downtown Cairo, which is state property, is vulnerable to invasive surveillance and control. Egypt's interim president used his legislative authority granted by the July 8 Constitutional Declaration to pass Law 107 of 2013 on the Right to Public Meetings, Processions, and Peaceful Demonstrations on November 24. The law severely curtailed Egyptians' freedom to congregate, debate, or even peacefully demonstrate or protest. Downtown's public spaces were partitioned or closed off to the public systematically. Carriens in downtown Cairo are denied the privilege to use public spaces to prevent future disturbances. Later, private investment flourished in central Cairo due to the systematic production of space that redistributed authority and redefined the standards for claiming public space in the city.

Public places are increasingly viewed as neoliberal and profit-driven development spaces. In downtown Cairo, public space is developed mainly for elite consumption to eventually play an essential role in gentrification and the neighborhood's transformation for capital accumulation. In downtown Cairo, the commercialization and the privatization of public space aimed at managing urban public space and reclaiming these areas from undesired users, turning them into privately owned public spaces. For example, the regeneration of the Downtown Cairo waterfront is a profit-oriented project. The large-scale urban development project aims to develop the Nile Corniche walkway. The project includes 19 buildings, five restaurants, five cafeterias, 56 shops, three car parks with 180 cars, three bleachers, and a theatre with a total area of 275m<sup>2</sup>, providing opportunities for leasing commercial space that provides additional revenue. The space is meant to be more popular with the new generation of young professionals through the proliferation of trendy, stylish restaurants and nightlife spots that cater to the fashion-conscious. Prime Minister Mustafa Madbouly of Egypt announced in March that the Ahi Masr Walkway would be offered to the public at no cost. However, Egyptians were flabbergasted when a 20 Egyptian pound (1 Euro) entrance fee was imposed on the promenade to deprive the common folk. Egyptian human rights lawyer Khaled Ali sued to have the entrance fee eliminated, arguing that the project's name, which can be translated as the "People of Egypt's Walkway," belongs to Egyptian citizens of all classes, to whom the Egyptian constitution of 2014 granted the right of access to the Nile River (Abu Sneineh, 2022). The business model has been replicated at Abdeen Square, where several restaurants, boutiques and cafés have been set up, security and hygiene firms have been assigned, and an iron fence has enclosed a field park.

Furthermore, clearing illegal but widely attended commercial activities in central Cairo was necessary to restore official control of public spaces. According to Mitchell (2003), the eviction procedure displaces disadvantaged groups or economically inferior individuals who are deemed undesirable for the commercial, financial, or exclusive interests of the capital. Unregulated street vending surged in the streets of downtown Cairo during the 2011 uprising. Downtown Cairo was overrun with hawkers peddling all kinds of goods. Prior to the evacuation of Ramses Square, 1,750 downtown street vendors were relocated to Torgoman, a decision that the vendors considered a death sentence (Rios, 2015). Torgoman is a parking lot near downtown but has the significant drawback of not being a commercial area. The evacuation of unauthorized street vendors forcibly represented another form of displacement and relocation.

In addition to physical displacement of residents and vulnerable groups, gentrification also aimed to displace the social collective memories of the citizens. Through cultural displacement and redesigning public spaces like Tahrir Square, where people are emotionally attached, gentrification has been employed politically in our case study to create new urban images, wipe off the citizens' political memory, and pass on a new homogenous official narrative. Tahrir Square was the symbol of democracy, justice, and liberation. Rather than being a physical space, Tahrir Square was an imagined idea created by a group of people's collective emotions "*space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols*" (Lefebvre, 1991; p39). The imagery of Tahrir Square has been widely distributed worldwide by international media, such as the BBC, CNN, and others. Tahrir Square has catapulted democratic debates about the Middle East and Egypt to the forefront. As previously explained, the artistic interventions highlight the importance of revolutionary art in forming society's collective memory and strengthening the notion of place attachments. The current renovation of Tahrir Square caused a radical shift in the site and its surroundings, turning it into a tourist destination and archaeological site. It is hard to trace any form of cultural awakening or freedom of expression in Egypt that marked the revolution.

### **Changes In The Social And Urban Fabric &The expansion of ‘consumption space’**

The wealthy and creative classes are frequently drawn to places with a certain quality, where spaces are produced for their consumption. Urban quality often includes cultural and natural amenities. Introducing high-end services, such as rehabilitating and refurbishing old or unused buildings, to attract a wealthier clientele causes changes in the neighborhood's original fabric. Implementing large-scale urban development projects such as Corniche Nil waterfront development and "Maspiro project", the renovation of Tahrir square and other squares would have a considerable impact on Downtown Cairo resulting from the widespread use of "aestheticization" and "securitization" strategies.

The concept of housing choice, like gentrification, is discerning. Gentrifiers' households in the new economy are often smaller families with a higher education and employment level; their lifestyle prioritizes work and leisure over family. The Egyptian middle class, as Economist Ramzy Zaki<sup>119</sup> (1997, 1993) described is the segment that earns money through governmental, public-sector, and freelance professions; he also divided the middle class into three categories: high, middle, and low. He also claimed a significant gap between the upper and lower classes regarding income, awareness, consumption, and savings. Speaking about housing difficulties for middle class, Xiaoqi Dai (2012: p.74) claimed, *“It has been hard for the middle classes to afford the rapidly rising housing prices, leading to the new generation being unable to access the property market as easily as the previous generation, meaning they have been stranded in their parents' home, or have had to buy a house in the suburbs and even in remote areas, or rent to survive”*.

Currently, downtown Cairo has begun to attract a variety of people, including singles and divorcees, young professionals with a relatively high socioeconomic status, and foreigners who work downtown or nearby. According to Amr Elhamy<sup>120</sup>, several previously suburban-based enterprises are seeking to move downtown. Therefore, their staff members searched for a rental. The central location of downtown Cairo and the proximity to modes of public transportation, primarily the Metro, are considered due to the rising cost of gasoline for private cars, especially after the flotation of the Egyptian pound. However, the elite, creative professional class, and wealthy senior citizens, are the primary target market since they can afford to live, work, and invest in downtown Cairo and bring it back to its former glory, not even the high average middle class. Shafi mentioned there is a growing valorization of downtown Cairo's urban life. Yet, the relevant lack of essential services and amenities like tiny grocery stores and laundromats that traditionally served the locals could be a reason behind the absence of targeted high-income young and senior tenants<sup>121</sup>. Despite the increasing valorization of downtown Cairo, most vacated units are rented for commercial activities rather than residential ones. According to Galila El Kadi<sup>122</sup>, commercial activities are not selectively chosen as the majority are inappropriate and do not fit the nature of the residential buildings, but they are more profitable for the property's owners.

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<sup>119</sup> Farewell to the Middle Class (Wada'an li-l-tabaqa al-wusta, published in 1997)

<sup>120</sup> Interview, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021

<sup>121</sup> Karim El-Shafie (CEO), personal interview, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021

<sup>122</sup> Personal interview, October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021

## Conclusion

Khedivial Cairo's urban regeneration paradigm is a prototypical example of a state-led gentrification process. The research confirmed that the khedival Cairo urban regeneration is employed to serve varying gentrification objectives. The gentrification process is a localized response to politico-economic changes shaped by pro-development interests, mainly real estate developers and investors, rather than being a socio- culture that impacts socio-economic mobility and culture production. Khedivial Cairo gentrification process is another evidence that confirms capital domination over sustainability and publicly oriented policy decisions concerning urban space management for capital accumulation and commodification.

The findings of this dissertation proved the involvement of the state, political elite, and private investment in the urban regeneration process, all of which aim to capitalize on the real estate value of Khedivial Cairo's urban heritage through dynamic circuits of capital and policies. In addition, Khedivial Cairo regeneration process, which transformed downtown Cairo's urban space into a surveillance zone where access and activities were monitored, provides valuable insight into the underlying power dynamics that drive the production of urban space. Nonetheless, space production and aestheticization as a gentrification tool have been utilized to create a new narrative for downtown Cairo that is appealing to targeted residents, consumers, and investors. The key to boosting the interest of the dominant players is space production, spatial restructuring which also serves as a means of social division, political legitimacy, and capital accumulation.

The gentrifying effect of Haussmann's nineteenth-century urban development of Paris on the state's control of public places as Castells (1977) described in his work is highly relevant to today's state's goals in downtown Cairo. The impacts of gentrification on the built environment are resulting in rising socioeconomic displacement, privatization, and elitist consumption patterns. Considering displacement, downtown Cairo is experiencing a variety of forms of displacement as a direct result of the gentrification process including but not limited to physical displacement.

The study validated the proposed hypotheses since gentrification was a means and goal in the Khedivial Cairo regeneration process.

The study is primarily focused on the following.

- 1-The influence of neoliberalism and globalization on urban development and gentrification schemes in Greater Cairo region.
- 2- Khedivial Cairo architectural heritage, the contribution of entrepreneurial initiatives in repositioning the buildings. The state efforts in Heritagization as a top-down process to create symbolic added value.
- 3- The role contemporary art scene that has lately been directed by the investors and private business to serve elite consumption and their aesthetic preferences.



4-The production of Khedival Cairo's public spaces and privatization, and the heavy reliance on aesthetics is a reverberation of the gentrification that occurred in central Cairo.

In each theme, the government plays a key role. State efforts included enhancing investment opportunities in downtown Cairo and increasing the value of real estate by supporting gentrification.

Given the similarity of Egypt's political and economic situations to those of other Arab countries in the Middle East and North Africa region, we may state that urban regeneration scheme is a led gentrification process. In Arab cities, gentrification is a pervasive yet location-specific economic-political strategy, and a current mode of space production. The process is a more extensive version of neo-liberalization that reflects the political priorities of the state and the global economic considerations driving the steady return of capital investment, particularly in the real estate sector. Indeed, supranational financial organizations like the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Bank for Development and Reconstruction are increasingly dictating and enforcing economic, political, and social policies in many Arab nations in the Middle East. Arab cities are forced to promote a competitive economic climate, first-rate tourism attractions, and world-class amenities to attract high-income individuals and businesses.

As a result, neoliberal urban restructuring is most blatant in downtown areas, where new urban development projects catering to the extravagant lifestyles of the elite are sprouting alongside the global expansion of commercial real estate firms and construction consulting firms able to provide superior services. The contemporary Arab city's development is mainly determined by the sheer size of its mega real estate developments (Barthel, 2010: p. 5). However, heritage has been commodified for tourism and consumption and used as a financial asset. Heritagization is largely motivated by a desire to get notoriety and financial return or to add aesthetic preferences. Despite the commonalities among the various neoliberal urban restructuring projects in the various Arab cities, each project develops within a local context and is influenced by it. Local actors are the ones that activate these processes, and they wield a disproportionate amount of power.

The purpose of this dissertation is to deepen our knowledge of gentrification and regeneration strategies in Arab cities in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) in the context of neoliberal entrepreneurial urbanism. To present a critical and alternative interpretation of urban regeneration in historical and heritage urban centers in Arab cities in the MENA region, the Khedival Cairo urban regeneration was examined in an effort to understand the commonalities. Nevertheless, my findings indicated the need for additional research into the impact of financialization in real estate investment and their motivations and the role of the state Holding Companies RECHCOs in regeneration process. Additionally, the value of the experience economy in fostering gentrification. In terms of methodology, the dissertation has relied on qualitative research methods; nevertheless, there are several areas such as the economic impact of the cultural initiatives, and

startup ecosystem in downtown Cairo where further investigation using quantitative methods might be more beneficial.

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